

ATOMIC APARTHIED: UNITED STATES-SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR  
RELATIONS FROM TRUMAN TO REAGAN, 1945-1989

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ATOMIC APARTHIED: UNITED STATES-SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR  
RELATIONS FROM TRUMAN TO REAGAN, 1945-1989

Javan David Frazier

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## VITA

Javan David Frazier was born on March 31, 1974 in Smithville, Tennessee and lived there until he graduated from DeKalb County High School in 1992. He then entered Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee and graduated in 1996 with a Bachelor's Degree in Secondary Education-Social Studies with an emphasis in History. He returned to Smithville and was employed as a teacher at the DeKalb County Middle School for one year and at the DeKalb County High School for two years. He took a leave of absence from teaching and earned a Master's degree in History at North Carolina State University in 1999 and entered Auburn University's Graduate History program in the fall of that year.

ATOMIC APARTHIED: UNITED STATES-SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR  
RELATIONS FROM TRUMAN TO REAGAN, 1945-1989

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This dissertation analyzes nuclear cooperation between the United States and South Africa from the Truman to Reagan administrations. The focus of this work is to examine how and why the United States became involved in this type of relationship with South Africa and how issues of race and nuclear proliferation affected this partnership. South Africa's dependability as a Cold War ally, its large supply of uranium, and the potential promise of nuclear power prompted the United States to assist South Africa's nuclear program. Yet, growing international and domestic concerns regarding apartheid and nuclear proliferation caused the United States to pressure South Africa, for the most part unsuccessfully, to reform its racial policies and to adopt nuclear nonproliferation policies. Because of this failure, the United States restricted nuclear cooperation with South Africa but never severed it completely, as government officials reasoned that doing

so would limit America's influence over South Africa's nuclear program and hamper its ability to pressure it.

This dissertation also demonstrates how consistent were the policies of administrations from Truman to Reagan in maintaining nuclear cooperation with South Africa. Once nuclear proliferation became a major issue after the Kennedy administration, presidential administrations consistently advocated strong nuclear nonproliferation policies toward South Africa. The only difference that political party affiliation caused in nuclear relations with South Africa was that Democratic administrations tended to be more publicly critical of South Africa than Republican ones.

Finally, this study shows the limitations of America's influence during the Cold War as it balanced its strategic interests with its commitment to civil rights. Even though the United States had more economic and military power than South Africa, it was unable significantly to pressure South Africa to change its nuclear or apartheid policies. As South Africa's nuclear program matured and it became more isolated internationally in the 1970s and 1980s, America's influence became even weaker. America's nuclear cooperation with South Africa demonstrates how limited its influence was over an ally, even when it provided invaluable aid.

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I want to thank the faculty, staff, and graduate students at Auburn's History Department for making my time there enjoyable and enriching. I want to express my gratitude to Dr. Nancy Mitchell from North Carolina State University who initially put me on the road to conducting research on United States-South African nuclear relations when I wrote my Master's thesis. Finally, I want to thank my family for their unwavering support they have given me toward my goal of earning a Ph.D. in history and writing a dissertation.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1 TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION: FORMING AN ALLIANCE THROUGH URANIUM.....	17
CHAPTER 2 EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION: THE FORMATION OF A NUCLEAR PROGRAM THROUGH COOPERATION.....	57
CHAPTER 3 KENNEDY AND JOHNSON ADMINISTRATIONS: THE NEAR TERMINATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR COOPERATION.....	109
CHAPTER 4 NIXON-FORD ADMINISTRATIONS: EVOLVING NUCLEAR RELATIONS.....	178
CHAPTER 5 CARTER ADMINISTRATION: STRAINED RELATIONS AND THE VELA EVENT.....	239
CHAPTER 6 REAGAN ADMINISTRATION: IMPROVING RELATIONS, SANCTIONS, AND NUCLEAR COOPERATION.....	272
CONCLUSION.....	302
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	318

## INTRODUCTION

America's nuclear relationship with South Africa began as a necessity, evolved into a cooperative partnership, and developed into a liability. This study will trace the evolution of United States-South African nuclear relations and show how they became a liability for American foreign policymakers during the Cold War. The two main reasons this aspect of American foreign policy became a problem were the change in American attitudes toward race and growing concerns about nuclear proliferation.

During World War II, preliminary studies on the vastness of South Africa's mineral potential stimulated American interest in South Africa as a uranium supplier. The United States was unable to take advantage of South Africa's uranium during World War II, but America's continued development of nuclear weapons meant a constant need for more uranium. For their part, South African authorities were eager to supply the United States with uranium but lacked the infrastructure to extract it. On November 23, 1950, South Africa signed an agreement with the United States and Great Britain that provided South Africa with the necessary economic aid to develop a uranium extraction industry and ensured that the two countries would buy a certain amount of the mineral at a set price.

During the 1950s, America's nuclear relationship with South Africa changed from one of simply buying uranium to a cooperative partnership whereby the United States aided in the development of South Africa's nuclear program. South Africa's uranium

extraction industry had become so efficient that it produced more uranium than the United States or Great Britain could readily use. In addition, America's uranium extraction industry had developed to the point that uranium mined in the United States became less expensive than that acquired from South Africa. Because of these two factors, the United States and Great Britain negotiated to end their purchases of South African uranium. South African officials were not pleased with this new development but were partly mollified by the new atomic relationship they entered into with the United States.

In 1953, President Eisenhower gave his Atoms for Peace speech which espoused the peaceful applications of nuclear power. His administration established a program whereby the United States would provide nuclear information and technology to any nation as long as that nation agreed to develop only peaceful uses for nuclear power and not weapons. South African authorities were eager to become involved in this program but did not officially join until 1957. The delay was due to South Africa's unsuccessful attempt to negotiate an agreement that would form a closer relationship with America than the United States had entered into with other nations. Through the cooperation agreement, the United States provided training to South African scientists, a nuclear reactor called SAFARI I, and the enriched uranium needed to operate the reactor. All of this aid provided the foundation for South Africa's nuclear program.

Before the 1960s, American-South African nuclear cooperation had proceeded smoothly, with both sides benefiting from the partnership, but during that decade domestic and international pressures started to limit and restrict this relationship. For example, in 1965 the United States decided not to initiate a barter exchange program with

South Africa, involving the transfer of agricultural goods for uranium and other mineral resources, due to concerns with how this would affect American industry. In that same year, the United States pressured South Africa to place the reactor given to it through the Atoms for Peace program under International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) safeguards before shipping the nuclear fuel necessary to operate it. The United States took this action due to growing nuclear proliferation concerns and in an effort to distance itself from South Africa due to that nation's policy of apartheid.

In 1967, the Atoms for Peace agreement was due for renewal. Renewal almost did not occur as American officials expressed concern about South Africa's international uranium sales, which they feared would contribute to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, South Africa's growing status as a pariah state due to apartheid caused some in Washington to question whether extension should occur. Extension was eventually granted because South Africa was more accommodating regarding its international sales of uranium than other American allies. Moreover, America wanted to try to maintain some influence over South Africa's nuclear program, and terminating the cooperation agreement would not aid this goal.

Seven years later, the two parties again extended the nuclear cooperation agreement but this time with no significant objections. The United States had adopted a policy of cooperation with South Africa in as many areas as possible in order to promote reform of South Africa's racial policies. Yet, in that same year, two events raised questions about America's policies regarding cooperation with South Africa. India's detonation of a nuclear device using Canadian and American materials challenged the idea that nuclear proliferation could be limited through cooperation. The rapid

decolonization of Portugal's southern African colonies due to a coup in Portugal undermined the idea that white-minority governments were a permanent aspect of southern Africa. Thus, the United States began to initiate stronger policies to limit nuclear proliferation and to foster the accession of African-majority ruled governments.

The nuclear nonproliferation policies the United States implemented in the 1970s culminated in the 1978 passage of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act (NNPA). Nuclear cooperation with South Africa became severely limited by the NNPA, which required that all nuclear activities of a nation be under IAEA safeguards and inspections in order for the United States to assist in the development of the nation's nuclear program. Because South Africa's program was not under such safeguards, the United States was forced to suspend all shipments of enriched uranium to fuel SAFARI I. Nevertheless, these new policies did not prevent South Africa from advancing a nuclear weapons program and attempting to test a nuclear device in 1977 in the Kalahari Desert and possibly again in 1979 with the likely nuclear test known as the Vela Event. The combination of South Africa's deteriorating strategic position, as it became surrounded by hostile majority-ruled nations, and its growing nuclear self-reliance caused America's hopes of influencing South Africa's internal policies to wane.

During the 1980s, the United States renewed a policy of cooperation with South Africa in order to try to influence both its racial and nuclear policies. Yet, due to past policy decisions, nuclear cooperation with South Africa remained limited as the country's strategic concerns overrode efforts to instigate nuclear reforms. In addition, South Africa only tentatively adopted racial reforms which fueled calls by reformers for America to impose economic sanctions. In 1986, the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA)

was passed, significantly limiting United States-South African cooperation in all areas until South Africa demonstrated progress toward racial reform. The CAAA further restricted nuclear cooperation between the two nations, though South Africa continued to develop nuclear weapons until 1991, when President F. W. de Klerk ordered the dismantling of his country's nuclear arms in response to the end of the Cold War and the first steps toward abandoning the apartheid system.

A number of scholars have examined various aspects of the United States-South African relationship. The works of Thomas Borstelmann, Mary Dudziah, Thomas J. Noer, and Peter J. Schraeder focus on general American-South African relations during the Cold War and occasionally refer to nuclear cooperation. A common theme emerging from these works is how the United States government attempted to balance varying, and at times, conflicting interests in its diplomatic relations with South Africa.

Borstelmann's book, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, examines the ways the government of the United States responded to the calls for the end of racial discrimination during the Cold War both at home and abroad. He describes how America attempted to advance ideals of equality while not alienating its allies abroad or whites at home, particularly in the south. Mary Dudziah's work *Cold War and Civil Rights* complements Borstelmann's work as she argues that from 1946 to the mid-1960s the government worried about how much damage racial discrimination did to America's perception abroad. She describes how the government attempted to control the portrayal of America's racial problems overseas and promoted certain domestic social reforms. The main purpose behind these actions was to improve America's image abroad in order

to demonstrate the nation's commitment to democracy and racial equality, especially to newly emerging nations in Asia and Africa.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas J. Noer's work studies America's policies from 1948 to 1968 toward South Africa, Rhodesia, and Portugal's colonies in southern Africa. He argues that the United States endorsed a peaceful shift to majority rule in southern Africa, which complicated its relations with the white-minority governments. The United States attempted to balance its promotion of change and stability while containing communism as it adopted this "middle road" approach toward southern Africa.<sup>2</sup>

Peter J. Schraeder's book, *United States Foreign Policy toward Africa*, studies America's foreign policies toward Ethiopia, Somalia, Zaire, and South Africa from the end of World War II to the beginning of the Clinton administration. Regarding South Africa, he argues that the nation's political stability caused the United States from 1948 to 1974 largely to ignore its racial issues. Even after 1974, close cooperation with South Africa continued in order to garner its assistance in helping to settle the issues involving independence for Namibia and Rhodesia.<sup>3</sup>

The theme of balancing America's interests continues in several works that focus only on one administration's South African policy. Borstelmann's *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle* reveals how the Truman administration had some reservations in dealing with South Africa due to apartheid, but that Cold War considerations, particularly securing a

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1-2, 8, 9; Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War and Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 6, 13-14.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas J. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1985), xi, 253, 254.

<sup>3</sup> Peter J. Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis, and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 243-44.

uranium agreement, overcame these reservations. Securing a dependable source of uranium was initially more important than South Africa's racial policies.<sup>4</sup>

Van Mitchell Smith argues that the Kennedy administration's approach toward all of Africa was a middle course that went too far for those who advocated a Europe-first foreign policy and not far enough for those who supported a foreign policy that focused on the Third World. Terrence Lyons argues that President Lyndon Johnson focused his administration on concerns other than Africa or South Africa, such as his Great Society programs and fighting the Vietnam War. Johnson largely left the issues involving Africa to the State Department, permitting it to make policies and keeping Africa off his agenda. Gerald E. Thomas argues that the United States missed an opportunity during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations in not supporting the oppressed African populations of South Africa, contending that America sacrificed doing the right thing in order to preserve short-term economic and political considerations.<sup>5</sup>

Another theme that emerges within the literature on United States-South African relations is the success or failure of a particular administration's foreign policy approach. The Reagan administration's policy of constructive engagement, in particular, has received scholarly attention from Robert I. Rotberg who argued it failed because closer cooperation did not accomplish the goal of improving relations. Alex Thomson also maintains that constructive engagement failed but cites the lack of a domestic base to

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle: The United States and South Africa in the Early Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 198-99.

<sup>5</sup> Van Mitchell Smith, "Africa: The Kennedy Years, 1961-1963," in *Essays on American Foreign Policy*, ed. Margaret F. Morris and Sandra L. Myres (Austin, TX: University of Texas at Arlington, 1974), 66, 69, 80-1; Terrence Lyons, "Keeping Africa off the Agenda," *Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World: American Foreign Policy, 1963-1968*, eds. Warren I. Cohen and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 245, 248, 267; Gerald E. Thomas, "The Black Revolt: the United States and Africa in the 1960s," in *The Diplomacy of the Crucial Decade: American Foreign Relations during the 1960s*, ed. Diane B. Kunz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 355.



support the policy, its conceptual weaknesses, and the failure fully to implement the policy. Pauline Baker argues that constructive engagement did not improve relations with South Africa, but did succeed in stabilizing the southern African region with its dual successes of starting the process of independence for Namibia and securing the withdrawal of South African forces from Angola.<sup>6</sup>

The literature focusing specifically on the development of South Africa's nuclear program is extensive with studies covering the development of the industry from the initial extraction of uranium to the development of nuclear weapons. E.J. G. Janson describes how South Africa's uranium and nuclear industry developed from 1945 to the 1970s. Janson's narrative concentrates on the connections between South Africa's government and its uranium industry. She also examines America's cooperation with South Africa and how important it was to the development of the country's uranium extraction industry.<sup>7</sup>

J.D.L. Moore and A.R. Newby-Fraser, both of whom worked in South Africa's nuclear program, have written individual works describing the history of this program and American assistance. They both give credit to America's aid in the development of

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<sup>6</sup> Robert I. Rotberg, "The Reagan Era in Africa," in *Reagan and the World*, Dave E. Kyvig (ed) (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 120, 126; Alex Thomson, *Incomplete Engagement: U.S. Foreign Policy Towards the Republic of South Africa, 1981-1988* (Aldershot, England: Avebury, 1996), 315; Pauline Baker, *The United States and South Africa: The Reagan Years* (New York: Ford Foundation, 1989), 71.

<sup>7</sup> ELJ (Elana) Janson, "The Development of the Uranium and Nuclear Industry in South Africa, 1945-1970: A Historical Study" (Ph.D. diss., University of Stellenbosch, 1995), i, iii.

the nuclear program but also promote the independent scientific accomplishments of South Africa's nuclear scientists.<sup>8</sup>

Before the 1993 declaration by President F. W. de Klerk that South Africa had developed nuclear weapons, several authors wrote on the weapons potential of South Africa's nuclear program. Ralmo Vayrynen provides a detailed description of South Africa's nuclear program as of 1977 and argues that South Africa's motivations for developing a nuclear weapons program included both economic and strategic considerations. Vayrynen also minimizes the likelihood that South Africa would develop nuclear weapons.<sup>9</sup>

After describing the nuclear technological capability of South Africa, Richard K. Betts, writing in 1979, stresses the diplomatic potential that a nuclear weapons program could have for South Africa. By 1979 South Africa's strategic position had weakened, and it was subjected to increasing pressure to reform apartheid and adhere to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Because South Africa had little to bargain with, Betts argues that threatening to become a nuclear weapons power could cause western nations, especially the United States, to come to its aid, as its nuclear program further undermined nuclear proliferation and generated hostility. Betts notes, however, that the incentives for South Africa not to develop or not reveal the development of a nuclear weapons potential decreased as its international relations deteriorated. C. Raja Mohan also contends that if South Africa developed nuclear weapons, they would be used more for political than

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<sup>8</sup> J. D. L. Moore, *South Africa and Nuclear Proliferation: South Africa's Nuclear Capabilities and Intentions in the Context of International Non-Proliferation Policies* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 82-84; A. R. Newby-Fraser, *Chain Reaction: Twenty Years of Nuclear Research and Development in South Africa* (Pretoria: Atomic Energy Board, 1979), 8-10.

<sup>9</sup> Ralmo Vayrynen, "South Africa: A Coming Nuclear-Weapon Power?" *Instant Research on Peace and Violence* 6 (1977), 44-45.

military reasons. Mohan contends that South Africa's undeclared status as a nuclear weapons power allowed it to assert leverage against western powers as much as they tried to influence South Africa's policies.<sup>10</sup>

After the revelation of South Africa's nuclear weapons program, several authors wrote on its development. Among them was David Fischer, who also stressed that South Africa has been the only country to date that developed nuclear weapons and then dismantled them. Waldo Stumpf, an official within the South African nuclear program, stressed the strategic reasons for the development of nuclear weapons. He also cited the easing of the Cold War in southern Africa, specifically the settlement of the issues of Namibia and Angola, which caused South Africa to reevaluate its need for nuclear weapons. In addition, the domestic political reforms that de Klerk initiated made nuclear weapons unnecessary and even an impediment to reforms.<sup>11</sup>

David Albright provides significant detail on the development of South Africa's nuclear weapons program and its dissolution, stressing the efficiency and affordability of the program. Conversely, David Fig argues that the program consumed resources that could have been used to help the people of South Africa and asserts that the program's expense was enormous. Fig also notes that the future of the nuclear program, as of 1998, is in doubt due to the expense of maintaining the facilities. Helen E. Purkitt and Stephen F. Burgess describe South Africa's development of a nuclear weapons program along with its chemical and biological weapons programs. They argue that the strategic

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<sup>10</sup> Richard K. Betts, "A Diplomatic Bomb for South Africa," *International Security* 4 (Fall 1979), 91,114-15; C. Raja Mohan, "Atomic Teeth to Apartheid: South Africa and Nuclear Weapons," *Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses Journal* (1980) Vol. 12, 265-67.

<sup>11</sup> David Fischer, "Reversing Nuclear Proliferation: South Africa," *Security Dialogue* 24 (September 1993), 280-81; Waldo Stumpf, "South Africa's Nuclear Weapons Program: From Deterrence to Dismantlement," *Arms Control Today* (December 1995/January 1996), 3, 6.

situation South Africa faced in the 1970s was the major reason for the development of these programs. In addition, Purkitt and Burgess note the critical influence of P. W. Botha in promoting the construction of nuclear weapons and cite the changing international and domestic situation in southern Africa in the 1990s, along with economic factors, for the dismantling of the program.<sup>12</sup>

Ronald Walters's 1987 work on United States-South African relations argues against this form of cooperation with South Africa. He contends that South Africa represents a failure of nuclear nonproliferation policy because trade, finance, technology, and security considerations prevented the United States from acting against South Africa's nuclear program. Furthermore, he contends that the policy providing South Africa with a reliable supply of nuclear materials and technology in order to maintain American influence over its nuclear program was a failure.<sup>13</sup>

What is missing from the existing literature is a study that focuses on the development of United States-South African nuclear relations during the entire Cold War from a diplomatic perspective. Also lacking is a study that focuses on negotiations during significant moments when nuclear cooperation could have been terminated or continued and analysis on why cooperation continued. A scholarly work is needed that examines how growing international and domestic concerns regarding nuclear proliferation and racial issues started to influence United States-South African nuclear

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<sup>12</sup> David Albright, "South Africa and the Affordable Bomb," *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* (July/August 1994), 38-9; David Fig, "Apartheid's Nuclear Arsenal: Deviation from Development," in *From Defence to Development: Redirecting Military Resources in South Africa*, ed. Jacklyn Cock and Penny Mckenzie (Capetown, South Africa: David Philip Publishers, Ltd, 1998), 164, 180; Helen E. Purkitt and Stephen F. Burgess, *South Africa's Weapons of Mass Destruction* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 41, 53, 59, 129-31.

<sup>13</sup> Ronald Walters, *South Africa and the Bomb: Responsibility and Deterrence* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1987), 3, 5, 110, 149.

cooperation. Finally, there should be a work that examines United States-South African nuclear cooperation from the South African, as well as American, perspective.

This study fills in many of these gaps in the literature regarding United States-South African nuclear relations. Though other studies have focused on some aspects of this relationship, this work traces the evolution of this relationship from the Truman to Reagan administrations. It focuses on diplomatic negotiations to measure the importance the United States placed on this partnership and provides insight into the importance South African officials placed on it. This study also sheds light on how nuclear proliferation and racial concerns influenced nuclear cooperation during each administration. Each administration tried different tactics to promote South African reform, using increased cooperation, threats of decreased cooperation, public criticism, private lobbying, or a combination of tactics to encourage South Africa to reform its nuclear and racial policies. Finally, this study focuses on the American perspective regarding nuclear cooperation more than the South African side, while recognizing that to gain a fuller understanding of the subject more information is needed regarding the attitudes, thoughts, and ideas South African officials had regarding nuclear cooperation.

Chapter One focuses on the Truman administration's role in helping South Africa to develop a uranium extraction industry by signing an agreement in 1950 to provide monetary support to this new industry and to buy a set amount of uranium at a predetermined price. The concerns of the Truman administration with the Nationalist Party and its policy of apartheid are noted, but Cold War considerations such as the Korean War and South Africa's supply of uranium helped to cement United States-South African nuclear relations. Furthermore, the lack of significant pressure internationally or

domestically concerning relations with South Africa allowed United States-South African nuclear cooperation to develop with few difficulties.

The next chapter stresses how nuclear cooperation with South Africa changed during the Eisenhower presidency. Due to the expense of South African uranium, the Eisenhower administration negotiated a gradual ending of purchases of South African uranium. Yet, nuclear cooperation with the United States did not diminish but increased when the Eisenhower administration initiated the Atoms for Peace program, in which the United States trained South African nuclear scientists, provided a nuclear reactor, and supplied the enriched uranium needed to operate it. Nuclear relations expanded during the Eisenhower administration, but general relations were threatened in 1960 when violent protests erupted over apartheid and South African police killed many demonstrators. The Sharpeville Massacre foreshadowed how apartheid strained relations between the United States and South Africa and even threatened nuclear cooperation.

Chapter Three focuses on both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations as some decisions regarding nuclear cooperation spanned both administrations and some of the same officials served in both administrations. The Kennedy administration considered becoming involved in a barter program with South Africa, where agricultural goods would be exchanged for uranium. The Johnson administration made the decision not to become involved in this aspect of nuclear cooperation because of fears it would adversely affect America's economy. The Johnson administration also pressured South Africa to place IAEA safeguards on fuel used in SAFARI I. Finally, the Johnson administration had to decide whether or not to renew the 1957 nuclear cooperation agreement America had with South Africa. Some officials strongly argued not to extend nuclear cooperation

due to concerns about how continued cooperation with apartheid South Africa would appear, especially in light of the domestic racial reforms the Johnson administration implemented. Furthermore, officials in the Johnson administration were concerned with South Africa's policies regarding its sales of uranium. Eventually the Johnson administration decided to accept the safeguards South Africa already had regarding uranium sales, because the United States had problems convincing its other allies to implement safeguards on their own sales of uranium. Also, the United States wanted to maintain some measure of influence over South Africa's nuclear program, and not extending nuclear cooperation seemed counterproductive.

In Chapter Four, the Nixon and Ford administrations are considered together because the policy of closer cooperation with South Africa articulated under National Security Study Memorandum 39 (NSSM39) started during the Nixon administration and continued into the Ford years. Furthermore, Henry Kissinger influenced the foreign policies of both administrations because he served as National Security Adviser and Secretary of State. With the implementation of NSSM39, the United States easily renewed its nuclear cooperation agreement with South Africa in 1974 at the request of the South African government. Yet, nuclear relations became strained in 1974 as India's detonation of a nuclear device challenged the premise that peaceful nuclear cooperation would prevent a nation from developing nuclear weapons. Congressional concerns increased regarding America's nuclear cooperation with other nations due to the Indian explosion and growing distrust of presidential actions due to the Watergate scandal. South Africa's strategic situation dramatically changed in 1974 when a coup in Portugal ignited decolonization process in southern Africa.

The Ford administration faced these new challenges to United States-South African nuclear relations after Richard Nixon's resignation in August 1974. Ford officials attempted to justify nuclear cooperation to skeptical members of Congress and support South Africa in its efforts to prevent the establishment of a communist government in the former Portuguese colony of Angola. Congress was not satisfied by the Ford administration's arguments regarding nuclear cooperation and prevented the continued funding of aid to anticommunist forces in Angola.

Chapter Five examines how the Carter administration responded to the changing situation in southern Africa, the growing fears of nuclear proliferation, and the greater influence of African-Americans on America's foreign policy. The Carter administration began to pressure South Africa more openly to reform its apartheid policies, leading to strained relations between the two nations. Furthermore, Congress passed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act (NNPA) that required all peaceful nuclear activities of a nation be under IAEA safeguards before the United States could continue or initiate nuclear cooperation. When South Africa refused to adhere to IAEA safeguards, nuclear cooperation became severely limited between the two nations. Furthermore, the Carter administration was forced to face the threat that South Africa had developed nuclear weapons and was close to detonating them. In 1977, the United States and the international community pressured South Africa to stop preparations for an apparent nuclear test in the Kalahari Desert and two years later the United States detected what appeared to be a nuclear test near South African territorial water, which became known as the Vela Event. The Carter administration was unable to prove that South Africa had



tested a nuclear device, but both incidents demonstrated America's waning influence as apartheid further isolated South Africa from the international community.

Chapter Six examines how the Reagan administration attempted to use closer cooperation through its policy of constructive engagement to foster reforms in South Africa. This approach, similar to NSSM39, was used to try and get South Africa to implement IAEA safeguards on its nuclear program, thus allowing increased nuclear cooperation with the United States that was not then possible due to previously passed legislation. The Reagan administration was unable to garner any significant reforms from South Africa. This lack of progress, combined with years of concerted effort by human rights activists, led to the passage of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 (CAAA), which further limited what little nuclear cooperation existed between the United States and South Africa.

An examination of United States-South African nuclear relations demonstrates the growing concern American policy makers and the American public had regarding nuclear proliferation and apartheid. Few objected when nuclear cooperation was implemented during the Truman administration. Yet, by the time of the Reagan administration, objections had grown strong enough that laws were passed severely limiting not only nuclear cooperation but nearly all other forms of collaboration. Nuclear cooperation with South Africa is an important prism to view how strategic Cold War considerations, coupled with issues of nuclear proliferation and race, affected American foreign policy in the post-1945 era.

CHAPTER 1  
THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION: FORMING AN  
ALLIANCE THROUGH URANIUM

The story of diplomatic relations between the United States and South Africa begins with the two Boer republics, the Orange Free State and Transvaal, which predate the 1910 formation of the Union of South Africa. These two republics were established in the late 1800s as a result of the northern migration of Dutch settlers, also known as Boers. The Boers migrated from the Natal and Cape colonies on the coastal areas of southern Africa that came under British imperial control in the nineteenth century, seeking to avoid policies that often restricted the way they dealt with the indigenous peoples of the San and Khoikhoi, and to insulate their culture from British influence. The areas previously inhabited by Bantu peoples that the Boers conquered during this migration were rich in gold and diamonds.<sup>1</sup>

The British government was ambiguous toward the migration of the Boers. As long as their interests, particularly the security of their empire, were not threatened, British authorities tended to ignore Boer migration, especially since it was into areas with seemingly with little strategic or economic value. Only when the Boers appeared to

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (New York: Avon Books, 1992), xiii-xiv.

threaten their interests, with the establishment of the republics with their newly discovered natural resources, did Britain start to implement controls over Boer affairs.<sup>2</sup>

The United States established diplomatic relations with the Boer republics in 1870 in the hope of bettering economic relations between the countries. American businessmen were keenly interested in the potential business opportunities that existed because of the Boer republics' mineral resources.<sup>3</sup>

Fearing that these republics could become potential rivals to British imperial control of southern Africa due to their new wealth, the British were also interested in the resources of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. In addition, they were also concerned that the republics could form an alliance with Germany, which was challenging British economic and military interests. Tensions increased between the republics and Great Britain with some fighting occurring in 1895 and a general conflict, known as the Boer War, beginning in 1899.<sup>4</sup>

American business interests, as well as the United States government, supported the British in the war. Despite economic and political ties to the Boers, Americans saw the British as best able to mobilize the resources of the region in order to make it productive and profitable. Most regarded the Boers as backward due to their desire to preserve their traditional agrarian economy and their highly racist attitudes toward nonwhites. In addition, the Boers restricted the political powers of the white males immigrating from Europe, Australia, and the Americas, known as Uitlanders, by

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<sup>2</sup> James Barber, *South Africa in the Twentieth Century: A Political History-In Search of a Nation State* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 10

<sup>3</sup> John H. Fegueson, *American Diplomacy and the Boer War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1939), 1; Thomas J. Noer, *Briton, Boer, and Yankee: The United States and South Africa, 1870-1914* (Kent State: Kent State University Press, 1978), 19-20.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa, 1876-1912* (New York: Random House, 1991), 139-141.

imposing a fourteen year residency requirement for becoming a citizen and being allowed to vote. The Boers feared the large numbers of Uitlanders would politically overwhelm them and the cultural and philosophical differences of the Uitlanders threatened the Boer way of life. These characteristics were interpreted as obstacles to mobilizing the African labor force needed to extract the precious resources from the republics, as well as developing the necessary technologies. American businesses thought that once Great Britain controlled the area it would be opened up to American trade and investment that the Boers had limited. The British would bring in efficient government, free trade, and the English language, which would further aid business.<sup>5</sup>

Officially the United States remained neutral in the conflict. American public support was roughly divided, with some supporting the British due to economic considerations. While others, mostly immigrants from Ireland, Germany, and the Netherlands, supported the Boers due to ethnic and national identities. Some Americans supported the Boers because they were seen to be fighting for their freedom against an aggressor or because of how the war mirrored America's fight for independence against the British. Many Americans provided humanitarian aid for the Boers who suffered due to loss of property and from being interned in concentration camps.<sup>6</sup>

Britain won the long and costly war in 1901, although American government and businesses were disappointed in British rule of the republics. American business was prevented from entering into the republics due to British imperial policy and what little American business had penetrated the area was slowly pushed out. Americans who had

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<sup>5</sup> Noer, *Briton, Boer, and Yankee*, xi; Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 3<sup>rd</sup>. ed., (Yale: Yale University Press, 2001), 136-37.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Duignan and L. H. Gann, *The United States and Africa: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 188-89.

hoped that racial issues in the republics would be improved due to British control were disappointed as the Boers still controlled racial policy in the republics.<sup>7</sup>

In 1910, the Transvaal, the Orange Free State, Natal, and the Cape Colony all were united under the Union of South Africa. This did not help to better business or diplomatic relations between the United States and the new union as the British dominated this new united colony as they had the other four. Only the growing strength of the Boers, becoming known as the Afrikaners, changed the relations between the two nations.<sup>8</sup>

As their population, education and wealth grew, Afrikaners slowly began to take economic, social, cultural, and governmental control of South Africa after the end of World War I in 1918. At the same time, they saw America as an alternative to Great Britain in helping foster economic development. American investment and trade was allowed freely to penetrate South Africa. The opening of a Ford car manufacturing plant in 1924 was but one example. Yet, South Africa was still a part of the British imperial system, and economic relations could only go so far as South Africa's 1925 protective tariff allowed.<sup>9</sup>

When World War II began, in 1939, South Africa followed Great Britain by declaring war on Germany. This did not occur easily as many Afrikaners wanted to remain neutral or were sympathetic to Nazi Germany. In fact, several future government officials including Nicholass Diederichs, future president of the Republic of South Africa, and Piet Meyer, future chairman of the South African Broadcasting Corporation,

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<sup>7</sup> Noer, *Briton, Boer, and Yankee*, 108.

<sup>8</sup> Ward Spooner, "United States Policy toward South Africa 1919-1941: Political and Economic Aspects" (Ph.D. diss., St. John's University, 1979), 2.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 343-46.

spoke and wrote against entering the war. Future prime minister Balthazar Johannes Vorster was even jailed for his pro-Nazi activities. Due to the closure by Germany of the Mediterranean, South Africa's Cape of Good Hope became a critical sea route for allied shipping to India and Southeast Asia. South African ports supplied American ships with goods, and South African mines and industry provided the materials needed to help win the war.<sup>10</sup>

When the United States entered World War II in 1941, it considered South Africa a minor consideration within the British Empire with good ports to provision ships and rest soldiers but nothing substantially more. By the time the United States had developed and used the atomic bomb and the Truman administration had ended, South Africa had become an important American ally because of its uranium supply and how it aided America in its Cold War contest with the Soviet Union. Jan Smuts' United party was the first to negotiate and work with the United States to exploit South Africa's uranium potential.<sup>11</sup>

Smuts had fought against the British during the Boer War but had since worked with British authorities to allow Afrikaners to regain more political rights in South Africa. Still, many Afrikaners thought that Smuts had reconciled himself too much to the British and had become their imperial agent. For example, Smuts suppressed an Afrikaner revolt that sought to regain independence during World War I and had led South African forces against German forces in Southwest Africa and East Africa. Smuts gained an international reputation for his activities, his work in establishing the League of Nations, and for his role in the British Imperial War Cabinet. He also served as prime

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<sup>10</sup> Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 162, 184, 177.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

minister of South Africa after World War I from 1919-1924. During his second term as prime minister from 1939-1949, Smuts did nothing to prevent the flow of Africans to the cities due to job opportunities created by World War II and made several statements indicating that segregation in South African society should end. All of these factors led many Afrikaners to perceive Smuts and the United party as being out of step with their vision of their nation, leading to his and the United party's defeat in 1948.<sup>12</sup>

Before his defeat, Smuts was active in discussing with American and British officials how best to utilize South Africa's uranium potential. Sir John Anderson, Chancellor of the Exchequer, sent a telegram to Smuts in the summer of 1944 requesting that his government begin investigating how much radium and pitchblende South Africa had because large concentrations of uranium are usually found around such mineral deposits. With the signing of the 1944 Quebec Agreement, the United States, Great Britain, and Canada had agreed to cooperate in the development of nuclear weapons. They went on to form the Combined Development Agency (CDA) to facilitate cooperation and the Combined Development Committee (CDC) to locate uranium deposits within their own countries as well as other nations. Anderson's request to Smuts was a part of this new cooperation.<sup>13</sup>

The CDA was privy to several sources indicating that South Africa could have a significant uranium supply. In 1915, Dr. A. W. Rogers, then director of the American Geological Survey, noted the presence of radioactive minerals in South Africa. During a 1941 trip to South Africa, George W. Bain, an adviser to General Leslie Groves of the

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 158-89, 180-01, 186.

<sup>13</sup>A. R. Newby-Fraser, *Chain Reaction: Twenty Years of Nuclear Research and Development in South Africa* (Pretoria: Atomic Energy Board, 1979), 21.

Manhattan Project , which developed America's first nuclear bombs, collected some rock specimens in South Africa and later tested them for uranium with positive results.<sup>14</sup>

Surveys by South African officials of their nation's uranium potential were also promising, so much so that Bain and Dr. Charles Davidson, his British counterpart, personally visited South Africa and toured several of South Africa's gold mines taking samples to determine further the amount of uranium available. These results proved the substantial existence of uranium deposits, and the South African government then decided to establish pilot plants for extracting uranium.<sup>15</sup>

The mining of uranium in South Africa occurs in two stages. The first stage is the actual removal of the uranium ore from underground mines or open pits. The second stage is the extraction of uranium from the ore and the separation of the uranium from other minerals, commonly gold. Extraction plants, often near the actual mines, subject the ore to a chemical process using resin, nitric acid, ammonium nitrate, and heat. The result of this process is uranium oxide,  $U^3O^8$ , also known as "yellow cake" due to its color. The terms uranium, yellow cake, and uranium oxide are often used interchangeably to describe the material sold abroad by South Africa and, once enriched, used in nuclear weapons and reactors.<sup>16</sup>

South Africa's uranium potential was not able to be utilized in time to help end World War II. Yet, South Africa continued to develop its uranium potential as tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union increased. When World War II formally ended on September 2, 1945, the United States had become the first nation successfully

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>16</sup> ELJ (Elana) Janson, "The Development of the Uranium and Nuclear Industry in South Africa, 1945-1970: A Historical Study" (Ph.D. diss., University of Stellenbosch, 1995), 23, 68, 362.



to construct, test, and use nuclear weapons. This gave the United States a distinct advantage in terms of technology and destructive power. In an effort to minimize international tensions and to avoid manufacturing massive numbers of nuclear weapons, the United States attempted to control nuclear weapons proliferation with a variety of plans that eventually coalesced into a plan proposed by Bernard Baruch on June 14, 1946. This proposal called for setting up an agency under the United Nations, known as the Atomic Development Authority (ADA), to monitor the international development of atomic energy. The authority would make sure that other nations did not develop atomic weapons, and it would take the information supplied by the United States to develop peaceful uses of atomic energy. The goal was to place all aspects of atomic energy production from raw material to finished product in the hands of this agency to prevent a nuclear arms race.<sup>17</sup>

The program did not work because the United States also insisted on automatic sanctions against any nation that violated the terms of the plan and that the imposition of sanctions was not subject to United Nations Security Council veto power. The Soviet Union proposed their own plan, which began a series of negotiations leading to no program being adopted.<sup>18</sup> The Baruch Plan failure illustrates the growing hostilities developing between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Tensions started between the United States and the Soviet Union with the end of World War II that had been submerged during the war. Policy disagreements between the two nations had not decreased but had grown steadily stronger, eventually leading to

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<sup>17</sup> McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and Survival: Choices about the Bomb in the First Fifty Years* (New York: Random House, 1988), 159, 160, 165.

<sup>18</sup> Larry Gerber, "The Baruch Plan and the Origins of the Cold War," *Diplomatic History* (Winter 1982) Vol. 6, No. 1, 72-3, 79.

the beginning of the Cold War. Europe became the major area of contention between the two nations due to the different plans they had for the continent. The Soviets wanted to use the resources of Eastern and Central Europe, especially Germany, to rebuild the Soviet Union. The United States wanted these resources to be left alone so that Eastern and Central Europe could rebuild their economies and lay the foundation for democratic government.<sup>19</sup>

An even stronger need that both nations were concerned with was security. The Soviet Union wanted to prevent another invasion from the west and feared the establishment of an American sphere of influence in Central and Eastern Europe. The United States wanted the establishment of democratic governments in these same areas to prevent the rise of another dictatorial figure such as Hitler and negate the need for another American intervention in European affairs.<sup>20</sup>

The security issue and how each side saw it differently emerged from each nation's different experiences in World War II. America was relatively untouched by the war and wanted to maintain the economic prosperity the war had brought. Americans were more fearful of a potential recession that the end of the war could cause than of an invasion from a foreign power. The Soviet Union was concerned for its security due to previous invasions from the west as well as America's possession of the atomic bomb. The Soviets' need for security demanded that they, too, develop a nuclear bomb.<sup>21</sup> Calls by the Americans for international control and trust in American willingness to share information were not as reassuring as possessing one's own nuclear weapons.

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<sup>19</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, *The Specter of Communism: The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917-1953, A Critical Issue* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 47-48, 35, 38.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-38, 49-50.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 40, 46-47, 84.

With no formal international agreement to cooperate in the field of nuclear energy and tensions increasing between the United States and the Soviet Union, both sides began to compete for allies and resources in their effort to gain influence in the world. One of the most important aspects to both America's vision of the world and its nuclear weapons program was the stockpiling of strategic minerals. America needed access to a large supply of strategic minerals including uranium, chromium, and manganese from dependable sources and allies in order to develop nuclear weapons and to stockpile them for use in case of a future war. South Africa was magnificently poised to fulfill these requirements.

President Harry Truman created the National Security Resources Board to organize the stockpiling of strategic minerals. In a 1947 report to Truman, the board acknowledged that America had a wealth of natural resources, at the same time it also recognized, through the experience of World War II, that it was not self sufficient in a variety of raw materials needed to wage war. The board noted the heavy drain World War II had inflicted upon America's resources and recommended the stockpiling of strategic and critical materials for America's national security.<sup>22</sup>

In a later report, the National Security Resources Board criticized how stockpiling since the end of World War II had been sacrificed in order for regular industrial production to occur. The board recommended a variety of measures to increase strategic stockpiling, such as implementing procedures to conserve strategic minerals and calling for voluntary conservation measures from the mining industry. If these did not work, the

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<sup>22</sup> "A Recommendation to the President from the National Security Resources Board on Stockpiling Strategic and Critical Materials", WHCF: CF 27, National Security Resources Board 1 of 10, Truman Papers, Harry S Truman Library. (hereafter Truman Library).

board called for mandatory federal controls to conserve strategic minerals and public campaigns to inform the public of the seriousness of the situation. In addition to increasing domestic production, the board recommended securing arrangements with allies abroad to improve the long-term supply of strategic and critical minerals.<sup>23</sup>

American policy makers obviously had concerns about the American need for strategic minerals and, by 1947, the South African government was beginning fully to appreciate the uranium potential of their country

In a meeting with British Prime Minister Clement Attlee in late 1947, Prime Minister Smuts noted the progress of South Africa's uranium extraction plants. Smuts mentioned that his government was interested in finding the most efficient method for extracting uranium so that large quantities could be made available to both the United States and Great Britain. He noted that the mining companies were concerned with acquiring the capital necessary to develop a uranium extraction industry, but Smuts assured Attlee the South African government would provide the money if it became necessary. He welcomed any help from the United States and Great Britain on extraction or technical problems. Finally, he predicted that there would not be a problem in reaching an agreement with the United States and the United Kingdom regarding the price and quantity of uranium.<sup>24</sup>

Negotiations were scheduled between the CDA and South Africa for June 1948 to establish production and price amounts. The CDA established some preliminary

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<sup>23</sup> "Staff Report of the National Security Resources Board on Proposed Recommendation for Acceleration of Stockpiling," June, 30, 1948, WHCF: CF 27, National Security Resources Board 1 of 10, Truman Papers, Truman Library.

<sup>24</sup> "Note on Conversation between British Prime Minister (Attlee) and the South African Prime Minister (Smuts)," undated, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947, Volume I General: The United Nations* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), 895-96. (hereafter cited as *FRUS*).

negotiation parameters for the talks. It desired ten thousand tons of uranium ore within the “next few years.”<sup>25</sup> The price would be based on the costs plus a royalty because a straight unit price would be difficult to establish due to uncertainties about the exact costs of production. The CDA also did not want a strategic or political *quid pro quo* to be raised with South Africa, nor did it want to allow South Africa into the CDA or CPC. Yet, CDA officials realized that if South Africa wanted admittance into the CDA or CPC it would probably have to be allowed. A key final acknowledgement on negotiations was made by the CDA when it stated: “In all our future foreign relations with the Union of South Africa, we would have to bear in mind the importance of South African uranium.”<sup>26</sup>

Smuts was keenly interested in reaching an agreement with the CDA. Just before the May 1948 election, Smuts asked Anton Gray to meet with him. Gray a British mining engineer who was also a consultant to the United Kingdom Energy Authority, the equivalent of the American Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), was in South Africa on non-government business. Smuts still wanted to meet with Gray because he wanted something he had recently learned verified. Smuts was angry that the CDA perceived him as hindering the development of South Africa’s uranium industry. Gray assured him that there was no such perception and that his impression was that the CDA saw Smuts as

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<sup>25</sup> “Minutes of Meeting of the American Members of the Combined Policy Committee,” Washington, May 28, 1948”, *FRUS, 1947, Volume I General: The United Nations Part 2* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), 707.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 707-08.

aiding the South African uranium industry to develop as quickly as possible, which calmed Smuts down considerably.<sup>27</sup>

They went on to discuss the coming negotiations. Smuts was concerned about whether or not a guarantee could be reached with America and Britain on uranium production at a fair price. Gray felt sure that this was possible and advised Smuts on how much it would take to accurately determine the amount and quality of the uranium in South Africa. Smuts also gave his impression of various CDA officials and that negotiations might prove difficult due to the personalities of the chief South African negotiator, Dr. Basil Schonland, and CDA officials.<sup>28</sup> Smuts was not able to complete the negotiations because his political party, the United party, was defeated in the May 26, 1948 parliamentary election. The United States would now have to deal with the Nationalist party, with its leader Daniel Malan, during uranium negotiations. The United States would also have to deal with the Nationalist party's new policy of apartheid, which would complicate relations between the two nations.

Though the Nationalist party was dominated by Afrikaners, the Nationalist party played on the fears of all Europeans regarding the strength and power non-Europeans had garnered due to World War II. The non-European population included people of dark skin whose ancestors originated in sub-Saharan Africa, Africans. It also included people whose ancestors originated in India, along with those who were of mixed African, white, and Malay descent known as coloreds. In 1936, the non-white population of South

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<sup>27</sup> Thomas Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle: The United States and South Africa in the Early Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 94; "Conversation with Anton Gray Concerning South Africa," May 26, 1948, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, D. General, 1947-50, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>28</sup> "Conversation with Anton Gray Concerning South Africa," May 26, 1948.

Africa consisted of seventy-nine percent of the population and it continued to grow until whites only comprised ten percent of the population by 1996.<sup>29</sup>

During World War II, non-European workers flocked to the cities to fill jobs left vacant by whites drafted into the service. Non-European merchants prospered as the war lifted South Africa out of the world wide economic depression that had started in 1929. Whites feared that they would no longer dominate South African economic and political life as they had in the past due to the rising economic and demographic power of these groups. The Nationalist party offered the solution of apartheid to these fears.<sup>30</sup>

Apartheid's premise was the separation of Europeans from non-Europeans in all aspects of life, stemming from the rationale that each group would evolve within its own timetable using its own resources without the other groups affecting them. Apartheid supporters argued that the problems experienced by both sides were due to the fact that the natural evolution of each race had been hindered due to the mixing of races. In reality apartheid placed Europeans in a better economic, social, and political situation than non-Europeans, which included those of mixed race, Indian, or African descent. The policy was designed to keep non-Europeans from encroaching on the strong economic and political position Europeans held by preserving their superior status through the law.<sup>31</sup>

The Nationalist party began implementing laws that divided South Africans into racial groups and designated what rights one did or did not have. The laws prohibited marriage between peoples of different races, designated where peoples of a certain race could live, described what political rights each race had, and delineated where they could

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<sup>29</sup> Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle*, xiii; Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 297.

<sup>30</sup> Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 178-180.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 185-86, 193.

exercise these rights. The Nationalist party was not the first political group in South Africa to pass laws that discriminated against people of different races. British imperial policy had done this for decades, if not centuries, and many other nations, such as the United States, had laws on the books that were also discriminatory. The South African situation was different, though, because of how zealously the Nationalist party worked to implement this policy and because it emerged after the horrific and failed experiment of Nazi rule and its theories of racial superiority and purity.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, the policy of apartheid countered the growing evidence that colonial rule was a dying form of governance. Two non-colonial powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, came out of World War II as the two most powerful nations in the world, while Great Britain, the strongest colonial power prior to the war, emerged significantly weakened. The clearest indication of Great Britain's weakness was its strong reliance on India for economic and military support during the war, which helped lead to the independence of India, Pakistan, Ceylon, and Burma in 1947.<sup>33</sup>

As the leader of the free world, the United States supported a gradual process of decolonization throughout the world. Yet, South Africa presented a dilemma for American policymakers as they did not want the international community to perceive American support of South Africa as a support of its racist ideas. Nevertheless, Cold War considerations, such as the outbreak of the Korean War and America's need for uranium, would lead the Truman administration into closer relations with South Africa.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 187-89, 198-99.

<sup>33</sup> William Minter, *King Solomon's Miners Revisited: Western Interests and the Burdened History of Southern Africa* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 105, 106, 110.

<sup>34</sup> Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle*, 197, 198.



The victory of the Nationalists surprised many throughout the world, including American officials. A May 17, 1948, report to the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) from the Department of State (DOS) about the upcoming South African election mentioned that the white population of South Africa had the potential to be divided on a number of issues but that it uniformly opposed communism and the Soviet Union. The report also predicted that Smuts would win the election, but it did note that Smuts was seventy-eight years old and his eventual death would lead to a disintegration of the United party and a political realignment.<sup>35</sup> American officials recognized the ethnic divisions among the Europeans in South Africa but did not figure they would lead to the defeat of Smuts' United party.

In a letter to Senator Bourke Hickenlooper, a Republican from Iowa, Undersecretary of State Robert Lovett addressed some of Hickenlooper's concerns about how the change in government would affect uranium negotiations. Although it was really too early to say, Lovett stated that there was no indication of any change in the uranium negotiations by the new Nationalist government. He mentioned that the Nationalists only had a majority of three to five seats and would need the support of other parties in order to substantially change any policies. He also described the agreement to be worked out between the CDA and South Africa as a straight commercial contract and not a diplomatic one. The State Department thought that a commercial agreement would be best for both the United States and South Africa. All negotiations had been preliminary with South Africa receiving some information on prices, quantities, and terms during the

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<sup>35</sup> Memorandum for J. K. Gustafson though A. A. Wells, May 17, 1948, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, D. General, 1947-50, National Archives at College Park, MD.

week of June 7, 1948. Finally, Lovett stated that how the new government would affect negotiations was unknown, but the Nationalist party was even more strongly anticommunist than the United party.<sup>36</sup> This last statement indicates that Lovett sought to relieve Hickenlooper's concerns by stressing the Nationalists' anticommunism.

During the July 6, 1948, meeting of the Combined Policy Committee, Donald F. Carpenter, Deputy to the Secretary of Defense on Atomic Energy Matters, reported on his impressions of the South Africans and touted their anticommunism. He portrayed them as anxious to finalize a uranium agreement with the CDA because they wanted to place their uranium "in the hands of those who could make best use of it in the fight against communism."<sup>37</sup> In another State Department memorandum, Edmund A. Gullion, Special Assistant to Under Secretary of State Lovett, suggested that South Africa's distance from the Soviet Union may make it an ideal location for certain atomic energy facilities that the United States might not want to place in Europe.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the anticommunist credentials of the South Africans, in general, and the Nationalists, specifically, reassured several within the Truman administration and in Congress about the change in government.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> "The Undersecretary of State (Lovett) to Senator Bourke B. Hickenlooper," Washington, June 16, 1948, *FRUS, 1948, Volume I General: The United Nations Part 2* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976), 711-12.

<sup>37</sup> "Minutes of the Meeting of the American Members of the Combined Policy Committee, Washington, July 6, 1948", *FRUS, 1948, Volume I General: The United Nations Part 2* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976), 720.

<sup>38</sup> Memorandum to J. K. Gustafson from Edmund A. Gullion, May 17, 1948, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space. Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, D. General, 1947-50, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>39</sup> Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle*, 72; Thomas J. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation: the United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1985), 24.

Government officials did not have to concern themselves with public criticism of American cooperation with South Africa as the only major organization that did criticize such activities was being held in check. In 1937, Paul Robeson founded the Council on African Affairs to promote the decolonization of African colonies. The Council lent its support to striking miners in South Africa during the 1940s, to the African National Congress (ANC) and South African Indians in their challenge to South Africa's attempt to limit the rights of Indians in 1947, and to the ANC's Defiance Campaign against South Africa's early apartheid laws in 1952. Robeson's group also pressured the United States government to uphold its commitment to decolonization during World War II and the early years of the Cold War.<sup>40</sup>

With the intensification of the Cold War after the 1947 issuing of the Truman Doctrine and the implementation of the Marshall Plan, criticism of American foreign policy fell beyond the grounds of legitimate debate and the fight for civil rights shifted toward anticommunist activities and firm support for American foreign policy. The international activities and connections of the Council on African Affairs caused the United States government to investigate it for its alleged communist ties with organizations such as the ANC. Thus, the Truman administration's activities to silence any critics of its foreign policy and its pursuit of communists allowed it to also minimize a potential critic of United States-South African nuclear cooperation.<sup>41</sup>

Negotiations between the United States and South Africa slowed at South Africa's request. Negotiations were already scheduled when the Nationalists won, and it

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<sup>40</sup> Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 17, 83, 137-38.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 120, 143.

was not until 1949 that uranium negotiations would begin anew. With the Nationalists just taking control of South Africa's government, it is no surprise that negotiations were delayed as they solidified their control of South Africa and worked at implementing their apartheid policies.

While the negotiations were on hold, South Africa's Atomic Energy Act went into effect on January 1, 1949. This law established the Atomic Energy Board (AEB) to regulate South Africa's atomic energy program and the government claimed mining, processing, and extraction rights over uranium discovered in South Africa. During the debates in late 1948 on the bill establishing the AEB, a question arose over whether Africans should receive some sort of compensation for the uranium now discovered on land that they formerly possessed, since the value had now increased. Dr. Smit, who brought up the question, was chastised by another member of parliament, S. E. Warren, for bringing up the matter. Warren's speech shows how racial issues were becoming stronger in South Africa and that communist fears were beginning to be used against Africans. Warren stated:

I rise this evening to protest against this continuous discrimination against Europeans in favor of non-Europeans. The native areas were purchased by the State; the natives got them for nothing, and now they also want the uranium that may be found there. The position is that the natives are already in such a position that one does not know once they get the stuff into their hands whether they may not send it to Russia, or what they will do with it. It is asserted that they are Communists. I cannot understand the hon. member getting up here and trying to protect them still further.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Janson, "The Development of the Uranium and Nuclear Industry in South Africa," 79; Transcript of South African Parliamentary Hearings, undated, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, D. General, 1947-50, National Archives at College Park, MD.

When negotiations began again in early 1949 between South Africa and the CDA, South Africa was in an even stronger bargaining position because the full potential of what the country could do for the United States was evident. A March 2, 1949, report from the National Security Council stated that South Africa could become one of world's major sources of uranium, large quantities of which were found in low concentrations in the gold ores. Unfortunately for American officials, the report also stated that South Africa had not been hesitant about using its uranium potential as a lever to obtain certain political advantages in dealing with the United States. This attitude had further complicated relations between the two countries.<sup>43</sup>

The report further mentioned that the known reserves of uranium in the Belgian Congo were larger than previously predicted, which eased the pressure for concluding an agreement with South Africa quickly. Yet, if the uranium supply in the Congo was eventually exhausted, present information indicated that South Africa could fulfill and even surpass the amount produced by the Congo. The NSC conceded that South Africa would be an important long-term source for uranium.<sup>44</sup> Thus, American officials saw South Africa as a leading future supplier of uranium, and it would only be a matter of time before the United States had to negotiate for these resources.

America's only readily accessible and cheap source for uranium during the late 1940s was the Belgian Congo at the Shinkolobwe mine. Uranium from Canada and Colorado was more expensive than Shinkolobwe ore due to how difficult it was to access the uranium and the higher wages paid in North American mines. Furthermore, the

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<sup>43</sup> "A Report to the President from the National Security Council on Atomic Energy Policy with Respect to the United Kingdom and Canada," March 2, 1949, SMOF: NSC File, Subject File, 13, 16, Truman Papers, Truman Library.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

quality of Canadian and American uranium was inferior to Congolese uranium. An agreement signed between Belgium, the United States, and Great Britain in 1944, through the CDA, secured this supply of uranium for both the United States and Great Britain who were both working together to develop nuclear weapons. Yet, this idea of sharing information in the development of nuclear weapons never worked as well as the British and Canadians had hoped, particularly for the British. One problem, never adequately resolved, was over whether the United States shared enough information with its partners.<sup>45</sup>

Another problem over the uranium supply from the Congo was seemingly solved when a 50-50 formula was devised, in 1946, to divide the uranium equally between the United States and Great Britain. Unfortunately, the formula did not work because the United States quickly consumed its supply of uranium while the British supply remained unused and stored due to Britain's relatively less advanced program. Negotiations eventually resulted in the United States procuring all the uranium available.<sup>46</sup>

It was also becoming difficult for Shinkolobwe to fulfill the uranium requirements of the United States as it just met them in 1948 and 1949. Scheduled improvements were slated for the Congo mine, which did increase uranium output but not enough to keep up with American demand as its output eventually declined. In 1953, Shinkolobwe produced 970 tons of uranium ore and slightly increased production in 1956 and 1957. Production peaked in 1958 at 1,822 tons and decreased to 1,784 tons in 1959, 915 tons in

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<sup>45</sup> Jonathan E. Helmreich, *Gathering Rare Ores: The Diplomacy of Uranium Acquisition, 1943-1954* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 28, 36-41; R. Gordon Arneson to the Secretary and the Under Secretary, February 3, 1949, SMOF, NSC File, Atomic Energy Policies vis-à-vis the (UK) and Canada [1943, 1949], Truman Papers, Truman Library.

<sup>46</sup>R. Gordon Arneson to the Secretary and the Under Secretary, February 3, 1949.

1960 and 123 tons in 1961 before the mine was closed as civil war erupted in the Congo that same year.<sup>47</sup>

The difficulties the United States faced regarding supply can best be understood in light of the fact that eight-two percent of its uranium came from the Belgian Congo and that domestic and Canadian sources were in the early stages of development. South African gold mining operations already harvested uranium as a by-product. South Africa needed the technical and financial help to take advantage of this new opportunity, which was what negotiations with the Combined Development Agency were designed to do.<sup>48</sup>

As the negotiations proceeded, South African officials constantly sought to sell the uranium potential of their country in various meetings with American officials. In August 1949, South African Minister of Defense F. C. Erasmus discussed with Under Secretary of State James E. Webb South African defense planning and mentioned how South Africa's large uranium resources strengthened its strategic position.<sup>49</sup>

South African Ambassador H. T. Andrews also attended this meeting and stated that these uranium sources could provide a *quid pro quo* for American military assistance that South Africa was interested in. Webb countered that the money earned from the development of South African uranium would enable South Africa to develop its own military potential without American assistance. He also mentioned that American military commitments elsewhere limited what American could do for South Africa.

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<sup>47</sup> Helmreich, *Gathering Rare Ores*, 137, 245.

<sup>48</sup> Ronald Walters, *South Africa and the Bomb* (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1987), 88.

<sup>49</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Under Secretary of State (Webb)," Washington, August 17, 1949, *FRUS, 1949, Volume VI The Near East, South Asia, and Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1977), 1805.

Erasmus responded that he understood America's military commitments elsewhere but wanted to emphasize South Africa's strategic importance to America.<sup>50</sup>

Another example of the selling of South Africa's uranium potential occurred when American Ambassador to South Africa John G. Erhardt paid a courtesy call to Prime Minister Daniel F. Malan on September 27, 1950, a day after he arrived to take up his post in South Africa. During the discussion that followed Malan, stressed South Africa's mineral wealth and particularly its uranium.<sup>51</sup> A key reason for bringing this matter up, as Erhardt reasoned in his memorandum, was the present negotiations between the CDA and South Africa.

The Korean War began on June 23, 1950, in the midst of negotiations between the United States and South Africa. Initially South Africa did not become involved in the conflict. During a July 7, 1950, meeting between Secretary of State Dean Acheson and South African Ambassador G. F. Jooste, the issue of South Africa's noninvolvement was discussed. Acheson appreciated the support South Africa had provided in the United Nations for actions against North Korea's invasion of South Korea but was disappointed because no military assistance had been offered. Jooste replied that South Africa did not consider the conflict near enough to become directly involved and that it could provide little aid to help end the conflict.<sup>52</sup>

In another meeting on July 24, 1950, between the two officials, Jooste elaborated upon South Africa's lack of involvement. South Africa could not rule out the possibility

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 1806-07.

<sup>51</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, by the First Secretary of the Embassy in South Africa (Connelly)," Pretoria, September 27, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1978), 1831.

<sup>52</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Korean Crisis, July 3, 1950, Memoranda of Conversation, 66, July 1950, Papers of Dean Acheson, Truman Library.



that other acts of aggression by the communists might occur, that Korea was not an isolated occurrence and that his country had to keep its military forces at home in order to counter any such contingencies. Jooste mentioned that South Africa had agreed, in the event of a general war with the Soviet Union, to send its forces throughout Africa to defend the continent from communist invasion. He also stressed the need to protect South Africa's strategic position, the small number of South African troops, and the limited amount of equipment South African forces had available. Jooste further stated that any force sent by South Africa to Korea would be a token force that would not affect the outcome of the war. Finally, Jooste assured Acheson that South Africa supported American efforts in Korea and would back the United States in any way short of direct military assistance. Disappointed, Acheson said any assistance would be welcome regardless of its size because it could influence the outcome of the war.<sup>53</sup>

South Africa's position on direct military assistance to the Korean War effort changed on August 4, 1950. After a six-hour cabinet meeting, South African government officials reversed their earlier position and agreed to send a fighter squadron to fight in Korea. The reasons given for the change in policy were increasing public pressure to become involved, the desire to prove South Africa's anticommunist credentials, and to influence the anticommunist German vote in its neighboring territory of South West Africa. A squadron was sent because it was the smallest but most acceptable gesture of

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<sup>53</sup>Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Active Assistance for Korea, July 24, 1950, Memoranda of Conversation, 66, July 1950, Papers of Dean Acheson, Truman Library.

cooperation South Africa could make. Another important reason given was concern on how America would react if South Africa did not help.<sup>54</sup>

South Africa wanted to prove its importance to the United States and demonstrating that it could be a dependable ally was the best way to do so. Showing that it could be a dependable ally would also help to secure not only the uranium agreement but also types of financial and military aid.<sup>55</sup> Though the squadron was a relatively small addition to America's fighting force, it helped to cement a strong anticommunist alliance between the United States and South Africa.

In April 1950, the National Security Council Memorandum 68 (NSC-68) became the blueprint for fighting the Cold War. It called for a massive expenditure of funds on strategic weaponry, conventional forces, covert operations, and assistance to American allies in the form of economic and military aid in order to fight communism. As the Soviet Union's military capability became stronger the United States had to counter this with strength of its own, as well as secure military support from its allies. NSC-68 was adopted before the eruption of the Korean War, but the war confirmed to many that this was the policy to follow.<sup>56</sup> Although NSC-68 was not publicly known, by striving to become an important ally for the United States, South Africa had placed itself in a position to benefit from America's new approach to spending more to help its allies fight communism. The uranium agreement was influenced by this new approach as South

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<sup>54</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, by the First Secretary of the Embassy in South Africa (Connelly)," Pretoria, September 27, 1950, *FRUS, 1950, Volume V The Near East, South Asia, and Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1978), 1831.

<sup>55</sup> Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle*, 139, 165.

<sup>56</sup> Leffler, *The Specter of Communism*, 94, 103.

Africa lobbied to make the agreement better for itself and the United States became willing to commit the funds necessary to make the agreement work.

Negotiations continued until November 23, 1950, when the Heads of Agreement between the Atomic Energy Board of the Union of South Africa and the Combined Development Agency was signed. South African officials continually emphasized the value of South African uranium to American officials. An example of such lobbying by South Africa occurred during a visit between AEC Chairman Gordon Dean and South African Ambassador G. F. Jooste. During discussions between the two officials, the subject of the negotiations was brought up and Jooste mentioned how eager South Africa was to proceed adding “ that his people were acutely conscious of the responsibility they had because of the uranium potential in South Africa.”<sup>57</sup>

Jooste went on to mention how South Africa wished to have a special position in relation to American and British atomic development. He modified this statement later in the conversation when he mentioned that South Africa really did not want a special position but was interested in becoming a member of the nuclear club that included the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. Jooste assured American officials that South Africa would not make any excessive demands of the United States. Still, South Africa was interested in the full potential of atomic energy so that his government could determine what the fair price should be for material sold to the United States and the

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<sup>57</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, September 14, 1950, RG 59 State Department Central Files, Lot File No. 56D418, Office of African Affairs, Subject File, 1945-1955, 3, Uranium 1948-1955, Union of South Africa, National Archives at College Park, MD.

United Kingdom.<sup>58</sup> South Africa was using its uranium position to try and forge the best deal possible from the United States just as the March 2, 1949, report had predicted.

The Heads of Agreement laid the foundation for the uranium extraction industry in South Africa because of the amount of aid both the United States and Great Britain promised toward this project. For instance, four and later six uranium recovery plants were to be constructed with some of the materials provided by Great Britain, and the United States providing technical assistance. The plants were to deliver 1,200 tons of uranium oxide every year. South Africa bore the production costs and would sell the uranium at thirty shillings per pound or \$7.70 plus seventy percent of the cost of production. The agreement would terminate ten years after a mine went into production or ten years after January 1, 1954, whichever came first.<sup>59</sup>

Once the Heads of Agreement was finalized and the decision to commit forces to Korea had been made, South African officials continued to try to gain more concessions from the United States. In a December 8, 1950, meeting, Dr. Theophilus Donges, along with Ambassador Jooste, met with Assistant Secretary of State George W. Perkins, who was accompanied by other American officials, to discuss the uranium procurement agreement. Donges wanted to meet with these officials to gain a better understanding of the relationship between the atomic energy club of the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Donges wanted South Africa to have adequate knowledge of this relationship in order to communicate effectively with them on atomic issues. Perkins,

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> "Progress Report on South African Uranium Project," August 8, 1951, RG 326 U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 43, Materials, Uranium South Africa Vol. 1, National Archives at College Park, MD; Margaret Gowing, *Independence and Deterrence: Britain and Atomic Energy, 1945-1952, Volume I: Policy Making* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974), 382.

along with R. Gordon Arneson, who was also present at the meeting, outlined the origins and functions of the CPC and CDA.<sup>60</sup>

Donges seemed satisfied with their answers and went on to point out, just as Jooste had, some financial problems South Africa had with the new agreement. He felt that during negotiations, the CDA side had been vague regarding price policies. Donges portrayed South Africa as understanding the urgency of quickly securing an agreement and had signed the agreement without any regard for special advantages. Now that an understanding had been reached South Africa felt it should enjoy some special consideration. Donges argued that, as an important supplier of uranium, South Africa might not be recognized as an actual member of the nuclear club, but it could be recognized as an “associate” member. Regardless, South Africa wanted more information about uranium prices as well as information on the peaceful uses for atomic energy. Donges asked for the information on peaceful uses of atomic energy to indicate that South Africa was not “simply a grocer in the uranium business.”<sup>61</sup>

Perkins stated that the information Donges requested would be made available and understood Donges’ positions.<sup>62</sup> This uranium extraction relationship between the United States, with Great Britain also involved, showed all the signs of being problematic with one side, South Africa, wanting more than the other side, the United States, wanted to give. The problems would increase as the actual building of the extraction plants began.

Officials from the AEC, State Department, and the Export-Import Bank arrived in Pretoria on April 12, 1951, to finalize some of the details of the Heads of Agreement and

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<sup>60</sup> Conversation with Dr. T. E. Donges, South African Minister of Interior, December 8, 1950, Memoranda of Conversations, 67, December 1950, Papers of Dean Acheson, Truman Library.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

discovered that the South African mining companies were not pleased with this agreement. According to the American officials, the mining officials had reservations about the uranium project, particularly about the project being financed by the United States. Most companies preferred to get their financing, supplies, and professional support from Great Britain and were averse to using other sources. The uranium extraction project was the beginning of a new era in overseas cooperation and financial affiliation for these South African mining companies.<sup>63</sup>

These officials noted that the mining companies had never been supportive of the project since its inception. Only pressure from the South African government, plus the prospect of generous financial returns, had prodded the mining companies into acquiescing to this project. American officials reported that the Heads of Agreement was reasonable for all parties and that the economic rewards garnered by the South African mines because of this agreement would make up for any problems faced.<sup>64</sup> Still, problems continued to grow as the project advanced.

F. W. McQuiston, Jr., the Deputy Director of the Division of Raw Materials at the Atomic Energy Commission, visited South Africa and reported his findings to the AEC in an August 8, 1951 report. The report detailed the progress on the construction of the six uranium recovery plants. McQuiston detailed the problems faced by the South Africans in shortages of sulfur, water, power, supplies, and skilled labor needed for the project. While describing these problems, he noted the possibility that the production of uranium

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<sup>63</sup> "The Consul General at Johannesburg (Redecker) to the Department of State," Johannesburg, April 19, 1951, *FRUS, 1951, Volume V The Near East and Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1982), 1443-44.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

could be increased and mentioned a serious problem regarding the pricing formula for the uranium.<sup>65</sup>

Originally, the price was to be thirty shillings per pound or \$7.70 plus seventy percent of how much South Africa had invested in the project. The bulk of the supplies, equipment, and other materials were to be purchased from the British. Due to the rapid construction program, the British were unable to keep up with South African demands, and the South Africans were forced to buy from the Americans. The whole reason for buying supplies from the British was due to the lower cost; purchasing from the United States increased the costs from the original estimated twenty million dollars to thirty million dollars.<sup>66</sup>

McQuinston suggested that a new pricing formula be introduced of one-hundred percent amortization of the costs of the project plus interest. He estimated that this would increase the costs for the uranium by fifty cents per pound. He noted that no formal request had been made to change the formula but anticipated that such a request would be on the agenda for the October AEC meeting.<sup>67</sup> Thus, an American official confirmed the concerns South African officials had expressed on pricing. American reaction to this recommendation was the signing of yet another agreement between the Combined Development Agency and South Africa.

During its October 15, 1951, meeting, the AEC decided to negotiate with South Africa to increase production of uranium up to 1,500 tons per year. It decided to modify the fourteen-dollar per pound price ceiling on uranium to up to twenty dollars. Finally,

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<sup>65</sup> "Progress Report on South African Uranium Project," August 8, 1951, RG 326, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

the commission agreed to aid in the development of mines in the Orange Free State region as well as the Transvaal.<sup>68</sup>

During the meeting, some AEC members expressed concern about the increase in uranium purchases. Sumner T. Pike agreed with increased procurement of uranium up to 1,500 tons but wondered whether clearance from the Executive Branch and Congress was needed in case negotiations led to a long-term contract between the United States and South Africa. Thomas E. Murray concurred with Pike's opinion. T. Keith Glennan wondered whether commitments of this nature should be made based solely on the expected increase in uranium that expanding the program was supposed to yield. His objections were not directed at the program. Glennan supported South African uranium extraction as a back up to America's uranium supply, but he was concerned about gaining political cover in case the negotiations obligated the United States for some time to come.<sup>69</sup>

Concerns about the negotiations arose again in a later meeting in October 1951. AEC Director of Raw Materials Jesse C. Johnson, who lead the negotiating committee traveling to South Africa, expressed some concerns about committing one billion dollars over a ten-year period as possibly envisioned by this new agreement. He also noted that clearance from the White House and Congress would take as long to get as the negotiations themselves and could not be waited for, even though he thought there would be no problem garnering this approval or in gaining British agreement for these

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<sup>68</sup> American Side of the CDA, October 1951, RG 326 U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 43, Materials, Uranium South Africa Vol. 1, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>69</sup> 613<sup>th</sup> AEC Meeting, October 18, 1951, RG 326 U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 43, Materials, Uranium South Africa Vol. 1, National Archives at College Park, MD.



negotiations. Finally, he thought the South Africans would not be happy with the new figures of 3,000 tons per year, but Johnson would use this figure as the maximum number with 2,000 tons per year as the minimum.<sup>70</sup>

Some of Johnson's concerns came to light as the negotiations started in South Africa. In a letter dated November 8, 1951, Johnson mentioned the difficulties he was experiencing. While noting how cooperative both government and mining industry representatives were, they had expressed reservations at the requested amount of uranium. They feared how much disruption it would cause to their gold mining operations and that such efforts would cut into their profits. Johnson also mentioned some of the same problems the McQuiston report noted of labor, power, and water shortages. Johnson mentioned that the American company Cyanamid planned to send four chemists to South Africa to help relieve the lack of skilled workers and he was optimistic that negotiations would be successful despite all the problems.<sup>71</sup>

On January 4, 1952, agreement was reached on a supplementary protocol for the Heads of Agreement between the Atomic Energy Board of the Union of South Africa and the Combined Development Agency. South Africa agreed to raise uranium output to 3,000 tons per year beginning with the end of 1956. The price was set at \$10.50 per pound, which was an increase from \$9.10 per pound with a price ceiling of \$14.00 per pound. The United States also agreed to aid South Africa in acquiring a loan for financing the development of electricity generating plants to meet the needs of the

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<sup>70</sup> 617<sup>th</sup> AEC Meeting, October 18, 1951, RG 326 U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 43, Materials, Uranium South Africa Vol. 1, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>71</sup> Letter to Sumner Pike from Jesse Johnson, November 8, 1951, RG 326 U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 43, Materials, Uranium South Africa Vol. 1, National Archives at College Park, MD.

uranium extraction facilities. All parties agreed to these proposals by January 21, 1952.<sup>72</sup> South Africa and the United States acquired everything that they wanted from the agreement. America gained more uranium and South Africa gained more aid in the development of its uranium industry.

After the signing of the supplementary agreement, the United States supported South Africa's loan application to the Export-Import Bank to expand its uranium facilities to fulfill the newly signed agreement. The United States agreed to repay two-thirds of the loan and Great Britain one-third in case the uranium companies defaulted. The United States also agreed to back the South African Electricity Supply Commission's request for an Export-Import bank loan, money from which would be used to construct additional power facilities to service the uranium plants. In the letter concerning this request, the AEC called South Africa's uranium program important to America's national defense and a major supplier to America's atomic weapons supply.<sup>73</sup> The previous examples illustrate how conscious American officials were of the importance of America's uranium extraction relationship with South Africa and strove to help it develop in any way they could.

American officials demonstrated this consciousness in other ways as well. For example, Atomic Energy Commissioner T. Keith Glennan and AEC Director of the

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<sup>72</sup> "Report by the Director of Raw Materials (Johnson), Atomic Energy Commission," Washington, January 4, 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Volume XI Africa and South Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1982), 902-05.

<sup>73</sup> Letter to M. W. Boyer from Jesse C. Johnson, Guarantee Agreement between Commission and Export-Import Bank, January 1, 1952, RG 326 Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence, 1951-1958, 43, Materials, Uranium South Africa Vol. II, National Archives at College Park, MD; Letter to Herbert E. Gaston from Thomas E. Murray, May 26, 1952, RG 326 Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence, 1951-1958, 43, Materials, Uranium South Africa Vol. II, National Archives at College Park, MD.

Division of Raw Materials Jesse C. Johnson were both present at the opening of the first extraction plant in September 1952.<sup>74</sup>

Another example of how much importance American officials placed on the new Heads of Agreement can be seen in how they attempted to avoid possible controversies with South Africa. America's mineral attaché at its embassy in Pretoria made a request for a Geiger counter, which he wanted to use on field trips around South Africa. South African officials had no objection to it, American officials, on the other hand, objected to this request. Director of the Office of British Commonwealth and Northern European Affairs G. Hayden Raynor explained his objection to this request by explaining that "we have an excellent co-operative relationship with South Africa on uranium, and there is no justification for running the risk for jeopardizing this relationship through prospecting activities of the minerals attaché."<sup>75</sup>

A potentially more serious incident of avoiding cooperation problems with South Africa occurred in December of that same year. The United States was negotiating with Brazil to acquire thorium from which plutonium could be derived from once it was processed. Brazil could produce about 5,000 tons a year, which was more than could be produced from American sources. During the negotiations, Brazil's Foreign Minister Raul Fernandes proposed that fifty percent of Brazilian thorium be made available to the United States. Assistant Secretary of State Arneson objected to this figure by arguing "the effect it might have if it became known on our relations with Belgium, the Union of

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<sup>74</sup> "Minutes of the Meeting of the United States Members of the Combined Policy Committee, Washington, October 9, 1952, 2:45 p.m.," *FRUS, 1952-1954, Volume II National Security Affairs Part 2* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1984), 1027.

<sup>75</sup> Memorandum to Bonbright from Raynor, August 3, 1951, RG 59 State Department Central Files, Lot File No. 56D418, Office of African Affairs, Subject File, 1945-1955, 3, Uranium 1948-1955, Union of South Africa, National Archives at College Park, MD.

South Africa and other countries which are providing us with uranium.”<sup>76</sup> The United States wanted to acquire as much nuclear material as possible from wherever it could. Yet, the thorium that Brazil could provide the United States was not worth acquiring if it endangered America’s new uranium relationship with South Africa whose uranium potential and allegiance to America were potentially stronger.

South African officials tried to take advantage of this new mood of cooperation to garner more assistance from the United States. The President of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research in South Africa, P. J. du Toit, wrote to the AEC chairman asking for help with the building of the first South African cyclotron considered an important training for the country’s nuclear physicists. The project was in danger of delay due to South Africa’s inability to find a motor generator to energize the magnet and du Toit wanted American help to acquire one in a timely manner. Du Toit justified asking for American assistance by explaining that the training these nuclear physicists received would be invaluable in the extraction of uranium from gold-bearing ores, which both countries had an interest in.<sup>77</sup> The request shows how South Africa wanted to gain as much advantage from the new cooperative relationship as the United States wanted to gain from South Africa.

Even after the supplementary agreement was signed, the United States was still interested in South Africa expanding its uranium facilities. In an August 11, 1952, letter to Export-Import Bank President Herbert E. Gaston, AEC Chairman Thomas Murray

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<sup>76</sup> “The Ambassador in Brazil (Johnson) to the Special Assistant to the Secretary of State (Arneson),” Rio de Janeiro, December 11, 1951, *FRUS, 1951, Volume I National Security Affairs: Foreign Economic Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1982), 791; Helmreich, *Gathering Rare Ores*, 51-52, 112.

<sup>77</sup> Letter to Chairman of AEC from P.J. Du Toit, October 8, 1951, RG 326 U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 43, Materials, Uranium South Africa Vol. 1, National Archives at College Park, MD.

described the possibilities for future expansion. He mentioned that the previous loan granted to the South African uranium mining companies had allowed for more uranium to be extracted than originally anticipated. Murray also mentioned that other mines wanted to become involved in uranium extraction for the CDA and that their proposals were being carefully evaluated. Finally, Murray ended the letter by expressing the hope that the Export-Import Bank would continue to aid in the development of South Africa's uranium industry because America was relying heavily on South Africa for its atomic requirements.<sup>78</sup>

America had consistently urged South Africa to enlarge its uranium production capabilities since the Heads of Agreement was signed in 1950. The United States seemed to easily absorb any increase in South African uranium. Still, there were some indications that America's willingness to buy additional ore was finite.

During an AEC meeting on September 29, 1952, Jesse Johnson reported that ore production could be expanded to 5,000 tons a year or more but that negotiations to reach this amount should not occur for six to eight months. Commissioner Glennan then asked what would happen if the South Africans offered more. The AEC agreed to welcome any additional ore that could be delivered before 1955. Although after 1956, many of the uranium mines were expected to be at or near full production capacity, and the United States had already obligated itself to buying this uranium. America's uranium needs were scheduled to be met in the late 1950s, and an increase in production then was not

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<sup>78</sup>Letter to Herbert Gaston from Thomas Murray, August 11, 1952, RG 326 U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 43, Materials, Uranium South Africa Vol. 1, National Archives at College Park, MD.

needed. Yet, in the early 1950s more ore available would be welcomed because it would mean an increase in nuclear weapons production.<sup>79</sup>

During the mid and late 1950s, problems would emerge involving purchases of South African uranium as domestic sources of uranium began to fulfill America's needs. Efforts by the infant uranium industry, supported by government incentives, led to the discovery of new sources of uranium on the Colorado Plateau which, along with improved mining techniques, led to increased production. In 1948, America produced 116 tons of uranium ore and by 1952 it produced 824 tons. American ore production became so efficient and inexpensive compared to overseas production that the Eisenhower administration started reducing its purchases of foreign uranium ore.<sup>80</sup>

Regardless of how cooperative the two nations acted towards one another, it was South Africa's mineral potential that was the key reason that America involved itself in aiding this country as several reports and comments from government officials illustrate. During a June 1952 staff meeting of the Psychological Strategy Board responsible for formulating various nonmilitary ways to combat communism, it was noted, "the primary interest of the United States in South Africa is in its mineral resources. The United States is the chief purchaser of these products."<sup>81</sup> A November 1952 National Security Council

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<sup>79</sup>Topnotch Mtg., 6<sup>th</sup> Session, 9am, 9-29-52, RG 326 U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 43, Materials, Uranium South Africa Vol. 1, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>80</sup>Richard G. Hewlett and Francis Duncan, *Atomic Shield: A History of the United States Atomic Energy Commission Volume II, 1947-1952* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 173, 551, 674.

<sup>81</sup>General Staff Meeting, June 13, 1952, SMOF: Psychological Strategy Board Files, 27, 337 Staff Meetings 1952-January 1953 3 of 3, Truman Papers, Truman Library.

report “expected [South Africa] to become an important source of uranium.”<sup>82</sup> A March 1951 Department of State policy statement on South Africa began with

The fundamental objectives of US policy toward the Union of South Africa are; 1) To maintain our present friendly relations, recognizing South Africa’s position as a member of the British Commonwealth, its importance as a source of various minerals in which we are interested and its strategic position in time of war.<sup>83</sup>

As the Nationalist party began to implement apartheid, opposition grew from Africans with violent clashes occurring between Africans and police. The African National Congress, along with other groups, began to organize opposition to apartheid causing South Africa to become a more authoritarian state from 1949-1952.<sup>84</sup> American policy makers became concerned with just how racial issues would hurt United States-South African relations, in general, and uranium cooperation specifically. During an April meeting of the Combined Policy Committee, Secretary of Defense Lovett said of South Africa: “an ugly race problem was brewing there which might lead to serious unrest and possibly to civil war thus making South Africa a rather uncertain source of supply.”<sup>85</sup>

In July 1952, the Atomic Energy Commission sent a request of the Department of State inquiring how political disturbances in South Africa would affect the uranium extraction program the United States had set up with that nation. Arneson responded to

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<sup>82</sup> “Current Policies of the Government of the United States of America Relating to the National Security,” PSF: Subject Files, 1945-53, 169, Current Policies of the Government of the United States of America Relating to the National Security Volume I, Geographical Area Policies 1 of 2, Truman Papers, Truman Library.

<sup>83</sup> “Department of State Policy Statement,” Washington, March 28, 1951, *FRUS, 1951, Volume V The Near East and Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1982), 1433.

<sup>84</sup> Borstelmann, *Apartheid’s Reluctant Uncle*, 196-7.

<sup>85</sup> “Minutes of the Meeting of the United States Members of the Combined Policy Committee, Washington, April 16, 1952, 3:30 p.m.,” *FRUS, 1952-1954, Volume II National Security Affairs Part 2* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1984), 888.

this request and sent a reply to G. Hayden Raynor in which he mentioned the problems that had arisen between whites over interpretations of their constitution and protests by non-Europeans over the segregation laws being passed. He argued that the potential for violence was evident with the rise of white youth groups and with growing mass defiance campaigns by non-Europeans. At the same time, Arneson did note that the South African police force appeared to have control of the situation.<sup>86</sup>

In November 1952, the National Security Council issued a report about America's policies relating to national security. In a section on South Africa, the NSC noted that tensions within the country for the next few years should not be so great as to prevent the exporting of strategic minerals like uranium. Yet, the report did recognize that in the long term racial tensions could cause large-scale uprisings that would seriously slow or halt the export of strategic minerals abroad.<sup>87</sup>

Thus, officials within the Truman administration expressed concern about the reliability of South Africa to deliver on its promise of uranium. What appeared to have been an excellent opportunity for a dependable supply of uranium was now being threatened by racial concerns within that country. The racial component of dealing with South Africa would continue to grow as South Africa implemented stronger apartheid policies and international concerns grew.

As the Truman administration ended, South Africa's importance in America's fight to win the Cold War had dramatically increased in large part due to uranium.

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<sup>86</sup> "Memorandum by the Director of the Office of British Commonwealth and Northern European Affairs (Raynor) to R. Gordon Arneson, Special Assistant to the Secretary of State," Washington, July 18, 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Volume XI Africa and South Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1982), 923-24.

<sup>87</sup> "Current Policies of the Government of the United States of America Relating to the National Security," Truman Library.



Without it, South Africa would have remained within the British sphere, American involvement would have been confined to making sure the Cape sea route remained secure and American officials would have been no more concerned with racial issues in South Africa than they were concerned with ethnic issues in Algeria. American officials would have left South Africa's racial issue largely in the hands of the British to deal with just as they let the French deal with the problems in Algeria. In addition to the uranium extraction agreement, other agreements were signed between American corporations and South African businesses in the early 1950s that drew the two nations more closely together.<sup>88</sup> Yet, United States-South African nuclear cooperation in the years from 1953 to 1961 evolved as America's need for foreign uranium diminished. Nuclear cooperation during these years would focus on America helping South Africa to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in the hope of precluding South Africa's development of nuclear weapons.

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<sup>88</sup> "The Consul General at Johannesburg (Redecker) to the Department of State," Johannesburg, April 19, 1951, *FRUS, 1951, Volume V The Near East and Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1982), 1445-46

CHAPTER 2  
THE EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION: THE FORMATION OF A NUCLEAR  
PROGRAM THROUGH NUCLEAR COOPERATION

American diplomatic relations with South Africa during the Eisenhower administration mirrored those of the Truman administration in several ways. The United States attempted to maintain a middle-of-the-road or middle policy in supporting a dependable Cold War ally while remaining committed to democracy, majority rule, and freedom. Yet, the Eisenhower administration did not commit substantial resources to the advocacy of majority rule in Africa. In fact, Eisenhower officials were more concerned about communist influence in African nations, especially if independence was granted prematurely. Furthermore, the strategic importance of South Africa restrained policymakers from placing too much pressure on South Africa to reform its racial policies. When Eisenhower administration officials advocated reforms, they would only go so far in pushing South Africa as they did not want to fracture the alliance and because of America's racial problems that slowly started to reform after the *Brown* decision. The experiences of America's ambassadors in South Africa illustrate this middle road policy in action.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas J. Noer, "Truman, Eisenhower, and South Africa: the 'Middle Road' and Apartheid," in *Race and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Colonial Period to the Present: Race and U.S. Foreign Policy during the Cold War No. 4*, ed. Michael L. Krenn (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 155-56; Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 117; William Minter, *King Solomon's Miners Revisited: Western Interests and the Burdened History of Southern Africa* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 134.

President Truman had appointed Waldemar J. Gallman ambassador to South Africa on August 22, 1951. Gallman described his working relationship with South African government officials as good, noting that in the thirty years he had been in the Foreign Service he had never established so fast an informal working relationship with any group as he had with the Nationalists. He described the cabinet members of the government under Prime Minister Daniel F. Malan as straightforward, with a unity of purpose about keeping their Nationalist party in power and a devotion to its policies. Gallman further described the Nationalists as knowing what they wanted to accomplish and working unceasingly to get it.<sup>2</sup>

Ambassador Gallman noted in his dispatches how helpful the government of South Africa and its prime minister had been to the United States. During a steel strike in the United States, for example, Gallman had suggested to Malan that manganese exports be increased to offset the effects of the strike, and they were. Gallman described Malan in a particularly positive way as having an essentially serious outlook on life but with a delightful sense of humor. Malan had a good grasp of world events and was particularly concerned about the communist threat from Moscow, South Africa's air squadron in Korea, the development of a defensive alliance in the Middle East, and the defense of the African continent. Malan was also interested in America's military aid to its allies in fighting communism.<sup>3</sup>

Gallman also reported his concerns about apartheid to the State Department. His comments show both a remarkable insight and a surprising naiveté regarding racial

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<sup>2</sup> "The Ambassador in the Union of South Africa (Gallman) to the Department of State," Pretoria, March 2, 1953, No. 410, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, Volume XI: Africa and South Asia, Part I* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1983), 986-87. (hereafter cited as *FRUS*).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 987-88.

relations in South Africa, which in many ways exemplifies the middle-of-the-road approach. A major problem he saw with apartheid was how to establish some type of separate development for African and Asians in South Africa when the cities were heavily populated by these groups. He could not understand how these groups could be taken from the cities, where their homes and jobs were, and be resettled some place else in an area that was unfamiliar to them and still be able to maintain the life that they had in the cities. This is what he understood apartheid to be, but he also admitted that his understanding could be wrong because he had been unable to find information or documents that clearly and completely explained what apartheid was.<sup>4</sup> There is also no indication that Gallman talked with Africans about apartheid to garner their perception of apartheid.

From his above statement, Gallman appeared to understand the problems and contradictions of apartheid. Yet, other comments showed that he placed too much faith in the Afrikaners. Despite his concerns about apartheid, Gallman felt that it was best left to the South African government to handle. Whatever the answer to the race problem was, he proposed, it had to be left to the Afrikaners to settle because they had the experience to settle it. He also thought that time was the key to the problem, involving trial and error and driven by the good will of all races.<sup>5</sup>

Gallman's views reflected the approach of the Eisenhower administration toward international and domestic racial issues. Eisenhower's advisers did not advocate him becoming involved in racial issues. In fact, Eisenhower's last chief of staff, Sherman

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 989.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 990; *The Ambassador in the Union of South Africa (Gallman) to the Department of State*, Capetown, August 13, 1953, No. 57, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Volume XI: Africa and South Asia, Part I* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1983), 1003.

Adams, would not even discuss issues of race or civil rights with other staff members due to how emotional the issues were.<sup>6</sup>

Eisenhower himself was not comfortable discussing racial issues or meeting with non-Europeans. In 1948, he had testified against the integration of the army and only met with African-American leaders once in his eight years as president. When the 1954 *Brown* decision was delivered, Eisenhower was more concerned with the reaction of whites than in promoting adherence to the Supreme Court ruling.<sup>7</sup>

Eisenhower's Secretary of State John Foster Dulles exhibited little interest in racial issues and even demonstrated a certain insensitivity to such issues. As a delegate to the 1945 United Nations conference in San Francisco that established this new international body, he had objected to the human rights clause of the charter because it could lead to closer scrutiny of American racial problems. As an adviser to the State Department in 1951, he had noted to a Taiwanese official that the minds of Orientals were more devious than those of Occidentals. Furthermore, Dulles' knowledge of Africa was limited as his focus, like most foreign policy experts of the times, was on Europe. Partly due to this bias, he regarded those coming to power in newly independent nations in Asia and Africa as children incapable of self-government.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, it is not surprising that Dulles agreed with Gallman's statements. He informed Gallman that the State Department felt that apartheid was a domestic problem and that any interference by America or any foreign government would be useless, as well as counterproductive. Yet, Dulles worked to contain racial issues in South Africa as

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<sup>6</sup> Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 88.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-88.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 41, 51, 88, 111.

he understood the potential violence that apartheid could cause. In a 1953 meeting with Gerhardus Petrus Jooste the South African ambassador to the United States, Dulles stated that Europeans in South Africa were sitting on a keg of dynamite and South Africa's present policies would ultimately lead to some kind of explosion.<sup>9</sup>

Though apartheid and racial relations in South Africa were considered a domestic matter not to be interfered with by the United States, the potential for violence there did cause the State Department to try at times to influence and mold South African racial policies. After Malan's Nationalist party was reelected in 1953 with an even greater majority, Dulles sent a telegram to Gallman suggesting that now might be the time for Malan to make some move to improve relations with various racial groups. Dulles suggested to Gallman to tell Malan to approach groups that he could politically afford to meet with. Dulles felt that this would have a calming effect both in South Africa and abroad. Yet, Dulles emphasized to Gallman that he was to approach this matter in a strictly informal manner.<sup>10</sup>

Gallman did approach Malan suggesting that a move be made by his government in the field of race relations and even suggested that he meet with some leaders for direct talks. Malan assured Gallman that more was being done for Africans under his government than under any previous ones. He stated that once all Africans, Asians, and Coloreds were removed from the voting rolls a legislative body would be set up for each

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 86; "The Secretary of State (Dulles) to the Embassy in the Union of South Africa, at Pretoria," Washington, April 21, 1953-2:35 PM, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Volume XI: Africa and South Asia, Part I* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1983), 995; "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of British Commonwealth and Northern European Affairs (Raymor)," Washington, June 22, 1953, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Volume XI: Africa and South Asia, Part I* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1983), 1001.

<sup>10</sup> "The Secretary of State (Dulles) to the Embassy in the Union of South Africa, at Pretoria," April 21, 1953, *FRUS 1952-1954*, 11:1, 996.

group so that they could govern their own affairs. Malan explained that this would show that his government was concerned with the interests of all racial groups and not just his own. Dissatisfied, Gallman continued to broach the subject delicately with other government officials but with little progress.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, Gallman and the State Department carefully tried to influence South African racial policies without applying direct pressure, which they believed would be counterproductive.<sup>12</sup> American officials would do what they could when they could, but they would not be forceful on the issue of apartheid. They would maintain a middle approach of pushing for reform but not at the expense of parting company with an ally.

One major reason for this cautiousness about alienating South Africa was the large supply of uranium that South Africa possessed. Yet, as the Eisenhower administration progressed the allure of South African uranium diminished as American and Canadian sources became more plentiful and cheaper than South African sources. Eventually, the United States dramatically scaled back its purchases of South African uranium but nuclear relations between the two countries continued in the form of bilateral nuclear cooperation under the Atoms for Peace program.

America's nuclear program had dramatically expanded since its beginnings with the Manhattan project and the creation of the first atomic weapons used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In January 1947, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) had been formed to

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<sup>11</sup>“The Ambassador in the Union of South Africa (Gallman) to the Department of State,” Pretoria, April 27, 1953-6 PM, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Volume XI: Africa and South Asia, Part I* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1983), 998; “The Ambassador in the Union of South Africa (Gallman) to the Department of State,” Capetown, August 13, 1953, No.57, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Volume XI: Africa and South Asia, Part I* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1983), 1003.

<sup>12</sup> “Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Merchant) to the Secretary of State,” Washington, June 19, 1953, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Volume XI: Africa and South Asia, Part I* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1983), 999.

organize and oversee the development of atomic energy in America. It also improved and developed better atomic weapons as seen when in 1951 America detonated its first hydrogen bomb. When Dwight D. Eisenhower began his administration in 1953, he sought to change American tactics on fighting the Cold War, with dramatic consequences for the country's nuclear program. Eisenhower made nuclear weapons a major part of America's defense against Soviet invasion and in containing the Soviet Union. He wanted to reduce the number of military personnel along with the budget, and he saw a greater reliance on nuclear weapons as a way to do this.<sup>13</sup>

In 1954, Eisenhower also pushed for a change in the Atomic Energy Act, which was passed in 1946. The new amendments to this act allowed for private construction of nuclear facilities, as well as for America to cooperate more freely with other nations in atomic energy matters.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the demand for more uranium ore would be greater than during the Truman administration as more nuclear weapons were constructed and private American companies began to build nuclear reactors for research, electricity, and a variety of other peaceful uses. Eisenhower's support for the peaceful development of atomic energy eventually became so great that he proposed and advocated the Atoms for Peace program, which further strengthened American-South African nuclear relations.

A 1955 National Security Council staff report listed receiving "uranium from abroad" as essential "to maintain[ing] the growth and effectiveness of our atomic

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<sup>13</sup>McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and Survival: Choices about the Bomb in the First Fifty Years* (New York: Random House, 1988), 228, 237, 248-49.

<sup>14</sup>Richard G. Hewlett and Jack M. Holl, *Atoms for Peace and War 1953-1961: Eisenhower and the Atomic Energy Commission* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 34, 142-43.



strength.”<sup>15</sup> This statement described and explained the uranium ore purchasing relationship the United States had with South Africa under the Eisenhower administration. America’s need for uranium ore continued to increase and South Africa was able to meet these new demands. The AEC worked through the Combined Development Agency (CDA) in its negotiations with South Africa’s Atomic Energy Board (AEB).

Through the CDA, the United States had supported the development of South Africa’s uranium extraction industry. This new industry was closely connected with the gold mining industry because uranium extraction occurred as a by product of gold mining. Development of the industry was proceeding well with the first profits for one of the uranium extraction plants, West Rand Consolidated, being announced in the company’s quarterly report of January 29, 1953.<sup>16</sup> Ambassador W. J. Gallman reported in a March 23, 1953, letter that he was present when the first uranium was shipped to America from the Calcine Products Ltd. uranium extraction facility. In 1953, South Africa supplied 145 tons of the 2,888 tons of uranium the United States purchased.<sup>17</sup> Thus, South Africa’s uranium extraction industry was beginning to be profitable, productive, and delivering the material agreed to in the 1950 Heads of Agreement. As

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<sup>15</sup> “Statement of Policy on U.S. Policy on Atomic Power in other Countries,” NSC Staff Draft, January 12, 1955, WHO: NSC Staff Records, 1952-1961, Special Staff File Series, 1, Atomic Energy, Peaceful Uses (3), Dwight D. Eisenhower Library. (hereafter Eisenhower Library).

<sup>16</sup> Memorandum to Spiegel from Thoreson, February 3, 1953, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, I. Uranium, 1953-1961, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>17</sup> Letter to R. Gordon Arneson from W. J. Gallman, March 23, 1953, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, I. Uranium, 1953-1961, National Archives at College Park, MD; Subcommittee on International Resources, Food, and Energy of the Committee on International Relations, “Resource Development in South Africa and U.S. Policy,” House of Representatives, 94<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, May 25, June 8 and 9, 1976, 297.

America's demands for uranium increased South Africa's ability to deliver the strategic material also increased.

During a February 1953 AEC meeting, Director of Raw Materials for the AEC Jesse Johnson recommended a twenty-five percent increase in production from the South African uranium mines. He noted that an expansion of the existing facilities would be needed, which would necessitate a loan of thirty-seven million dollars, bringing the total investment of South Africa in nuclear ore extraction up to one hundred ninety million. Johnson also noted that projected goals for uranium ore could be met by late 1955. The AEC approved Johnson's recommendation with some discussion afterward but nothing substantial enough to be recorded in the synopsis of the meeting.<sup>18</sup>

The new amount of uranium ore the United States had committed to purchasing under the CDA was 4,000 tons per year, but new opportunities arose to increase production. Jesse Johnson and members of the Congressional Joint Committee on Atomic Energy were scheduled to visit South Africa in August 1953. Johnson reported to the AEC at its August 20 meeting that there was a possibility of increasing ore production to between 5,000-6,000 tons per year, adding that the chances were strong that the South Africans would bring up this issue. Johnson also emphasized the tentative nature of this number as the main focus of the negotiations would be to figure out how to go beyond the 4,000 ton figure. Johnson still wished to gain AEC approval before proceeding in negotiations with South Africa. Continuing a trend started during the

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<sup>18</sup> 634<sup>th</sup> AEC Meeting, December 5, 1951, RG 326, U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 43, Materials, Uranium South Africa Vol. 1, National Archives at College Park, MD.

Truman administration, the AEC gave its approval for negotiations to increase the amount of uranium ore it agreed to acquire from South Africa.<sup>19</sup>

Negotiations were successful. In a January 1954 letter to Robert LeBaron, a Department of Defense official on the Military Liaison Committee, AEC Chairman Lewis L. Strauss explained to LeBaron the previous increase of 4,000 tons and the new finalized projected increase of 5,000 tons by the end of 1956. He mentioned that more negotiations were underway with the AEB to increase further the supply of uranium ore. Strauss explained that five plants shipped a total of one hundred tons of ore from South Africa per month in 1953 and that six more plants were scheduled to be completed by the end of the year. With the additional mines, production per month would total 300 tons per month. Also an additional three mines were scheduled for completion by the middle of 1955, which could further increase uranium ore output.<sup>20</sup> Strauss explained the justification for committing to buying this ore to LeBaron by stating “the expansion of the uranium production program as approved is considered essential to provide uranium needed for the Commission’s weapons objectives.”<sup>21</sup>

Nuclear relations between the United States and South Africa appeared to be proceeding smoothly. Advancements in technology and increased efficiency by the South Africans would cause an increase in the production of uranium ore and the United States would agree to buy the ore to fulfill its new military needs. Yet, some strains in

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<sup>19</sup> 943<sup>rd</sup> AEC Meeting, February 2, 1953, RG 326, U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 43, Materials, Uranium South Africa Vol. III, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>20</sup> Letter to Robert LeBaron from Lewis L. Strauss, January 7, 1954, RG 326, U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 43, Materials, Uranium South Africa Vol. III, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

this relationship began to emerge as the AEB tried to use America's need for uranium to its advantage.

During a July 1955 AEC meeting, Johnson reported that three new mines were now operational. He also relayed that the AEB was now taking the position that all uranium sold to America was for defense purposes only. Still, the South Africans would agree to lift this new proviso if the United States agreed to accept all uranium ore mined from these three new mines without termination dates. With all other mines, specific dates were set, ten years from the time the mine was in operation, for when America would no longer automatically buy the mined ore.<sup>22</sup>

The AEC did not accept South Africa's new interpretation on how purchased uranium ore should be used and requested that Johnson inform the South African Atomic Energy Board that there were no provision on how ore should be used. Yet, it did agree to purchase the uranium ore from the three new mines. The AEC also agreed to extend the contracts with two of the new mines beyond the ten-year limit but would include a termination clause in the contract.<sup>23</sup> The demand that South African uranium only be used for peaceful purposes was probably a negotiating tactic to try and force the United States to buy more uranium. It also may have been an attempt by South Africa to see how much influence it had with the United States regarding this uranium ore contract. Finally, South African officials may have been trying to make United States-South African uranium purchases appear more benign to international opinion and portray itself as being interested in peace to offset its racist image with many nations.

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<sup>22</sup> 1103<sup>rd</sup> AEC Meeting, July 19, 1955, RG 326, U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 43, Materials, Uranium South Africa Vol. IV, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

Nonetheless, such discussions demonstrate that the United States was willing to negotiate with South Africa on nuclear matters, but only so far. Instead of threatening not to trade with South Africa or not negotiate with it, the United States decided to give South Africa some of what it wanted, an extension on its mines beyond ten years, but not everything. Only two of the three new mines would be covered by the agreement, and there would be a termination clause for when and how America would stop buying uranium ore from these mines in the future. The United States would inform South Africa that it would use the uranium ore it purchased as it saw fit but did not threaten to terminate this or other agreements. As this relationship continued, both sides would challenge the other to determine what they could do to make uranium ore trade more beneficial for their respective countries.

America had bought all of the additional uranium ore that the AEB produced with little or no debate on whether to do so. Indeed, Strauss concurred with the interpretation of the Heads of Agreement provided by Deputy Chairman V. H. Osborn of the AEC which stated that the AEC was “obligated”<sup>24</sup> to purchase new uranium ore produced by South Africa under the Heads of Agreement.<sup>25</sup> The agreement actually stated that America would be the first nation South Africa offered increased amounts of uranium ore to before making it available to other nations.<sup>26</sup> In 1957, the AEC would use this provision for the first time to decline the purchase of South African ore.

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<sup>24</sup> Letter to V. H. Osborn from Lewis L. Strauss, January 8, 1954, RG 326, U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 43, Materials, Uranium South Africa Vol. III, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> “AEC 101/95 Report to the General Manager by the Director of Raw Materials, Order of Additional South African Uranium,” January 31, 1957, RG 326, U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 43, Materials, Uranium South Africa Vol. IV, National Archives at College Park, MD.

During the February 20, 1957, meeting of the AEC, Johnson presented a report from South Africa's AEB, offering to increase the amount of ore available for America to purchase by 1,100 tons per year to 6,100 tons per year beginning in 1958. Per the Heads of Agreement, South Africa offered this to the United States first. Unlike its response to previous requests, the United States decided against increasing uranium ore purchases from South Africa, which freed the AEB to sell its uranium ore to other sources.<sup>27</sup>

If the United States did not want to buy more uranium ore, the AEB indicated that it would need to negotiate on the use of certain facilities used to dry and calcify the uranium ore before it was shipped that the United States had financed the construction of. South Africa would need access to these facilities in order to prepare the unwanted uranium ore for purchase by other nations.<sup>28</sup> This point proved to be moot when the United Kingdom emerged as a reluctant buyer for this excess uranium.

Great Britain did not want South Africa to sell this uranium ore to other nations such as West Germany who South Africa reported as being interested in the ore. Although Britain did not want to commit additional money to financing the extraction project, the British requested new details on the increased extraction of uranium ore and reluctantly took on this additional ore.<sup>29</sup>

The AEC approved allowing the United Kingdom to purchase this new uranium ore with little debate.<sup>30</sup> Why the AEC would not purchase the additional uranium ore is more complex than indicated in Johnson's statement that "further commitments in South

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> 1266<sup>th</sup> AEC Meeting, February 20, 1957, RG 326, U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 43, Materials, Uranium South Africa Vol. IV, National Archives at College Park, MD.

Africa are not needed to meet military and civilian programs through 1966.”<sup>31</sup> The United States increased its procurement of uranium ore every fiscal year from 1953 to 1960, acquiring 2,900 tons in the former year and 34, 580 tons in the latter year.<sup>32</sup> Another reason besides demand for the AEC’s decision was money.

In another report about the new increase in uranium ore production, the AEC plainly laid out the issue of cost. When negotiations were originally completed, the price of South African ore was reasonable, but the price had been agreed to at one set standard that would eventually make it more expensive than American or Canadian sources when they became available. By the 1950s, American and Canadian ore could be purchased at prices considerably lower than South African uranium. According to the Heads of Agreement, the price was set at \$10.50 per pound. Domestic sources for 1958 were \$9.45 per pound and would continue to decrease in the future. In 1958, the AEC reported to the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy that the average price for South African uranium ore purchased under the Heads of Agreement was actually \$11.50 due to inflation.<sup>33</sup>

The United States had obligated itself to buying the uranium ore at a particularly critical time in its nuclear development when South Africa was the only major source of

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<sup>31</sup> “AEC 101/95 Report to the General Manager by the Director of Raw Materials, Order of Additional South African Uranium,” January 31, 1957, RG 326, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>32</sup>Hewlett and Holl, *Atoms for Peace and War*, 580.

<sup>33</sup> Report to the General Manager by the Director of Raw Materials, Order of Additional South African Uranium, undated, RG 326 U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 43, Materials, Uranium South Africa Vol. IV, National Archives at College Park, MD.; “Report by the Director of Raw Materials (Johnson), Atomic Energy Commission,” Washington, January 4, 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954, Volume XI: Africa and South Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1982) p. 902-05; Thomas L. Neff, *The International Uranium Market* (Cambridge, MA.: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1984), 14; Letter to James T. Ramey from R. W. Cook, November 13, 1957, RG 326, U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 43, Materials, Uranium South Africa Vol. IV, National Archives at College Park, MD.

new uranium production. The only chance America had of increasing its production of uranium ore was the discovery of new sources, which did not occur until 1952; the most important discovery, Ambrosia Lake, New Mexico, did not occur until 1955.<sup>34</sup> Because South Africa's uranium industry was established as an offshoot to its major industry of gold mining, it developed relatively easily and quickly compared to most American and Canadian mines that had to start from scratch. Yet, by the mid-1950s, North American producers had caught up to and surpassed South Africa's uranium ore industry in terms of output and price, and the contractual commitments of the Heads of Agreement had lost some of its appeal as evident in America not purchasing more South African uranium ore.

Not only was the United States decreasing its purchases of uranium from South Africa, but it was decreasing its purchases from other nations as well. For example, America bought 5,210 tons of uranium from overseas markets during the 1957 fiscal year. It purchased 6,655 tons in fiscal year 1958, but only 4,660 tons in the 1959 fiscal year and 4,570 in fiscal year 1960. The overall quantity of uranium ore purchased by the AEC was 26,375 tons in fiscal year 1958, 33,325 tons in fiscal year 1959 and 34,580 tons in fiscal year 1960.<sup>35</sup> Thus, America's overall uranium needs did not diminish but as the price for domestic sources decreased while overseas prices, such as South Africa's, remained expensive, the country cut back its purchases of overseas uranium.

How much the appeal of South Africa uranium ore had declined is evident when America renegotiated the Heads of Agreement. The issues of money and increasing ore production had become so significant that in 1958 Johnson negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding between the AEC and the AEB setting a permanent ceiling of 6,200 tons

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Hewlett and Holl, *Atoms for Peace and War*, 580.



per year of uranium ore. The ceiling would last until December 31, 1963, and new ceilings would be put in place beginning January 1, 1964, that would gradually phase out purchases from the various mines. The AEC gave up its option of buying additional uranium that the AEB produced, and South Africa could sell it to anyone they wished. A fee would be charged for all uranium sold to other nations that was processed using American funded facilities.<sup>36</sup>

Johnson described how the situation of increasing ore production had occurred. He mentioned that when the Heads of Agreement was signed, the United States had pushed the mines to increase the production estimates for uranium ore.<sup>37</sup> They had obviously been successful and now the United States found itself in an odd situation of not wanting this costly uranium ore. Johnson went on to explain that the situation was going to become even worse as South African estimates for uranium ore were approaching 7,000 tons in the near future.<sup>38</sup>

South African scientists, engineers, and miners had become more efficient at extracting and processing ore. Metallurgical recoveries had increased output from 80 percent to 90 percent. The uranium mills were mining more than they were able to process for shipment to the United States. More efficient sorting of waste rock both below and above the ground had been introduced on a large scale, which raised both gold and uranium content at the mines. The mines themselves provided a better quality of ore

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<sup>36</sup> Memorandum to K.E. Fields from Jesse C. Johnson, June 2, 1958, RG 326, U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 43, Materials, Uranium South Africa Vol. IV, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

than originally planned all of which contributed to the unintended problem of too much uranium ore.<sup>39</sup>

South African Atomic Energy Board officials did not agree to this Memorandum of Understanding easily. Johnson related that America had originally wanted a 5,800 ton ceiling per year. The South Africans rejected this and even rejected a 6,000 ton figure. One reason for these rejections was because the United Kingdom was also negotiating to be relieved of its purchasing obligations. South Africa proposed the 6,200 ton figure to the United States which would relieve Great Britain from its purchasing commitments except for one mine that produced 1,500 tons per year, and no expansion was planned. The United States and the United Kingdom could not agree on what exactly to do with the 200 extra tons proposed by the South Africans but agreed to accept the 6,200 figure stating they would settle the matter later.<sup>40</sup>

Regarding the negotiations, Johnson reported that it was important for the United States and Britain to reach an agreement on the uranium figures because negotiations had been deadlocked for two weeks. The 6,200 figure from the AEB appeared to be a major concession to objections from sources in the South African government and in the uranium industry. Johnson stated that he feared if this offer had not been accepted the issue would have been referred to the South African cabinet and the result “would have been to the disadvantage of both the Agency and the U.K.”<sup>41</sup>

AEB officials did not go down without a fight regarding this lucrative uranium ore relationship. It had not completely ended, but the beginning of the end was clearly

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

starting due to the fact that North American sources were simply more economical than South African sources. The NSC statement of the importance of buying uranium abroad no longer applied due to the expense of South African uranium. Because the United States had decided to reduce its uranium purchases, the Atomic Energy Board decided to negotiate with the CDA to stretch out its uranium purchasing commitments up to the 1970s instead of fighting with it to maintain or increase uranium purchases.

From February 15 to 26, 1961, American and British CDA officials met with South African officials to negotiate an agreement to stretch out CDA purchases of South African uranium beyond the 1966 deadline to 1970. South African officials explained that their research indicated the market for uranium between 1966 and 1970 would be weak. Because the CDA indicated that it had an oversupply of uranium, South Africa wanted to reduce the amount of uranium it sold to the CDA but extend how long it would sell the uranium through the projected period of low world-wide demand for uranium. South African officials also argued that they should receive a higher price for the uranium sold under an extension agreement because it would compensate them for the interest on deferred profits.<sup>42</sup>

The United States would not consider such an agreement without a reduction in the price of uranium and opposed an increase of uranium purchases, concluding that the Heads of Agreement was “an undesirable agreement”<sup>43</sup> because of the high price for South African uranium compared to the price of uranium on the current world market. American officials argued that \$8.00 per pound should be the price of South African

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<sup>42</sup> Outline of Discussion, undated, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, D. General, 1953-62 Part 2 of 2, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

uranium. They understood why the original price had been established but felt any changes in the agreement had to include a price reduction. American officials did not exclude the idea of purchasing larger amounts of uranium either, but they did not want to exceed the total amount they had committed to spending on uranium bought under the Heads of Agreement. Finally, the Americans argued that one agreement should be made eliminating the Heads of Agreement and dealing only with American obligations to South Africa.<sup>44</sup>

Great Britain supported American desires for a decrease in price but did not strongly push for it. British officials were mainly concerned in stretching out their uranium purchases beyond 1966 to 1970 or even 1971. Once the details of the stretch out were finalized, they were willing for the price to remain where it was and even for it to increase if that was necessary.<sup>45</sup>

The meetings ended without a formal agreement. South African officials took the information they had learned from the meeting and tried to draft a new agreement acceptable to all parties. They wanted something to be concluded by July 1, 1960, so that uranium production could begin to be scaled back. With the British desire strong for a stretch out agreement with or without a decrease in price, American officials postulated that two agreements might need to be concluded with South Africa in order to satisfy divergent British and American desires.<sup>46</sup>

On January 1, 1961, a new purchasing agreement on South African uranium ore was announced. Negotiations had occurred in November and December 1960 with South

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

Africa's self imposed deadline clearly not being met, but an agreement had finally been reached. The United States negotiated a separate contract from the United Kingdom and the CDA whereby it agreed to purchase 3,150 tons of ore annually from 1961 to 1966 for a total of 18,900 tons. Yet, these purchases would be at a reduced cost averaging \$11.20 per pound, or 50 cents less than the Heads of Agreement price. Britain also negotiated a new agreement that extended its purchases up to 1970.<sup>47</sup>

South Africa greatly benefited from this stretch out agreement because it ensured that its uranium production would continue until the late 1960s. South African officials hoped that by the time the agreement ended the world demand for uranium would be on the rise and South Africa would be ready to fill it. In the interim, improvements could be made to mines, and workers could remain employed until the expected boom.<sup>48</sup> This planning for the future helps to explain why South Africa was willing to negotiate with the United States to reduce its uranium purchasing obligations when it really did not need to.

The United States was not able to get the substantial price reduction it had wanted, but it was able to considerably reduce its uranium purchasing obligations from 6,200 tons a year to 3,150 tons a year. Britain's strong desire for a stretch out to 1970 gave South Africa a strong bargaining position so that the United Kingdom was willing to accept the high price in exchange for the stretch out. Both the United Kingdom and the United States had separated themselves from CDA obligations, leaving only uranium

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<sup>47</sup> Memorandum to Dana Orwick from William E. Hughes, Subject: Announcement of New U.S. Uranium Procurement Contract with South Africa, January 13, 1961, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space. Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, I. Uranium, 1953-1961, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>48</sup> ELJ (Elana) Janson, "The Development of the Uranium and Nuclear Industry in South Africa, 1945-1970: A Historical Study" (Ph.D. diss., University of Stellenbosch, 1995), 132.

purchase agreements with Portugal, with its Urgeirica mine, and Australia, which were due to expire by 1963.<sup>49</sup>

Although, the United States was lessening its foreign uranium purchasing obligations as North American sources became more efficient, it was not deemphasizing international nuclear cooperation. On the contrary, America was increasing its interest in developing the peaceful applications of nuclear technology. One particular development that occurred between South Africa and the United States, which helped make the reduction in American purchases of South African uranium more palatable, was South Africa's admission to the Atoms for Peace program.

On December 8, 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower delivered his "Atoms for Peace" speech before the General Assembly of the United Nations. Eisenhower proposed that governments with large stockpiles of nuclear materials should "begin now and continue to make joint contributions from their stockpiles of normal uranium and fissionable materials to an international atomic energy agency." Eisenhower further stated that the United States was "prepared to undertake these explorations [the exchange of nuclear technology] in good faith. Any partner of the United States acting in the same good faith will find the United States a not unreasonable or ungenerous associate." Eisenhower also stressed that this new international atomic energy agency would promote the development of atomic energy for non-military uses. He wanted

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<sup>49</sup> Memorandum to Dana Orwick from William E. Hughes, Subject: Announcement of New U.S. Uranium Procurement Contract with South Africa, January 13, 1961, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, I. Uranium, 1953-1961, National Archives at College Park, MD.; Outline of Discussion, undated, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, D. General, 1953-62 Part 2 of 2, National Archives at College Park, MD.

“experts...mobilized to apply atomic energy to the needs of agriculture, medicine and other peaceful activities.”<sup>50</sup>

Though making nuclear technology more widely available increased the likelihood of more nations developing nuclear weapons, the potential benefits of a civilian nuclear program outweighed the dangers of nuclear proliferation. Thus, Eisenhower was prepared to take a “calculated risk” in developing nuclear energy through international cooperation. Furthermore, Eisenhower wanted to use America’s leading position in nuclear technology to its utmost advantage. The United States could not indefinitely keep other nations from acquiring nuclear technology but it could lead the way in the development of peaceful nuclear technology, which would allow it to exert some measure of control over other nations’ nuclear programs. An international atomic agency and bilateral nuclear agreements with other nations could not guarantee the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, but Eisenhower saw such measures as the best methods of deterrence.<sup>51</sup>

Europe was perceived to be the key beneficiary of the Atoms for Peace program, which Eisenhower anticipated would strengthen further the economic and technical bonds formed by the Marshall Plan. Eisenhower believed that the Atoms for Peace program would aid in the formation of a European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) that would include France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Eisenhower also hoped it would strengthen the domestic nuclear industry as orders for

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<sup>50</sup> “Eisenhower’s ‘Atoms for Peace’ Address,” New York, December 8, 1953, *The American Atom: A Documentary History of Nuclear Policies from the Discovery of Fission to the Present 1939-1984*. Robert C. Williams and Philip L. Cantelon, eds. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 110.

<sup>51</sup> J. Samuel Walker, “Nuclear Power and Nonproliferation: The Controversy over Nuclear Exports, 1974-1980,” *Diplomatic History* 24 (Spring 2001), 216.

nuclear reactors from abroad would be made to American companies. Thus, the United States hoped that Atoms for Peace would bring prosperity to the United States and Western Europe.<sup>52</sup>

Non-European allies also benefited from the Atoms for Peace program. Since its independence in 1948, Israel had been slowly developing a nuclear program and established its own atomic energy commission in 1952. Two years later, Israel signed a nuclear cooperation agreement with the United States whereby the United States provided a nuclear reactor that was installed at Nahal Soreq, south of Tel Aviv.<sup>53</sup>

Even without formally joining the Atoms for Peace program, some of America's allies were inspired to begin their own nuclear programs. In 1954, Pakistan expressed an interest in developing a small nuclear research program and formally began this process in 1956, with the establishment of its own atomic energy commission. Pakistan's neighbor and antagonist, India, also benefited from the Atoms for Peace program. India also never joined the program but did take advantage of America's offer to train foreign nationals in nuclear engineering and availed itself of the thousands of nuclear papers and reports declassified by the United States. This assistance helped to boost the development of India's nuclear program that had started in 1945 under the private sponsorship of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, which had accelerated with the 1948 establishment of India's Department of Atomic Energy.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the nuclear cooperative

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<sup>52</sup> Hewlett and Holl, *Atoms for Peace and War*, 320, 430.

<sup>53</sup> Seymour Hersh, *The Samson Option: Israel's Nuclear Arsenal and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Random House, 1991), 20; Yair Evron, *Israel's Nuclear Dilemma* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1994), 1-2.

<sup>54</sup> Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions since 1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 102, 105; George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1999), 30.



assistance that America extended to other nations helped in the continuation and development of their nuclear programs.

Yet, Eisenhower's proposal was never fully realized. Soviet distrust of American intentions, reservations by the other atomic or potential atomic powers about giving atomic material to a United Nations body, and the lack of details in Eisenhower's speech delayed the formation of an international atomic energy body. Not until 1957 was the International Atomic Energy Agency formed in Geneva. By then, America's approach to peaceful nuclear cooperation under the Atoms for Peace program had changed its focus from pooling resources from all nuclear powers to form an international agency to establishing bilateral relations with nations to support the peaceful development of atomic energy. South Africa was a beneficiary of this change of focus in American international nuclear cooperation.<sup>55</sup>

South Africa was a natural candidate for inclusion to Atoms for Peace as a result of its uranium purchasing relationship with the United States, its rich natural supply of uranium, and its interest in uranium ore extraction. South African Ambassador to the United Nations G. F. Jooste had called the Atoms for Peace speech "one of the most important and sobering statements ever presented to the UN."<sup>56</sup> South Africa's support for the program occurred early on as it accepted from the AEC a library of unclassified research reports, abstracts, development reports, and other materials useful in developing

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 225, 236, 438-39.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 240, 581; "Official Foreign Reaction to President Eisenhower's Speech of December 8, 1953", December 8, 1953, Ann Whitman File, 1952-1961, Speech Series, 5, United Nations Speech 12/8/53 (1), Eisenhower Library.

a peaceful nuclear program.<sup>57</sup> South African interest in cooperating with America in the field of atomic research had been well established and extending that relationship should not have been difficult, yet it took some time to complete.

In 1955, the United States completed the first Agreement for Cooperation under the Atoms for Peace program, not with South Africa but with Turkey, which is not surprising considering that nation was a European nation and ally of the United States in NATO. Not until August 22, 1957, did the United States conclude a similar agreement with South Africa, nearly four years after Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace speech. The United States completed twenty cooperation agreements with twenty-four other nations, before signing the agreement with South Africa.<sup>58</sup> Why was there such a long delay in South Africa and the United States agreeing to a nuclear cooperation agreement? South African concerns about access to certain types of data, attempts by South African officials to secure a "most-favored-nation clause" in the cooperation agreement, and finalizing the type of reactor South Africa wanted slowed the negotiation process.

The first draft of an agreement was sent to South Africa's American embassy on February 17, 1956, by John A. Hall, the director of the AEC's Division of International Affairs. Essentially the same as research reactor agreements signed with other countries, the agreement allowed for the exchange of information relating to atomic research reactors. It also allowed the leasing of six kilograms of 20 percent enriched U-235 for the operation of the research reactor. Hall mentioned that an article could be included in the future that would allow for the availability of materials such as highly enriched

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<sup>57</sup> "Progress Report on Nuclear Energy Project and Related Information Programs, June 20, 1953, WHO: Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, 1952-1961, NSC, Policy Papers, 14, NSC 5507/2 Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy (2), Eisenhower Library.

<sup>58</sup> Hewlett and Holl, *Atoms for Peace and War*, 581.

U-235, U-233, and plutonium to South Africa for further research in the peaceful uses of atomic energy. Finally, the agreement included liability clauses that only recently had been included in other bilateral nuclear cooperation agreements.<sup>59</sup> America had concluded both research and research/power agreements with other countries. Research agreements helped a nation develop an atomic program by providing information and selling a nuclear research reactor for experiments, while research/power understandings included an additional provision for a power reactor to produce electricity and included U-235 that was enriched up to 90 percent to fuel the reactor.

American and South African officials met on February 27, 1956, to discuss the draft agreement. Dr. S. Meiring Naude, the president of the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, South African Ambassador John Edward Holloway, and the South African embassy's scientific attaché, Dr. R. G. Shuttleworth, met with AEC officials. The most vocal of the South African delegation, Naude was interested in the best way America could help South Africa develop an atomic program, especially with the type of reactor most suited to meet his country's electrical power needs and reduce the high costs of power generation. Finally, Naude thought South Africa should have access to restricted nuclear data so it could better communicate with the United States on nuclear issues. AEC officials thought it best for South Africa first to secure an agreement on the research reactor before pressing for access to restricted data.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Letter to R.G. Shuttleworth from John A. Hall, February 17, 1956, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, A. Agreements, 1952-62, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>60</sup>Memorandum for the File, Subject: Atomic Energy Agreement with the Union of South Africa, February 27, 1956, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, A. Agreements, 1952-62, National Archives at College Park, MD.

These negotiations whetted South Africa's appetite for a cooperation agreement as demonstrated by a March 23, 1956, letter sent by Dr. Naude to AEC Chairman Lewis L. Strauss. Naude mentioned that after his return to South Africa he had a meeting with the Minister of Mines, Dr. A. J. R. Van Rhijn, where he told him about his meeting with Strauss and stressed the need for a cooperation agreement. Van Rhijn agreed and had Naude give the draft agreement to his staff to begin work on it. Naude hoped that by July the agreement could be finalized.<sup>61</sup>

South African interest in securing a cooperation agreement apparently receded because South African officials made no further substantial contact with their American counterparts until June 1956. At that time, Philip J. Farley of the Office of the Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Atomic Energy Matters was contacted by Robert Slawson of the AEC about the nuclear cooperation agreement. What prompted this conversation is unknown, but it may have been the long delay since the AEC had last heard from South Africa. Regardless, Farley then contacted D.A.V. Fischer at the South African embassy, offering to help in the negotiation process. Farley mentioned that the State Department normally kept out of discussions involving the AEC and uranium matters. Yet, a nuclear cooperation agreement was broader than most agreements negotiated by the AEC, and the DOS felt its interests were involved. Fischer agreed to send copies of the draft to Farley and mentioned that South Africa had not yet decided on

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<sup>61</sup> Letter to Lewis L. Strauss from S. M Naude, March 23, 1956, RG 326, U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 136, Research and Development 1-1, South Africa, Bilateral Agreements with, National Archives at College Park, MD.

what type of cooperation it wanted. Farley offered to show copies of cooperation agreements signed with France and Australia to help South Africa decide.<sup>62</sup>

Farley's intervention apparently reenergized talks as Dr. Shuttleworth and D.A.V. Fischer of the South African Embassy presented AEC officials with a revised cooperation draft on June 28, 1956. Most of the changes involved the wording more than the actual substance or details of the document. For example, South African officials had replaced the term South African Government for the South Africa Atomic Energy Board. They also included South West Africa, present day Namibia, as a part of this agreement.<sup>63</sup>

In 1919, then German South West Africa, was placed under a Class C mandate by the League of Nations as a part of the Treaty of Versailles. South Africa agreed to assume responsibility for the territory, and with full administrative and legislative authority. When the League of Nations dissolved, the status of South West Africa was uncertain. South Africa claimed that the territory was now a part of South Africa, while the international community reasoned the territory should be administered as a trust territory under the United Nations.<sup>64</sup> International concern over the status of South West Africa had increased with the implementation of apartheid in South West Africa.

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<sup>62</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, South African Approach Concerning Atomic Energy Bilateral Agreement, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, D. General, 1953-62 Part 1 of 2, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>63</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Discussion of an Agreement for Cooperation with Union of South Africa, June 26, 1956, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, A. Agreements, 1952-62, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>64</sup> Memorandum to John A. Hall from Gerard C. Smith, Subject: Relationship between the Union of South Africa and the Territory of South-West Africa Relative to the Conclusion of a Research Reactor Agreement between the United States and the Union Governments, July 25, 1956, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, A. Agreements, 1952-62, National Archives at College Park, MD.

The uncertain status of South West Africa caused the AEC to ask for an official position from the State Department on the inclusion of South West Africa in the cooperation agreement. The State Department favored not including South West Africa, arguing that its exclusion would not limit the effectiveness of the agreement and noting that the last three agreements signed with South Africa dealing with taxes, South African involvement in Korea, and mutual defense did not mention South West Africa. If South Africa insisted on the inclusion of South West Africa in the agreement, the DOS suggested including the word “mandated” before South West Africa to insure that America did not inadvertently recognize the territory as a part of South Africa.<sup>65</sup>

American officials’ concerns about South West Africa originated from the fact that a strong case could be made that South Africa should leave South West Africa. American officials could justify not interfering in apartheid because it was a domestic matter that neither the United Nations nor the United States had any jurisdiction over. Justifications for not declaring the occupation of South West Africa illegal and calling for United Nations actions were harder to find. American officials did not want to alienate and ally but they did not want to provoke African opinion against America if it unintentionally recognized South West Africa as a part of South Africa. It was presumably better to recognize South West Africa as a de facto part of South Africa until something changed but not to put anything in writing.

Fischer also inquired during the June 28 meeting whether South Africa should pursue an agreement that would include classified information. Clark Vogel of the AEC stated that most classified information regarding atomic research and power had been

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

declassified and that a classified agreement would mainly include information on fuel element fabrication, chemical reprocessing, and other materials issues. Shuttleworth inquired about the fueling of the reactor which Vogel said the United States would furnish up to twelve kilograms of fuel. Shuttleworth also asked about the training of South African personnel to operate the reactor. Vogel stated that most contractors trained personnel to operate the reactors they delivered and that the United States government would also provide training. It was also mentioned that approval of the agreement could occur before Congress adjourned for the summer. The meeting ended with both sides satisfied that their questions had been answered and the South African officials stating they would be in further contact.<sup>66</sup>

On September 10, 1956, at a meeting was held between Fischer and Shuttleworth and AEC and DOS officials, Fischer stated that the discussions were still preliminary in nature and that the South African government did not expect to finalize an agreement in time for approval by the end of the present congressional term. Vogel presented two main objections to the revised draft that South Africa had presented in June. The first was a change of wording and the other was the inclusion of South West Africa. The South Africans had no objection to the change of wording, replaced "Atomic Energy Board" with "Government of the Union of South Africa," because the Atomic Energy Act required a government to agree to this type of agreement and not an agency of the government. On the matter of South West Africa, their comments are not recorded. Instead, two State Department officials Halvor Ekern and William M. Johnson, Jr.,

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<sup>66</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Discussion of an Agreement for Cooperation with Union of South Africa, June 26, 1956, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, A. Agreements, 1952-62, National Archives at College Park, MD.

addressed this issue. They expressed the opinion “the relationship between the two areas was such that...the Territory of South-West Africa could be considered under the complete control of South Africa.”<sup>67</sup> American officials wanted to smooth over any objections the South Africans may have had to this position. The strategy worked as Fischer and Shuttleworth made no recorded comment on this issue during the meeting.

As he did in the June meeting, Fischer inquired about a broader agreement that would include classified information. He wanted to know the differences between a classified and an unclassified agreement. Vogel replied that most information in the field of atomic power was unclassified, with more information being released on a regular basis.<sup>68</sup> From the description of the meeting, all of Fischer’s and Shuttleworth’s questions appeared to have been answered satisfactorily, and the draft seemed to be agreeable to all parties. Yet, the South African government would soon complicate and lengthen negotiations.

In October, D. C. M. van der Merwe of the South African embassy sent a letter to Joseph Trevithick of the AEC stating that South African authorities had decided that the nuclear cooperation agreement should be “along the widest possible lines,”<sup>69</sup> which generally involved the exchange of classified information. Van der Merwe informed Trevithick that South African officials wanted an agreement similar to the one the United States had concluded with Australia. They also wanted an agreement that included a

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<sup>67</sup> Memorandum to the Files, Subject: Discussion of Bilateral Agreement with South Africa, September 10, 1956, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, A. Agreements, 1952-62, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Letter to J.P. Trevethick from D.C. M. van der Merwe, October 11, 1956, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, A. Agreements, 1952-62, National Archives at College Park, MD.



“most-favored-nation” clause similar to what the United States had concluded with Belgium. Van der Merwe also informed Trevithick that whether or not South Africa would include South West Africa in the agreement had not been decided and asked to be informed whether or not the United States would accept its inclusion. If so, he would also like to be informed if the United States would submit a draft or whether South Africa should.<sup>70</sup>

Philip Farley explained specifically what these new South African demands meant in a memorandum to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Robert Murphy. South Africa now wanted a cooperation agreement that would include a power reactor and the exchange of classified information. This type of agreement would “permit South Africa to acquire from the U.S. the nuclear fuels and technology necessary for a future commercial power program.”<sup>71</sup> It would also involve standard security procedures to be implemented such as those with Australia and Switzerland. Farley proposed that attempts should be made to “dissuade the South Africans from a ‘most-favored-nation’ clause.”<sup>72</sup>

Negotiations began again between the United States and South Africa on December 5, 1956, with Fischer and Shuttleworth representing South Africa. Classified information was one of the first items discussed. J. P. Trevithick, representing the AEC, explained that due to scheduled declassification nearly all information on civilian nuclear power and fields related to it would within six months be available making access to

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Memorandum for the Under Secretary, Subject: Request for Circular 175 Authorization to Commence Negotiation of US/South African Atomic Agreement, October 19, 1956, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space. Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, A. Agreements, 1952-62, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

classified information unnecessary. Questioned by Fischer on the future status of classified power agreements, Trevithick responded that with the declassification process underway there would be no further need for such agreements. Fischer asked whether that applied to chemical reprocessing of uranium, which South Africa was interested in, and Trevithick responded that it did.<sup>73</sup>

Shuttleworth asked how the “most-favored-nation” clause would affect access to classified information. Trevithick responded that the clause was included in the agreement with Belgium because of the historical relationship the United States had with Belgium regarding uranium that went back to World War II. Still, the declassification program made the practical meaning of this clause irrelevant as far as the exchange of information was concerned. Trevithick stressed that America could help South Africa develop its nuclear program without such a clause in the cooperation agreement.<sup>74</sup>

Shuttleworth inquired why a bilateral agreement was needed between the two nations if no exchange of classified information could be expected. Trevithick explained that only with a bilateral agreement could nuclear material be transferred to South Africa. An agreement would also allow for the training of South African personnel in America. It would also allow South Africans to obtain “advice [on atomic energy] on a more or less priority basis since it would put the U.S. under a commitment and obligation to aid the Government of the Union of South Africa.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Atomic Energy Commission, Division of International Affairs, Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Meeting with South Africa Embassy Representatives Re: Proposed Power Bilateral, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space. Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, A. Agreements, 1952-62, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

American officials offered to examine each article in the agreement with Shuttleworth and Fischer and they agreed. During this examination, Trevithick explained that the amount of U-235 in the agreement had been left blank intentionally so that South African officials could propose a quantity they would need to operate the various reactors and experiments they anticipated. AEC representative Robert Slawson explained that the figure submitted would be studied by the AEC as to its “reasonableness and in light of the quantity of U-235 available to the AEC for distribution abroad.”<sup>76</sup>

Toward the end of the meeting, AEC Representative John A. Hall elaborated upon why South Africa should work toward finalizing an unclassified agreement over a classified agreement because of the impending declassification program. Fischer and Shuttleworth ended the meeting by extending their thanks to the American officials, stating they would send the new draft to South Africa and contact the Americans when they received a response from their government.<sup>77</sup>

The strong controls Eisenhower wanted to exert over peaceful nuclear cooperation helps to explain the hesitancy of American officials in providing South Africa with classified nuclear information and reflects the president’s belief that the world was doomed unless peaceful uses for atomic energy could be found. Yet, the danger of atomic energy remained even when nations used atomic energy for peaceful uses because of the ease with which atomic materials could be converted to military purposes. The only way to prevent this unintended use of atomic cooperation was to instigate strong controls and safeguards.<sup>78</sup> Thus, American officials did not want to give South Africa

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Hewlett and Holl, *Atoms for Peace and War*, 306.

any more information on atomic development than needed. As the United States continued to develop its nuclear capacity, American officials did not want to obligate the country to sharing information with South Africa as the United States refined its arsenal and attempted to control its allies' nuclear development.

The December 5, 1956, meeting shows that South Africa worked to obtain as much information as possible in order to create the strongest atomic energy program. The constant questioning of the differences of a classified over a declassified agreement and the push for "most-favored-nation" status illustrates this concern with information. American officials' stress of the merits of declassified over classified agreement and their explanation of the various issues during the meeting apparently satisfied South African officials because they never came up again.

When South African officials next contacted AEC officials the issue was power reactors. In response to a South African request for a power reactor agreement, a meeting was scheduled on March 20, 1957 between AEC officials and the South African embassy. This time the Third Secretary of the Embassy Mr. Wilmat Theunissen met with AEC officials instead of the ambassador and the scientific attaché. South Africa was planning to construct a reactor near Cape Town, and wanted to gather information on the various power reactors available and determine which one would best meet South African electrical needs.<sup>79</sup>

On April 5, 1957, another meeting was held between American and South African officials on the reactor cooperation agreement. This meeting concerned issues of

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<sup>79</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Meeting with Mr. Theunissen of the South African Embassy Re: South African Interest in a Commercially Feasible Power Reactor for Cape Town, March 20, 1957, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, A. Agreements, 1952-62, National Archives at College Park, MD.

language and clarification instead of the substance of the agreement. Theunissen asked how the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) would affect cooperation between the two nations. Mallison replied that negotiations would occur if and when both sides wished the agreement to be administered by this agency. Finally, Theunissen informed AEC officials that South Africa wanted to purchase 500 kilograms of enriched U-235. Mallison saw no problem with this figure.<sup>80</sup>

A new draft with all corrections went to the South African embassy on May 3, 1957. Theunissen told AEC officials that South Africa was anxious to conclude an agreement and June 3 was set as the date for the initialing of the agreement by Theunissen for South Africa, Robert Slawson for the AEC, and George D. LaMont for the State Department. The agreement would then proceed to President Eisenhower for his approval, which usually required two weeks after which a signing ceremony would occur with South African Ambassador Wentzel C. du Plessis, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs William M. Rountree, and AEC Chairman Lewis L. Strauss. It would then go before the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy for approval where it would become law after thirty days with the exchanging of notes by the two governments.<sup>81</sup>

The above mentioned State Department memo did not include AEC approval after the initialing of the agreement. The commission met on June 5, 1957, and discussed the

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<sup>80</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Meeting with South African Representative Re: Agreement for Cooperation, April 5, 1957, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, A. Agreements, 1952-62, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>81</sup> Memorandum to Palmer from George D. Lamont, Initialing of Nuclear Power Bilateral with South Africa, May 24, 1957, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, A. Agreements, 1952-62, National Archives at College Park, MD.

proposed agreement. The commissioners approved the agreement with two modifications. The AEC also wanted to allow for the lease of enriched uranium as well as the sale of it to South Africa. Similar arrangements had been concluded with Brazil, Italy, Germany, and France. Lastly, the commissioners approved of the wording on a safeguard provision in Article XI.<sup>82</sup>

Two days later, AEC and DOS officials met to discuss the changes made to the agreement with Theunissen. Theunissen informed them that South Africa was not interested in leasing uranium. They also discussed other minor wording and editorial changes. The AEC then met on June 18, 1957, to approve only the sale of enriched uranium to South Africa.<sup>83</sup>

In a letter dated June 26, 1957, AEC Chairman Lewis L. Strauss explained to the president the terms of the Agreement for Cooperation on the civil uses of atomic energy between the United States and South Africa. Strauss noted that the AEC saw this agreement as “an important and desirable step in advancing the development of the peaceful uses of atomic energy in the Union of South Africa.” Strauss also mentioned that cooperation between the United States and South Africa had occurred since 1950 in uranium ore and that this agreement “represents an extension of cooperation in the atomic

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<sup>82</sup> 1289<sup>th</sup> AEC Meeting, June 5, 1957, RG 326 U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 136, Research and Development 1-1, South Africa, Bilateral Agreements with, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>83</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Meeting between South African Representative and DIA Staff, Re: Proposed Power Bilateral, June 7, 1957, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, A. Agreements, 1952-62, National Archives at College Park, MD.; Letter to Wilmat Theunissen from John A. Hall, June 11, 1957, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, A. Agreements, 1952-62, National Archives at College Park, MD.; 1290<sup>th</sup> AEC Meeting, June 18, 1957, RG 326 U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 136, Research and Development 1-1, South Africa, Bilateral Agreements with, National Archives at College Park, MD.

energy field between the United States and the Union of South Africa.” Strauss explained that the agreement allowed the two nations to work together in various aspects of atomic energy research and development in reactors, power, biological research, medicine, agriculture, industry, and science. South Africa could contract with American companies to “...construct research, experimental power, demonstration power, and power reactors and ...render other assistance to the Union of South Africa.”<sup>84</sup>

South Africa would receive no classified information. It would purchase up to 500 kilograms of 20 percent enriched U-235 to fuel reactors for research, experimental power, demonstration power, and power reactor projects. Strauss also explained that part of the 500 kilograms could be sent as 90 percent enriched U-235 for use in reactors, but the amount could not exceed six kilograms, and it was at the discretion of the AEC. The amount of enriched uranium available for each reactor could not exceed the amount needed to operate the reactor and to replace radioactive fuel elements for cooling.<sup>85</sup>

Eisenhower approved the agreement with no substantive comments, mentioning only some of its highlights in his letter to Strauss. Eisenhower’s letter mirrors the general reaction in Washington and in the press of not raising any unusual questions about the agreement.<sup>86</sup> On July 12, 1957, when the chairman of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, Carl T. Durham, submitted the agreement to Congress, he described it as a “standard power agreement providing for the transfer of 500 kilograms of contained U-

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<sup>84</sup> Letter to the President from Lewis L. Strauss, June 26, 1957, RG 326 U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Records, Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence 1951-1958, 136, Research and Development 1-1, South Africa, Bilateral Agreements with, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Foreign Policy Study Foundation, *South Africa: Time Running Out* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 345.

235.”<sup>87</sup> The Joint Committee’s discussion of the agreement, if there was one, is not available, nor is there any record of debate on the matter in the *Congressional Record*. The only available indication of Durham’s thoughts about the agreement is a letter to a woman concerned about the Atoms for Peace program in which he stated that the United States would not rush into anything without international control and inspection.<sup>88</sup> The agreement stirred no interest in the American press, other than a small announcement in the *New York Times* that the AEC had recommended that Atoms for Peace agreements be made with South Africa along with the Netherlands, West Germany, France, and Italy.<sup>89</sup>

With American encouragement and support, South Africa was now ready to begin developing an atomic program of its own. The agreement gave South Africa access to America’s nuclear expertise, a research reactor, and training of South African personnel. Ninety-four South African nuclear scientists and engineers, trained mainly at AEC facilities in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and at the Argonne National Laboratory in Illinois, would help form the foundation of South Africa’s nuclear program. By 1979, for example, four members of South Africa’s Atomic Energy Board had been trained in the United States.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, the president of the board, A. J. A. Roux, said in 1977, “we can

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<sup>40</sup>” Civil Uses of Atomic Energy-Agreement for Cooperation with Government of South Africa,” *Congressional Record, Proceedings and Debates of the 85<sup>th</sup> Congress, First Session*, Vol. 103, Part 9. July 12, 1957, 11457.

<sup>88</sup> Durham to Bessie M. Miller, May 13, 1957, Durham Papers No. 3507, Box No. 78, Folder No. 1425.

<sup>89</sup> “Nuclear Pacts Backed, A.E.C. Lists 5 Agreements Under Atoms-for-Peace.” July 25, 1957. *New York Times*, 5.

<sup>90</sup> Kenneth L. Adelman and Albion W. Knight, “Can South Africa Go Nuclear?,” *ORBIS: A Journal of World Affairs* 23 (Fall 1979), 634-35.



ascribe our degree of advancement today in large measure to the training and assistance so willingly provided by the United States of America.”<sup>91</sup>

United States-South African nuclear cooperation was a part of the Eisenhower administration’s move toward liberalizing nuclear policies. The United States government had maintained a monopoly over nuclear technology both domestically and internationally since World War II. Internationally this monopoly was broken in 1949 with the detonation of the Soviet Union’s first nuclear bomb. Domestically, interest by American industries in making commercial use of nuclear technology was increasing especially since companies like General Electric and Westinghouse had helped in the construction of nuclear facilities for government use. Eisenhower’s sympathy toward the development of a private nuclear industry was consistent with his objective of reducing the federal government’s influence on the American economy, and the president saw the elimination of the government’s nuclear monopoly as a step in that direction. Less than a year after the Atoms for Peace speech was given, Eisenhower signed into law the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, which liberalized government policies on nuclear information and technology and allowed the development of a domestic nuclear industry and encouraged international nuclear cooperation.<sup>92</sup>

Eisenhower also felt a moral imperative to find some redeeming value with atomic energy because of all the death and destruction it had caused and was capable of causing. In addition to the World War II atomic detonations at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the United States had tested a thermonuclear device on Bikini Atoll in 1954 that yielded

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<sup>91</sup> J. D. L. Moore, *South Africa and Nuclear Proliferation: South Africa’s Nuclear Capabilities and Intentions in the Context of International Non-Proliferation Policies* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 82.

<sup>92</sup> Hewlett and Holl, *Atoms for Peace and War*, 113-14, 187.

over six megatons with radioactivity levels so high that people from the neighboring island of Rongelap had to flee their homes and could not return for three years. During the same test, the Japanese fishing vessel *Lucky Dragon* was irradiated causing the death of one crew member and the sickness of the other twenty-two.<sup>93</sup>

Thus, Eisenhower wanted nuclear energy to be a positive force both domestically and internationally to counter the negative aspects of nuclear energy. Eisenhower wanted the United States to lead the way to peaceful uses of atomic energy just as it had led the way toward military uses of atomic energy. The 1954 Atomic Energy Act demonstrated Eisenhower's commitment to the development of peaceful uses for atomic energy domestically just as America's nuclear cooperation agreement with South Africa reflected Eisenhower's desire that foreign nations develop peaceful uses of atomic energy not nuclear weapons. Ironically, the United States promotion of the peaceful uses of atomic energy both at home and abroad occurred at the same time it continued to refine its nuclear weapons.

As United States-South African nuclear cooperation continued to prosper and advance, other aspects of diplomatic relations between the two nations became strained. American officials had always been uncomfortable with apartheid, but changing international and national circumstances caused America to be even more concerned with South Africa's racial policies. Ghana became the first European African colony to become independent on March 5, 1957. American officials realized that several more African nations would soon be independent and wanted them to support America and its fight against communism and not become allies with the Soviet Union. American

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 173-75, 307.

support for a nation that discriminated against Africans along with other non-whites and was not moving to reform its own society would be difficult to explain to newly independent African nations.<sup>94</sup>

The Eisenhower administration realized it would have problems convincing African nations that America was friendly to Africans when its own racial issues gained national and international attention. The 1957 crisis in Little Rock, Arkansas, over the integration of Central High School did not show America as a tolerant, diverse, democratic nation when it took soldiers guarding African-American students for them to attend school. For some international observers, South Africa and the United States appeared to have racial problems that, on the surface, were not that different from one another.<sup>95</sup>

Vice-President Richard Nixon visited several African nations when Ghana gained its independence. He noted that in the African nations he visited a distorted picture of minority races in the United States was being presented and that every instance of prejudice in America was used to give the impression that most Americans held racist attitudes. He blamed this portrayal on the communist enemies of freedom and argued it caused irreparable damage to the cause of freedom. Nixon also stated that America needed to counter communist propaganda efforts to show that America was as interested in independence, equality, and economic progress as they were.<sup>96</sup> Thus, Nixon's

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<sup>94</sup> Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 118; Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War and Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 12.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> "The Vice President' Report to the President on Trip to Africa," February 28-March 21, 1957, WHO: Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, 1952-61, Special Assistant, Subject, 10, Vice-President (1) January 1954-April 1957, Eisenhower Library.

observations show that American policy makers were becoming concerned with the perception of America in Africa's newly emerging, independent nations.

William P. Maddox, the charge d'affaires at America's embassy in Pretoria, presented a staff study to the State Department on South Africa's racial problems. The goal of the study was to determine what could or should be done by the United States government to prevent a major domestic racial crisis in South Africa that would have international repercussions. One question that the embassy group dealt with was how to influence South Africa to reform its racial policies.<sup>97</sup>

Among the many suggestions made on how to influence South African racial policies was a "carrots and threats" approach, or a rewards and punishment system. America would award South Africa for moving to reform race relations by giving South Africa something it wanted or withhold something it wanted if it did not take steps to reform its racial policies. One area that was mentioned was the uranium ore contracts. Although these were not due to expire for some time, it was proposed that South Africa be given advanced notice that renewal of these uranium agreements depended partly on South Africa moving to reform its racial policies. The report also mentioned military assistances as well as American business support of South African industry.<sup>98</sup> The United States-South African nuclear cooperation agreement was not mentioned in this "carrots and threats" approach because it had not been formalized by the time this report was completed.

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<sup>97</sup> "Despatch from the Embassy in South Africa to the Department of State, Subject: Embassy Staff Study on the South African Race Problem, II, Diplomatic Policy Recommendation, Pretoria, April 12, 1957 *FRUS, 1955-1957, Volume XVIII: Africa* (Washington, D.C.: 1989), 816.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 819.

The State Department reacted favorably to some of the report's suggestions. For example, the DOS agreed that American embassy officials should work to moderate the racial views of white South Africans. Yet, the department did not think that the "carrots and threats" approach would work toward the uranium contracts, nor would it work on the other areas of trade and cooperation between the United States and South Africa, such as gold sales, military aid, or American business investment. The State Department felt American involvement in all these areas was not great enough to force South Africa to change its racial policies if America ended its involvement in any of these areas.<sup>99</sup>

That the government of South Africa itself was growing frustrated with the United States on racial relations is evident in a conversation between Maddox and Dr. Willem C. Naude, the Undersecretary for External Affairs. The conversation concerned the continued discussion of South Africa in the United Nations, even though South Africa considered it a domestic matter and had walked out of UN discussions on the issue. Naude also noted the criticism South Africa was facing from various American sources both outside and inside the government and asked Maddox what America wanted South Africa to do regarding racial issues. Maddox replied that America realized how important South Africa was to western civilization, how whites needed to remain in control of South Africa, thus giving South African officials some rhetorical private support, and how America sympathized with South Africa's racial problems and wanted to maintain its friendship with the Union. The United States was concerned about the stability of South Africa and what repercussions would flow to other parts of Africa if

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<sup>99</sup> "Memorandum from the Deputy Director of the Office of Southern Africa Affairs (LaMont) to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Palmer), Subject: Embassy Pretoria Staff Studies on South Africa's Racial Problem, Washington, May 16, 1957, *FRUS, 1955-1957, Volume XVIII: Africa*. (Washington, D.C.: 1989), 826.

South Africa became unstable. Maddox ended the conversation with the statement: “to put it simply, we disagree that the measures you are taking will lead to a healthy social order. To some of us, they seem to spell trouble-and that would not be in our interest.”<sup>100</sup> American fears about the direction racial relations were heading in South Africa proved well founded in 1960 when racial tensions led to a major crisis.

On March 21, at least 67 people were killed and 186 were injured in Sharpeville, South Africa, when police fired on demonstrators who were participating in nationwide protests against the South African pass laws, which regulated where and when Africans could travel.<sup>101</sup> The next day Lincoln White, Director of the Office of News for the State Department, released a statement condemning the massacre:

The United States deplors violence in all its forms and hopes that the African people of South Africa will be able to obtain redress for their legitimate grievances by peaceful means. While the United States, as a matter of practice, does not ordinarily comment on the internal affairs of governments with which it enjoys normal relations, it cannot help but regret the tragic loss of life resulting from the measures taken against the demonstrators in South Africa.<sup>102</sup>

Unfortunately, White’s statement had not been authorized by Secretary of State Christian Herter, who was furious about the press release and explained to Andrew Goodpaster, Eisenhower’s Staff Secretary, that it was a breach of courtesy between the two nations. He also considered it a failure of the State Department to have a bureau chief compose a statement and then a press officer release it without checking with their

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<sup>100</sup> “Memorandum from the Counselor of the Embassy in South Africa (Maddox) to the Ambassador (Byroade), Subject: Conversation on U.S. South African Relations with Dr. W. C. Naude Undersecretary for External Affairs, Pretoria, July 19, 1957, *FRUS, 1955-1957, Volume XVIII: Africa* (Washington, D.C.: 1989), 829-32.

<sup>101</sup> Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 3<sup>rd</sup>, ed. (Yale: Yale University Press, 2001), 193, 210.

<sup>102</sup> “Briefing Papers for the President’s News Conference,” March 30, 1960, Whitman File, 1952-1961, Press Conference Series, 10, Press Conference, March 30, 1960, Eisenhower Library.

superiors, as well as not possessing all the facts of the situation. He suggested that all that could be done to remedy the situation would be for the South African ambassador to be called in and to offer an apology. Herter suggested that the United States express concern for what occurred in Sharpeville but regret for making such a public statement about the incident, adding that the apology be kept secret.<sup>103</sup>

Herter discussed the Sharpeville release with Eisenhower, whose first knowledge of the release came when he read the newspapers and found the statement there. Eisenhower remarked that the “fat is in the fire”<sup>104</sup> regarding how the South Africans would react and told Herter that he should find another post for the bureau chief who was involved in the press statement. Eisenhower and Herter agreed that the apology was necessary and suggested that America’s ambassador in South Africa might be the best one to do this.<sup>105</sup>

James K. Penfield, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, was also privy to Herter’s reaction to the Sharpeville press release. Herter felt that the United States had “jumped awfully fast on this one and made a real mistake [but] that it was...water over the dam.”<sup>106</sup> Voicing his concerns that America had taken sides on what happened at Sharpeville and might be accused of inciting a revolution, Herter now wanted to figure out the best way to repair relations with South Africa and asked for Penfield’s help on the best approach.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> “Memo of Meeting between Secretary of State (Herter) and President Eisenhower,” March 24, 1960, 8:45 AM, Eisenhower Library, Staff Secretary Records, *FRUS, 1959-1960, Volume XIV: Africa* (Washington, D.C.: 1993), 741-42.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Memorandum of Telephone Conversations to Mr. Penfield Thursday, March 24, 1960, 2:10pm, Christian A. Herter Papers, 12, CAH Telephone Calls 1/1/60 to 3/25/60-1, Eisenhower Library.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

Though Herter became so angry with the Sharpeville statement that he disavowed it,<sup>108</sup> President Eisenhower did not go quite that far. During a March 30, 1960, news conference, Eisenhower responded to a question on the race problems facing South Africa, by explaining that he deplored the violence that had occurred. Yet, he did think that race issues in South Africa were “a very touchy thing,” and he felt that there were people in South Africa of a “human understanding” who wanted to improve the situation, which he wanted to see happen.<sup>109</sup>

America’s ambassador to South Africa, Philip Crowe, reported on the aftereffects of the Sharpeville statement. He did not think there would be any lasting damage between the two nations. Yet, in the short term, relations would be cool because many in the government and the South African media felt America had sold out whites in order to favor blacks. Still, many non-white groups were delighted by the statement, as was the liberal opposition.<sup>110</sup>

Crowe also informed the State Department about the police report on the Sharpeville incident. Police only opened fire after six to eight hours of trying to control the crowd by tear gas and other nonlethal methods. A police commissioner reported that there had been no gunfire from the crowd as Crowe had been previously informed. Nevertheless, the marchers were armed with axes, iron bars, and other homemade weapons considered dangerous in light of the eight policemen who were stoned and clubbed to death during recent disturbances in Durban. Crowe reported that he felt the

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<sup>108</sup> Memorandum to Andrew Goodpaster from Christian A. Herter, March 24, 1960, WHO: Office of the Staff Secretary Records, 1952-61, International Series, 1, Africa, General 2, Eisenhower Library.

<sup>109</sup> “The President’s News Conference,” Washington, March 30, 1960, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States Dwight D. Eisenhower Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President*, 327.

<sup>110</sup> “Telegram from the Embassy in South Africa (Crowe) to the Department of State,” Capetown, March 25, 1960, 9 PM, *FRUS, 1959-1960, Volume XIV: Africa*. (Washington, D.C.: 1993), 743.



police had no choice firing into the mob, adding that South African riot control techniques were different from American ones and that American police might have been able to control the crowd without so much loss of life.<sup>111</sup>

Crowe's description of Sharpeville omitted several details that expose the police in a much more critical light. No warning of any kind was actually given before the seventy-five man police force opened fire upon the large crowd numbering in the thousands. As the crowd fled, the police continued to fire into the crowd resulting in the sixty-nine deaths of which most were shot in the back. Over seven-hundred shots were fired by the police who injured four hundred people including dozens of women and children. Thus, Sharpeville was more than a mishandling of a riot by police who were trained in different riot techniques and more like a massacre.<sup>112</sup>

Eisenhower met with British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan to discuss how best their respective countries should respond to Sharpeville in the United Nations, where the issue was bound to come up. Macmillan was reluctant to include the issue on the agenda because of fear of alienating South Africa but was also afraid it would alienate the growing number of independent African nations if Britain did not vote to include the issue on the UN agenda. Eisenhower sympathized with Macmillan's position, and they discussed proposing a moderate resolution that expressed regret for the killings and the hope that measures would be taken to insure that such an incident did not reoccur.

Eisenhower did not want the United States to stand in judgment on a difficult situation some six thousand miles away, especially because he knew how dangerous

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1994), 238.

racial issues could become from the growing sit-in movement in cities like Atlanta. Elaborating on his own ideas on how racial relations in America should be handled, Eisenhower argued that extreme laws, probably referring to strong civil rights laws, were unnecessary but that Negroes should be guaranteed the right to vote so that improved race relations would naturally evolve from there.<sup>113</sup> Because of Eisenhower's attitude and the concern over not damaging relations with South Africa, a moderate resolution was passed in the United Nations.

On March 24, 1960, CIA Director Allen Dulles provided some more interesting observations on the Sharpeville massacre. He was not surprised that the event had occurred but was surprised how violent it had been. He thought that the military in South Africa would be able to maintain order for some time, but believed the only long term hope for the country was for white liberal elements to work out a settlement involving all the races. In an NSC meeting he attended eight days after he made the above statement, Dulles expressed doubt that a liberal government would be formed in South Africa and predicted that repression would continue in the country for some time. He also thought that the Soviet Union would begin to smuggle weapons into South Africa as Africans began to arm themselves in resistance to the South African government.<sup>114</sup>

Dulles' pessimistic statements would, unfortunately, come true. The South African government began to round up and imprison people who had been trying to end apartheid peacefully by operating within the South African system. As the arrests

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<sup>113</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, March 28, 1960, WHO: Office of the Staff Secretary Records, 1952-61, International Series, 15, Macmillan Vol. II of III-6 [March-April 1960], Eisenhower Library.

<sup>114</sup> Memorandum, Subject: Discussion at the 439<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the National Security Council, Friday, April 1, 1960, Whitman File, 1952-1961, NSC Series, 12, 439<sup>th</sup> Meeting of National Security Council, April 2, 1960, Eisenhower Library; Memorandum, Subject: Discussion at the 438<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, March 24, 1960, Whitman File, 1952-1961, NSC Series, 13, 438<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the National Security Council, March 24, 1960, Eisenhower Library.

continued and such organizations as the African National Congress (ANC) were declared illegal, these peaceful reformers turned to violence and organized armed resistance to fight apartheid.<sup>115</sup> The Eisenhower administration, though, would not have to deal with this new aspect of United States-South African relations, leaving the growing problem to successive administrations.

Ironically, the Sharpeville massacre would reinvigorate the anti-apartheid movement in the United States. The Council of African Affairs, founded by Paul Robeson in 1937, had disbanded in 1955. The federal government had investigated the Council for its alleged communist ties and the ensuing costs financially drained the organization. In addition, the restrictions imposed by government on travel by Council leaders, such as Robeson, made it difficult for the organization to maintain its international connections and support.<sup>116</sup>

A new organization emerged as a critic of United States-South African relations with the 1953 founding of the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) by George Houser a white Methodist minister. ACOA advocated total disengagement from South Africa by the United States and called for American economic sanctions against South Africa. On December 10, 1957, ACOA issued its “Declaration of Conscience on South Africa” signed by 123 world leaders the declaration protested the arrest of 156 leaders of liberation movements in South Africa. The declaration called for governments to work against apartheid and change their policies of cooperation toward South Africa.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 210-11.

<sup>116</sup> Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 143.

<sup>117</sup> Les de Villiers, *In Sight of Surrender: The U.S. Sanctions Campaign against South Africa, 1946-1993* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), 23; Francis Njubi Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans against Apartheid, 1946-1994* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 32.

Unfortunately, ACOA pronouncements did not receive much attention until the Sharpeville massacre. In fact, George Houser admitted that violent incidents like Sharpeville, the 1976 Soweto uprising, and the massive violence of the 1980s that escalated in 1984, reinvigorated antiapartheid campaigns and the call for sanctions. ACOA and other anti-apartheid groups would become more active in the 1960s successfully lobbying some corporations and banks from conducting business with South Africa.<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, the Johnson administration became concerned with how effective these organizations were and how their activities could hinder United States-South African nuclear cooperation.

The story of United States-South African nuclear relations during the Eisenhower administration is one of evolution. The uranium ore relationship started under the Truman administration faded while a new nuclear partnership emerged after 1953. The two major reasons for this change were the comparative low cost of North American uranium and the Eisenhower commitment to developing both domestic and international peaceful uses for nuclear energy.

Meanwhile, America's racial relations had been evolving as shown by the desegregation of public schools ordered by the *Brown v. Board* decision of 1954, the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955-56, and the sit-in movements that started in 1960. In addition, the Eisenhower administration began to comprehend how important racial issues were to the international community, especially newly independent African nations emerging in the late 1950s. The Nationalist controlled South African government used intimidation and then violence to fight attempts by the opponents of apartheid to push for

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<sup>118</sup> De Villiers, *In Sight of Surrender*, 23, 29; Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 55-56.

reforms, as the 1960 Sharpeville massacre illustrates. The Eisenhower administration did not have to deal with the new reality of both South Africa's and America's racial relations, but successive administrations would have to confront them. How South Africa handled the changes in its race relations with violence and repression would make United States-South African relations more problematic for the United States as international world opinion mounted against South Africa and pressure mounted to abandon the nuclear partnership between the two nations.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE KENNEDY AND JOHNSON ADMINISTRATIONS: THE NEAR TERMINATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR COOPERATION

The apartheid government of South Africa had enjoyed good relations with the United States during the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. South Africa had proved itself to be a dependable Cold War ally by supporting America during the Korean War and America's fight against communism throughout the world. Because of this strong South African support of American Cold War policies, United States-South African economic and strategic relations had strengthened. America enjoyed a favorable trade relationship with South Africa and benefited from having access to a dependable supply of strategic minerals that included uranium.

After the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, South Africa's position in the international community deteriorated as it refused to heed calls to reform its racial policies and suppressed any domestic dissent aimed at its policy of apartheid. The Eisenhower administration found itself in a difficult position regarding its policy toward South Africa but in its waning days did not have to confront the issue directly. The new administration of John F. Kennedy would have to consider carefully American policy toward South Africa as it transformed itself into a police state and refused to reform its racial policies.

The rhetoric of Kennedy and members of his administration seemed to indicate a change in policy toward South Africa and an end to cooperation in a variety of economic and strategic fields. Lyndon B. Johnson's succeeding administration echoed the Kennedy rhetoric and indicated a further shift away from cooperating with South Africa. Yet, the substance of both administrations' policies remained unchanged from those of their predecessors as basic American economic and strategic interests in South Africa continued. Both administrations closely studied whether or not to modify America's nuclear relationship with South Africa, ultimately determining that strategic interests and international events trumped human rights concerns and prompted the continuance of the two nations' nuclear ties.

The Kennedy and Johnson administrations' involvement in nuclear cooperation with South Africa can be examined together because both had to deal with a proposal for a uranium barter agreement with South Africa involving American agricultural goods. The classic definition of barter is the trade of goods or services for other goods or services without the use of money. The United States-South African barter agreement initially was envisioned to be this type of arrangement.<sup>1</sup> At least for the first part of the Johnson presidency, Kennedy administration people dealt with South African nuclear issues. Finally, the Kennedy administration's criticism of South Africa's system of apartheid, along with concerns about nuclear proliferation, carried over into continued criticism during the Johnson presidency and even deeper worries about nuclear proliferation. These issues led the Johnson administration to come closer than any

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<sup>1</sup> Donna Vogt, Cathy Jabara, and Dee Linse, *Barter of Agricultural Commodities* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Trade Policy Branch, International Economics Division, Economics Research Service, April 1982), 5.

previous or future administration to terminating America's nuclear cooperation agreement with South Africa.

John F. Kennedy's election as president in 1960 seemed to indicate a new presidential interest in Africa. As a senator in 1957, Kennedy delivered a speech that criticized Eisenhower for not supporting self-determination throughout the world. Kennedy was also critical of the Eisenhower administration's policy of maintaining friendly relations with former colonial powers, while trying to woo former colonies. Finally, Kennedy called on Eisenhower to support international efforts to recognize Algeria's independence from France. His statements on African independence eventually garnered him the chairmanship of the newly formed Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Africa, though he was not especially active with his committee work. During the 1960 presidential campaign, Kennedy mentioned Africa 479 times in campaign speeches and continued a steady stream of criticism against the Eisenhower administration's African policy.<sup>2</sup>

Once Kennedy was in office many of his key foreign policy staff appointments were people who believed in self-determination and majority rule for Africa. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, former Michigan governor, G. Mennen Williams brought a sense of energy to the African bureau with his outspokenness, frequent trips overseas, and colorful antics such as holding a square dance at the State Department where he was personally the caller. Newly appointed Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Chester Bowles and United Nations Ambassador Adlai Stevenson were

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<sup>2</sup> Gerald E. Thomas, "The Black Revolt: the United States and Africa in the 1960s," in *The Diplomacy of the Crucial Decade: American Foreign Relations during the 1960s*, ed. Diane B. Kunz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 325



strong advocates of making Africa a major part of American foreign policy. Some of Kennedy's ambassadorial appointments to Africa, William Attwood to Guinea and Edward Korry to Ethiopia, and some diplomatic officials in Africa, Edmund Gullion in the Congo and Philip Kaiser in Senegal, enjoyed personal access to the president, which they used to try to influence policy.<sup>3</sup>

Kennedy conveyed an image of a president interested in promoting Africa and met personally with twenty-eight African leaders during his presidency. Because Eisenhower rarely met with any African leaders, Kennedy's willingness not to only meet with them but treat them as equals helped to convey a positive image of America and Kennedy to African leaders.<sup>4</sup>

Kennedy's new approach toward African policy was more image than reality. Though he had appointed officials sympathetic to a more engaged American foreign policy toward Africa, none of these appointees held cabinet-level positions or powerful positions in the White House where they could strongly influence policy. The men Kennedy mainly sought advice from were former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Presidential advisor McGeorge Bundy, MIT Professor Walt Rostow, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Maxwell Taylor. These men, known as "realists or "Europeanists," had a Cold War view of foreign policy that placed Europe at the center of their strategy, with Africa playing only a peripheral role.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas J. Noer, "New Frontiers and Old Priorities in Africa," in *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy 1961-1963*, ed. Thomas G. Paterson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 259-60.

<sup>4</sup> Noer, "New Frontiers," 260; Thomas, "The Black Revolt," 325.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas, "The Black Revolt," 326.

Kennedy's negative perception of those who supported a more active approach toward Africa minimized any chance for major changes in American foreign policy. Bowles was replaced in November 1961 and given a meaningless assignment. His replacement, George Ball, was a "realist" who enjoyed an influential position in the formation of the Kennedy administration's foreign policy. Though Adlai Stevenson held an important position as UN Ambassador, he was perceived as soft and lazy by Kennedy, which cost him influence and led Kennedy to minimize his use of the United Nations. Kennedy admired the energy G. Mennen Williams poured into his post, but many in the State Department disliked Williams' style, preferring a quieter, more somber diplomatic approach.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, on the surface Kennedy conveyed an image of supporting a proactive American foreign policy toward Africa, but the focus of his foreign policies remained strongly dominated by more traditional Cold War concerns. Events themselves pushed Africa more and more off Kennedy's foreign policy agenda. The Bay of Pigs invasion, the 1961 Berlin Crisis, the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, and the growing Vietnam War were only some of the events that turned Kennedy's focus away from Africa.<sup>7</sup>

Yet, South Africa and its policy of apartheid could not be ignored by the Kennedy administration. Since the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, the South African government had cracked down on dissent, becoming, in effect, an authoritarian police state. Such actions created difficulties for the Kennedy administration because it did not want to condemn South Africa too strongly due to various economic and strategic considerations as well as the strained state of racial relations in the United States. The country still provided an

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

ample supply of strategic minerals such as diamonds, gold, manganese, platinum, and chromium to the United States and its good harbors and location along major east-west shipping routes made it an important area both for commercial and strategic reasons, especially since the 1956 closing of the Suez Canal. American investment in South Africa totaled \$286 million dollars and America exported \$277 million of goods to South Africa in 1960. Finally, the United States had established missile and satellite tracking stations near Pretoria. Strong criticism of South Africa could make it difficult to retain these facilities.<sup>8</sup>

Criticism of South Africa's system of apartheid came from officials such as Williams and Bowles, who denounced apartheid as an unjust system that eventually would lead to violence. Secretary of State Dean Rusk also condemned apartheid as "repugnant." Still, such denunciations were not followed by any substantial actions against South Africa. Rusk called for continued diplomatic and economic relations with South Africa regardless of its "repugnant" system. Kennedy rejected suggestions of ending International Monetary Fund loans to South Africa or attempts to discourage private American investment in South Africa.<sup>9</sup>

Like Eisenhower, the Kennedy administration was not willing to condemn an ally for its domestic policies. Though doing so would have meant gaining more credibility with African majority-ruled countries, the United States had stronger ties with South Africa than with most of the rest of Africa. Thus, to paraphrase Thomas J. Noer, the

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<sup>8</sup> Noer, "New Frontiers," 275; Thomas Borstelmann, "'Hedging Our Bets and Buying Time': John Kennedy and Racial Revolutions in the American South and Southern Africa," *Diplomatic History* 24 (Summer 2000), 457-58.

<sup>9</sup> Noer, "New Frontiers," 275-76.

Kennedy administration did not believe it would be worth the expense to criticize an old ally like South Africa in order to gain new friends with the other African nations.<sup>10</sup>

These considerations were evident in the extension of America's nuclear cooperation agreement with South Africa. The continuation of this understanding caused little if any concern for the Kennedy administration. On October 12, 1961, the South African embassy sent a formal note to the State Department requesting that the bilateral nuclear cooperation agreement signed between South Africa and the United States be amended to allow South Africa to lease fuel instead of buying it for the nuclear reactor it purchased from the United States, and which was then under construction. The agreement only allowed the sale of enriched uranium, thus necessitating a change in terms.<sup>11</sup> South Africa probably wanted a leasing agreement because it would be cheaper than purchasing the material outright and because disposal would involve returning it to the United States instead of storing it in South Africa.

State Department representatives had been talking informally with South African officials about amending the agreement since early 1961. They had encouraged South Africa to work through the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to secure a lease. South African officials explained in the formal note that they did want to work through the IAEA because they feared a delay in the delivery of the fuel past the time for the start up of the reactor.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>11</sup> Memorandum to Charles W. Thomas from H. D. Bengelsdorf Subject: South Africa, October 12, 1961, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-1963, IAEA Agreements General 1961-62, 52, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Also, the AEC's Division of Internal Affairs was privy to another concern of South African embassy officials. South Africa feared that it would not be able to accommodate itself to IAEA standards. This would be especially true if any of the inspectors originated from Asian or African countries who might use their positions and authority to embarrass South Africa by not giving their approval because of the country's policy of apartheid.<sup>13</sup>

The reactor was purchased as a part of the original 1957 nuclear cooperation agreement between the United States and South Africa, with the Allis-Chalmers Corporation of America as the building contractor. South African officials projected the reactor being completed by October 1963 and asked that the fuel be delivered by July 1963 to ensure that the fuel fit the reactor assembly. The fuel would be ninety percent enriched uranium, provided for in the 1957 agreement. South African officials asked for twelve kilograms to operate the reactor at six and two-thirds megawatts. Beginning in 1965, the reactor would operate at twenty megawatts, with twenty kilograms of enriched uranium needed for this level of production. South African officials also requested ten grams of plutonium to assist in atomic research.<sup>14</sup>

Recognizing the South African request as reasonable, the AEC foresaw no reason why South Africa could not be accommodated and the agreement amended. Yet, the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Letter to the Secretary of State from the South African Ambassador, October 12, 1961, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-1963, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, A. Agreements, 1952-62, National Archives at College Park, MD.

amendment only provided eight kilograms of enriched uranium instead of the twelve and then the twenty kilograms for continued operation that South Africa requested.<sup>15</sup>

Why did the United States not fully honor South Africa's request?

Correspondence between South African Ambassador Naude and Secretary of State Dean Rusk indicated that the actual amount of enriched uranium needed was uncertain. Also, operating schedules might change, which would affect the weights and amount of enriched uranium needed for the reactor. The note also mentioned that the remote location of the reactor, along with America's distance from South Africa, caused the South African government to want to have an adequate supply of fuel in storage at all times. It was also difficult for a definite amount to be quoted until the South Africans gained more experience cycling the fuel and learning how it was affected by shipping conditions.<sup>16</sup> Thus, South African officials requested more enriched uranium than American officials thought was needed to operate the reactor.

American officials were also disappointed that South Africa had not worked through the IAEA to acquire the enriched uranium it needed. AEC and DOS officials had worked to persuade South Africa, along with Brazil, Canada, Taiwan, Portugal, and Thailand, all of which had also made changes in their nuclear cooperation agreements with the United States in 1962, to work with the IAEA but to no avail. White House Budget Director David Bell described these frustrated attempts as "a continued failure"

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<sup>15</sup> Memorandum to Philip J. Farley from A.A. Wells, Subject: South African Request for Bilateral Amendment, November 6, 1961, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-1963, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, A. Agreements, 1952-62, National Archives at College Park, MD.; Letter to Glenn T. Seaborg from President John F. Kennedy, May 24, 1962, WHCF: Subject File, AT3-1/Co 301-Executive, 11, Kennedy Papers, John F. Kennedy Library. (hereafter Kennedy Library).

<sup>16</sup> Letter to the Secretary of State from the South African Ambassador, October 12, 1961, National Archives at College Park, MD.

by the United States in shifting technical assistance to the IAEA. Yet, he did not recommend to President Kennedy that he reject South Africa's and the other nations' amendments because doing so would require the removal of American nuclear materials already in use in South Africa and the other countries. Kennedy approved the amendments, which went into effect on July 16, 1962.<sup>17</sup>

The Kennedy administration also experienced frustrations with Israel's nuclear program. Just prior to the beginning of Kennedy's presidency, mounting evidence suggested that Israel was constructing a nuclear reactor with French assistance that was not subject to American inspection via the Atoms for Peace program. President Kennedy pressured Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion to allow inspections of this new reactor, which eventually allowed for a one-time inspection in 1961. Kennedy continued to pressure Ben-Gurion for annual inspections that the prime minister finally agreed to in 1963.<sup>18</sup>

Nuclear relations with Pakistan continued to progress smoothly. Four months before Kennedy took office, the United States presented Pakistan with \$350,000 to help in the preparations for a research reactor. In 1962, the IAEA approved a request from Pakistan for American assistance in the transference of a research reactor to the Pakistan Institute of Nuclear Science and Technology. Nuclear relations with Pakistan's rival India proceeded well with America signing an agreement in 1963 to provide fuel for

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<sup>17</sup> Memorandum for the President from David E. Bell, Subject: Proposed Amendments to Six Bilateral Agreements for Cooperation in the Civil Uses of Atomic Energy, May 19, 1962, WHCF: Subject File, AT3-1/Co 301-Executive, 11, Kennedy Papers, Kennedy Library; Memorandum to Edwin E. Spingarn from W. G. Evans, Completion Thirty Day Waiting Period Amendment to Agreement with Cooperation with South Africa, July 9, 1962, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-1963, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, A. Agreements, 1952-62, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>18</sup> Yair Evron, *Israel's Nuclear Dilemma* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1994), 4-5.

India's nuclear reactors at Tarapur.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the Kennedy administration experienced displeasure, irritation, and satisfaction with the nuclear expansion programs of its allies.

The amendment to the United States-South African nuclear cooperation agreement proceeded relatively easily, especially when compared to the proposed uranium barter agreement between the two nations. Besides the fact that the change in the agreement was minor, another explanation for the ease of the extension passage was the lack of opposition by the State Department, which did not think that the cooperation agreement, unlike the barter arrangement, directly threatened American industrial interests at home. In fact, America's industrial interests benefited from the extension agreement because South Africa would be purchasing more expensive 90 percent enriched uranium in addition to 20 percent enriched uranium. Thus, when American interests were not directly threatened, United States-South African relations proceeded uninhibited. Still, the proposed uranium barter agreement between the United States and South Africa caused concern within the Kennedy administration, especially within the State Department. As negotiations proceeded to finalize this agreement, concerns emerged as to how it might hurt America's domestic economy, damage American relations with important allies such as Canada, and adversely affect international perceptions of America's relationship with South Africa.

The barter program was first proposed during the Eisenhower administration and involved the exchange of uranium for agricultural commodities. In 1954, a law was passed that gave the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) authority to reduce its inventories of surplus agricultural commodities. Through the Agriculture

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<sup>19</sup> George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1999), 48, 206.



Department's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), surplus agricultural commodities could be bartered for strategic and critical minerals, such as uranium. The program was intended to promote the stockpiling of strategic minerals in case of a national emergency and to reduce further American dependence on foreign markets. Agricultural commodities were used as barter because releasing these products into the American market could potentially lower prices and hurt American farmers. To further protect American trade, the only nations that the United States would barter with were nations where the disruption of normal American trade would be at a minimum.<sup>20</sup>

In 1958-1959, negotiations had occurred between the Atomic Energy Commission and South Africa about stretching out the timetable for United States purchases of uranium. During this time, the AEC also considered initiating a barter program with South Africa. Tom Upchurch from the AEC's Division of Raw Materials informed Robert Winfree of the State Department's South African Office about the details of exchanging American surplus wheat for South African uranium. To entice South Africa to agree to this program, the United States would also purchase additional amounts of South African uranium.<sup>21</sup>

Winfree thought such a barter arrangement with South Africa would damage relations with Canada, noting that America had recently terminated its options to purchase Canadian uranium and that entering into a new agreement with South Africa to acquire more uranium could be harmful to American-Canadian relations. Winfree also

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<sup>20</sup> Vogt, Jabara, and Linse, *Barter of Agricultural Commodities*, 13, 15.

<sup>21</sup> Memorandum for the Files, Subject: South African Uranium, December 10, 1959, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, F. Minerals and Metals, 1956-59, National Archives at College Park, MD.

mentioned that because Canada was a major exporter of wheat, the barter agreement could interfere with overseas markets for Canadian wheat, further straining dealings with an important ally. When Winfree discussed the barter proposal with other State Department officials who worked on United States-Canadian relations, he found that “their objections were much more violent than mine had been.” Given this reaction, Winfree informed the AEC that the State Department would not support the barter proposal.<sup>22</sup>

The barter proposal was placed on hold until January 5, 1961, when Upchurch met with Edmund Pendleton of the export firm Leon Tempelsman & Son about reviving the plan. Some of the details of the deal had changed, such as a modification from a traditional barter exchange to a counter-trade transaction with a switch arrangement aspect. Modifications later made the barter agreement a counter-trade transaction with a switch arrangement aspect. A counter-trade transaction involves the exchange of not only goods but money as well. A switch arrangement provides for another party, usually an international firm, to sell the exchanged goods through its international contacts to complete the transaction. In addition, surplus supplies of agricultural products, not just wheat, would be sold abroad by the firm of Leon Tempelsman & Son, money from which would be used by the United States to purchase South African uranium already under contract.<sup>23</sup> The barter aspect comes in because no additional dollars would be used to

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Vogt, Jabara, and Linse, *Barter of Agricultural Commodities*, 5-6; Letter to Melvin L. Manfull from Thomas B. Upchurch, February 2, 1961, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, I. Uranium, 1953-1961, National Archives at College Park, MD.

buy the uranium. The agricultural products sold had already been purchased by the CCC to aid in strengthening the prices of agricultural goods and the incomes of farmers.

Upchurch discussed with Melvin L. Manfull from the Department of State's Office of the Special Assistant to the Secretary for Atomic Energy the CCC's earlier objections to this particular barter program. Due to USDA restrictions on the amount of agricultural goods subject to barter, only ten to twenty million dollars worth of the uranium under contract would be eligible for the program. Because the contract called for America to purchase one hundred million dollars worth of uranium for four consecutive years, the bulk of the contract would not be affected by the barter program.<sup>24</sup>

In a letter to Thomas R. Rawlins, Director of Barter and Stockpiling of the Division of Commodity Stabilization Service at the USDA, dated February 3, 1961, Maurice Tempelsman, of Leon Tempelsman & Son, continued to press for adoption of the barter agreement. He first laid out the arguments against the barter aspect of the program, especially that barter displaced dollar sales of agricultural commodities and that barter was considered by some a method of price competition. He also noted the reasons against the uranium aspect of the program, acknowledging that there was no immediate need to stockpile more uranium. Finally, he brought up the problems the program would cause with Canada and other African nations if the United States traded with South Africa.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Letter to Melvin L. Manfull from Thomas B. Upchurch, February 2, 1961.

<sup>25</sup> Letter to the Director of the Barter & Stockpiling Division of the Commodity Stabilization Service at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Subject: Barter for Conversion of Uranium Contract, February 3, 1961, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, I. Uranium, 1953-1961, National Archives at College Park, MD.

On the other hand, the benefits of the program outweighed its potential liabilities. Tempelsman argued that agricultural and barter sales had both increased in recent years, indicating that one was not hurting the other. He stated that no law prevented the United States from competing with other agricultural producers and that the cost of storing uranium was smaller than that of storing agricultural commodities. Moreover, he argued that the barter program was not a new commitment to South Africa but an alteration of a preexisting relationship, which would minimize any international concerns. Finally, Tempelsman explained that no new legislation would be needed for this program; all that was needed was President Kennedy's support and an executive order easing the USDA restrictions attached to all barter programs.<sup>26</sup>

In a meeting between Tempelsman and State Department officials on February 7, 1961, the opposition of Canadian and American uranium producers once again came up. State Department officials noted that cutting American purchases of Canadian uranium had "seriously hurt Canadian producers and involved the closing down of whole towns dependent on uranium production." They also emphasized that United States-Canadian relations, in general, were strained and that the agricultural and uranium aspects of the barter program would not help the situation.<sup>27</sup>

In a February 7, 1961 letter, Chairman Glenn T. Seaborg elaborated to President Kennedy the reason for strained relations. Seaborg mentioned that a stretch out agreement on uranium purchases had recently been concluded with Canada, which

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Proposed Barter of Agricultural Commodities for South African Uranium, February 7, 1961, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, I. Uranium, 1953-1961, National Archives at College Park, MD.

allowed the United States to purchase 240 million dollars worth of uranium through 1966 instead of in 1961 and 1962 as originally promised. America had also informed Canada that it was not picking up its options of purchasing additional amounts of uranium for the near future. Both of these actions caused major economic and political problems for Canada as the uranium industry was cut roughly in half because of the closing of several mines, resulting in increases in local unemployment increases and some Canadian citizens wondering what had happened to their jobs.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, new American opposition emerged toward United States-South African uranium purchases. On March 14, 1961, Victor G. Reuther, administrative assistant to the president of the United Auto Workers, sent a letter to George Ball, Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs, about America's uranium stretch out agreement with South Africa. Reuther argued that such a purchasing agreement was not necessary because domestic sources were adequate to fulfill American needs. He also noted the higher price that the United States was paying for South African uranium compared to domestic sources. Reuther called for the stretch out agreement to be revoked and new negotiations initiated because the existing agreement gave "unnecessary and undesirable advantages" to South Africa.<sup>29</sup>

In response to Reuther's letter, Philip J. Farley, Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Atomic Energy and Outer Space, noted that the agreement with South Africa

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<sup>28</sup> Letter to President Kennedy from Glenn T. Seaborg, February 7, 1961, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, I. Uranium, 1953-1961, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>29</sup> Letter to George Ball from Victor G. Reuther, March 14, 1961, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, I. Uranium, 1953-1961, National Archives at College Park, MD.

was an old agreement that had already been renegotiated. Farley explained that when the agreement had been originally negotiated the price of South African uranium had been acceptable and, at that time, domestic sources were not adequate to meet American demands. Farley also emphasized that no new foreign purchases of uranium had been committed to since 1956. Farley concluded his letter by stressing that the government was concerned with America's uranium industry but that the United States needed to honor its overseas commitments and could not terminate the stretch out agreement.<sup>30</sup>

George Ball sent a memorandum to White House Special Counsel Myer Feldman detailing the State Department's opposition to the program. Among his reasons for opposing the barter plan was the anticipated negative domestic reaction, which Reuther's letter indicated could extend to AFL-CIO opposition to not only the barter agreement but also to all United States-South African uranium relations. Ball also claimed that the agreement would allow critics, presumably the Soviet Union, to portray America as a militaristic nation determined to acquire as much uranium as possible. South Africa was not the best source to acquire more uranium as it had been ostracized by the British Commonwealth. Ball explained that the details of the barter agreement, particularly that it was an extension of a former agreement and that the uranium was to be placed in permanent stockpile, would be lost to critics, and the country would be portrayed as exchanging food for weapons for an enormous amount of money.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Letter to Victor Reuther from Philip J. Farley, April 14, 1961, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, I. Uranium, 1953-1961, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>31</sup> Memorandum to Myer Feldman from George Ball, Subject: Tempelsman Proposal for Uranium Barter, April 28, 1961, RG 59, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Energy and Outer Space, Records Relating to Atomic Energy Matters, 1944-63, Lot No. 57D688, 435, Country Files, 21.79 South Africa, I. Uranium, 1953-1961, National Archives at College Park, MD.

Subsequently the entire program, not just the South African uranium component, lost favor in the Kennedy administration. One reason was that the specific policies regarding the stockpiling of uranium were reexamined. The Kennedy administration also implemented a study to determine how or if the barter program was harming actual trade.<sup>32</sup> Before the conclusion of this study, Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, and the administration of Lyndon B. Johnson inherited the problem of implementing the program or not.

When Lyndon Johnson became president, he maintained most of the foreign policy staff that Kennedy had put in place, including G. Mennen Williams and Adlai Stevenson, who supported a strong African foreign policy. Johnson assured Williams that Africa was as important to him as it had been to Kennedy. Although Kennedy's actual concern for Africa was minimal compared to Europe and other areas deemed more important in the fight against communism, Johnson's already minimal attention to Africa would wane even more as Vietnam became his overriding concern.<sup>33</sup>

Johnson's past experience and exposure to Africa had been limited to a trip to Senegal as vice president, which had not translated into a strong interest in the region. He focused his attention and energies on the Great Society, the Soviet Union, the Cold War, and Vietnam, leaving African issues to the State Department. Johnson appointed W. Averell Harriman as ambassador-at-large with special responsibility for Africa to take

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<sup>32</sup> Letter to Mr. Charles A. Cogliandro from the White House, May 13, 1964, WHCF: Gen Co 302 South Africa, Republic of 11/22/63, Co 302 Republic of South Africa 11/23/63-4/25/66, 72, Johnson Papers, Lyndon J. Johnson Library. (hereafter Johnson Library).

<sup>33</sup> Terrence Lyons, "Keeping Africa off the Agenda," in *Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World: American Foreign Policy, 1963-1968*, eds. Warren I. Cohen and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 248-49.

care of African issues that could not be settled at the assistant secretary level, thereby preventing them from reaching the White House.<sup>34</sup>

This is not to say that Johnson avoided African issues completely. Williams continued to promote African issues and constantly attempted to speak with Johnson about them. Assured by Johnson at the beginning of his presidency that he would have as much access to him as he had to Kennedy, Williams found it increasingly difficult to talk with the president after 1964, and his influence waned with the administration. This was largely due to Johnson's conclusion that he no longer needed former Kennedy officials to bolster his prestige with his 1964 landslide victory. Williams' lack of political skill in dealing with the Johnson administration also contributed to his decline in influence, and he eventually resigned in 1966 to run unsuccessfully for a Senate seat in his home state of Michigan.<sup>35</sup>

Before leaving, Williams along with others within the administration encouraged Johnson to support a strong American policy statement toward Africa, resulting in the speech Johnson made to commemorate the third anniversary of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on May 26, 1966. The major focus of Johnson's OAU speech was economic development issues and the promotion of greater regional cooperation in Africa. Johnson gave no details on how these reforms were to occur but called for the formation of a committee, which would be headed by America's ambassador to Ethiopia, Edward Korry, to review these questions.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 247-48, 250.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 249-50.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 263-64.



Johnson agreed to deliver the speech to demonstrate his administration's concern about Africa in order to counter critics such as Robert Kennedy, who claimed that he had no African policy. Johnson also saw it as an opportunity to demonstrate that his administration's concern for civil rights was not simply confined to the United States but extended abroad as well. Finally, the speech was an opportunity for America publicly to proclaim its policy toward Rhodesia, an issue the administration had wrestled with for several months.<sup>37</sup>

Rhodesia had issued a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) on November 11, 1965. This break from the British Empire by the white-minority government in Rhodesia had been greeted with outrage by other African nations and complicated any hopes for a smooth transition to a majority-rule government that most other British colonies in Africa had enjoyed. The Johnson administration initially saw Rhodesia as a British problem and had followed its lead on how to handle this crisis, but when the British made little progress in negotiations with Rhodesia, many in the Johnson administration, including Bill Moyers and Arthur Goldberg, argued it was time to formulate a policy.<sup>38</sup>

The strongest wording in the OAU speech dealt with national self-determination and Rhodesia. Johnson stated that it was morally wrong not to allow people to govern themselves. He argued that a nation could not grow or maintain order in the twentieth century without full political rights being enjoyed by all its citizens. Johnson condemned the continuation of racial and political injustice throughout the world and vowed to assist

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 263, 267-68.

refugees from persecution. Johnson asserted that America would not support policies abroad or at home that supported the rule of minorities over majorities.<sup>39</sup>

Johnson stated that the United States supported an orderly transition to majority rule for all nations in the world, citing the examples of India and Vietnam, and also applying this principle to the case of Rhodesia. Johnson noted that America supported the efforts of Great Britain and the United Nations toward establishing majority rule in Rhodesia so that all of its people could benefit, not just a few.<sup>40</sup>

Even with these strong statements about Rhodesia, Johnson did not significantly alter American policy toward Africa after his OAU speech. Johnson thought American interests in Africa were not as important as they were in other areas of the world, so that he could afford to limit his attention toward Africa. Vietnam, in particular, garnered more of his attention as his administration proceeded.<sup>41</sup>

Johnson's policy of leaving African problems primarily in the care of State Department officials had the major unforeseen consequence of increasing criticisms of South Africa, particularly its apartheid policy. The trend had started during the Kennedy administration, with G. Mennen Williams, Chester Bowles, and Dean Rusk making public statements that criticized South Africa. Criticism carried over into the Johnson administration with officials Johnson had appointed adding to the chorus of disapproval regarding South Africa's racial policies.

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<sup>39</sup> "Remarks of the President at White House Reception Celebrating the Third Anniversary of the Organization of African Union," May 26, 1966, National Security File-Country File, Africa-General Vol. IV 2 of 2 3/66-5/66, 76 2 of 2, Johnson Papers, Johnson Library.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Terrence Lyons, "Keeping Africa off the Agenda," 266.

One such incident occurred when South African ambassador to the United States Dr. Willem C. Naude met with W. Averell Harriman on January 9, 1964. During the meeting, Harriman told the ambassador that most Americans would never accept the policy of apartheid and that many Americans were appalled at any forms of racial segregation. He said that agreement in some areas could be reached between the two governments but that “there are diversities which can never be accepted just as Hitlerism and Communism could not be.”<sup>42</sup>

The State Department also implemented some policies that South Africa objected to. For example, the South African government disapproved of the American embassy in South Africa hosting mixed-race receptions in Pretoria. Foreign Minister Hilgard Muller told America’s ambassador to South Africa, Joseph Satterthwaite, that the United States should honor the customs of his country. In the past, the United States had always honored the South African request of not having mixed receptions or placing African-American officials at the embassy.<sup>43</sup>

By July 1965, South African government officials also began to object to American personnel policies at NASA, Department of Defense (DOD), and Smithsonian Institution facilities located in South Africa. Some of these installations were used to receive Mariner IV pictures sent from Mars and to help in the first attempt to send a Surveyor spacecraft to the moon in the fall of 1965 and spring of 1966. Prime Minister

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<sup>42</sup> “Memorandum of Conversation,” Washington, January 9, 1964, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Volume XXIV* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1999), 963-64. (hereafter *FRUS*).

<sup>43</sup> “Telegram from the Embassy in South Africa to the DOS,” Cape Town, May 5, 1965, *FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume XXIV* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1999), 1026-7; “Memorandum from Charles E. Johnson and Ulric Haynes of the National Security Council Staff to President Johnson,” Washington, July 13, 1965, *FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume XXIV*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1999), 1031.

John Verwoerd advised the Johnson administration that he wanted Americans to follow apartheid policies at these installations, which were manned by one hundred forty three South Africans and fifty-three Americans, none of whom were African-American or African. The pressure was so great that the Johnson administration considered alternative facilities in Madagascar, Spain, and Ascension Island.<sup>44</sup>

The attitude of some members of the Johnson administration to South Africa can best be expressed by what Charles E. Johnson and Ulric Haynes, staffers at the National Security Council, wrote to Johnson on July 13, 1965. They were concerned specifically about the defense and scientific facilities issue, but their words could be applied to nearly any issue connected to South Africa. They argued that Johnson's accomplishments in improving race relations and promoting civil rights in America made it necessary for him to take a similar position in his foreign policy. If he failed to do this, he risked alienating liberals, in general, and some members of Congress, African-Americans, civil rights, labor, and church groups in particular. Furthermore, they contended Johnson would lose the support of African, Asian, and Latin American nations at the United Nations.<sup>45</sup>

United States-South African nuclear cooperation thus took place within the larger context of strained relations between the two nations. Unlike the Kennedy administration, the Johnson administration had to make three important policy decisions regarding nuclear cooperation. The first involved the barter agreement of agricultural products for uranium. Another issue involved the fueling of the nuclear reactor, SAFARI I (South African Fundamental Atomic Research Installation I) that South Africa had

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<sup>44</sup> "Memorandum from Charles E. Johnson and Ulric Haynes of the National Security Council Staff to President Johnson," Washington, July 13, 1965, *FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume XXIV* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1999), 1030-31.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 1030.

acquired from the United States. Finally, the Johnson administration had to decide whether or not to extend the nuclear cooperation agreement signed with South Africa in 1957. The debate concerning these last two decisions reflects how individuals within the Johnson administration, specifically within the State Department and the National Security Council (NSC), had growing concerns about America's nuclear cooperation with South Africa. They argued against its continuation because of nuclear proliferation concerns and had trepidations about South Africa's policy of apartheid. Nevertheless, Cold War objectives elsewhere and changes in personnel influenced the Johnson administration to continue nuclear cooperation with South Africa rather than terminating it.

The Johnson administration's nuclear nonproliferation policy largely focused on the use of international treaties and agencies. France's 1960 detonation of a nuclear device and China's 1964 detonation made the threat of nuclear warfare more tangible. China's entrance into the nuclear club was especially unsettling for western nations, which perceived China as a technologically backward nation. Thus, the Johnson administration focused its efforts on creating an international treaty, via the IAEA, that would prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.<sup>46</sup> The effort to write such a treaty would cause the United States to compromise on its position regarding South African sales of nuclear materials abroad. The need to approve an international nonproliferation treaty was more important than forcing South Africa to adhere to a standard of nuclear commerce that none of America's other allies adhered to.

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<sup>46</sup> ; J. Samuel Walker, "Nuclear Power and Nonproliferation: The Controversy over Nuclear Exports, 1974-1980," *Diplomatic History* 24 (Spring 2001), 217.

Cooperation with other nations continued apace during the Johnson years. The defeat of India in the 1962 Sino-Indian war along with China going nuclear caused India to increase its military capability and accelerate its nuclear program. The Johnson administration briefly considered a program of sharing nuclear weapons with India to guarantee its security but no workable arrangement could be agreed to. Instead, the United States aided India's nuclear program in 1966 by signing a tripartite agreement through the IAEA to supply a small amount of American plutonium to India for research purposes.<sup>47</sup>

America continued to inspect Israel's nuclear reactor in Dimona but was unable to learn much more about Israel's nuclear capabilities. Yet, this inability to gain more insight into Israel's nuclear program did not strain relations between the two nations as the rapport between President Johnson and Prime Minister Levi Eshkol was more amicable than that of their predecessors, plus the eruption of the 1967 Six-Day War and Israel's triumph helped to minimize the urgency of needing to know the status of Israel's nuclear capacity. Nonetheless, America pressured Israel to adhere to the NPT once it was finalized, which Israel refused to do.<sup>48</sup>

As a part of its commitment to international nuclear cooperation, the Johnson administration breathed new life into America's uranium barter program with South Africa. The Kennedy administration had implemented further study on the barter agreement just before Kennedy's death. At the beginning of 1964, the Johnson administration appeared to be satisfied regarding the questions surrounding the agreement and negotiations began anew between the United States and South Africa. Instead of

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<sup>47</sup> Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, 116-17, 131.

<sup>48</sup> Evron, *Israel's Nuclear Dilemma*, 150.

negotiating through an export firm, Department of State, Agriculture, Treasury, and AEC officials met with members of South Africa's Atomic Energy Board (AEB).

Negotiations did not progress as South Africa had hoped because the United States withdrew the barter agreement. When AEB officials expressed shock and astonishment at this new development, American officials explained that the withdrawal had nothing to do with the AEB but with internal American government decisions to maintain the stretch out agreement as previously negotiated. American officials further explained to perplexed AEB officials that the meeting was about easing the balance of payments problem caused by the stretch out agreement. The South Africans were not interested in any of the suggestions by the Americans and insisted on reviving the barter agreement.<sup>49</sup>

After a recess, the South Africans brought forward a new proposal, which made the American negotiators suspicious that the South Africans knew in advance that the barter program would be withdrawn. The AEB proposed that the remaining amount of uranium in the stretch out agreement be converted over to barter beginning on January 1, 1964 and deferring the payments due to South Africa for three years. The value of the contract to be converted was \$138 million, and the deferred amount was \$102 million. The uranium would be valued at \$4.75 per pound, a significant reduction from the \$11.20 value of the stretch out agreement. The AEB also suggested that part of the uranium be

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<sup>49</sup> Telegram to Department of State from Pretoria, Subject: Uranium Contract Negotiations, January 14, 1964, National Security File-Country File, Africa, Union of South, Cables, Vol. I 11/63-10/64, 78, Johnson Papers, Johnson Library.

exchanged for enriched uranium to fuel its forthcoming nuclear reactor.<sup>50</sup> In the final understanding, American negotiators got the price of the uranium lowered, eliminated the additional quantities of uranium that were a part of the original barter agreement, and South African officials gained access to the enriched uranium they needed for the development of their nuclear program. Both sides appeared to have garnered something they needed though nothing was signed and all proposals were in principle only.

How difficult it was to get the barter program implemented is evident in the February 11, 1964, telephone conversation between Congressman Harold D. Colley, Democrat from North Carolina and Chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, and White House staffer Walter Jenkins. Colley mentioned that three years earlier President Kennedy had discussed the barter agreement with him. Colley was interested in the program because he wanted to eliminate surplus agricultural goods due to the high price of storage. He went on to say that the barter agreement had, “gone on from time to time and I think there must be half a dozen people trying to promote it.” Colley expressed the belief that “somebody is killing barter, although everybody has approved. Just what the hell is happening? Who is holding it up?” He then described various committees that the proposal had been discussed in but noted that “nothing has been done. Who is holding up the order?” He ended the conversation by stating, “it has been

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.; Letter to John Miles from T.E.W. Schumann, Deferment of Payments and Barter Proposals, January 20, 1964, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, Science Box 3070, National Archives at College Park, MD.



so long everybody is thoroughly disgusted...somebody ought to shoot or give up the gun.”<sup>51</sup>

That the State Department was the strongest critic of the barter program with South Africa contributed to Colley’s complaints about delays. The issues of trade and money were important, but the State Department not wanting to alienate a close ally such as Canada appeared to be equally, if not more, important. If the State Department had supported the program, implementation would have occurred immediately. As it was, despite the delays, by January 1964 an agreement appeared imminent. Then, just when success seemed assured, changes in the details of the program held it up again. This time there was so much controversy with domestic producers of American minerals that the program to exchange South African uranium for agricultural goods was abandoned.

The last modification to the barter proposal not only involved South Africa but the newly independent nation of the Congo. Barter contractors would sell surplus agricultural commodities to other nations and use the revenue from these sales to pay the remaining balance of \$55 million still owed to South Africa from the stretch out agreement. These contractors would also purchase \$27.5 million worth of industrial diamonds from the Congo and resell them to the CCC for America’s diamond stockpile.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Telephone Conversation between Congressman Harold Cooley and Walter Jenkins, February 11, 1964, WHCF: Gen Co 302 South Africa, Republic of 11/22/63, Co 302 Republic of South Africa 11/23/63-4/25/66, 72, Johnson Papers, Johnson Library.

<sup>52</sup> Memorandum to Samuel Z. Westerfield from Jesse M. McKnight, Conversion to Barter of Uranium Agreement with South Africa-Talking Points for Proposed Telephone Calls, April 2, 1965, NSF-Files of Edward K. Hamilton, South Africa 2 of 2, 3, Johnson Papers, Johnson Library; United States Department of Agriculture, CCC announces Proposed Conversion to Barter of Unexpended U.S. Dollar Balance Under Existing Atomic Energy Commission Purchase Contract for Uranium Concentrates with the Atomic Energy Board of South Africa, 4/12/65, Office Files of Bill Moyers, Uranium Contract, 134, Johnson Papers, Johnson Library.

The USDA argued that the advantages of this new barter approach were that the uranium contract would be paid with agricultural commodities instead of cash and would provide a net savings on America's balance of payments. The export of \$82.5 million worth of agricultural products represented a major savings in storage and deterioration costs. The purchases from the Congo provided needed revenue for that country. In addition, such transactions reduced the demands for American foreign aid and helped to keep the Congo's diamond industry functioning.<sup>53</sup>

The USDA publicly announced the barter program on April 12, 1965 and solicited the participation of any American firms who met its basic terms and requirements. DOS officials were concerned about this public announcement because of the potential negative African reaction to the program because it involved both South Africa and the Congo. The rapid decolonization of the Congo in 1960 caused major disruptions within the country with various armies fighting for control. The situation was slowly stabilizing, especially after the November 1964 drop of Belgian paratroopers in the Congo by the United States, but the situation was far from resolved as plans for announcing the barter program were formulated. DOS officials feared that "any statements that tie the U.S., the Congo, and South Africa into a package would revive the difficulties which have recently subsided a bit after much patient work."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, CCC announces Proposed Conversion to Barter of Unexpended U.S. Dollar Balance Under Existing Atomic Energy Commission Purchase Contract for Uranium Concentrates with the Atomic Energy Board of South Africa, 4/12/65, Office Files of Bill Moyers, Uranium Contract, 134, Johnson Papers, Johnson Library.

<sup>54</sup> Barter Conversion Project to Help Stem Dollar Outflow, April 13, 1965, United States Department of Agriculture, Office Files of Bill Moyers, Uranium Contract, 134, Johnson Papers, Johnson Library; John D. Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Longman Limited, 1999), 194-97; Memorandum to Samuel Z. Westerfield from Jesse M. MacKnight, Conversion to Barter of Uranium Agreement with South Africa—Talking Points for Proposed Telephone Calls, April 2, 1965, NSF-Files of Edward K. Hamilton, South Africa 2 of 2, 3, Johnson Papers, Johnson Library.

The State Department noted that growing domestic pressure about doing business with South Africa was another reason to keep the agreement quiet. Victor Reuther had protested United States-South African business relations at a recent conference and civil rights, church, labor, and student groups had started to protest against firms doing business with South Africa. These same groups were also beginning to pressure the American government to do something more on apartheid in South Africa than just stating that the United States government was against it. State Department officials reasoned that the barter agreement would be interpreted as new American assistance to South Africa and urged keeping the agreement as quiet as possible.<sup>55</sup>

The American Committee on Africa (ACOA) continued its calls for sanctions against South Africa and met with some success in the 1960s. The ACOA launched a campaign against banks that provided loans to South Africa. It and other antiapartheid groups began targeting corporations, state governments, and universities, calling on them to disinvest from business with South Africa or with corporations that did business with South Africa.<sup>56</sup> It was campaigns like this that concerned State Department officials

Ironically, it was business interests that caused the USDA to withdraw the project on May 25, 1965. Six companies had gained approval to become involved with the barter program. One “disgruntled firm,” as Maurice Tempelsman described it in a letter to President Johnson’s chief of staff W. Marvin Watson, anonymously filed a grievance with the Department of Justice. The unnamed firm claimed the barter program was a

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<sup>55</sup> Memorandum to Samuel Z. Westerfield from Jesse M. MacKnight, Conversion to Barter of Uranium Agreement with South Africa—Talking Points for Proposed Telephone Calls, April 2, 1965, NSF-Files of Edward K. Hamilton, South Africa 2 of 2, 3, Johnson Papers, Johnson Library.

<sup>56</sup> Les de Villiers, *In Sight of Surrender: The U.S. Sanctions Campaign against South Africa, 1946-1993* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), 23; Francis Njubi Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans against Apartheid, 1946-1994* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 55-56.

violation of antitrust laws because a single source of uranium, South Africa, and of diamonds, the Congo, were involved. When the Justice Department filed a complaint with the Department of Agriculture, Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman suspended the program and initiated a review of it. Tempelsman noted that the review committee had discovered no way to improve the barter program and asked for its reinstatement, but this did not occur.<sup>57</sup>

The barter program involving South African uranium demonstrated how domestic and foreign policy concerns were beginning to affect the nuclear aspect of United States-South African relations. Business interest pressure ended this aspect of American-South African nuclear relations illustrating that American bilateral relations with South Africa were becoming more susceptible to nongovernmental pressures. In addition, the concerns that DOS officials expressed about protests of the barter agreement from civil rights, church, union, student, and other activists confirm the growing influence of new pressures on American foreign relations, particularly in the case of South Africa. Johnson administration anxiety about American nuclear cooperation with South Africa increased as the question arose as to whether or not the United States should honor its contractual obligation and ship enriched uranium to fuel South Africa's nuclear reactor.

Jesse MacKnight, the Director of the State Department's Office of Eastern and Southern African Affairs, brought the fueling of SAFARI I to the attention of high-ranking State Department representatives on July 24, 1964. MacKnight mentioned that the delivery of the enriched uranium by the United States was a part of the 1957 nuclear

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<sup>57</sup> Memorandum to W. Marvin Watson from Maurice Tempelsman, Subject: Barter Conversion Contract, August 9, 1965, WHCF, Ex Ag 7 11-23-63, Ag 7-1 Barter Program Yellow Label, 10, Johnson Papers, Johnson Library.

cooperation agreement with South Africa. Nevertheless, he predicted that the supplying of this fuel by America would cause major “political and psychological problems” with African nations and would require a “massive educational effort via diplomatic and public channels” to counter the problems he foresaw. He noted that there was nothing that could be done to delay or stop the shipment and mentioned how his office along with others within the State Department would work to place this shipment “in the best possible light.”<sup>58</sup>

The shipment of the fuel should not have occurred as a surprise to the State Department. South Africa had started construction of Pelindaba, South Africa’s nuclear research facility, in 1961. The 1957 agreement allowed for the purchasing of a nuclear reactor, and the designs for this reactor had been completed with delivery scheduled for 1963. Delivery of the reactor was delayed due to damage it sustained while still in the United States, which some South African officials suspected was due to sabotage. The 1962 modification of America’s nuclear cooperation agreement with South Africa focused on securing fuel for SAFARI I by leasing instead of buying enriched uranium. South Africa signed a lease agreement with the AEC for this purpose on April 4, 1963.<sup>59</sup>

The problem with the enriched uranium was not so much its imminent release because the AEB had not yet requested shipment. Yet, the fuel was prepared, so that American officials were waiting for such a request at any time once the reactor was

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<sup>58</sup> Memorandum to G. Mennen Williams, etc. from Jesse MacKngiht, Subject Nuclear Reactor for South Africa, July 24, 1964, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.

<sup>59</sup> ELJ (Elana) Janson, “The Development of the Uranium and Nuclear Industry in South Africa, 1945-1970: A Historical Study” (Ph.D. diss., University of Stellenbosch, 1995), 230-31; Memorandum to Harriman from Kretzmann, Subject: South Africa, Release of Fuel Elements for Nuclear Reactor, December 14, 1964, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.

completed either in November or December. The Johnson administration wanted to release the uranium at a time when it would cause as little publicity and problems as possible.<sup>60</sup>

For the White House, the pressing concern was the presidential election coming up in November. William Brubeck, staff member of the National Security Council, was designated to “take action” and ask the Allis-Chalmers Corporation to delay shipment until after the election.<sup>61</sup> With the reactor scheduled for completion, the Johnson administration did not want the fuel shipment to become public knowledge just before the election because of the unknown way the news might affect the campaign.

The State Department was concerned about how African and Asian nations within the United Nations would react to hearing about the fuel shipment. DOS officials had checked to see when these nations were holding meetings during the General Assembly sessions scheduled for November 1964 to March 1965 to determine when would be a good time to announce the delivery of the enriched uranium. They discovered that there was no time that would be best to minimize the “intensity of adverse Afro-Asian reaction.”<sup>62</sup>

The State Department planned to present the fuel shipment as a part of America’s effort to promote the worldwide peaceful uses of atomic energy. The only problem was

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<sup>60</sup> Memorandum to Harriman from J. Wayne Fredericks, Subject: Program to Off-Set Adverse Reaction to Year-End Activation of US-Built Nuclear Reactor to South Africa, August 17, 1964, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.

<sup>61</sup> “Transfer of Nuclear Reactor for Peaceful Uses to South Africa,” August 12, 1964, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.; Memorandum to Harriman from J. Wayne Fredericks, Subject: Program to Off-Set Adverse Reaction to Year-End Activation of US-Built Nuclear Reactor to South Africa, August 17, 1964.

<sup>62</sup> Memorandum to Harriman from J. Wayne Fredericks, Subject: Program to Off-Set Adverse Reaction to Year-End Activation of US-Built Nuclear Reactor to South Africa, August 17, 1964.

that the African aspect of peaceful uses of atomic energy primarily involved South Africa. The United States had established a small research reactor at Louvanium University in the Congo, but that was the extent of American cooperation with black African nations. Because of the lack of American nuclear cooperation with black African nations, DOS officials proposed that a regional program be established to assist in the development of nuclear energy in desalinization and power plants, in the hope that the announcement of such a program would offset any negative reaction to the delivery of the enriched uranium.<sup>63</sup>

Another tactic proposed by officials in the State Department was negotiating with the South Africans to have the inspection or control aspects of United States-South African nuclear cooperation placed under IAEA auspices. By transferring controls over to the IAEA, America's nuclear cooperation with South Africa would appear to be one aspect of America's larger international nuclear cooperation efforts. MacKnight argued that this would help to reduce the negative reaction he expected from African and Asian nations.<sup>64</sup> It would also minimize the bilateral aspect of nuclear cooperation between the United States and South Africa, which made the two appear to be close allies to many nations in Africa and Asia.

American officials had been trying to promote South African membership in the IAEA over bilateral relations since the organization's founding in 1957. In the spirit of Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace program, American officials had promoted this

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Memorandum to Fredericks from MacKnight, Subject: Request for AF Concurrence for SCI to Negotiate With South African on Turnover of Atomic Energy Controls to IAEA, August 26, 1964, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.

international organization to develop the peaceful uses of nuclear technology but had been unsuccessful with South Africa. South Africa feared that IAEA inspectors would use their position to embarrass South Africa because of its apartheid policies and preferred bilateral relations with the United States over IAEA involvement.

In late August, South Africa requested that the AEC arrange to ship the fuel to South Africa. The NSC requested that the fuel delivery be delayed. The AEC agreed to do so, citing administrative reasons to the South Africans as the reason for the shipment's delay. The South Africans did not press the issue because the enriched uranium was not urgently needed, because SAFARI I was not yet finished. The South African embassy did send a letter on September 3, 1964, asking if the AEC could fulfill South Africa's request.<sup>65</sup>

The delays continued on the shipment until the South African embassy forcefully raised the issue with the AEC on December 1, 1964. Pieter H.J.J. Van Vurren, the First Secretary of the South African embassy, contacted E. W. Rebol, the Chief of the Materials Branch of the Atomic Energy Agency's Division of International Affairs. Van Vurren informed Rebol that the AEB had wired Van Vurren asking that the enriched uranium for SAFARI I be sent as soon as possible in order to start up the reactor in mid-January 1964. The request was unusual in that the scientific attaché, R. G. Shuttleworth, usually handled these types of requests, not someone in Van Vurren's position. Van Vurren pressured Rebol to offer an explanation for why the fuel had been delayed. Rebol

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<sup>65</sup> Memorandum to Harriman from Kretzmann, Subject: South Africa, Release of Fuel Elements for Nuclear Reactor, December 14, 1964; Letter to Myron B. Kratzer from R. G. Shuttleworth, September 3, 1964, RG 59, Bureau of International Scientific and Technological Affairs, Central Files 1964-1966, South Africa 1964-65, 5, National Archives, College Park, MD.



evaded the question and said that he would check on the status of the shipment and contact Van Vurren when he learned something.<sup>66</sup>

Rebol contacted the State Department to determine when the uranium might be released. John Trevithick of the DOS Bureau of International Scientific and Technological Affairs informed Rebol that once all the African embassies and consulates had been informed by telegram of the pending delivery and given information placing the shipment within its proper context, the DOS would ask the White House to approve the shipment. Myron Kratzer, the AEC Director of the Division of International Affairs, understood that once this telegram was sent out the White House would approve releasing the fuel.<sup>67</sup>

Yet, authorization for the shipment continued to be delayed after the above information was released. The reason for this was that the White House's National Security Adviser, McGeorge Bundy, through his assistant Charles Johnson, requested a recommendation from Secretary of State Dean Rusk on releasing the enriched uranium. Bundy asked whether the United States should release it or continue to delay until a White House sponsored committee on the dangers of nuclear proliferation headed by Roswell Gilpatric issued its report or not ship the fuel.<sup>68</sup>

Within the State Department, there were divisions as to whether or not to release the uranium. The Bureau of International Scientific and Technological Affairs argued for the immediate release. Peter Hooper, from the department's Bureau of African Affairs

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<sup>66</sup> Memorandum to the Files from John Trevithick, Subject: South Africa Release of Fuel for SAFARI I, December 1, 1964, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Memorandum to Fredericks from Hooper, Subject: Basic Decision Urgently Required on South African Reactor Fuel, December 7, 1964, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.

Eastern and Southern African Affairs office, expressed the concern many in his office had of South Africa developing a nuclear weapons program and how much this reactor might help South Africa do this. He also argued that the announcement of the activation of a nuclear reactor by South Africa with American aid would harm America's relations with other African nations, particularly due to events in the Congo.<sup>69</sup>

Two months after the accession of Moïse Tshombe as prime minister of the Congo in June 1964, a rebel government formed in Stanleyville and fighting began between government and rebel forces. The rebels took European and American hostages in Stanleyville in an effort to prevent Tshombe's forces from defeating them. The United States supported Tshombe's government, and the rebels wanted America to end its assistance to Tshombe and impose a cease-fire in exchange for the hostages. Negotiations languished until reports surfaced of the execution of hostages in November 1964. American airplanes then transported Belgian paratroopers into Stanleyville on November 24, 1964. During the ensuing chaos, twenty Belgians, two Americans, and thousands of rebels were killed as Tshombe's forces, which included South African mercenaries, advanced into Stanleyville. African nations were furious at America's actions, which they saw as a neoimperialist attempt to gain control of the Congo. Under these circumstances, American policy makers were not eager to provide more reasons for African nations to criticize America or its policy toward Africa. The reactor, along with South African mercenaries in the Congo, would provide further evidence of close United States-South African relations and provoke severe criticism.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Terrence Lyons, "Keeping Africa off the Agenda," 256-59.

The delay of the fuel continued until DOS, AEC, and South African government officials met on December 14, 1964 to resolve the situation. Donald Sole of the South African Foreign Ministry asked why the shipment had been delayed, informing the American representatives present that some South African officials thought the delay was a “form of arm twisting” by the United States to get South Africa to accept IAEA safeguards on SAFARI I. He added that when South Africa chose an American reactor it was over the advice of the British who had warned that America was untrustworthy when it came to supplying uranium fuel. Sole claimed he had been a strong supporter of choosing America to help his nation acquire a reactor and would be “most unhappy if the fuel supply were delayed any longer.”<sup>71</sup>

British reservations about America supplying uranium fuel stemmed from Britain’s experience in working with the United States to construct a nuclear weapon during World War II. Though the United States did the most to develop the first nuclear weapon, Great Britain contributed valuable scientific information. Yet, once the first nuclear weapons were constructed America became reluctant to share information, wanting to maintain a monopoly for as long as possible. Britain’s frustration at trying to get help from the United States became so great that it stopped asking for assistance and built its nuclear weapons independent of American aid.<sup>72</sup>

Charles Thomas of the DOS Bureau of International Scientific and Technological Affairs Office, John Hall, the Assistant General Manager of the AEC, and Myron Kratzer

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<sup>71</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Discussions Concerning the Transfer of U.S. Bilateral Safeguards Under the U.S.-South African Agreement for Cooperation to the International Atomic Energy Agency, December 14, 1964, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.

<sup>72</sup> Septimus Paul, *Nuclear Rivals: Anglo-American Atomic Relations, 1941-1952* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2000), 1.

all reassured Sole that there was no connection between the fuel delay and negotiations to have South Africa adopt IAEA safeguards. Although the delays were due more to the presidential election and African reaction to the shipment, American preferences for IAEA safeguards, contrary to American assurances at the time, were connected to the fuel shipment. Officials, particularly MacKnight, had argued with J. Wayne Fredericks, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, that South Africa placing its program under IAEA inspection would reduce the negative reaction by African and Asian nations toward the fuel transfer because the shipment would appear to be a part of America's promotion of nuclear cooperation worldwide. The push for the IAEA safeguards could be interpreted as a part of this move, which had been promoted since the Kennedy administration. America had not pushed South Africa to join the IAEA in 1962, when South Africa negotiated to change a part of its nuclear cooperation agreement with the United States, but the political context had now changed.<sup>73</sup>

Sole agreed that there should be no connection between the shipment and the IAEA safeguards because both the bilateral agreement and the fuel lease agreement had been signed in 1957 and 1963. Sole again asked what the reason for the delay was. Thomas weakly responded that "there are many reasons for delays within a large government such as the U.S. Government and told him that every effort is being made to resolve the problem."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Discussions Concerning the Transfer of U.S. Bilateral Safeguards Under the U.S.-South African Agreement for Cooperation to the International Atomic Energy Agency, December 14, 1964; Memorandum to Fredericks from MacKnight, Subject: Request for AF Concurrence for SCI to Negotiate With South African on Turnover of Atomic Energy Controls to IAEA, August 26, 1964.

<sup>74</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Discussions Concerning the Transfer of U.S. Bilateral Safeguards Under the U.S.-South African Agreement for Cooperation to the International Atomic Energy Agency, December 14, 1964.

Sole, perhaps recognizing he was not going to get a straight answer about the delay, started to discuss the issue of the IAEA safeguards. He mentioned that he had brought up transferring inspections over to IAEA control at the June meeting of the South African Atomic Energy Board, but that such a move had been quickly rejected. The main reason Sole gave for the rejection involved the difference between American and IAEA inspectors. The AEB feared that if South Africa developed a novel reactor concept, IAEA inspectors would reveal it to the world while American inspectors would not. Sole also mentioned that calculations on fuel utilization and operation were complex and that IAEA inspectors were more likely than Americans to question these calculations, thereby causing delays and problems.<sup>75</sup> Essentially, Sole feared IAEA inspectors would use their position more for political purposes than for the scientific and technical purposes that inspection was supposed to involve.

Sole stated that because of these fears South Africa needed some incentives before agreeing to IAEA inspections. South Africa wanted a ten-year extension of its nuclear cooperation agreement with the United States beyond the termination date of 1967. South Africa also wanted a firm contract guaranteeing its reactor's fuel supply for the entire extension period. Thomas stated that an extension would be considered upon its own merits and could not be guaranteed; though, the ten-year extension proposed was well within present American policy.<sup>76</sup>

Kratzer argued that the agreement in place already pledged the United States to supplying South Africa with fuel, so that another agreement was not necessary unless South Africa pressed for one. Sole stated that South Africa wanted an "absolutely firm

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

commitment” from the United States. Kratzer mentioned that if South Africa wanted to buy the material instead of leasing it that could be arranged and would be as strong a commitment as the lease. Sole stated that supplying the reactor was important to his government and that South Africa did not want “any loop holes which would permit the U.S. to renege.”<sup>77</sup>

If it were to accede to using IAEA inspectors, South Africa also wanted a revision in the inspection process to allow it to choose from a panel those who would actually conduct inspections in South Africa. Sole mentioned that South Africa did not fear the present IAEA Director General or Inspector General responsible for inspections, but it would be impossible to know who would be holding these offices in the future and how they would treat South Africa. Thomas mentioned that the problem with establishing such a panel was that any nation under IAEA safeguards could then choose inspectors only from countries allied or friendly to it, thus hurting the integrity of the inspection process. Kratzer stated that America was committed to a fair inspection process and to reforms that meshed with the IAEA’s new safeguards system, which should relieve some of South Africa’s concerns.<sup>78</sup>

Sole’s requests show that South Africa wished to retain as much independence as possible from the IAEA while still agreeing to submit to inspections. The negotiations also demonstrate South Africa’s desire to secure enriched uranium for the reactor and the seriousness with which it engaged in these negotiations. Though South Africa appeared ready to submit to IAEA inspection with some conditions, American policy makers were still uncertain as to whether or not the fuel would be shipped to South Africa.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

In South Africa, developments proceeded steadily toward the activation of SAFARI I, which made the need for the uranium even greater. Allis-Chalmers had been scheduled to send a group of scientists to South Africa during the first week of January to help in the start up of the reactor, but the company believed that January activation of the reactor was unrealistic, and March became the new start up date, if the fuel arrived. The American embassy in South Africa noted growing tensions within the AEB and South Africa's Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) over the fuel issue. AEB's managing director, Dr. A.J.A. Roux, was disturbed by the inability to find out what more was needed to get the fuel shipped. He partially blamed Allis-Chalmers and Babcock & Wilcox, which actually had the enriched uranium, for not fully realizing the type of problems they would encounter with the AEC.<sup>79</sup>

Finally, American officials agreed to release the uranium. Harriman discussed the shipment with South African Foreign Minister Hilgard Muller, whom Harriman knew. Harriman told Muller that if America had not become involved in the Congo, South Africa would have had to, which meant both nations were "in the same boat in the Congo." Therefore, South Africa should understand America's concern that its delivery of enriched uranium to South Africa could outrage moderate Africans the United States was trying to calm down after events in the Congo. America was willing to ship the fuel if South Africa agreed to submit to IAEA controls, which would protect America "against too much African backlash." Delivery would occur in two months, a further delay

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<sup>79</sup> Telegram to Department of State from Pretoria, Pelendaba atomic reactor, December 18, 1964, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.

needed due to the reaction to events in the Congo. Harriman also insisted that the delivery occur with no publicity, and Muller agreed.<sup>80</sup>

Robert Komer, a staff member of the National Security Council, informed National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy of the above settlement. Komer had learned that the reactor had already been sold to South Africa and not delivering “a piddling amount of enriched fuel” would be a breach of contract. Komer also stated “we have already incurred the real onus of providing the reactor in the first place...the fuel itself is only a minor add-on.” Komer and Harriman agreed that the uranium shipment should be delayed further but that it would have to be sent “sooner or later.” Komer agreed with the settlement reached but was not enthused, stating “I’ll settle for the above way out of a box we shouldn’t have gotten into in the first place.”<sup>81</sup>

From the tone of Komer’s report, the South African government had accepted the new conditions on the nuclear fuel without any problems. Yet, the American embassy in South Africa reported a different version of the negotiations between Harriman and Muller that showed some irritation with the United States. After Carl von Hirschberg, the head of DFA’s Scientific Liaison Section, delivered the new fuel arrangements to Dr. Roux, he expressed his displeasure to John Miles, the departing Counselor of Economic Affairs at the American embassy, who was at the DFA paying his final respects. Von Hirschberg described the meeting between Muller and Harriman as one in which Harriman had delivered an ultimatum to South Africa to accept IAEA safeguards if it wanted the enriched uranium. Von Hirschberg described the action as if one of South

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<sup>80</sup> Memorandum to McGeorge Bundy from Robert Komer, December 23, 1964, National Security File-Country File, Africa, Union of South Memos and Miscellaneous 3 of 3 Vol. II 11/64-9/66, 78, Johnson Papers, Johnson Library.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.



Africa's "best friends... [had] taken to dishonoring contractual agreements apparently out of fear of the Afro-Asian bloc." He went on to question Miles as to why his country was "so sensitive to pressure of African States when we [United States] could afford to ignore their rantings." Miles responded that America was under far greater pressure by the international community on South Africa than the South Africans realized. He also tried to describe the new measures as not an ultimatum but as "practical measures providing [a] defensible position for US in UN when fuel supplied." Ambassador Joseph Satterthwaite described Von Hirschberg's comments as important because he was a South African official who had always been friendly and cooperative toward the United States. In a later telegram, Satterthwaite reported that Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd was concerned over America's willingness to alter contractual agreements, which he saw as inviolable.<sup>82</sup>

Though South African government officials were displeased with the way they had to acquire the nuclear fuel for SAFARI I, South Africa submitted the necessary forms at the IAEA Board of Governors meeting on February 23, 1965, and the United States, South Africa, and the IAEA signed an agreement on February 26, 1965, to place American materials going to SAFARI I under IAEA safeguards. Though South Africa had acquired the enriched uranium, most of its other requests were not granted. Nothing

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<sup>82</sup> Telegram to Department of State from Pretoria, December 26, 1964, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.; Telegram to Department of State from Pretoria, January 7, 1965, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.

in the agreement mentioned a guarantee of an extension of the 1957 accord or the nationality of the inspectors of SAFARI I.<sup>83</sup>

Authorization for the fuel finally occurred on February 10, 1965, the material arrived in South Africa on February 26, and SAFARI I went critical on March 18. A ceremony was held on August 5 to inaugurate the reactor. Representing the United States were Robert Eisenberg, the Counselor of Economic Affairs for the American embassy, and Dr. A. M. Weinberg, the Director of the Argonne National Laboratory in Chicago, who was present as a special guest. At the ceremony, Dr. Roux thanked the American scientists who had contributed significantly to the project, though in a report on the event American embassy officials noted that the tone of the speeches gave the impression that South African scientists, industry, and government foresight were largely responsible for SAFARI I. Embassy officials remarked that it might be expecting too much of South Africa to give much credit to governments abroad considering how embattled the country was over its apartheid policies. Moreover, America would not want South Africa to thank it too much for its assistance because it was better to keep a low profile under the existing international circumstances.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Fuel Delivery for South African Reactor, January 19, 1965, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.; Subcommittee on International Resources, Food, and Energy of the Committee on International Relations, "Resource Development in South Africa and U.S. Policy," House of Representatives, 94<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, May 25, June 8 and 9, 1976, 215-220.

<sup>84</sup> Telegram to Capetown from Department of State, February 10, 1965, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.; Telegram to Department of State from Capetown, SAFARI I Reactor, February 26, 1965, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.; Telegram to Department of State from Pretoria, Re: SAFARI I, March 19, 1965, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.; Telegram to Department of State from Pretoria, Subject: Inauguration of S.A. Atomic Reactor, July 22, 1965, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.; Telegram to Department of State from Pretoria, August 5, 1965, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966,

The fuel situation with SAFARI I demonstrates the concerns held by some within the State Department and the National Security Council staff at the White House about United States-South African nuclear cooperation. The timing of the shipment around the presidential election of 1964 and the Congo crisis helped to cause further consternation about the shipment. Trying to minimize this cooperation by having South Africa place its reactor under IAEA safeguards was a necessary but transparent ruse. Fortunately for the United States, the situation stabilized in the Congo so that America was not criticized when the fuel was delivered and the reactor went critical. The steps that American officials took in deemphasizing nuclear cooperation with South Africa may also have helped to minimize international attention.

Yet, American officials faced a new issue involving United States-South African nuclear relations because the 1957 nuclear cooperation agreement was due to expire in 1967, and South Africa was interested in an extension. South Africa informally requested on October 14, 1965, that negotiations begin on extending the 1957 nuclear cooperation agreement. Donald Sole, yet again, was the South African representative who approached AEC and DOS officials on the subject. He mentioned that it had been his government's "feeling" that agreeing to IAEA safeguards would go "hand-in-hand" with the approval of a ten-year extension. Sole noted that "events surrounding the delivery" of the fuel had overtaken the question of extension. Sole reported that Foreign

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Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.; Telegram to Department of State from Pretoria, August 6, 1965, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.

Minister Muller “attached considerable importance” to the extension of the cooperation agreement and wanted it accomplished as soon as possible.<sup>85</sup>

Sole noted that South Africa’s nuclear relationship with the United States was closer than with any other nation and that South Africa wanted it to continue. He recognized that beginning negotiations so much in advance of the scheduled expiration in August 1967 was unusual, arguing that South Africa’s “special circumstances” required beginning the talks early. He reluctantly explained, with the understanding that his remarks were off the record, that the SAFARI I nuclear fuel negotiations had caused some resentment of the United States within the South African government. Sole described how his government “on very short notice...had undertaken a crash effort” to transfer the safeguards to the IAEA. Furthermore, he “believed his government had cooperated wholeheartedly...but some scars” remained. Thomas suggested that if discussions were started in June or July 1966 there would be enough time to approve an extension before the expiration of the 1957 agreement.<sup>86</sup>

The “special circumstances” Sole mentioned probably referred to South Africa’s system of apartheid. Although conditions within South Africa were relatively quiet in 1965, the peace had come at the price of South Africa transforming itself into a police state with the imprisonment of leading activists and the formation of militant opposition groups that attacked South African government installations. Also, as more African nations became independent, United Nations interest in apartheid increased. Not only were annual condemnations of apartheid passed by the General Assembly, but also

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<sup>85</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: South Africa Agreement for Cooperation in Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy, October 14, 1965, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, AE6 Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy 1/1/65, Science Box 3055, National Archives, College Park, MD.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

special committees were formed to study the problem.<sup>87</sup> South Africa's continued decline in the international community would further strain United States-South African relations.

Meeting participants discussed minor modifications to the cooperation agreement as to the amount of ninety percent enriched uranium, two percent enriched uranium, and heavy water South Africa requested to continue to operate SAFARI I and conduct experiments. Thomas saw no difficulties with these amounts and suggested that informal talks could continue in London or Vienna when the Western Nuclear Suppliers meeting was set to meet next.<sup>88</sup>

In a February 11, 1966 memorandum to Harriman, Williams and Herman Pollack of the DOS Bureau of International Scientific and Technological Affairs noted that an important issue in the extension negotiations was the pending decision by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the status of South West Africa as a UN trust territory. South Africa's position had long been that the United Nations had no right to interfere with the administration of South West Africa because it had been the League of Nations that gave South Africa the authority to administer the territory.<sup>89</sup>

In 1960, Ethiopia and Liberia brought suit against South Africa before the ICJ to force it to withdraw from South West Africa and turn over supervision of the territory to

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<sup>87</sup> Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (Yale: Yale University Press, 2001), 211, 214.

<sup>88</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: South Africa Agreement for Cooperation in Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy, October 14, 1965.

<sup>89</sup> Memorandum to Harriman from Williams and Pollack, Subject: Proposed Initiation of Discussions with South African Government on Renewal of U.S. Atomic Energy Agreement, February 1, 1966, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science Thomas J. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation: the United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968*. (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1985), AE6 Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy 1/1/65, 3055, National Archives, College Park, MD.; 176.

the United Nations. A decision on this suit was anticipated sometime in 1966. Pollack and Williams noted that the South African government would like for the United States to commit to extending the nuclear cooperation agreement before the ICJ issued its decision. They argued that the United States should not commit itself either morally or legally to an extension before the court issued its decision. Still, they recognized that beginning preliminary negotiations with South Africa could place the United States in a better position to encourage South Africa to abide by the ICJ ruling if it ruled against South Africa.<sup>90</sup>

Another reason they gave for initiating preliminary negotiations was the influence South Africa had with Rhodesia. On November 11, 1965, Rhodesia's Prime Minister, Ian Smith, elected by only the white settlers of the country, had declared independence from Great Britain. Economic and military sanctions were implemented by Great Britain to force Smith's government to return to colonial status so that an independence could be negotiated that benefited all Rhodesians. South Africa was in an important position to force Smith into a settlement, yet it easily bypassed the sanctions due to its close proximity to Rhodesia, supplying both economic and diplomatic support. Thus, beginning preliminary negotiations on the nuclear cooperation agreement was also important in maintaining good relations with South Africa so that it might influence Rhodesia back off on independence.<sup>91</sup>

The final reason given by Pollack and Williams for beginning preliminary talks with South Africa was to use these discussions to encourage South Africa to institute

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Memorandum to Harriman from Williams and Pollack, Subject: Proposed Initiation of Discussions with South African Government on Renewal of U.S. Atomic Energy Agreement, February 1, 1966; Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 190, 196, 204.

adequate safeguards on its sales of uranium. American officials wanted to insure that these sales were under restrictions that prevented the further proliferation of nuclear weapons. In 1964, South Africa negotiated a contract to sell uranium to France. France, a growing nuclear power, and South Africa, the third largest supplier of uranium in the west, agreed to bypass IAEA safeguards. South Africa sold the uranium to France with the understanding that it could be used for either peaceful or military purposes, 'free usage' of the uranium that concerned American officials.<sup>92</sup>

Pollack and Williams observed that besides the United States, Canada was South Africa's biggest competitor in uranium sales. Canada had adopted a policy, publicly announced in its parliament, of selling uranium only under IAEA safeguards. South Africa had not made a similar public declaration but privately had followed this policy with the exception of its deal with France. Pollack and Williams argued that until South Africa agreed to IAEA safeguards on the uranium it sold to France, commercial pressures could cause Canada to recant its policy and sell uranium without safeguards. They argued that this issue was serious enough for the United States to use whatever leverage it had with South Africa on extending the nuclear cooperation agreement to force South Africa to agree to sell only safeguarded uranium.<sup>93</sup> With the issue of Rhodesia, uranium safeguards, and the ICJ judgment in the background, preliminary talks began in February.

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<sup>92</sup> Memorandum to Harriman from Williams and Pollack, Subject: Proposed Initiation of Discussions with South African Government on Renewal of U.S. Atomic Energy Agreement, February 1, 1966; Chantal Cuddumbey, "France and South Africa," in *Paris, Pretoria and the African Continent: The International Relations of States and Societies in Transition*, eds. Chris Alden and Jean-Pascal Daloz (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 69, 70.

<sup>93</sup> Memorandum to Harriman from Williams and Pollack, Subject: Proposed Initiation of Discussions with South African Government on Renewal of U.S. Atomic Energy Agreement, February 1, 1966.

On February 22, 1966, AEC and DOS officials began negotiations with Donald Sole after the Western Nuclear Suppliers meeting. American officials presented a nuclear cooperation draft to Sole and emphasized that South Africa's extending safeguards to its uranium exports would be a "major consideration" in America extending the agreement. America was not asking in the draft for a formal pledge from South Africa to follow Canada's lead in imposing restrictions on its uranium exports. Sole explained that many South Africans remained unconvinced of the sincerity and dependability of Canadian regulations and that South Africa's contract with France was the only contract it had to sell uranium that included no IAEA safeguards, but that it did include safeguards from EURATOM. EURATOM was a Western European organization that promoted the peaceful development of nuclear technology. American officials noted that these restrictions could be lifted unless the material was specifically pledged for peaceful uses only, which the South African uranium was not. The meeting ended with Sole stating that he now understood the American position better and would convey everything he learned to his government. American officials were optimistic that South Africa would place its uranium under IAEA safeguards.<sup>94</sup>

On April 13, 1966, Johan S. F. Botha of the South African embassy met with AEC and DOS officials again and provided his government's response to the draft. The only provision South Africa wished to change was that limiting the amount of enriched uranium South Africa could have to what was necessary to load reactors and reactor experiments and to keep them in operation. John Hall of the AEC noted that this was the

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<sup>94</sup> Telegram to Department of State from Vienna, Subject: South African Policy on Nuclear Safeguards, February 22, 1966, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.



first time a nation had ever wanted to buy additional quantities of uranium. The substantial cost of buying large supplies of uranium usually prevented nations from buying substantial amounts. Nevertheless, he agreed to find out if it was possible.<sup>95</sup>

The American negotiators were more interested in South Africa's policy toward uranium sales. When questioned about whether or not the policy had been changed, Botha responded that he knew discussions had been held on the subject in South Africa. He also wanted to clarify the accuracy of his impression that unless South Africa adhered to safeguards on its uranium sales no nuclear cooperation extension with the United States could occur. Donovan Zook, Officer in Charge at the DOS Bureau of International Scientific and Technological Affairs Atomic Energy Office, could not categorically say this was correct, but he acknowledged that it was "a reasonable interpretation." Questioned by Botha whether the safeguards should apply to all countries, Zook replied that America wanted the "widest possible application of safeguards."<sup>96</sup>

Botha explained that uranium played a more important part in South Africa's economy than it did in Canada's. South Africa had no problem with submitting its uranium sales to safeguards, as long as all other suppliers did so as well. South Africa did not want to lose an economic advantage if it placed restrictions on its nuclear exports, which it feared would happen if "smaller producers" were not subject to the same regulations. Hall asked who these producers were, because few other nations had surplus uranium to sell. America had reached an understanding with all other major suppliers and tentative agreements with many minor suppliers. South Africa was the only

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<sup>95</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Draft Amendment to Agreement for Cooperation between South African and United States Governments, April 13, 1966, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

significant nation left without such a policy, and it would be a major political coup if South Africa announced it was placing safeguards on its uranium exports.<sup>97</sup> Such an announcement would demonstrate South Africa's commitment to nuclear nonproliferation and willingness to work with the international community.

South Africa's obstinacy about uranium safeguards became clear during the June 7-9, 1966, negotiations. Donald Sole once again represented South Africa, as did A.J.A. Roux, the Director of South Africa's Atomic Energy Board. Roux and Sole informed the American negotiators that they would recommend to the South African government that except for sales to the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, all future contracts for sale or lease of South African nuclear materials would be subject to IAEA or equivalent EURATOM safeguards. The reason those three nations were exempted was because these nations already had nuclear weapons and selling additional uranium unconditionally to them would not contribute to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. South Africa had no desire to increase the number of nuclear weapons nations, citing its refusal to sell uranium to France before the detonations of its first nuclear weapon and that South Africa did not plan on entering into any more uranium contracts with France. Yet, South Africa did not want its sale policy to discriminate against France and stressed that France's domestic uranium production was sufficient for its military program and that South Africa's deliveries were used only for civilian programs.<sup>98</sup>

American negotiators countered that there were some indications that France's nuclear weapons program did depend on uranium imported from abroad. They were also

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Telegram to Pretoria from Department of State, June 27, 1966, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.

disappointed in South Africa's proposal and encouraged Roux and Sole to apply the safeguards equally toward all nations, whether they had nuclear weapons or not. The American negotiators pressed Roux and Sole for the reasons for the exceptions within the proposed uranium sales policy.<sup>99</sup>

The South Africans answered that they feared that the "rest of the world" would impose a boycott on South African products some time in the future and that South Africa needed to formulate contingency plans for such a development. Sole explained that some uranium markets might be closed to South Africa but France was unlikely to do so, and that to protect South Africa's long-term interests it would need to preserve access to the French uranium market. American officials asked why South Africa thought the French uranium market would be open to it if sanctions were imposed upon South Africa. Sole responded that past experience supported such an assumption.<sup>100</sup>

Sole's reference to past experience involved France's actions toward the 1963 United Nations arms embargo against South Africa. On August 2, 1963, the United States led the way toward pushing through a voluntary arms ban against South Africa in the United Nations. France had voted for the embargo but had decided to limit its restrictions against South Africa only to weapons that could be used for internal repression and continued to sell weaponry to South Africa that was necessary for defending itself and the important Cape of Good Hope sea route. South Africa was able to continue buying the weapons it needed, and France enjoyed a lucrative exchange that it did not want to abandon.<sup>101</sup> If another voluntary embargo was placed against South Africa regarding

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Chantal Cuddumbey, "France and South Africa," 70.

sales of uranium, there was ample evidence that France would continue to trade with South Africa.

American reactions to South Africa including France with the United States and the United Kingdom in the exemption of uranium safeguards are best understood within the context of Franco-American relations in the 1960s. With the ascent of Charles de Gaulle as president of France, France's nuclear program accelerated with the detonation of an atomic bomb on February 13, 1960. De Gaulle wanted to use France's nuclear power to rebuild France's international prestige and to replace the bipolar American-Soviet system established after World War II with a multipolar international system in which France could play a major role. As a result, clashes occurred between the United States and France over nuclear issues as France struggled to assert itself and the United States fought to control the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Issues regarding the continued sale of enriched uranium, submarine reactors, and nuclear submarines exacerbated tensions between the two nations as the United States began to end or renege on sales of such equipment as France developed a nuclear program independent of American influence.<sup>102</sup> French access to uranium without any limitations placed France further outside American influence, which explains why American negotiators urged South Africa to include safeguards on its sales of uranium to France.

During the June 7-9, 1966, meeting, Roux and Sole had informed the American negotiators that South Africa needed to know whether the extension would occur by September 1966, because if it was not to occur, South Africa would need to make other arrangements to continue its nuclear program. Throughout July 1966, negotiations

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<sup>102</sup> Wilfrid Kohl, *French Nuclear Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 103, 358, 363, 367.

between the two nations stalled over the nuclear cooperation agreement and the uranium safeguards issue. Sole and Roux both met with the American ambassador to South Africa, William Rountree, about these issues, in which Roux expressed his disappointment that the two issues had been connected.<sup>103</sup>

Sole warned that if the United States made an ultimatum requiring the acceptance of safeguards in order for the cooperation agreement to be renewed, South Africa would have to decline even though it desired to have the agreement extended. Sole described how his government had tried to influence French policy but insisted that South Africa could not “be used as [an] instrument of pressure against France [because of] US displeasure [toward] French actions and policies.”<sup>104</sup>

On July 18, 1966, one factor that complicated and potentially could have derailed negotiations was eliminated when the ICJ ruled in an eight-to-seven decision that Liberia and Ethiopia did not have sufficient legal cause to bring their lawsuit against South Africa. The ICJ did not make any comment on South Africa’s occupation of South West Africa. State Department officials, African diplomats, and United Nations representatives were surprised by the decision. Before the announcement, DOS officials had argued that the United States should not obligate itself toward extension until the ICJ

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<sup>103</sup> Telegram to Pretoria from Department of State, June 27, 1966; Memorandum to Stephen Low from John Trevithick, Subject: South Africa: Status of Discussions on Extension of Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy Agreement and South African Policy, July 26, 1966, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.; Telegram to Department of State from Pretoria, South African Uranium, July 7, 1966, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.

<sup>104</sup> Telegram to Department of State from Pretoria, July 7, 1966, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.

rendered its decision, so that America could evaluate the South African reaction.<sup>105</sup> With the ICJ ruling in favor of South Africa, one obstacle South Africa faced toward getting the nuclear cooperation agreement extended was removed. The equal, if not larger, obstacle of uranium safeguards still hindered negotiations.

Negotiations continued for the rest of the summer and early fall of 1966 but no agreement was concluded. In September, G. Edward Clark, the DOS Country Director for Southeastern Africa, reported to the department's Director of African Affairs, Joseph Palmer, a new proposal from Herman Pollack regarding extending nuclear cooperation. He noted that "we've continued to thrash around on Atomic Energy agreements and this is SCI's [Bureau of International Scientific and Technological Affairs] latest compromise." Clark explained that Herman Pollack suggested South Africa be offered a two-year extension instead of a ten-year extension. Clark was not sure that the South African government would agree to this. Yet, the two-year extension would let the United States demonstrate that it was committed to maintaining nuclear cooperation with South Africa and allow it to maintain influence with South Africa's nuclear program. A two-year extension would also give the United States and South Africa more time to

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<sup>105</sup> Memorandum to Johnson from Meeker, Subject: Renewal of United States-South Africa Atomic Energy Agreement, June 1, 1966, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.; Memorandum to Pollack from Fredericks, Subject: Renewal of Atomic Energy Agreement with South Africa, June 3, 1966, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.; Memorandum to Strong from Gustafson, Subject: Renewal of Atomic Energy Agreement with South Africa, June 3, 1966, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.; Memorandum to Pollack from Sisco, Subject: Renewal of Atomic Energy Agreement with South Africa, June 6, 1966, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.

negotiate uranium safeguards. Once this issue was settled, the cooperation agreement could be extended for the full ten years.<sup>106</sup>

On December 19, 1966, John Trevithick presented the two-year extension proposal to Johan S. F. Botha and explained the reasons why it was being offered. Botha said he would transmit the agreement and the substance of Trevithick's comments to his government, he predicted that South African officials would be disappointed with the offer of only a two-year instead of a ten-year extension. In response to Botha's inquiry on whether this was the first time the United States had offered a short extension to a nuclear cooperation agreement, Trevithick responded that the United States had done this several times with countries such as the United Kingdom. He also noted that in some of these cases only one-year extensions were offered but that once the disputed issue had been settled longer agreements were initiated.<sup>107</sup>

As 1967 began, the prospect of the nuclear cooperation agreement being extended appeared remote. American and South African negotiators were both adamant regarding their respective positions on uranium safeguards with little room for compromise or negotiation being evident until March when the situation changed significantly.

Negotiations regarding the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) caused American

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<sup>106</sup> Memorandum to Palmer from Clark, Circular 175 Request for Authority to Negotiate and Conclude an Amendment Extending the Agreement for Cooperation Between the US and SA on the Civil Uses of Atomic Energy, November 16, 1966, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.; Memorandum to Rusk from Pollack, November 7, 1966, Circular 175 Request for Authority to Negotiate and Conclude an Amendment Extending the Agreement for Cooperation Between the US and SA on the Civil Uses of Atomic Energy, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.

<sup>107</sup> Telegram to Pretoria from Department of State, Subject: Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation, December 21, 1966, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-1966, Science, AE Atomic Energy (GEN) 4-21-64, 3070, National Archives, College Park, MD.

policy makers to change their stance regarding South African uranium sales and clearing the way for approval of the extension agreement.

The Kennedy administration became worried about nuclear proliferation when nuclear war appeared to be a real possibility during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. One result of this crisis was the August 1963 implementation of the Limited Test Ban Treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union, which prohibited testing of nuclear weapons above the ground, in the atmosphere, in outer space, or underwater, but did allow for the testing of nuclear weapons underground. The treaty started the process for both the United States and the Soviet Union to consider seriously steps for averting nuclear warfare and nuclear proliferation.<sup>108</sup>

The Gilpatric report of 1964 had warned of the dangers of nuclear proliferation and argued that the time was fast approaching when America could do little to stop the spread of nuclear weapons to other nations. The Johnson administration responded to this report by submitting a draft of the NPT at the August 1965 Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Conference in Geneva. The draft treaty called for nations with nuclear weapons not to aid nonnuclear nations in developing them. It also called for those nations that had not yet developed nuclear weapons to renounce their intentions to build them.<sup>109</sup>

Negotiations began between the United States, the Soviet Union, and other nations on various components of the NPT and continued until the completion of the

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<sup>108</sup> Thomas G. Paterson, "Fixation with Cuba: The Bay of Pigs, Missile Crisis, and Covert War Against Castro," in *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy 1961-1963*, ed. Thomas G. Paterson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 152.

<sup>109</sup> Peter Pringle and James Spigelman, *The Nuclear Barons* (New York: Holt, Rinhart, and Winston, 1981), 299-300.



treaty in 1968. One aspect of the NPT that many nations objected to was the uranium safeguard component, which would apply IAEA safeguards to a nation's nuclear program. The safeguards included inspections to insure that no nuclear material was being diverted to make nuclear weapons. Belgium, Italy, West Germany, and Japan, in particular, objected, arguing they would harm their emerging nuclear industries because they would be at an economic disadvantage compared to such nations, as the Soviet Union, which as a current nuclear power was not required to place its industries under safeguards. AEC Chairman Glenn Seaborg argued these nations were more concerned with American than Soviet competition. To placate their concerns, American negotiators offered to place American facilities dedicated to peaceful nuclear activities under IAEA safeguards.<sup>110</sup>

The concerns about IAEA safeguards during NPT negotiations occurred in early 1967 when the United States changed its policy toward South Africa. In his recommendation to approve the nuclear cooperation extension, Herman Pollack mentioned how these events had influenced the policy change, noting that during NPT negotiations America's stance on safeguards had "undergone a considerable evolution within the last few months." Pollack argued that the American policy change "diminishes the significance" of America's objections to South Africa's uranium sales.<sup>111</sup> South Africa's standing policy on IAEA safeguards appeared sufficient to American officials in light of the difficulties they had in getting other allies with whom America

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<sup>110</sup> Glenn T. Seaborg and Benjamin S. Loeb, *Arms Control in the Johnson Years* (Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1987), 297-98, 463-64.

<sup>111</sup> Memorandum to Rusk from Pollack, Subject: Circular 175 Request for Authority to Negotiate and Conclude an Amendment Extending the Agreement for Cooperation Between the US and SA on the Civil Uses of Atomic Energy, March 27, 1967, *National Security Archive: South Africa*, Mokoena, Kenneth, ed. (Alexandria, VA: Chadwyck-Healey, 1991), no. 00333.

had stronger relations to apply safeguards toward their own uranium programs. Thus, a policy decision on nonproliferation issues involving some of America's leading allies contributed to a change in policy that affected United States-South African relations and remove a major obstacle in extending nuclear relations with South Africa.

Pollack also argued that an offer of a two-year instead of a ten-year extension made no sense given America's changed policy stance and that continued insistence on a two-year extension could be interpreted by the South Africans as applying political considerations to nuclear cooperation, which the United States had not done toward nations with which it had friendly relations. The country's influence with South Africa would be undermined by an insistence on a two-year agreement especially because, contrary to Pollack's earlier prediction, South Africa did not support such a proposal.<sup>112</sup>

Pollack also observed that South Africa had consistently supported most of America's international nuclear policies while the French had not and that now it appeared to be "moving rapidly into the French orbit." He noted that as France and South Africa continued to cooperate more closely regarding nuclear policy, America's influence on South Africa would decrease.<sup>113</sup> South Africa's position regarding uranium safeguards and South African government officials' statements that they felt France would continue trade if a boycott was imposed upon South Africa underscore Pollack's point that French-South African relations were becoming stronger.

Extending nuclear cooperation with South Africa would also allow for the continuance of IAEA safeguards on American-supplied materials, which would end otherwise. American cooperation and IAEA safeguards, Pollack argued, helped keep

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

South Africa's nuclear program open to the United States; without an extension American accessibility to South Africa's nuclear program could easily be denied.<sup>114</sup>

Finally, the renewal of the cooperation agreement was urgent because South African officials had indicated that unless there were clear indications of an extension by the end of March the nuclear fuel contract between the United States and South Africa for SAFARI I would be terminated. Pollack maintained that not extending the nuclear cooperation agreement with South Africa would "adversely affect U.S. interests." It would also hinder American objectives regarding international safeguards and American "attempts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons...to still more countries."<sup>115</sup>

On March 31, 1967, Foy D. Kohler of the Office of Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs authorized the negotiation for a ten-year extension of the nuclear cooperation agreement. He mentioned that he had made the decision after meeting with various officials within his department and from the AEC, and on April 26, 1967, a ten-year extension was finally presented to Johan S. F. Botha.<sup>116</sup>

Benjamin Read of the DOS Executive Secretariat explained the details of the extension to White House Special Adviser Walt Rostow. In recommending extension, Read mentioned that the IAEA Board of Governors had agreed to extension of its safeguards on American material in South Africa at its June 15, 1967, meeting and that none of the twenty members of the board, including Ghana and the Soviet Union, had raised any objections to the agreement or America's nuclear relationship with South

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Memorandum to Rusk from Kohler, Subject: Extension of Agreement with South Africa on Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy, March 31, 1967, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1967-1969, Science, AE Safr, 1/1/67, 2916, National Archives, College Park, MD.; Telegram to Capetown from Department of State, April 26, 1967, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1967-1969, Science, AE Safr, 1/1/67, 2916, National Archives, College Park, MD.

Africa. Rostow concurred with Read's assessment and recommended to President Johnson that the nuclear cooperation agreement be extended. Rostow noted that it was a "tough decision...but on balance necessary," and Johnson agreed with no comment.<sup>117</sup>

The final terms included some minor modifications from the 1957 agreement. Article III permitted authorized nongovernment parties and private industry to transfer nuclear material to South Africa, but the total amount of enriched uranium still had to be below five hundred kilograms. Article IV allowed for uranium enriched at more than twenty percent to be sold to South Africa if there was a justified technical or economic reason. Article IV also allowed for comparability of prices for domestic and foreign enriched uranium and enrichment services and allowed the establishment of enrichment services by the United States for South African uranium after 1968, which had been discussed during the negotiations on safeguards for SAFARI I's fuel. Finally, if IAEA safeguards were terminated on SAFARI I's fuel, both sides agreed to negotiate another standard for safeguards, and if no agreement could be reached on new safeguards, the cooperation agreement would be abrogated.<sup>118</sup>

On July 8, 1967, the United States signed an extension of the Agreement of Cooperation Concerning the Civil Uses of Atomic Energy with the government of South Africa. In Vienna on July 26, 1967, the United States, South Africa, and the IAEA signed an extension of IAEA safeguards over American nuclear materials sent to South Africa,

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<sup>117</sup> Memorandum to Walt Rostow from Benjamin Read, Subject: Extension of Nuclear Energy Agreement with South Africa, July 5, 1967, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1967-1969, Science, AE Safr, 1/1/67, 2916, National Archives, College Park, MD.; "Memorandum from the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson," Washington, July 10, 1967, *FRUS, 1964-1968. Volume XXIV* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1999), 1082.

<sup>118</sup> Letter to President Johnson from AEC Chairman Glenn T. Seaborg, July 12, 1967, National Security File-Subject File, Agreements for Cooperation Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy 1966-67, Vol. 2, 35, Johnson Papers, Johnson Library.

including SAFARI's fuel.<sup>119</sup> Once the uranium safeguards issue was overcome, the extension of the nuclear cooperation agreement for the most part proceeded unimpeded. The one voice of dissent on the cooperation extension was United Nations Ambassador Arthur Goldberg, who continued to criticize the agreement even after the uranium safeguards issue had been settled.

Goldberg's initial concerns involved the negative criticism he believed the United States would face from signing the agreement with South Africa. In March 1967, he objected to signing a ten-year agreement but not a two-year, arguing that it would be impossible to prevent the knowledge of a ten-year extension from becoming public. Goldberg feared that the complex technical reasons for renewal, though legitimate, would be lost to many critics.<sup>120</sup>

Goldberg went on to maintain that no matter what American officials said about "keeping [a] nuclear leash on SA," the United States was helping South Africa toward developing an "independent nuclear capability" with the extension of nuclear cooperation. Goldberg also noted that there were several weaknesses in the bilateral agreement that allowed South Africa to develop nuclear weapons without American assistance or knowledge. The extension did not make America the only supplier of enriched uranium to South Africa and South Africa had not agreed to forego developing nuclear weapons under the extension. The extension only prevented South Africa from

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<sup>119</sup> "Treaty Information-Current Actions-Bilateral-South Africa," *The Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. 57, No. 1471, September 4, 1967, 309; Agreement among the International Atomic Energy Agency, The Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Government of the United States for the Application of Safeguards of 26 July 1967 text," July 26, 1967 *National Security Archive: South Africa*, no. 0347.

<sup>120</sup> Telegram to Department of State from United Nations, Subject; Renewal of Atomic Bilateral with South Africa, March 31, 1967, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1967-1969, Science, AE Safr, 1/1/67, 2916, National Archives, College Park, MD.

using American-supplied materials if it wished to develop nuclear weapons and IAEA safeguards were only imposed upon American supplied-materials and facilities. The agreement did not specify that South Africa place its sales of uranium under IAEA safeguards, though Goldberg noted that South Africa had agreed to do this in a separate arrangement. Overall, Goldberg argued that it was not clear that the United States would be getting much of a guarantee on nuclear safeguards or nonproliferation from renewal of the cooperation agreement.<sup>121</sup>

Goldberg also expressed concern about America's general policy toward South Africa in a telegram to Secretary of State Dean Rusk a few weeks later. He noted that several decisions were being made "in a piecemeal fashion [that] have effect of producing important changes in US policy toward South and Southern Africa." These changes included the sales of spare parts for military equipment, the guarantee of an Export-Import Bank loan for diesel locomotives, and the extension of the nuclear cooperation agreement.<sup>122</sup>

Goldberg's observation that America's overall policy toward South Africa was changing was inaccurate. America had cooperated with South Africa in a variety of fields, including nuclear, before the Johnson administration, though some aspects of cooperation with South Africa were considered for termination along with nuclear cooperation, such as Department of Defense and NASA tracking stations. Just as nuclear

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Telegram to Department of State from United Nations, Subject: US Policy toward Southern Africa, September 25, 1967, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1967-1969, Science, AE Safr, 1/1/67, 2916, National Archives, College Park, MD.

cooperation with South Africa was continued, America's tracking stations remained with alternate sites to be developed in case they were needed.<sup>123</sup>

Although policy did not change, there had been a shift in the internal debate over cooperation with South Africa. Serious discussions had occurred about ending cooperation, including nuclear, with South Africa but nothing substantial came of these discussions, before they ended. One reason for this shift involved a change in Johnson administration personnel who developed policy. The DOS African Bureau came under the direction of Joseph Palmer beginning in March 1966, when G. Mennen Williams resigned to run for the Senate from Michigan. Palmer was a career diplomatic officer who regularized policy and embarked on few new initiatives on Africa or South Africa. Williams had been more of a reformer and crusader who often criticized South Africa. Noncareer officers within the State Department were more likely to challenge established policies than career officers. The change in the African Bureau during the Johnson administration illustrates this, as the status quo of American relations with South Africa was maintained once a career officer became bureau head.<sup>124</sup>

Changes in personnel also helped to prevent major changes in United States-South African nuclear policy as a number of NSC and DOS staff personnel who had criticized South African policies or argued against extension left the Johnson administration. Ulric Haynes of the NSC had argued that Johnson's civil rights policy and his foreign policy had to be compatible, but he left the NSC in 1966. Jesse

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<sup>123</sup> Memorandum to Rostow from Saunders, Subject: SIG Meeting on Southern Africa Paper, December 3, 1968, NSF-Files of Edward K. Hamilton, South Africa 1 of 2, 3, Johnson Papers, Johnson Library.

<sup>124</sup> Terrence Lyons, "Keeping Africa off the Agenda," 250, 272; Anthony Lake, "Caution and Concern: The Making of American Policy Toward South Africa, 1946-1971," (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1974), 188.

MacKnight, who first reported on the pending SAFARI I fuel shipment, left the DOS in November 1965.<sup>125</sup> Though these men were never in a position to stop or prevent extension themselves, they were in positions to at least raise critical issues, and their departure often left a void for those who argued against closer South African relations. This void of dissent especially became evident as the Johnson administration became increasingly preoccupied with the Vietnam War and the importance of American strategic and economic interests in South Africa prevailed over concerns about apartheid.

Thus, America's nuclear cooperation relations with South Africa during the Johnson administration demonstrated how issues not directly related to South Africa affected relations between the two countries. Concerns about the economic effect of the barter agreement by the American diamond industry had stopped the implementation of the agreement. American policy makers' troubles in negotiating with European and Asian allies caused the United States to modify its stance on uranium safeguards, allowing for the extension of America's nuclear cooperation agreement with South Africa. American concerns about nuclear proliferation and anticipated negative reaction by African and Asian countries caused American officials to force South Africa to apply IAEA safeguards on SAFARI I's fuel.

The nuclear cooperation agreement also illustrates that the Johnson administration was paying greater attention to United States-South African relations, in general, compared to the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, in which diplomatic relations had been conducted with little to any thought as to international or public reaction. The Kennedy administration was not concerned about the public or international attention its

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<sup>125</sup> "Person," *FRUS, 1964-1968, Volume XXIV* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1999), xxxv, xxxvi.



nuclear relations with South Africa might garner. Yet, the Johnson administration's experience with United States-South African nuclear relations demonstrated that closer scrutiny was being taken of general relations between the two countries by the international community and within the United States. This scrutiny would intensify in future administrations.

The debate over the nuclear cooperation agreement shows that the original concern of trying to use cooperation as a means of restricting another country's nuclear program for peaceful purposes was becoming more important as worries about nuclear proliferation grew. Yet, the weaknesses of trying to influence another country's nuclear program were also evident. Ambassador Goldberg's comments clearly pointed out some of these weaknesses, as did America's failure to influence South Africa to follow the safeguards measures it advocated. Still, the arguments in favor of maintaining the nuclear cooperation agreement in order to have any influence over South Africa's nuclear program were equally valid. Thus, America found itself in the awkward position of helping an ally with its nuclear program while trying to restrain it.

The Kennedy and Johnson administrations occurred at a time when racial concerns grew in importance both within the United States and the world. With decolonization rapidly underway, the number of nations criticizing South Africa's apartheid policy grew as well. When South Africa instigated suppression instead of reform regarding race issues beginning in 1960, the United States was placed in a difficult position. The United States was moving to reform its own racial policies while South Africa was not, yet, South Africa was a dependable ally with whom the United States had strong ties. Moreover, disengaging from South Africa would be difficult and

possibly counterproductive if the United States was to try and influence South Africa to reform. Even so, continuing relations with South Africa would involve a juggling act between justifying cooperation with South Africa to other nations and not alienating South Africa while doing so. As the Nixon administration became the next one to face the juggling act, it would have to deal with another nuclear cooperation extension and the realization that South Africa was approaching the point of being able to develop nuclear weapons.

## CHAPTER 4

### NIXON-FORD ADMINISTRATIONS: EVOLVING NUCLEAR RELATIONS

When Richard Nixon began his presidency in 1969, there were some indications that his policies toward South Africa would be more accommodating than the approaches of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Nixon was vice-president under Eisenhower when South Africa enjoyed particularly good relations with the United States. Nixon's credentials as an anticommunist stretched back to the days of McCarthyism when he led attacks against such suspected communists as Alger Hiss. The apartheid government of South Africa had a strong record against communism and had been a dependable Cold War ally for America, even supporting the internationally unpopular Vietnam War. Nixon's lack of interest in Africa benefited United States-South African relations as President Kennedy's knowledge of the area had led to increased criticism of South Africa's racial policies.

Many of these expectations were realized as the Nixon administration became more concerned with the Vietnam war and through détente the relaxing tensions with China and the Soviet Union. In fact, the Nixon administration adopted a position of improving relations with South Africa through increased cooperation instead of confrontation in at least some areas. National Security Study Memorandum 39 (NSSM39) fully articulated this policy and guided the Nixon administration's approach toward South Africa. On August 9, 1974, President Nixon resigned due to his

involvement in the Watergate scandal and was replaced by Gerald Ford whose foreign policy experience was limited. Ford retained Henry Kissinger as his secretary of state, who had also been Nixon's secretary of state and National Security Adviser, thus ensuring consistency in foreign policy. Yet, international events occurred that caused changes in America's approach toward South Africa even before Nixon's resignation.

When the April 25, 1974, coup in Portugal initiated a process of decolonization in the white-minority-ruled nations of Mozambique and Angola, South Africa suddenly found itself surrounded by hostile African-ruled nations, with only Rhodesia as an ally in maintaining a white-minority government over a black majority. The Ford administration had to modify its policy toward South Africa and southern Africa because NSSM39 was based on the assumption that white-minority rule would always exist in southern Africa. The independence of Angola and Mozambique increased pressure on Rhodesia and South Africa to accede to majority rule.

India's May 1974 explosion of an atomic device caused increased concerns by the international community and Congress about nuclear proliferation and initiated further changes in America's relations with South Africa. Congressional interest, in particular, forced the Nixon and especially the Ford administration to defend America's nuclear cooperation with all nations.

The nuclear programs of many of America's allies accelerated during the 1970s. India's decision to detonate a nuclear device occurred due to a convergence of international and domestic factors. Indian scientists had honed their nuclear engineering skills and could now construct a nuclear device. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and members of the Indian Atomic Energy Commission thought a nuclear detonation would

help encourage confidence among Indians as a nation and in their prime minister. Trying to improve the image of the prime minister became increasingly important as economic problems, caused by higher oil prices due to the 1973 Yom Kippur war, led to political instability that plagued India in the months preceding the nuclear explosion. In addition, the defeat of India by China in the 1962 Sino-Indian border war continued to influence the decision makers in New Delhi. India's victory over Pakistan in 1971 also made it want to further demonstrate its prowess on the sub-continent. Thus a combination of domestic and international influences propelled India toward becoming a nuclear power.<sup>1</sup>

The United States and Canada took a critical stance toward India's nuclear test. Canada especially was displeased as it thought India had illegally diverted nuclear fuel from a research reactor Canada had provided the fuel for. Canada suspended all nuclear cooperation with India and the United States suspended sending fuel to the nuclear power plant at Tarapur built by General Electric. Though India regretted losing American and Canadian support for its nuclear program, its nuclear program became much more self-sufficient.<sup>2</sup> The situation in the 1970s with India demonstrates that the United States lost significant influence over an ally's nuclear program once it advanced to a certain technological sophistication. A similar situation would occur with South Africa during this same time, except whether or not it detonated a nuclear device remains unknown.

India's 1971 victory over Pakistan caused it to step up its nuclear program in order to bolster its security. The loss of East Pakistan, which became independent Bangladesh, plunged Pakistan's economy into chaos. Furthermore, Pakistan felt that the

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<sup>1</sup> George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1999),161; Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions since 1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 104.

United States had not done enough to help prevent the fragmentation of Pakistan by India. Thus nuclear weapons could provide security against the further disintegration of Pakistan and Pakistan would not have to rely on allies for help whose reliability was questionable. Pakistan signed a contract with France in 1974 to acquire a plutonium reprocessing plant and continued to work with France to procure a nuclear reactor. Pakistan's nuclear activities eventually garnered the attention of the United States but it would be the Carter administration, not the Nixon-Ford administrations, which would deal with this new proliferation threat.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore the Nixon-Ford administrations would have to deal with a world that had blossomed with nuclear-weapons states or consisted of nations with nuclear technology but no weapons. The United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, France and China all had detonated nuclear weapons. Canada, West Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium, and Japan had developed nuclear technology to the point of being able to manufacture a nuclear weapon if they so desired. All of these nations to varying degrees exported their nuclear capability abroad through uranium enrichment services, technological transfers, or through other areas of nuclear cooperation. Besides South Africa, Pakistan, and India, South Korea, Iraq, and Taiwan started to develop a nuclear deterrent largely due to security concerns.<sup>4</sup> Thus, United States-South African nuclear cooperation during the Nixon-Ford years occurred in an atmosphere rife with the proliferation of nuclear nations.

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<sup>2</sup> Ganguly, *Conflict Unending*, 104-05.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 105-06.

<sup>4</sup> Gary T. Gardner, *Nuclear Nonproliferation: A Primer* (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 1994), 37-39-41; Walton L. Brown, "Presidential Leadership and U.S. Nonproliferation Policy," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26 (Summer 1994), 564.

Though the United States adhered to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1969, the Nixon administration preferred to use other measures to limit the spread of nuclear weapons. The nuclear nonproliferation policies of the Nixon administration relied on America's dominance of international markets of uranium enrichment and nuclear energy technology. The administration reasoned that America could use its dominant position to influence other nations' nuclear programs and to also demonstrate that it was a reliable supplier of peaceful nuclear technology. The Nixon administration wanted to maintain its dominance of the market and worried about the growing influence of the Soviet Union. This dominant position changed during the Ford administration as the nuclear abilities of European nations such as France and West Germany significantly increased. Furthermore, the emergence of large European consortiums such as URENCO and EURODIF effectively competed with the United States in the areas of uranium enrichment and nuclear reactor technology. By the end of the Ford administration, America's ability to control the spread of nuclear technology and materials through unilateral control had been lost.<sup>5</sup>

When considering American nuclear relations with South Africa, it is useful to examine the Nixon and Ford administrations together because of the continuity between them. The major event in nuclear relations between the United States and South Africa was the 1974 extension of nuclear cooperation begun during the Nixon administration but completed during the first months of Ford's presidency. Continuity is evident in NSSM39, which was formulated under the direction of National Security Adviser

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<sup>5</sup> Seymour Hersh, *The Samson Option: Israel's Nuclear Arsenal and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Random House, 1991), 211-10; Brown, "Presidential Leadership and U.S. Nonproliferation Policy," 564-65.

Kissinger, who later oversaw the extension's passage as Ford's secretary of state. Yet, by examining both administrations, changes become evident in America's nuclear policy toward South Africa due to international and domestic events. The Watergate scandal, the 1974 Portuguese coup, and India's nuclear explosion caused a shift from the Nixon administration's close cooperation to the Ford administration's justification and reevaluation of cooperation.

Upon coming into power, Kissinger ordered, and Nixon approved, a series of studies on America's relations with other regions and countries. Among these studies was one of the southern region of Africa that mainly focused on South Africa but also included the other white-minority-ruled nations of Mozambique and Rhodesia and the black-majority-ruled nations of Botswana and Zambia. The report was the National Security Study Memorandum 39, which dealt with nearly all aspects of American and South African relations, including nuclear cooperation.

Henry Kissinger explained to Nixon why his administration should get an "early Presidential grip" on American foreign relations in southern Africa. Kissinger explained that no extensive, high-level review of America's southern African policy had been conducted since the early years of the Kennedy administration. He also noted that the area was becoming more "volatile and complicated" due to "terrorist groups" operating against Rhodesia, Angola, and Mozambique.<sup>6</sup>

The "terrorist groups" Kissinger referred to were, in Rhodesia, the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU).

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<sup>6</sup> Memo for Pres from HAK, NSC Review of Policy toward Southern Africa, April 3, 1969, National Security Council Institutional (H) Files, Records of the Staff Secretary (1969-1975), National



They were fighting against the white-minority government that had established itself independently from the British Empire on November 11, 1965, when it issued a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). In Angola, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) were fighting for independence from Portugal on a variety of ideological platforms. The Mozambique Front of Liberation (FRELIMO) was also fighting against Portugal to gain independence. Most of these organizations had some socialist aspects to their ideology, which led Kissinger to worry how much communist influence existed in these organizations.<sup>7</sup>

Kissinger further explained to President Nixon that America had important “material” interests in southern Africa that included financial investments, a NASA tracking station, and military overflight and refueling rights that needed to be considered if the United States decided to disassociate itself from “the repressive racial policies of the white regimes.” Kissinger noted that the situation in southern Africa was not at an “immediate crisis,” but “black terrorist raids into Rhodesia and white reprisals are first rounds of long predicted race war.” Kissinger expected that a “black-white confrontation” in southern Africa would exist throughout the 1970s and grow in intensity.<sup>8</sup>

NSSM39 reluctantly accepted the importance of race in United States-South African relations. America’s political interests in South Africa had increased in

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Security Decision Memoranda Working Files, NSDM-38, H-286, Richard M. Nixon Presidential Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD. (hereafter Nixon Materials)

<sup>7</sup> John D. Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1999), 231, 235-36.

importance because of the reaction by the international community to the racial policies of the white-ruled states, which could be considered the “most volatile racial problem on the international scene.” Future formulations of American foreign policy would have to take these racial policies into account. NSSM39 noted that many nations in the world, especially outside Europe, considered America’s cooperation with the white-ruled states as proof that America condoned their racial policies, which was becoming a major factor in the “international power balance.”<sup>9</sup>

To meet this new challenge, NSSM39 listed five options for American policy toward South Africa. The first was to have “closer association with the white regimes to protect and enhance our economic, strategic, and scientific interests.” The second option was to broaden relations with both African and white-ruled states to try and improve relations among both groups, including encouraging moderation on racial issues by the white-ruled nations. African-ruled states would reciprocate these actions toward improving overall relations by reducing cross-border violence originating from their nations.<sup>10</sup>

The third option called for limited relations with the white-ruled states and closer relations with African-ruled nations. By doing this, America would retain some of its economic, scientific, and strategic interests in the white-ruled states but take a position on racial issues that African states would more readily accept. Yet this new position did not call for America to support a violent overthrow of white-ruled states. The fourth option

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<sup>8</sup> Memo for Pres from HAK, NSC Review of Policy toward Southern Africa, April 3, 1969, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>9</sup> Mohamed A. El-Khawas and Barry Cohen, eds., *The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa: National Security Study Memorandum 39* (Westport, Connecticut: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1976), 89, 91.

advocated a total break in relations with the white-ruled nations and for closer relations with African-nations. This option would improve America's standing on racial issues with African-ruled nations and others opposed to white-minority rule throughout the world. The fifth and last option called for a total withdrawal from relations with both African-majority and white-minority ruled states in order to limit American involvement with the region's problems.<sup>11</sup>

Before the adoption of any of the five options outlined in NSSM39, several meetings were held and reports written to identify the best option for the United States. One such document was prepared by NSC Staffers Richard T. Kennedy, Charles H. Hermann, and Roger Morris for the NSC Review Group scheduled to meet on October 16, 1969, to discuss NSSM39. The NSC staffers noted that prospects for any major change in attitude by the white-minority were "slim," and that any changes that did occur would be slow and modest and would not satisfy African demands. Kennedy, Hermann, and Morris noted that "violence won't bring change...the whites have control and blacks can't overcome that reality, however they continue to try." They pointed out that forces of moderation existed in white-minority states in the form of church leaders, politicians, youth, and "the social effects of a modern economy."<sup>12</sup>

Kennedy, Hermann, and Morris also argued that actions designed to isolate the white-minority governments, such as sanctions against Rhodesia, arms embargoes against Rhodesia and South Africa, and verbal attacks against South African governments had

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Memorandum for Henry Kissinger from Richard T. Kennedy, Charles H. Hermann and Roger Morris, Subject: Southern Africa-NSC Review Group-Thursdays, October 16, October 15, 1969, National

failed to effect reform. They noted that outside pressures against the white-minority governments seemed to generate a strong backlash in their racial policies rather than moderation and reinforced a feeling of “siege mentality.” The NSC staffers also noted that African-ruled nations demanded stronger actions by the United States in the form of sanctions and the use of force against the white-minority ruled nations, options that were totally unrealistic. American influence on both African and white-minority ruled nations was “marginal.” The only leverage available was the desire by white-minority governments for better relations with the United States and African nations’ need for American political and economic support.<sup>13</sup>

Kennedy, Hermann, and Morris noted the strengths and weaknesses of the five options of NSSM39. Option five would limit American involvement in southern Africa, but the United States would not be able to ignore a “race war” if hostilities broke out among the various nations. By disengaging from southern Africa completely, the United States would lose what little leverage it had with these nations. They argued that option two called for greater involvement in the region than they would recommend and that option three only postponed making a decision and would cause African nations to pressure America more. The NSC staffers pointed out that option four was the direction American policy was gradually heading toward now. They recommended an option between two and three, all avenues open while attempting to “cope on both sides within a potentially dangerous situation.” They argued that racism by the white-minority

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Security Council Institutional (H) Files, Meeting Files (1969-1974), Review Group Meeting Southern Africa 10/16/69, H-040, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

governments should never be ignored or excused but that “both white strength and growing black realism about it argue that we stay in the game with both sides.”<sup>14</sup>

Another NSC staffer, Winston Lord, advocated a policy similar to option five of total disengagement from the white-minority governments in southern Africa by the United States. He advised that nothing America was likely to do could change the racial policies of the white-minority governments and that aligning with African nations would not prevent the likelihood of violence. The determination of the white-minority governments to stay in power made violence inevitable in southern Africa. He explained that before the eruption of violence America should have “removed our belongings and changed our identification.”<sup>15</sup>

Lord argued that the key reasons the United States should disengage from southern Africa were related to moral and domestic issues not foreign policy gain. He understood that domestic considerations had not been considered during the formation of NSSM39. Yet, he contended that the time had passed when American policy makers could “segregate foreign and domestic policies” as the situation in Vietnam proved. Lord predicted that there were strong indications that southern Africa would become one of the most volatile foreign issues in terms of domestic public opinion.<sup>16</sup>

Lord contended that if the Nixon administration, already “in trouble on its civil rights policy at home,” approved a policy that moved the United States closer or even appeared to move America closer to the white-minority governments in southern Africa,

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Memorandum to Dr. Kissinger from Winston Lord, Subject: U.S. Policy for Southern Africa: National Security Begins at Home, October 17, 1969, National Security Council Institutional (H) Files, Study Memorandums (1969-1974), NSSM-39 2 of 3 [2 of 2], H-144, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.

it would “reverberate domestically and reinforce doubts about the [administration’s] commitment to racial justice in our own society.” Lord noted that the United States could no longer afford to practice a foreign policy toward South Africa that proclaimed an “abhorrence of apartheid” but continued to conduct normal relations with it. The “niceties” of following such a policy will be “lost on those in this country who identify with the overseas oppressed” and with “a generation which insists on matching rhetoric with action.”<sup>17</sup>

Domestic opposition to closer relations with white-minority governments, Lord maintained, would become particularly strong because it would appear that America had “opted for our investments at the expense of a clear moral imperative” and that American ties to white-minority governments would “give credence to the crudest kind of Marxian cliché.” Lord predicted that awareness of problems in southern Africa would increase as black studies programs grew in universities across America and students, particularly African-Americans, began to learn more about America’s foreign policy toward Africa. Domestic opposition to white-minority governments would increase to the point where banks and businesses with investments in these countries would be pressured to disinvest; congressional hearings on America’s southern African policies were likely; campus demonstrations against those nations would increase; demonstrations against American participation with South Africa in sporting events would occur; and African periodicals, study programs, institutions, and associations believed to represent institutionalized

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

racism would be attacked. Lord noted that some of these actions were already beginning in a few areas.<sup>18</sup>

Continuing, Lord argued that America should not be embarrassed in basing its foreign policy toward southern Africa in part on moral grounds, especially since there were practical reasons, as well for breaking ties. He also contended that white-minority governments in southern Africa were different than other “undemocratic governments” that the United States dealt with on a “business like basis,” including such nations as Romania, Greece, China, and “Latin American dictatorships.” Lord contended that southern Africa featured governments with policies that offended more than ten percent of America’s population. South Africa’s racial policies were more “repulsive than those of any other government since Nazi Germany’s treatment of the Jews” because they were based entirely on race a “biological inheritance, an inescapable classification.” Other repressive regimes give people “a choice to conform to prevailing ideology.”<sup>19</sup>

Thus, within the NSC, there were differing opinions on which option should be adopted. Kennedy, Hermann, and Morris along with NSC staffer Robert Osgood endorsed a policy between options two closer relations with both white-minority and African majority ruled nations and that of three, limiting relations with white-minority governments and increasing relations with African-ruled nations. Whereas, Lord argued for a total disengagement of southern Africa reminiscent of option five. Lord’s thoughts

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

were not formally submitted to Kissinger until the day after the NSC Review Group first met to discuss NSSM39 on October 16, 1969.<sup>20</sup>

Henry Kissinger chaired the NSC Review Group which consisted of officials from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the CIA, the United States Information Agency, Office of Emergency Planning, and the Departments of State, Defense, and Commerce. During the meeting, discussion arose over the general aims of NSSM39 and the wording of the five options. Kissinger asked whether it was practical to form a general policy that included Angola, Mozambique, Rhodesia, and South Africa. David Newsom, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, stated that it was not but that Mozambique and Angola could be grouped together and a policy formed that would apply to both. Rhodesia and South Africa would have to be considered individually.<sup>21</sup>

Discussion occurred over options two and three, with Newsom noting that option two did not sacrifice American interests in the white-minority-ruled states and was supported by the NSC Staff and the Department of Defense. The State Department thought option two called for “unrequited U.S. initiatives toward the white states.” Kissinger countered this interpretation and thought option two called for broader contacts with both African and white-minority ruled states.<sup>22</sup>

Morris noted that there was “bureaucratic disagreement” on option two because it was considered “activist in the sense that it ceases to squeeze the white states.” Kissinger argued that a policy should be adopted that would not seek stronger ties with the white-

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<sup>20</sup> Memorandum to Col. Kennedy, Roger Morris from Robert E. Osgood, Subject: Southern Africa, October 13, 1969, National Security Council Institutional (H) Files, Study Memorandums (1969-1974), NSSM-39 2 of 3 [2 of 2], H-144, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.



minority governments but also did not “kick them in the teeth.” Newsom argued that option two included wording that stopped “kicking the whites” in the pursuit of preserving American interests.<sup>23</sup>

While Kissinger discussed general South African relations with the NSC Review Group, he contemplated whether the United States should avoid taking a stand on apartheid. He doubted that such an approach was possible due to domestic reasons and the effect it would have on African votes for American proposals in the United Nations. He also recognized that refusing to take a stand on racial issues was “not an heroic position” but that it might be necessary in order for America to pursue its “normal economic and strategic interests.” On the other hand, he had no problem with pressuring the white-minority governments. Still, he wished an option could be adopted of “leaving problems alone and let economic forces work themselves out.” Though if some action was to be taken against South Africa, America “should do it and get it done.”<sup>24</sup> Kissinger and other policy makers did not want to formulate a policy that sacrificed America’s strategic and economic interests in southern Africa, nor did they want to formulate a policy that alienated the African nations and the international community.

No decision was made at the October 16, 1969, meeting on which of the five options to adopt, but option two, increasing relations with both white and African-ruled nations, seemed to have the most support. In more studies of NSSM39 NSC staffers

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<sup>21</sup> Minutes of the NSC Review Group Meeting, October 16, 1969, National Security Council Institutional (H) Files, Study Memorandums (1969-1974), NSSM-39 3 of 3 [4 of 4], H-145, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

continued to submit arguments about which option to follow, including Lord's argument for total withdrawal from southern Africa.

On December 17, 1969, the National Security Council met to discuss NSSM39 and adopt one of the five options. Attending the meeting were President Nixon, Vice-President Spiro Agnew, and representatives, even some heads, from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the CIA, Office of Emergency Planning, National Security Council, and the Departments of State, Defense, Justice, Treasury, and Commerce. Nixon opened the meeting by referring to southern Africa as a peripheral issue but acknowledged that a frank discussion of the issues involved was needed in order to decide on the right policy.<sup>25</sup>

Kissinger described three choices regarding foreign policy toward South Africa. One was to end the restrictions imposed upon the white-minority states, presumably arms and trade embargos, and avoid any involvement in hostilities between them and African states. The second was to have a limited association with both sides, and the last was to cut off relations with the white-minority governments and establish closer relations with the African states.<sup>26</sup> Thus, Kissinger presented NSSM39 options one, two, and four for consideration.

During the ensuing discussion, Nixon explained “we have to be realistic on this question and straddle it.” He wanted to avoid the United States being labeled a “colonist”

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<sup>25</sup> “Minutes of NSC Meeting on Southern Africa, December 17, 1969,” National Security Council Institutional (H) Files, Study Memorandums (1969-1974), NSSM-39 3 of 3 [3 of 4], H-145, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

nation but believed it was important to protect American interests. He also thought America should “not worry too much about other peoples’ domestic policies.”<sup>27</sup>

Newsom mentioned that in the formation of these options the NSC Review Group had addressed the question of what the United States could and could not do and the extent of American influence which Newsom conceded was minimal, but economic forces would ultimately bring change. Secretary of State William Rogers agreed that there was a moral argument that America should do something about the situation in southern Africa if anything could be done but because nothing could be done, the country had no responsibilities there.<sup>28</sup>

Nixon then noted that the whites in southern Africa, particularly South Africa, could not return to a home but were there to stay. Under Secretary of State Elliot Richardson added that the whites felt they had a right to be there “as we do in the U.S.” He also argued that there was “no real solution” because Africans being ruled by whites did not work, and Africans ruling whites would not work. Partition of South Africa was the only solution.<sup>29</sup>

When the discussion turned to the United Nations, Nixon asked if the United States could avoid southern African issues there. UN Ambassador Charles Yost stated that it was not possible because southern African issues arose over human rights or in criticism of Portugal. Nixon inquired whether America could “roll with the punch” on United Nations’ attacks on Portugal and avoid diplomatically isolating that nation.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

The above statements and discussion from the meeting indicate that Nixon and members of his administration did not want to move American policy too much from previous support of the white-minority governments. They saw vital American interests in the region, and Nixon noted it would even be worth taking some diplomatic blows in order to continue support. Although, Nixon's statements demonstrated the growing realization of having to acknowledge the concerns of the African-ruled governments and that somehow a policy of appealing to both sides needed to be formulated. Still, the decision that emerged out of this meeting approved a policy that appeared significantly to benefit the white-minority governments.

A final decision was made on December 17, 1969 to adopt option two of the NSSM39. The larger stated premise behind it was that only through whites could "constructive change" occur in South Africa because they were in political and economic control and were not about to leave. The only hope for Africans and other groups in South Africa to gain their political rights was to work with the whites. Using violence to gain political rights would only lead to chaos and increased opportunities for communists to infiltrate southern Africa.<sup>31</sup>

Option two argued that if the United States selectively relaxed some of its policies toward the white-minority governments, it would be in a better position to advocate changes in the racial and foreign policies of white-ruled nations. It also suggested that the United States send about five million dollars in technical assistance aid to the African

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<sup>31</sup> National Security Decision Memorandum, Subject: United States Policy Toward Southern Africa, December 17, 1969, National Security Council Institutional (H) Files, Meeting Files (1969-1974), NSC Meeting 12/17/69 Southern Africa NSSM 39 1 of 3, H-025, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.; Mohamed A. El-Khawas and Barry Cohen, eds., *The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa*, 106.

nations. The hope was that both economic aid and the improvement of relations with the white-minority governments would draw the two groups together and allow the United States to exert some influence for peaceful change. Finally, option two noted that America's interests, which placed it in contact with both sides in southern Africa, could be preserved at an "acceptable political cost."<sup>32</sup> Though both sides in southern Africa were to receive support and aid, as the practical aspects of the policy were implemented the white-minority governments appeared to benefit the most from this new approach.

In a memorandum on the new policy toward southern Africa, Kissinger explained that the United States would lower its participation on issues regarding the region in the United Nations and temper statements made there to insure it did not assume a leadership role on any southern African issue. America would continue to oppose racism and colonialism in southern Africa but would abstain in international disputes at the UN "where the facts" were unclear. America would also oppose sanctions and the use of force against South Africa, South West Africa, and any of the Portuguese territories if proposed at the United Nations and would also oppose either broadening U.N. sanctions against Rhodesia or using force to make the sanctions effective.<sup>33</sup>

The United States would also resume a more diplomatic dialogue with South Africa and address issues on their merits rather than "primarily as a reflection of our disagreements with its domestic policy." Making clear its disagreement with South Africa's policy of apartheid as well as maintaining the position that its occupation of

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<sup>32</sup> Mohamed A. El-Khawas and Barry Cohen, eds., *The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa*, 106.

<sup>33</sup> Security Decision Memorandum, Subject: United States Policy Toward Southern Africa, December 17, 1969, National Archives at College Park, MD.

South West Africa was illegal, America would avoid pressuring Portugal on its policies toward its southern African colonies while still encouraging “liberalizing steps.”<sup>34</sup>

The memorandum noted that President Nixon had decided to implement concrete steps to improve relations with the white-minority governments. For instance, the arms embargo against South Africa would be continued, but America would sell equipment and related parts that could be used for both civilian or military uses. The embargo against Portugal on military equipment scheduled for shipment to its African colonies would also be maintained, except on items that could be used for both civilian and military purposes.<sup>35</sup>

Nixon also agreed to the formation of military contacts with South Africa, if both sides wished it, and allowed South African participation in correspondence courses and visits as long as these contacts were “carried out inconspicuously.” America would also resume shore visits by naval personnel at South African ports as long as integrated activities were allowed once the sailors were ashore.<sup>36</sup>

Nixon approved the continued operation of America’s consulate in Rhodesia’s capital of Salisbury. South Africa’s participation in the American sugar quota program, in which the United States subsidized the price of sugar for its allies, would be continued. Nixon also allowed a “one-time hardship exception” for the importation of chrome from Rhodesia by the Union Carbide Corporation, which had paid for the shipment before the implementation of the embargo against Rhodesia. Kissinger later requested that this

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., National Security Decision Memorandum 38, Subject: United States Policy toward Southern Africa, January 28, 1970, National Security Council Institutional (H) Files, Study Memorandums (1969-1974), NSSM-39 3 of 3 [4 of 4], H-145, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

action be delayed until further study could be conducted by the Departments of State, Treasury, Justice, and Commerce.<sup>37</sup>

Improving relations with the African-ruled nations of southern Africa, including Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland, and Zambia were also objectives. The United States would do this by emphasizing America's commitment to racial equality and political freedom, encouraging closer relations among all nations in the region, discouraging violence so that change could occur peacefully, and increasing economic assistance to these nations through bilateral and multilateral agreements.<sup>38</sup> Compared to what benefits the white-minority nations were receiving, the new policy toward the African-ruled nations of southern Africa provided little explicit benefit. There was only promise of more aid. The discrepancy is best explained by the higher priority the United States placed on its interests in the white-minority-ruled states compared to those in the African-ruled states.

Critics charged that in adopting option two America was making a major alteration in its policy. Others stated that NSSM39 was not a substantial change to the Kennedy-Johnson administration's approach of outwardly condemning apartheid while maintaining relations with Pretoria. Many State Department African Bureau critics dubbed option two a "tar baby" after the Uncle Remus fable, where Brer Rabbit fell prey to the designs of Brer Fox in embracing a tarred baby from which escape was impossible. They feared that fostering closer relations with South Africa would cause America to

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Security Decision Memorandum, Subject: United States Policy Toward Southern Africa, December 17, 1969, National Archives at College Park, MD.

become entangled with South Africa's problems and damage American ties with the rest of sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>39</sup>

A more accurate description of the Nixon administration's policy toward South Africa was that it formalized the approach and goals toward South Africa and southern Africa that previous administrations had followed in practice since the beginning of the Cold War. With the lack of success by African liberation armies in Mozambique, Angola, and South Africa, it is not surprising that NSSM39 would state that the white-minority governments were there to stay. This seemingly unalterable fact, combined with America's strategic and economic interests in the region, made the Nixon administration's move toward better cooperation with the white-minority governments understandable.

NSSM39 also reviewed American nuclear cooperation with South Africa, pointing out that South Africa was the third largest supplier of uranium outside the communist world, with the United States and Canada being first and second. The memo noted that South Africa agreed not to contribute in any way toward the proliferation of nuclear weapons when the two countries' nuclear cooperation agreement had been extended for ten years in 1967. Finally, NSSM39 acknowledged that South Africa was a beneficial member of the IAEA Board of Governors.<sup>40</sup> With the adoption of option two, America's nuclear cooperation relationship with South Africa appeared to be ensured.

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<sup>39</sup> Thomas J. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation: the United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968*. (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1995), 239; Kerma Irogbe, *The Roots of United States Foreign Policy Toward Apartheid South Africa, 1969-1985* (Lexington, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), 71; Peter J. Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis, and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 208.

<sup>40</sup> Mohamed A. El-Khawas and Barry Cohen, eds., *The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa*, 122; Ralmo Vyrynene, "South Africa: A Coming Nuclear-Weapon Power," *Instant Research on Peace and Violence* 6 (1977), 36.



In the ensuing years, America's foreign policy began to reflect NSSM39. In the United Nations, the United States had abstained on votes on racism, colonialism, and apartheid before the passage of NSSM39. Once the new policy was in place, America's votes in the United Nations indicated an increased level of support for South Africa. The United States also voted on October 30, 1974, along with Great Britain and France, against expelling South Africa from the United Nations. A month later, the United States was the only nation in a special UN committee to vote against a resolution that requested the Security Council meet on the South African race question and mandated a halt on all arms supplies to South Africa.<sup>41</sup> Though the votes against expelling South Africa from the United Nations and the special UN committee occurred after Nixon left office, they demonstrate that NSSM39 continued to affect the foreign policies of the Ford administration.

The appointment of John Hurd as ambassador to South Africa also demonstrated an attempt to better relations with that country. America's previous ambassador, William Rountree, was a career diplomatic officer whom Nixon had praised for his work in South Africa during the December NSC meeting on NSSM39. Described by Kissinger as a "strong Nixon man, Hurd was a Texas businessman who had managed Nixon's 1968 presidential campaign in Texas."<sup>42</sup>

Kissinger, Elliot Richardson, and Assistant to the President Peter Flanigan supported the appointment of Hurd as ambassador. NSC staffers William Watts and

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<sup>41</sup> Iroge, *The Roots of United States Foreign Policy Toward Apartheid South Africa*, 73, 82.

<sup>42</sup> "Minutes of NSC Meeting on Southern Africa, December 17, 1969"; Memorandum for the President from Kissinger, Subject: Your Meeting with John Hurd, Ambassador Designate to South Africa, 10:00 a.m., August 25, August 24, 1970, NSC Files, Country Files, Africa, South Africa 1969-71 Vol. I 1 of 2, 744, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.

Roger Morris proposed to Kissinger that Rountree be retained as ambassador to South Africa. Morris, in particular, argued that Rountree wanted to stay and that he was the only ambassador in Africa “on the President’s wave length with regard to southern African problems.” Morris also noted that if NSSM39 was to be implemented against “the traditional bureaucratic breast-beating and inertia” found in government, then Rountree would be a valuable asset in this fight. Finally, Morris argued that American ambassadors to South Africa walked a diplomatic tightrope and had to fight not to fall “prey...to the fast shuffling from Washington [and the] skillful South African efforts to embrace us publicly.” To Morris it was a job for a professional diplomat, not an inexperienced appointee. He recommended that the replacement of Rountree be delayed but if that was not agreed to, then he should be replaced by someone with experience.<sup>43</sup>

Morris’s recommendations were not followed, and by August 1970 Hurd was the ambassador to South Africa his qualification for the post being his strong political allegiance to Nixon. He had tried to become ambassador to Venezuela in 1969 but withdrew his nomination due to his oil interests, which made such an appointment appear to be a conflict of interest. Hurd was more qualified for that post than for South Africa due to his knowledge of Spanish and his experience in oil.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the Nixon administration wanted to reward an important political supporter, and when the South African post became available Hurd seemed to be a reasonable fit.

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<sup>43</sup> Memorandum to Kissinger from Morris, Subject: Proposed Replacement of Ambassador Rountree in South Africa, March 11, 1970, NSC Files, Country Files, Africa, South Africa 1969-71 Vol. I 1 of 2, 744, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>44</sup> Memorandum for the President from Kissinger, Subject: Your Meeting with John Hurd, August 24, 1970.

Kissinger acknowledged that Hurd faced a “delicate task” in South Africa but that America’s economic, strategic, and scientific assets needed to be preserved without violating America’s principles. Kissinger suggested that Hurd avoid being “preachy with South Africa” about America’s disapproval of apartheid and advised that it was unnecessary to “constantly reiterate it”<sup>45</sup> as an issue. Morris’s concerns about Hurd appeared justified when Hurd became involved in a series of controversies that cultivated an image of the Nixon administration as a close ally of South Africa and undermined NSSM39, which called for a balanced policy of fostering relations with all peoples in southern Africa.

Early in 1971, Hurd planned on attending the opening of Nico Malan, a Capetown opera house. Such an event would not ordinarily be a problem in most nations, but the opening ceremony was for whites only, and the owners of the opera house stated that no integrated audiences would be permitted. When news of Hurd’s plans reached Washington, Congressional leaders and critics of South Africa, such as Representative Charles Diggs of Michigan, objected to Hurd’s attendance. Because of these objections, Hurd decided to be out of town for the opening ceremonies.<sup>46</sup>

In July 1971, Hurd hosted a party for South African government officials and members of the South African parliament. Hurd also invited several opponents of apartheid to the reception but none that were African, Indian, or Colored. Two of these critics stormed out of the reception and reported the incident to the newspapers. The premise behind the occasion was to integrate philosophical opponents and supporters of apartheid in the hopes of promoting a dialogue between the two groups. NSC staff

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

member Marshall Wright noted that Hurd's heart seemed to be in the right place, but the "result turned out badly."<sup>47</sup>

Perhaps the worse faux pas that Hurd committed was participating in a pheasant hunt on Robben Island with Minister of Transportation Ben Shoeman in September 1972. Located just off the coast of Capetown, Robben Island housed a prison where such political prisoners as Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu were interned. The hunt occurred on an isolated part of the island away from the prison, but some prisoners were used as beaters to drive the game toward the hunters.<sup>48</sup>

The State Department attempted to assuage Congressman Diggs criticism of the hunt by arguing that Hurd's participation did not mean he approved or condoned apartheid. The department emphasized that under Hurd's leadership the South African embassy had extended personal contacts with all peoples in South Africa. The number of non-white employees at the embassy increased from 32.2 percent to 44.9 percent under Hurd's tenure, and some non-whites had been placed in senior-level positions at the embassy. The White House also defended Hurd with similar arguments and replied to Diggs that "Hurd's record speaks for itself and is the basis for our continued full confidence in him."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> "South Africa: Undiplomatic Behavior," *Newsweek*, July 26, 1971, 35.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*; Memorandum to Kissinger from Wright, Subject: John Hurd's Troubles, July 21, 1971, NSC Files, Country Files, Africa, South Africa 1969-71 Vol. I 1 of 2, 744, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>48</sup> Jack Anderson, "South Africa Hides Prison for Blacks," *Washington Post*, September 19, 1974, B15; Suggested Reply to Congressman Diggs, undated, WHCF, Subject Files, Foreign Affairs, Ex Fo2/Co126-Fo2/Co150 [1971-72] 1 of 3, 20, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>49</sup> Suggested Reply to Congressman Diggs, undated; Letter to Diggs from Cook, October 19, 1972, WHCF, Subject Files, Foreign Affairs, Ex Fo2/Co126-Fo2/Co150 [1971-72] 1 of 3, 20, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.

Though Hurd's embassy policy actions indicated a broadening of South African contacts both outside and inside the embassy, his public actions communicated an increased closeness with only one element of South African society, especially considering the symbolism of the location of the hunt. American and South African government personnel participating in recreational activities together could help to improve relations between the two countries. Yet, participating in such activities at one of the symbols of apartheid rule further communicated a growing closeness of cooperation between the two nations. Any benefit that Hurd's personal contact policies fostered diminished quickly with publication of the story of the Robben Island hunt and pictures of him hunting with a South African government minister.

Hurd's commitment to making his embassy's staff more multiracial did not carry over into his diplomatic corps. In December 1971, the State Department decided to begin the process of placing an African-American Foreign Service Officer (FSO) at the South African Embassy. By 1972, James E. Baker, who was then stationed at the Tokyo Embassy, received the assignment. On June 4, 1972, Ambassador Hurd wrote to Peter Flanigan, Assistant to President Nixon, that he had no objections to Baker personally but argued that assigning an African-American to his embassy would cause relations to deteriorate with the South African government. He further argued that he did not see how Baker's appointment would help improve relations with African-ruled nations or provide any political benefits in America. Hurd was also concerned that if news of Baker's appointment became widely known it could be interpreted as nothing more than an appeal to African-American votes as the presidential election drew near. Finally, Hurd was anxious about how Baker would be treated in South Africa due to his race and

the problems this would cause for the embassy. Hurd called the appointment “a mistake... but [he] was willing to run with the ball as long as I know the White House has looked at the game plan and approved.”<sup>50</sup>

Flanigan forwarded Hurd’s letter to Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Alexander Haig. In reference to Baker’s appointment, Flanigan asked Haig “do you really think it is a good idea to proceed with this in 1972?” Haig argued that the appointment could have been delayed earlier in the year but that it was too late now. Charles Diggs and the press were both aware of the appointment. If the appointment was held up, Haig argued, the Nixon administration would be handing Diggs a “big stick to beat the Administration” with, and Diggs, along with the Black Caucus in Congress, could allege “discrimination and/or racism in our African policy.”<sup>51</sup>

Haig also noted that three African-American FSOs had served in South Africa on a temporary basis during the past year and had encountered no problems as far as he was aware of. Haig informed Flanigan that the South African government had been made aware of Baker’s assignment in April after the State Department had approved it. The South Africans were not happy about the situation but had done nothing-such as refusing Baker a visa-to stop it. Haig also sent a message to Ambassador Hurd stating that the decision to place Baker in South Africa had progressed too far to withdraw his appointment. Haig appreciated Hurd’s views on the matter and assured him that Baker

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<sup>50</sup> Letter to Flanigan from Hurd, June 4, 1972, NSC Files, Country Files, Africa, South Africa Jan. 1972 Vol. II-Jan. 72-May 74 1 of 1, 744, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>51</sup> Memorandum to Haig from Flanigan, Re: The Attached, June 15, 1972, NSC Files, Country Files, Africa, South Africa Jan. 1972 Vol. II-Jan. 72-May 74 1 of 1, 744, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.; Memorandum to Flanigan from Haig, Subject: Assignment of Black Diplomatic Officer to Pretoria, July 6, 1972, NSC Files, Country Files, Africa, South Africa Jan. 1972 Vol. II-Jan. 72-May 74 1 of 1, 744, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.

was “an excellent young man” who would perform his job with “skill and discretion.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, Hurd’s commitment to a multiracial embassy is suspect considering his opposition to Baker’s appointment. Even so, it is also possible that Hurd was simply trying to preempt a situation that would cause problems between the United States and South Africa. Either way, Morris’s predictions about the difficulties someone like Hurd would have in South Africa had become reality.

The Nixon administration’s foreign policy toward South Africa demonstrates how America attempted to balance its interests while not appearing to condone or support the apartheid system. NSSM39 policies made this balancing act difficult as the Nixon administration seemed to give more aid and support to the white-minority governments over the African-ruled nations of southern Africa. Hurd’s actions did not help to offset a perception that America was drawing closer to South Africa. The Nixon administration slowed down the implementation of embargoes and sanctions against southern Africa, but these actions were not a radical shift in American policy toward South Africa or the southern African region. The Nixon administration could have implemented more embargoes and sanctions against the white-minority governments, but it argued that closer cooperation would better improve relations and would be more likely to effect reform. Whether correct or not, this was essentially the same policy that previous administrations had followed.

Regarding nuclear cooperation with South Africa, the Nixon administration followed a policy similar to previous administrations of continuing cooperation. The

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<sup>52</sup>Memorandum to Flanigan from Haig, Subject: Assignment of Black Diplomatic Officer to Pretoria, July 6, 1972; Letter to Hurd from Haig, July 6, 1972, NSC Files, Country Files, Africa, South

goal of exchanging nuclear technology was so that the United States could influence South Africa's nuclear program as well as its foreign and domestic policies. Yet, the South Africans were unable to persuade the Nixon administration to partner with them in refining the process they had formulated in 1970 for enriching uranium.

On November 15, 1971, Theodore L. Eliot, Jr., Executive Secretary from the State Department whose office coordinates relations with other government agencies, presented a proposal to Kissinger regarding South Africa's purchase of two nuclear reactors from the United States. The reactors would be used to generate electricity, and the first of the reactors would be completed by 1978, with the next to follow several years thereafter. The sale would also include providing the enriched uranium for the reactors for up to thirty years. All nuclear materials and facilities would be under IAEA safeguards and inspection.<sup>53</sup>

Eliot argued that the sale of these reactors would be a continuation of America's policy of cooperating with South Africa in the field of nuclear energy and would demonstrate America's reliability as a supplier of peaceful nuclear technology. Income from the enriched nuclear fuel would bring in \$230 million over the thirty years the reactors operated. This was in addition to the \$325 million the reactors would cost. The South African government favored American designed nuclear facilities because most South African scientists were trained on American equipment either in the United States or at SAFARI I. The South African government also planned to build more reactors and

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Africa Jan. 1972 Vol. II-Jan. 72-May 74 1 of 1, 744, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>53</sup> Memorandum to Henry Kissinger from Theodore L. Eliot, Jr., Subject: Proposed Nuclear Fuel Agreement with South Africa, November 15, 1971, NSC Files, Country Files-Africa, South Africa 1969-71, Vol. I 1 of 2, 744, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.



acquiring these two could provide a rationale for buying more reactors from the United States due to the continuity of design.<sup>54</sup>

Eliot noted that even though the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy supported the reactor sales this type of nuclear cooperation with South Africa could provoke criticism from Congress. African nations could also condemn America for such nuclear cooperation with South Africa and accuse the United States of hypocrisy because of its condemnation of apartheid but continued cooperation with it. The United States was also vulnerable to criticism for undercutting the arms embargo against South Africa and on limited military cooperation.<sup>55</sup>

Support for the reactor sales grew within both the State Department and the NSC despite Eliot's concerns and a significant problem arising regarding funding of the project. General Electric (GE) bid for the sale contract along with British, Canadian, West German, and French firms. As a part of its bid, GE wanted the Export-Import Bank, the American government agency that provided loans to companies for overseas transactions usually too risky for private banks, to guarantee a loan of \$50 million for the project. Under present guidelines, it could not grant a loan for such a significant amount for such a long-term project in South Africa because the bank only provided loans of up to two million dollars for projects lasting ten years in South Africa. The Nixon administration implemented such loan restrictions to counter accusations made by such critics as Congressman Diggs that the United States government supported apartheid with its substantial and continuing investment in the country.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

Nevertheless, the State Department did not dissuade GE from submitting a bid for the reactor sales. Instead, it suggested that GE ask for a loan from the Private Export Funding Corporation (PEFCO), a private entity composed of American banks and industrial corporations that had no restrictions on trade with South Africa. It also had previously provided loans for nuclear power plants in Taiwan, Italy, and Brazil.<sup>57</sup> The finalization of the reactor sales did not occur until the Ford administration, when unforeseen complications arose causing unexpected results.

Though restrictions had been implemented on trade with South Africa, the Nixon administration sought to bypass them in order to exploit an economic opportunity that the reactor sales provided. This demonstrated that the Nixon administration wanted to maintain United States-South African nuclear relations and was aware of the problems that continued cooperation with South Africa would produce. This awareness became especially acute during the process of extending America's nuclear agreement with South Africa.

In 1974, the United States and South Africa extended for the third time their 1957 agreement for the peaceful uses of atomic energy. As it had in 1967, South Africa was the first to request an extension. Ely Maurer, head of the Department of State's Bureau of International Scientific and Technological Affairs, mentioned that the South African Ambassador to the United States, Johan S. F. Botha, had contacted him on May 12, 1972, about extending the agreement. He had apparently first contacted Maurer earlier because he mentioned the concern his government had that its inquiries about extension had not been answered. Botha mentioned how uneasy he was about this silence because he

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

feared that with the impending election “the White House and the Congress might find themselves distracted and consequently unable to give prompt attention to consideration of an extension.” He suggested that a general “umbrella” agreement be reached that would not include specific enriched uranium figures and that detailed information on the reactors South Africa planned to build could follow at a later date. Maurer felt an agreement could not be reached without knowing specific information on the sizes of the proposed South African nuclear reactors and the anticipated dates for beginning construction. Botha understood these concerns and said he would contact Maurer again once he got more information from Pretoria.<sup>58</sup>

If the 1967 extension did not expire until 1977, why did both parties want an extension so early? South Africa wanted to guarantee that its new power stations would be supplied by the United States, while from the American perspective extension would show the world that the United States was a dependable source of nuclear material. The extension would also allow Washington to preempt French influence with South Africa’s nuclear program, desirable because France was not as strong on international safeguards as was the United States. Approving the extension would avoid alienating South Africa, which controlled twenty-seven percent of the free world’s supply of uranium.<sup>59</sup> Finally, the Nixon administration had shown itself to be more accommodating toward South Africa; thus, the time appeared right for extension.

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<sup>58</sup>“Conversation with South African Ambassador on Extension of Nuclear Cooperation Bi-lateral Agreement,” May 12, 1972, *National Security Archive: South Africa*, no. 00424, Mokoena, Kenneth, ed., Alexandria, VA: Chadwyck-Healey, 1991.

<sup>59</sup>“Memorandum on Signing of Amendment to U.S./S.A. Atomic Energy Agreement,” May 21, 1974, *National Security Archive: South Africa*, no. 00456.

By the 1970s, South Africa's nuclear program was coming into its own. South African scientists had trained in the United States ever since the signing of the 1957 agreement. In 1970, Prime Minister John Vorster had announced that South African scientists had developed their own technique of enriching uranium, which probably was an adaptation of a process developed in West Germany, where South African scientists had trained for many years. He also announced plans for building an enrichment plant. By enriching uranium, South Africa would eventually be able to sell weapons grade uranium on the world market which would increase Pretoria's profits.<sup>60</sup>

South Africa attempted to get the United States more involved in its program by asking for help to develop its uranium enrichment technique. Dr. Edward Teller, considered the father of America's hydrogen bomb and a supporter of South Africa, had a discussion with Dr. A. J. A. Roux of the South Africa Atomic Energy Board (AEB) about their new uranium enrichment process. Teller informed Ambassador Hurd of the AEB's desire for American assistance arguing that if American scientists aided South Africa in further developing the process, the United States would learn information it took South African scientists ten years of experience to gain. This information would give America an invaluable head start compared with other nations and only a relatively small team would be needed to work at the South African enrichment facility.<sup>61</sup>

Ambassador Hurd noted that there was considerable interest in this new process by other governments and private firms from Germany and Japan and that under normal

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<sup>60</sup> J. D. L. Moore, *South Africa and Nuclear Proliferation: South Africa's Nuclear Capabilities and Intentions in the Context of International Non-Proliferation Policies* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 84-87.

circumstances he would have recommended further exploration of this new process. Yet, Hurd noted that “this is not a fully normal situation” because involvement with South Africa in this field would cause “major political problems.” Even if the United States was able finally to secure South Africa’s signing of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), Hurd contended that it was unknown whether or not this would be enough to counter international criticism of American cooperation with the apartheid regime. Hurd provided no recommendation on what action to take toward Teller’s proposal, but the tone of his telegram was not favorable to further cooperation.<sup>62</sup>

Ultimately, the Nixon administration decided not to involve itself in cooperating with South Africa in the enrichment project, evidently guessing that the political costs were too high. Through the cooperation agreement, the United States was already providing assistance to South Africa, but it did not involve American personnel working with and cooperating directly with South African scientists. Helping to further develop a new uranium enrichment technique would require close personal cooperation between American and South African scientists and indicate a level of cooperation that the United States did not want to advertise to the international community. Furthermore, directly aiding South Africa in this project would be helping South Africa acquire the key component of nuclear weapons, enriched uranium. The Nixon administration had already refused to share its uranium enrichment technique with South Africa in 1970-71, when it shared this technology with ten other nations.<sup>63</sup> Considering America’s worries about

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<sup>61</sup> Telegram to Department of State from Pretoria, Sub: South African Uranium Enrichment Project Dr. Teller’s on Possible Cooperation, October 1973, NSC Files, Country Files, Africa, South Africa Jan. 1972 Vol. II-Jan. 72-May 74 1 of 1, 744, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Moore, *South Africa and Nuclear Proliferation*, 86.

nuclear proliferation, helping South Africa perfect a technique for making the key component of nuclear weapons would be counterproductive. Even so, the Nixon administration still remained committed to its nuclear cooperation agreement with South Africa and some aspects of the new extensions provided more flexibility for South Africa's nuclear program.

The agreement allowed South Africa to transfer some of the nuclear material that it had received from the United States to another country if it wanted to. The only stipulation was that the recipient nation had to have an agreement of cooperation with the United States. This article reversed the original 1957 agreement and the 1967 extension's stipulation that South Africa was prohibited from exchanging any American nuclear material with another country. One explanation for this change, offered by James J. Blake of the Department of State during a congressional hearing, was that South Africa was establishing new reactors to produce electricity and needed more flexibility in its nuclear relations with other nations to make sure its facilities were fueled.<sup>64</sup>

Other items within the extension were consistent with prior American-South African nuclear agreements, including a stipulation that no nuclear materials, devices, or equipment transferred to South Africa either through purchase or by loan from the United States would be used to develop atomic weapons or for any other military purpose. Furthermore, nothing produced from American material, equipment, or devices would be used to develop or manufacture atomic weapons or be used for any other military

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<sup>64</sup> "Amendment to Agreement for Cooperation Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of South Africa Concerning the Civil Uses of Atomic Energy," May 22, 1974, *National Security Archive: South Africa*, no. 00458; Subcommittee on International Resources, Food, and Energy of the Committee on International Relations, "Resource

purpose.<sup>65</sup> As in the original agreement and the 1967 extension, the United States stipulated that South Africa not use any American-supplied material to make nuclear weapons.

As a further restriction on its nuclear activity, South Africa was allowed to have only as much enriched uranium as could be used to power a two-thousand megawatt reactor, and South Africa could only transfer enough enriched uranium from one reactor to another to continue the operations of its reactors and reactor experiments.<sup>66</sup> The United States was clearly attempting to insure that no uranium would be transferred for use in nuclear weapons experiments.

Two other stipulations in the extension are worth noting. It was agreed that if any uranium needed to be reprocessed, it would be done in a facility acceptable to both parties. South Africa also agreed to take full responsibility for any harm caused by the nuclear materials. To monitor South African nuclear activities further, the 1974 extension, like the 1967 extension, included International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) oversight.<sup>67</sup>

In Washington on May 22, 1974, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Donald Easum signed the extension agreement for the United States, and South African Ambassador Johan S. F. Botha signed for South Africa. Easum's staff recommended that he sign the agreement, as did the Legal and Scientific Affairs Offices at the White House, the Atomic Energy Council, and the State Department. Easum had taken office only two

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Development in South Africa and U.S. Policy," House of Representatives, 94<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, May 25, June 8 and 9, 1976, 16.

<sup>65</sup>"Amendment to Agreement for Cooperation," May 22, 1974, *National Security Archive: South Africa*, no. 00458.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*

months earlier, when the negotiations were already well underway. Moreover, Easum was not an expert in South African or nuclear affairs. He had only had three African assignments, and none had been in southern Africa. Easum commented that if the agreement extension had come up after his trip in October-November 1974 to several southern African nations, he might have had more questions and been less accommodating about signing. As it was, he signed the agreement having been thrust into a position for which he, admittedly, was not fully qualified and on an issue with which he was unfamiliar.<sup>68</sup>

The State Department was concerned that Diggs along with the Congressional Black Caucus might object to the extension agreement. After the 1970 elections brought thirteen African-Americans to Congress, these newly elected members of Congress formed the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) with Diggs as chair. Diggs had been informed in March that Washington was going to extend the 1957 agreement. At that time, he had raised no objections and had made no further inquiries about the negotiations.<sup>69</sup>

Diggs was not a member of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, but he was a vocal opponent of America's policy toward South Africa. As chair of the Africa Subcommittee of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, he had attacked the policies of the Nixon Administration toward South Africa. He had recommended that the United States remove its NASA tracking stations, end sugar imports from South Africa, threaten economic sanctions if South Africa refused to withdraw from Namibia, discourage

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., Donald Easum, interview with the author, February 19, 2001.



American investment and tourism in South Africa, and begin to isolate the country economically. Diggs called the American relationship with South Africa “an immoral entangling alliance with one of the most tyrannical governments in the world.”<sup>70</sup>

Diggs had attempted to get from the White House a copy of NSSM39, a policy he noted that was designed to “improve rapport and broaden communication with the white governments of southern Africa,” but was informed that it was secret. NSC staffer Melvin Levine informed Alexander Haig of Diggs’s request and noted that Diggs was “hostile to our policy and is seeking ammunition to use against us.” Diggs was informed by Deputy Assistant to the President Richard Cook that it was a long-standing policy dating back to previous administrations that within the executive branch the distribution of active NSC papers was limited. Cook advised Diggs to contact the State Department to receive a full briefing on the Nixon administration’s South African policy.<sup>71</sup> Diggs’s interest in the Nixon administration’s South African policy made him a potentially strong critic of nuclear extension.

Another reason that State Department officials were worried that Diggs would oppose the extension was because he had fought hard to end the renewal of South Africa’s quota for sugar imports. Since 1948, the Sugar Act had provided subsidized

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<sup>69</sup> “Memorandum on Signing of Amendment to U.S./S.A. Atomic Energy Agreement,” May 21, 1974, *National Security Archive: South Africa*, no. 00456.

<sup>70</sup> Steven Metz, “Congress, the Antiapartheid Movement, and Nixon,” in *Race and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Colonial Period to the Present: Race and U.S. Foreign Policy during the Cold War No. 4*, ed. Michael L. Krenn (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 304-05.

<sup>71</sup> Letter to Nixon from Diggs, June 15, 1972, National Security Council Institutional (H) Files, Study Memorandums (1969-1974), NSSM-39 2 of 3 [2 of 2], H-144, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.; Memorandum to Haig from Levine, Subject: Congressman Diggs Requests South African NSSM Study, June 26, 1972, National Security Council Institutional (H) Files, Study Memorandums (1969-1974), NSSM-39 2 of 3 [2 of 2], H-144, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.; Letter to Diggs from Cook, June 26, 1972, National Security Council Institutional (H) Files, Study Memorandums (1969-1974), NSSM-39 2 of 3 [2 of 2], H-144, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.

sugar imports for foreign nations to the United States that ensured steady supplies during world price fluctuations. The act assigned quotas to various nations and served as an indirect form of foreign assistance when prices were low. Antiapartheid forces in 1969 had tried and failed to revoke South Africa's annual quota of 55,000 short tons.<sup>72</sup>

The CBC lobbied hard to get South Africa's sugar quota revoked. It hired a full-time staff to help it in the fight against renewal. Massachusetts Democratic Senator Edward Kennedy led the fight in the Senate, and Democratic Texas Congressman W. R. Poage led the fight in the House and in the Agriculture Committee that he chaired. All these efforts were fruitless because the quota was eventually passed in October 1971.<sup>73</sup>

The campaign against the sugar quota failed for a variety of reasons. The issue did not greatly concern Congress. Southern senators and representatives of sugar producing states would support South Africa due to similar fears on race and economics. In addition, the antiapartheid forces were never able to galvanize enough pressure on uncommitted members of Congress or to gain media attention. For example, when Kennedy called a press conference before a key vote, there were no representatives from the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, ABC, or NBC. African-American support outside Congress was minimal. The NAACP was against the quota but did little to mobilize public support.<sup>74</sup>

In late 1971, Diggs issued an "Action Manifesto" that outlined his recommendations for relations with South Africa and other nations in the southern African region. He called for the United States to refuse to condemn the efforts of

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 307.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 306, 308-09.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 309.

Africans in South Africa to demand freedom even when their efforts included the use of violence. He called on Washington to denounce the violence South Africa inflicted upon its black citizens. Diggs requested that America contribute to the United Nations Trust Fund, which, among other things, helped give legal assistance to people prosecuted under South Africa's apartheid laws. Diggs wanted American foreign policy to advocate majority rule and denounce minority rule in South Africa. He pushed for all American business expansion in South Africa to cease until Pretoria reformed its racial policies. Diggs, of course, insisted that the sugar quota with South Africa be abolished.<sup>75</sup>

On nuclear cooperation, Diggs argued that America's agreement with South Africa should be terminated. He further maintained that no new amendment or agreement should be negotiated that would increase the amount of enriched uranium supplied to South Africa by the United States. Diggs contended that America's support of South Africa's nuclear program supported the policy of apartheid economically and militarily.<sup>76</sup>

For the State Department, this statement undoubtedly caused concern. Diggs could not stop the approval of the extension, but he could raise anxiety and alarm over it. He could demand hearings and publicize the extension when the DOS wanted to keep it quiet. So, why did Diggs not make an issue out of the 1974 extension? With the failure to get South Africa's sugar quota revoked, Diggs made two radical moves to show his support for the fight against apartheid: He issued his "Action Manifesto" and he resigned from the American delegation to the United Nations. The reason he gave for his

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<sup>75</sup> Charles C. Diggs, Jr. "Action Manifesto," *Issue A Quarterly Journal of Africanist Opinion*. Spring 1972, Vol. II, No. 1. 53-56.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

resignation was the American decision to give Portugal a \$436,000,000 credit even when it was fighting colonial wars in Africa. He also mentioned the many American abstentions on resolutions dealing with apartheid and the South African arms embargo. Diggs was the first American representative to the United Nations who ever resigned over policy disagreements.<sup>77</sup>

His moves were not able to pacify leftist leaning members of the CBC. They felt his efforts to pressure the Nixon administration to change its South African policies were too little, too late, and he was replaced as CBC chairman in 1972. In 1973, he became chairman of the District of Columbia Committee, which he had sought after for a long time. This committee appointment cut into the time he had for South African policy. Furthermore, in 1974, Ms. Goler Butcher the staff director for the House Africa Subcommittee resigned her position. She had helped keep the committee running, especially with Diggs's new responsibilities taking up so much of his time. With her absence and Diggs chairing another committee, he had little time to focus on South Africa.<sup>78</sup>

Approval of the extension agreement came at a time when the forces that may have opposed it were distracted. Diggs had new responsibilities and the failure of the sugar quota fight probably countered any desire to openly oppose the extension. With the bitter memory of the weak support he had received, he probably decided not to pay the political price for another potential failure. Moreover, the Watergate scandal had made Congress and the nation concerned about the future of American democracy, making the

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<sup>77</sup>“Memorandum on Signing of Amendment to U.S./S.A. Atomic Energy Agreement,” May 21, 1974, *National Security Archive: South Africa*, no. 00456; Metz, “Congress, the Antiapartheid Movement, and Nixon,” 313.

issue of nuclear cooperation with South Africa relatively unimportant. The extension went into effect June 28, 1974, with little opposition from Congress.<sup>79</sup>

For the Nixon Administration, the 1974 extension was a part of its new approach toward South Africa based on NSSM39. Even before Nixon resigned from office in August 1974, due to his involvement in the Watergate scandal, NSSM39 had become outdated. On April 24, 1974, a coup occurred in Portugal that overthrew the government of Marcello Caetano. With this coup, the road toward final independence began for the Portuguese colonies, because the coup had been started by military officers tired of the colonial wars in Africa and who wanted to withdraw Portuguese troops from Africa.<sup>80</sup> The idea that the white governments were in Africa to stay had been discredited for Portugal, and South Africa's position became more precarious.

Some of the actions mentioned earlier, such as the United States voting against the expulsion of South Africa by the United Nations, occurred during the early months of the Ford administration. Yet, because of the Portuguese coup, the Ford administration had to deal with a new reality and change its approach to southern Africa. In addition, a reevaluation of American policy toward southern Africa was needed due to the public revelation of NSSM39.

Due to the policy actions of the Nixon administration, journalists and critics both suspected that a new policy had been formulated toward southern Africa. NSSM39 was a classified document accessible only to those in the NSC and the State Department. In October 1974, two articles were published that vividly described NSSM39 and quoted

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 313, 315, 317.

<sup>79</sup> "South Africa," *The Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. 71, No. 1830, July 22, 1974, 163.

<sup>80</sup> Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa*, 211.

from the document itself. One article in the *Washington Post* was by Jack Anderson, who had criticized the Nixon administration for Ambassador Hurd's activities, and the other was by Tad Szulc, a former *New York Times* reporter, who published a long article in *Esquire*.<sup>81</sup>

The public revelation of NSSM39 caused the Ford administration to become more aware of public scrutiny toward its South African policies. For example, a prayer breakfast was scheduled to occur at the White House in November. NSC staffer Hal Horan informed National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft of a potential problem. Liberian President William J. Tolbert, Jr., was expected to attend the breakfast. White House staffer John E. Nidecker wanted to know whether South African Minister of Mines Peit Koornhof, a leading contender for the prime ministership, and Ross Main, a private South African citizen, could also attend. Horan contended that it would not be in the best interests of the Ford administration to invite the South Africans because the press stories pointed to America's "tilt toward the white supremacist states and ... suspicions...that the US is considering military links with South Africa." He thought if the press knew about the South African presence at this event it would further "fan the fires of suspicion." Robert McFarlane, another NSC staffer, noted in a memo to Horan on the invitation that there was no doubt that visits by South African personnel to the White House would only cause problems for the Ford administration. He advised that the invitation be withheld and Nidecker should be questioned to determine "how far this fiasco has progressed."<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Jack Anderson, "Henry Kissinger's First Big 'Tilt,'" October 11, 1974, *The Washington Post*, D19; Tad Szulc, "Why are we in Johannesburg?" *Esquire* October 1974, 48.

<sup>82</sup> Memorandum for Brent Scowcroft from Hal Horan, Subject: Prayer Breakfast at White House November 5 and Invitation to South Africans, October 24, 1974, NSA Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977, SA-1, 5, Ford Materials, Gerald Ford Library; (hereafter Ford Library); Memorandum

Especially considering the timing of this issue, October 24, 1974, the Ford administration was not eager to provide any more appearances of close cooperation between the United States and South Africa.

In addition, the Ford administration had to deal with the growing anti-apartheid movement in the United States. Though the anti-apartheid movement had garnered some successes in the 1960s, it lost some momentum due to the disappointments of the Civil Rights movement and the assassination of such leaders as Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and Robert Kennedy. The 1970s witnessed a reinvigorated anti-apartheid movement. Calls for African consciousness and Black Power by Malcolm X and the Black Panthers in the 1960s came to fruition in the 1970s in the anti-apartheid movement. Activists became more radical and challenged previously all white academic organizations and reestablished ties with communist groups, particularly in Africa. These activists were also becoming better organized and successful regarding their protest activities.<sup>83</sup>

For example, Ken Williams and Caroline Hunter organized the Polaroid Revolutionary Workers Movement (PRWM) in October 1970 to protest against the sale of Polaroid equipment in South Africa. This equipment was used to make the identification pictures for passbooks that all Africans and Coloreds had to use in the country and that had become the hated symbol of apartheid for many activists. Through the PRWM activities, Polaroid decided to impose restrictions on its sales to South Africa for one year until the distributor of its equipment in South Africa, Frank and Hirsch, and

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to Hal Horan from Bud McFarlane, October 24, 1974, NSA Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977, SA-1, 5, Ford Papers, Ford Library.

its retailers significantly improved the salaries and benefits of its non-white employees and improved their training so that they could advance to better jobs.<sup>84</sup>

In December 1976, the City Council of Madison, Wisconsin passed an ordinance giving preferential treatment for city purchases to companies that did not do business with South Africa over those that did. In addition, firms that did do business with South Africa could have their contracts with the city terminated. Madison was the first city to adopt such an ordinance, with East Lansing, Michigan, becoming the second the following year.<sup>85</sup> Thus, antiapartheid activities were increasing throughout the United States effecting not only private companies but state governments as well. The time had come when such antiapartheid activities would begin to influence American foreign policy.

By April 24, 1975, concern had grown large enough within the Ford administration about the perception of United States-South African relations that the NSC created a document to be used by Ford officials to publicly address it. The document, called "On United States Policy Towards Southern Africa," noted eight actions the United States had taken against South Africa and Rhodesia since the implementation of NSSM39, including maintaining the United Nations arms embargo and discouraging investment in the two nations. The NSC argued that American policy toward southern Africa had remained the same since the 1950s, supporting the principles of self-determination for Africans and encouraging peaceful change but discouraging the use of

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<sup>83</sup> Francis Njubi Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans against Apartheid, 1946-1994* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 55-56, 68, 69-71.

<sup>84</sup> Les de Villiers, *In Sight of Surrender: The U.S. Sanctions Campaign against South Africa, 1946-1993* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), 47-48.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 49, 56.



force to bring about change. The NSC contended that “a balanced examination” of American policies toward the white-minority governments of southern Africa did not reveal any “tilt” toward these nations.<sup>86</sup>

Though “On United States Policy” identified many of the actions taken against South Africa and Rhodesia, it did not note any continued cooperation such as nuclear. The contention that American foreign policy toward southern Africa was consistent since the 1950s was accurate. Still, the document did not recognize that with the rise in the number of independent African nations, increased international opposition to apartheid, and the growth of violence in southern Africa, America’s relations with this region had grown in complexity. Finally, the contention that the United States had not grown closer to the white-minority governments and only advocated peaceful change within southern Africa would be undermined by American cooperation with South Africa regarding Angola.

The 1974 Portuguese coup challenged how the United States approached the remaining white-minority governments of Rhodesia and South Africa. Specifically, Secretary of State Kissinger began taking a more active interest and role in southern African affairs. Kissinger saw the newly independent Portuguese colonies as being prime targets for communism. Little could be done to prevent Mozambique or Guinea-Bissau from forming left leaning governments but, according to Kissinger, in Angola, something could be done to stop the spread of communism. Kissinger felt that the Soviet Union

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<sup>86</sup> “On United States Policy towards Southern Africa,” National Security Council Institutional (H) Files, Study Memorandums (1969-1974), NSSM-39 2 of 3 [2 of 2], H-144, Nixon Materials, National Archives at College Park, MD.

would begin to spread its influence now that the force that had prevented it from entering this area before, the Portuguese, was no longer there.<sup>87</sup>

In an effort to prevent the Portuguese colony of Angola from being taken over by the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), considered in Washington to be pro-Marxist, America began to support the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA). The FNLA had close ties to America's ally, President Sese Seko Mobutu of Zaire, and the United States began covert arms shipments and transferring funds to the FNLA in late 1974. South Africa began to aid the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) that was based in southern Angola, which bordered South African-controlled Namibia, further complicating the situation in Angola.<sup>88</sup>

The critical point for this crisis came on October 25, 1975, when South African troops marched into Angola with FNLA and UNITA forces, allegedly with American approval. Their goal was to capture the capital of Luanda, the power base of the MPLA, and impose their own government. The key ally of the MPLA, Cuba, responded by sending in thousands of soldiers to Angola. The United States was unable to respond to this new development because aid alone would not counter Cuban troops, and America was unwilling and unable to send its troops or to raise a mercenary force. South Africa eventually withdrew from Angola in 1976 and the MPLA gained control.<sup>89</sup>

The reason that the United States had not supported the FNLA and UNITA forces was the recent experience of the Vietnam War and the Portuguese coup. As the scholar

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<sup>87</sup> Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 675-76.

<sup>88</sup> Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa*, 212.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 212-3.

Chris Alden put it, “coming on the heels of the ignoble experience in Vietnam, congressional doves sought to curtail America ‘adventurism’ in Africa.” The passage of the Clark amendment effectively cut off American aid to South African forces and American operatives in Angola and caused their withdrawal. Thus, “Kissinger and the South African government misjudged the mood of the United States Congress for American involvement in Angola.”<sup>90</sup>

Cutting off American support in Angola placed the South African government in a precarious position. The invasion of Angola and South Africa’s failure there undermined its position among African states because it appeared as if Prime Minister Vorster was going against earlier reassurances of peace with his neighbors and that he did not have the power to enforce South African interests when persuasion failed. America’s lack of support undermined its position with the South African government and caused the apartheid government to reconsider how reliable an ally America really was. This lack of faith in America was so great that South Africa began making overtures toward other allies or potential allies, among them Israel.<sup>91</sup>

Kissinger was critical of the renewed congressional interest in foreign policy, blaming this closer interest on Watergate, which had emboldened Congress to investigate all presidential initiatives. Watergate also encouraged Congress to legislate specific policies more than it had previously done. He saw Congress as being more concerned

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<sup>90</sup> Chris Alden, *Apartheid’s Last Stand: The Rise and Fall of the South African Security State* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996), 25.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 26; Benjamin M. Joseph, *Besieged Bedfellows: Israel and the Land of Apartheid* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1988), 21, 58.

with “inhibiting executive discretion than with [implementing a] nonpartisan national security policy,” and thereby hindering many aspects of Ford’s foreign policy.<sup>92</sup>

Though unflattering, Kissinger’s assessment of Congress does touch on how strongly Watergate had affected congressional interest in presidential actions, especially foreign. Kissinger noted that Congress “harassed East-West policy with amendments and hearings,”<sup>93</sup> which is certainly borne out by events. In 1974, concern grew regarding United States-South African nuclear cooperation but this interest increased in 1975 and 1976 as seen with the rise in the number of committees formed and reports issued by Congress compared to previous years.

Watergate was not the only event that heavily influenced congressional interest toward America’s nuclear cooperative activities. On May 18, 1974, India conducted a test of a nuclear device, claiming that it was intended for peaceful nuclear purposes, not the development of nuclear weapons. The reassurances that the explosion was for peaceful purposes, such as dam building or changing the course of a river, were not convincing to many governments worldwide that saw no difference between a peaceful and a military nuclear explosion. The Indian explosion caused further trepidation within the international community because it demonstrated that any nation could build a nuclear device, including “desperately poor nations, mad dictators, even political terrorists.”<sup>94</sup>

The Indian test also was a challenge to the contention that peaceful nuclear cooperation could prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Indian scientists had

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<sup>92</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 31, 36-37, 1064.

<sup>93</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 835.

used plutonium from a Canadian-supplied research reactor and American-supplied heavy water for use in their nuclear experiments. India claimed that its nuclear cooperation agreement with Canada did not prohibit the testing of peaceful nuclear devices. Canada strongly disagreed with this interpretation of the agreement and terminated future shipments of nuclear equipment or material. India had not signed the NPT and thus avoided international condemnation of the test through the IAEA or the United Nations.<sup>95</sup>

The Nixon administration was alarmed about the Indian nuclear explosion but did not issue a strong condemnation. A key reason for this was administration plans to sell nuclear reactors and the fuel for them to Egypt and Israel. Secretary of State Kissinger did not want to emphasize further how peaceful nuclear cooperation could lead to nations developing nuclear weapons because of the pending sale of nuclear technology to the volatile Middle East. When the knowledge of these plans became known, congressional worries were so great that Congress started taking an active interest in formulating policies to stymie the proliferation of nuclear weapons.<sup>96</sup>

One way Congress demonstrated its concerns on nuclear proliferation was the passage of a series of laws designed to limit the further spread of nuclear technology by the United States. It was the Ford administration, due to Nixon's resignation in August, which had to deal with this renewed interest in nuclear nonproliferation. In late October 1974, President Ford signed a bill empowering Congress to approve international agreements for sharing nuclear technology, responding to congressional anxieties about

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<sup>94</sup> Peter Pringle and James Spigelman, *The Nuclear Barons* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1981), 374-75.

<sup>95</sup> J. Samuel Walker, "Nuclear Power and Nonproliferation: The Controversy over Nuclear Exports, 1974-1980," *Diplomatic History* 25 (Spring 2001), 221.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

the proposed sale of nuclear reactors and fuel to Israel and Egypt. It had surprised many members of Congress that they had no way to block agreements with foreign countries on the peaceful uses of atomic energy. This bill was passed to try to placate congressional concerns. The House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements, the House Subcommittee on the Near East and South Asia, and the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Subcommittee on International Finance all held hearings on the proposed sale of nuclear reactors and fuel to Egypt and Israel.<sup>97</sup>

During these hearings, DOS officials tried to reassure congressional leaders about the sales. They emphasized that IAEA safeguards would be applied to the reactors and fuel. This would require periodic inspections and strict accounting of nuclear materials to insure they would not be used for military purposes. DOS officials also said spent nuclear fuel from these reactors would be processed outside Israel and Egypt, special security measures would be implemented to protect the reactors and fuel from sabotage or theft, and that American supplied materials would not be used to develop nuclear explosive devices.<sup>98</sup>

Many congressional leaders were not satisfied by these assurances. Indiana Democratic Representative Lee H. Hamilton, Chairman of the House Subcommittee on the Near East and South Asia, called the language used by DOS officials to justify the sale as “slippery.” Senator William Proxmire, a Democrat from Wisconsin, and Senator Henry M. Jackson, a Democrat from Washington, questioned the adequacy of IAEA safeguards and criticized the unwillingness of American officials to guarantee that the

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<sup>97</sup> “Congress Seeks Role in Nuclear Agreements,” *Congressional Quarterly Almanac* 93<sup>rd</sup> Congress 2<sup>nd</sup> Session 1974, Vol. 30, 597.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

sales not occur without additional conditions. Jackson, in particular, felt that India's explosion of a nuclear device earlier that year showed that a thorough review was needed of IAEA safeguards.<sup>99</sup> This debate showed just how the Indian explosion had increased congressional attention on nuclear proliferation issues and how, when it came to the volatile Middle East, a region of the world that Congress had long experience with, it would take notice when a nuclear cooperation agreement was proposed.

Democratic Senator John Glenn of Ohio, along with Senate Republican Charles H. Percy of Illinois and Democratic Senator Abraham Ribicoff from Connecticut also expressed concerns during hearings of the Committee on Government Operations in April and May 1975. The committee convened to "explore the various controls that the United States places on its peaceful nuclear exports." The three lawmakers had also proposed a bill that "would require that all nuclear exports by the United States be made contingent on a finding by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission that safeguard against diversion, theft, and sabotage." The committee was also disturbed that South Africa had not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and noted, "Our nuclear trade with India, South Africa, and other non-NPT nations is an important issue which we will want to explore."<sup>100</sup> The adherents to this treaty agreed not to develop nuclear weapons or, if they already had them, not to assist other nations without nuclear weapons in the manufacture or procurement of such weapons.

During the hearings, Senator Percy asked the Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Dr. Fred Ikle, about why the United States had shipped one

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Committee on Government Operations, "The Export Reorganization Act-1975," Senate, 94<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, April 24, 30, and May 1, 1975, 1, 4.

hundred pounds of highly enriched uranium to South Africa, which was enough for ten bombs. He also wondered why a computer was shipped to South Africa that could aid it in setting up an enrichment plant, thus increasing the chances of manufacturing nuclear weapons. Ikle mentioned that the reactor this material was slated for, SAFARI I, was a research reactor but provided no further explanation.<sup>101</sup>

Dr. Abraham Friedman, Director of the Division of International Programs, Energy Research and Development Administration for the National Security Administration, did have an answer. He explained that the majority of this enriched uranium was in cooling tanks because the material to run the reactor frequently had to be replaced. Only a small amount of the hundred pounds was used at once, and the other material could not be used for any other purpose due to its high radioactivity. He also emphasized that this facility was under IAEA inspection and that there were tight controls over the material. Friedman tried to assure the committee further that strong safeguards were in place by mentioning that the United States had insisted on such safeguards being in place before it shipped trigger amounts of nuclear material, five kilograms of highly enriched uranium and two kilograms of plutonium which is the least amount needed to manufacture nuclear weapons, to South Africa.<sup>102</sup>

Senator Glenn was not reassured by Friedman's statement. He acknowledged that he understood how executive agreements and nuclear export licenses were issued but noted that Congress approved none of these agreements and licenses, which allowed the exporting of nuclear fuel to "South Africa, India, [and] God knows where." He argued that the United States was "playing doomsday [and taking a] big risk" with its nuclear

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 16, 17.



export policy. He felt that the United States did not have adequate controls on its distribution of plutonium and uranium and stated that “if anyone can tell me that we know where all of the plutonium and the uranium is in this country and in the world, then I will go home and sleep better tonight.”<sup>103</sup> Though Watergate may have initiated increased interest in presidential actions, the Indian explosion helped to focus congressional attention on American nuclear cooperation abroad and how much control America had over this material.

Congressional concern over South Africa’s nuclear ability continued into 1976. The proposed sale of two nuclear reactors by GE came to the attention of Congress. The bid for this sale had first been submitted during the Nixon administration. The selling of nuclear reactors abroad was unexceptional and had occurred for years as seen in the Egyptian and Israeli sale. Still, Congress decided to hold hearings on the sale and thus brought the issue into the public arena despite the DOS desire for the nuclear cooperation extension to be handled quietly. Probably due to the publicity, South Africa decided to take up France’s competing bid, which had been increasing its nuclear relationship with South Africa for years.<sup>104</sup>

The reaction within the Ford administration regarding South Africa withdrawing from the purchase of a reactor was one of disappointment as evident from a memorandum written by NSA staffer David Elliott to National Security adviser Brent Scowcroft. Elliot noted that South Africa had not given any reasons for its actions, but he stated “it is not hard to guess that they were unwilling to be pilloried in the U.S. Congress and press for

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 73-74.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 80.

exercising their completely legitimate right to acquire nuclear power for civil purposes.”<sup>105</sup>

Elliot also expected that there would be long-term proliferation consequences because South Africa had withdrawn from this sale. Elliott predicted that South Africa would turn to France, as it eventually did, or West Germany, to acquire a reactor. He noted that neither of these two countries had the same stringent requirements that the United States had in regulating the amount of plutonium produced by reactors they exported to other countries. Thus, South Africa would have the opportunity to accumulate greater amounts of plutonium than the United States would have allowed if the sale of the reactors had been allowed to proceed unhindered.<sup>106</sup>

Elliott predicted that Congress would continue its examination of the Ford administration’s policies. He mentioned how the Ford administration had warned Congress months earlier that its attempts to restrict and intervene in nuclear policy would be counterproductive to America’s nuclear nonproliferation policies. Elliot noted that what happened with South Africa and the sale of nuclear reactors was a prime example of this interference. Elliot predicted that Congress would not learn from this failure and would force America “further and further out of the nuclear export arena, with the attendant loss of influence.”<sup>107</sup>

Though written in a highly critical and opinionated manner, Elliott’s prediction came true as Congress began further to investigate America’s nuclear relationship with

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<sup>104</sup> Richard K. Betts, “A Diplomatic Bomb for South Africa?” *International Security* 4 (Fall 1979), 112.

<sup>105</sup> “National Security Council Memorandum from David Elliott to Brent Scowcroft,” May 28, 1976, National Security Administration Presidential Country Files for Africa, Box 5, South Africa Folder 4, Ford Library.

South Africa. Representative Diggs reemerged as a critic of American relations with South Africa during hearings of his Subcommittee on International Resources, Food, and Energy of the Committee on International Relations in May and June 1976.

Diggs strongly questioned the DOS position on United States-South African nuclear relations. He inquired about the State Department policy of transferring nuclear materials and technology to South Africa, even though it had not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The department responded that America should uphold its commitments to South Africa regardless of its non-signatory status and contended that American cooperation with South Africa allowed it to exert a positive influence by encouraging South Africa's "responsible behavior in the field of nuclear development." The DOS further explained that the degree of cooperation America had with South Africa was directly proportional to its ability to influence South Africa to sign the NPT. Not cooperating with South Africa because it had not signed the NPT would hamper relations with other nations and make them seek other sources of nuclear material or develop their own indigenous nuclear capabilities without American input. Both of these developments would be contrary to American goals for international nuclear development.<sup>108</sup>

Further controversy emerged concerning American-South African nuclear cooperation when, in mid-1976, the Congressional Black Caucus and others led the fight against the license application to export enriched uranium to South Africa's American built SAFARI I plant. The Ford administration argued that a ban would backfire and

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

cause South Africa to turn its enrichment plants from low enrichment to high enrichment and produce unsafeguarded weapons-grade uranium. This license would enable America to continue to monitor the enriched uranium's use at SAFARI I through IAEA safeguards. The license was granted, but the controversy over South Africa's nuclear capability continued.<sup>109</sup>

Several points emerged from the exchange between Diggs's committee and the State Department, the testimony from other government officials, and statements by other members of Congress. First, the Ford administration continually justified its cooperation with South Africa as being the best way to gain influence with that nation. Second, the administration consistently emphasized the safeguards, restrictions, and laws America had on its nuclear cooperation with South Africa. Finally, members of Congress expressed concern regarding America's nuclear cooperation with South Africa and responded by calling for more restrictions or termination of this cooperation.

The Ford administration attempted to influence events in southern Africa again in 1976, but through negotiation and not support of covert activities. Kissinger hoped to use his method of "shuttle diplomacy," to end the conflict in Rhodesia between African liberation forces and the white-minority government. He started this negotiation process by publicly refuting NSSM39 at speech on April 27, 1976 in Lusaka, Zambia, and advocating ten steps for the achievement of majority rule in Rhodesia within two to three years.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Subcommittee on International Resources, Food, and Energy of the Committee on International Relations, "Resource Development in South Africa and U.S. Policy," 235, 241.

<sup>109</sup> Betts, "A Diplomatic Bomb for South Africa?" 112-13.

<sup>110</sup> Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa*, 244.

Kissinger needed the help of South Africa's Prime Minister John Vorster to force the leader of the white-minority government in Rhodesia, Ian Smith, to come to the negotiating table. South Africa was providing invaluable aid to Smith, and Kissinger thought Vorster could pressure Rhodesia to reach a settlement allowing a transition to majority rule. Kissinger continued his "shuttle diplomacy" throughout the summer, negotiating with Vorster, Smith, and the leaders of the independence movements in Rhodesia, until he was finally able to call a meeting of all parties in Geneva on September 19, 1976, to propose a settlement. The agreement allowed for a transitional government where whites would control the defense and legal apparatuses and allowed for a dual legislature for whites and Africans with both legislatures having a veto over the other. Rebel leaders rejected the settlement because they thought the whites would dominate the transitional government and that they could win a better settlement on the battlefield. Thus, Kissinger's attempt at helping to arrive at a negotiated settlement failed in 1976, and he was unable to restart negotiations when President Ford lost to Jimmy Carter in the November 1976 presidential elections. Still, Kissinger did establish the precedent for the United States to aid in negotiating a settlement for Rhodesia that was maintained by his successor Cyrus Vance.<sup>111</sup>

During the negotiations by Kissinger on Rhodesia, violence erupted in the South African township of Soweto that destroyed any image of political stability. On June 16, 1976, approximately 15,000 school children protested the South African government's policy of having half of their school subjects taught in Afrikaans, which the Africans saw as the language of their oppressor. Police fired on the school children, killing fifty-eight

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<sup>111</sup> Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 244; Andrew DeRoche, *Black, White, and Chrome: The*  
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and igniting a wave of violence throughout South Africa causing the police to use harsh countermeasures. By February 1977, 575 more people had been killed, all but five black, and 2,389 more had been wounded. Even worse for the South African government, thousands of young people fled to Angola and Tanzania and joined with the militant wings of the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), which advocated majority rule in South Africa and which instructed the students in the techniques necessary to fight a guerilla war. Violence in South Africa increased beginning in the Carter administration accelerating international criticism and bringing more pressure to reform.<sup>112</sup>

United States-South African relations at the end of the Nixon-Ford administrations were under more strain due to the strategic change the 1974 Portuguese coup brought to South Africa and the instability within the region caused by the war in Rhodesia along with the escalation of violence in South Africa ignited at Soweto. Yet, the nuclear relationship remained stable largely due to the fact that the 1974 extension had occurred before increased congressional scrutiny on United States-South African nuclear relations. After two extensions of the original 1957 agreement and having weathered congressional interest, America's nuclear cooperation with South Africa appeared secure, but that soon changed. In 1977 and 1979, suspicions arose that South Africa had first attempted to detonate a nuclear bomb and later succeeded in detonating a nuclear device. The Carter administration would have to deal with this new situation, in

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*United States and Zimbabwe, 1953-1998* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 2001), 228

<sup>112</sup> Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa*, 215; Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 3<sup>rd</sup>. ed., (Yale: Yale University Press, 2001), 213.

addition to international and domestic calls for economic sanctions against South Africa due to its policy of apartheid.

## CHAPTER 5

### CARTER ADMINISTRATION: STRAINED RELATIONS AND THE VELA EVENT

America's diplomatic and nuclear relationship with South Africa underwent considerable strain during the Carter administration. President Jimmy Carter based his administration's foreign policy on human rights rather than on the power politics of the Cold War, which led to heavy criticism of South Africa for its system of apartheid. Tensions also increased between South Africa and the United States as the administration implemented policies that tightened America's nuclear export policies. Finally, nuclear relations between the United States and South Africa became especially difficult due to two events in 1977 and 1979. In 1977, satellites detected preparations for a nuclear test in the Kalahari Desert of South Africa, which was finally averted due to international pressure. In 1979, an incident, known as the Vela Event, occurred within South Africa's territorial waters that had all the earmarks of a nuclear explosion. Since 1957, a major policy goal for the United States government had been preventing South Africa from using nuclear technology for military purposes. Both events, especially the September 22, 1979 Vela Event, appeared to demonstrate that South Africa had crossed the line from a potential nuclear weapons power to an actual one.

When Jimmy Carter assumed the presidency in 1977, he emphasized his administration's focus on human rights and not strictly on the East-West power politics of the Cold War. In a March 17, 1977, speech at the United Nations, Carter had pledged



his administration's advocacy of "the dignity and well-being of people throughout the world" and stated that he believed this foreign policy approach was consistent with "my own nation's historic values and commitments." During a May 22, 1977, commencement address at Notre Dame University, Carter asserted that America's foreign policy would be democratic and its power and influence would be used to help people.<sup>1</sup>

Key foreign policy officials within Carter's administration also articulated a strong commitment to human rights in public speeches and congressional committee testimonies. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance provided details regarding this new approach in his April 30, 1977, Law Day speech at the University of Georgia School of Law where he acknowledged that the United States had signed international agreements advocating the protection of human rights but added that simply signing such agreements was not enough. The United States should now work with other governments and people "to protect and enhance the dignity of the individual."<sup>2</sup>

Vance defined human rights as the freedom from government persecution in the form of torture, degrading punishments, or unfair trials. Governments should also not deprive humans of adequate food, shelter, health care, and education. Finally, all people should enjoy the political and civil liberties of freedom of thought, religion, speech, press, and assembly. Vance argued that the defense of these rights by the Carter administration coincided with America's traditions, international obligations, and laws.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jimmy Carter, "A Foreign Policy Based on America's Essential Character," *Department of State Bulletin*, June 13, 1977, 621, 622; Jimmy Carter, "Peace, Arms Control, World Economic Progress, Human Rights: Basic Priorities of U.S. Foreign Policy," *Department of State Bulletin*, April 11, 1977, 332, 333.

<sup>2</sup> Cyrus Vance, "Human Rights and Foreign Policy," *Department of State Bulletin*, May 23, 1977, 505.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 505, 506.

As Carter's ambassador to the United Nations, Andrew Young, an African-American, civil rights activist, and trusted former aide to Martin Luther King, Jr., symbolized the administration's commitment to human rights. Young's statements underscored the new direction of American foreign policy. He testified before a congressional subcommittee that during discussions with the White House on providing aid to a country that the issue of human rights always arose. Young also stated that the best protection for human rights was through "a flexible approach from a committed executive branch...I think we have that commitment in the executive branch."<sup>4</sup>

Public statements in the United Nations put further pressure on South Africa to reform, though he did not specifically mention that nation. Young described how the United Nations should be a catalyst for positive change in the world and stated that all parties involved in a dispute should work to end conflicts.<sup>5</sup>

The Carter administration's focus on human rights endangered United States-South African relations because apartheid violated any definition of human rights. In fact, Carter and his key foreign policy officials early on issued comments publicly and privately pressuring South Africa to reform its racial policies. During his March 17, 1977 UN speech, Carter pledged to work toward majority rule in southern Africa, predicting that if such reforms were not accomplished, a race war would erupt to the detriment of all people in South Africa. During his Notre Dame speech, Carter again advocated majority rule for South Africa, committing the United States to a "peaceful resolution" in South Africa and that it had to take place quickly. Carter emphasized that

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<sup>4</sup> Peter J. Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis, and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 215; Subcommittee on African Affairs and

the United States was willing to work with European and African nations to foster an international atmosphere allowing for peaceful change in South Africa and all of southern Africa.<sup>6</sup>

In a July 1, 1977 speech to the NAACP, Cyrus Vance said that human rights meant “making our best effort peacefully to promote racial justice in southern Africa.” He warned South Africa that it needed to begin reforms promptly and that the United States “will applaud such efforts. If there is no progress, our relations will inevitably suffer.” Vance asserted that this was not interference in South African affairs, but part of a universal concern of human rights, which justified the opposition to apartheid.<sup>7</sup>

Before congressional subcommittees, Vance mentioned that America wanted to promote peaceful change in South Africa, forecasting a growing crisis in that nation. He stated that “a deterioration in our bilateral relations is inevitable if progress is not made,” that there were simple solutions to the problems in South Africa, and that some actions, such as government officials meeting with leaders of liberation movements, would be a sign that steps were being taken toward reform.<sup>8</sup>

Other foreign policy experts within the Carter administration who were usually not strong human rights activists took a more critical approach to South Africa. On January 28, 1977, National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, a dedicated Cold War

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Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance of the Committee on Foreign Relations, “African Development Fund,” House of Representatives, 9<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, April 18, 1977, 36, 37.

<sup>5</sup> Andrew Young, “Human Rights,” *Department of State Bulletin*, February 1979, 60.

<sup>6</sup> Carter, “Peace, Arms Control, World Economic Progress, Human Rights,” 330; Carter, “A Foreign Policy Based on America’s Essential Character,” 625.

<sup>7</sup> Cyrus Vance, “The United States and Africa: Building Positive Relations,” *Department of State Bulletin*, July 1, 1977, 166, 169; Vance, “Human Rights and Foreign Policy,” 506-07; Carter, “Peace, Arms Control, World Economic Progress, Human Rights,” 332;

<sup>8</sup> Subcommittee on African Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, “U.S. Policy toward Africa,” House of Representatives, 95<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, May 12, 1978, 5.

warrior, met with South African ambassador to the United States R. F. Botha to discuss the situation in South West Africa and Rhodesia. Brzezinski asked Botha if he was related to General Louis Botha of the Boer War. When ambassador Botha replied that he was, Brzezinski recalled that as a child he had refought the Boer War while playing with his toy soldiers and that he had always been on the side of the Boers, which pleased the ambassador. Then Brzezinski went on to say that he had always favored national liberation movements, which did not make Botha happy because South Africa was trying to contain liberation movements in Rhodesia and South West Africa.<sup>9</sup>

The tensions between the United States and South Africa over this new foreign policy approach rose so much that Carter offered to send an envoy to meet with Prime Minister John Vorster to discuss the situation in southern Africa. Vorster accepted, believing that the issues of South West Africa and Rhodesia were too serious to be handled through regular diplomatic channels and that the United States and South Africa should be able to work out their differences without “quarreling with one another.”<sup>10</sup> Guerrilla movements in South West Africa and Rhodesia, largely composed of majority black African soldiers, fought against the government forces of white-minority-rule. In Rhodesia, South Africa backed the government forces of Ian Smith, while in South West Africa it fought to maintain control of a region it had occupied since the end of World War I.

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<sup>9</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Southern Africa, January 28, 1977, National Security Agency-Brzezinski, Subject File, Memcoms-Brzezinski 1-9/77, 33, Carter Papers, James E. Carter, Jr., Library. (hereafter Carter Library).

<sup>10</sup> Letter to Prime Minister Balthazar Johannes Vorster from President Jimmy Carter, April 8, 1977, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Geographic File, Southern Africa 3/77-4/77, 14, Carter Papers, Carter Library; “Message to President Carter from Prime Minister Vorster”, March 23, 1977, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Geographic File, Southern Africa 3/77-4/77, 14, Carter Papers, Carter Library.

In the early months of 1977, the Carter administration decided exactly what it wanted to convey to the government of South Africa regarding its domestic and foreign policies in southern Africa and who to convey it-Vice-President Walter Mondale. In his memos to the president, Mondale wrote that he wanted Vorster to understand the new approach the Carter administration had toward South Africa and how it differed from the Ford administration's approach. The Ford administration had also worked to resolve the situation in South West Africa and Rhodesia but was primarily concerned with keeping the Soviet Union out of southern Africa, which had caused the South African government to believe that the United States was not concerned with its apartheid policies or the domestic policies of white control in South West Africa and Rhodesia.<sup>11</sup>

Mondale planned on precisely stating to Vorster that the Carter administration's objective was a "progressive transformation of South African society...[and] a constructive South African role on Rhodesia and Namibia." He further explained to Carter that relations with South Africa "are at a watershed; their future (Rhodesia and Namibia) depends on South African actions on all three questions." Mondale was to meet with Vorster on May 20-21 in Vienna, which he argued was the best location because it forced Vorster to meet Mondale halfway, avoided America legitimizing South Africa's policies by having the vice-president visit the white-ruled nation, and lowered any public expectations of substantial results from the meeting.<sup>12</sup>

In advance of the meeting, Mondale prepared a draft statement for the end of the talks that elaborated on what the Carter administration expected of the South African

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<sup>11</sup> "My Meeting with Vorster," April 8, 1977, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Geographic File, Southern Africa 3/77-4/77, 14, Carter Papers, Carter Library

government. Mondale wanted to explain to the international community that the United States government did not demand that South Africa grant political rights to everyone regardless of race. Instead, the United States sought to counsel South Africa, as a friend would, that if it moved quickly and resolutely away from racial discrimination toward full political participation for its citizens, further domestic unrest would be averted, regional conflict would be avoided, and South Africa's proper place in the international community would be restored. If Vorster and the South African government did not "make fundamental changes to meet the aspirations of its citizens of all races," relations between the United States and South Africa would be negatively affected.<sup>13</sup>

After reviewing the memos by Mondale, Carter expressed some concerns, noting that it would be best to assume that Vorster had better intentions than he probably had and that it was important "to give them a way not to acknowledge past mistakes."<sup>14</sup> Carter wanted to pressure South Africa to reform but not to the point of issuing an ultimatum and having to threaten to sever relations. Thus, the Carter administration prepared itself for a difficult meeting with an ally, but hoped that Vorster would be receptive.

The statement was not released without some significant modification because the meeting in Vienna did not go as smoothly as hoped. The government publication *South African Digest*, after describing how the two sides disagreed on key issues, mentioned that Vorster agreed to support efforts to move toward majority rule in Rhodesia and to continue to make progress toward resolving the situation in South West Africa. Vorster

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<sup>12</sup> "Objectives During Visit to Europe for Talks with Vorster and European Leaders", May 10, 1977, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Geographic File, Southern Africa 3/77-4/77, 14, Carter Papers, Carter Library; "My Meeting with Vorster" April 8, 1977.

disagreed with American attempts to associate African-American problems with the problems of black Africans in South Africa. He argued that black Africans in South Africa were members of separate nations within South Africa that would eventually gain independence. Vorster noted that the discussions were meaningful and productive but that strong disagreements remained between the two nations.<sup>15</sup>

At a press conference after the talks, Mondale repeated some of the same themes, calling the meeting productive but noting strong disagreement on some issues. A reporter asked “Mr. Vice President. Could you possibly go into slightly more detail on your concept of full participation as opposed to one man one vote? Do you see some kind of a compromise?” Mondale responded with “No. No. It’s the same thing. Every citizen should have the right to vote and every vote should be equally weighted.”<sup>16</sup> By publicly advocating one man one vote, the United States seemingly allied itself with antiapartheid forces to pressure South Africa to reform. Previous administrations had advocated reform of the apartheid system but had rarely made such a strong, public statement to this effect. Thus, the South African government could easily infer that the United States was no longer as close an ally.

Some members of Congress were pleased with the Carter administration’s new tougher approach toward South Africa. Members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), in particular, were pleased with Carter’s foreign policies. Carter had sought CBC support during his 1976 presidential campaign, and Andrew Young was a former

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> “Vorster and Mondale Disagree on Key Issues,” *South African Digest*, May 27, 1977, 1-2.

<sup>16</sup> Telegram from the Department of State, Subject: Vice President Press Conference, May 28, 1977, White House Central File-Subject File, CO 141 1/1/77-6/30/77, CO-53, Carter Papers, Carter Library.

member. African-American votes had provided critical support to Carter's 1976 campaign, and had allowed Carter to win the Democratic primary in Florida.<sup>17</sup> Thus, satisfying members of predominantly African-American congressional districts allowed Carter to maintain their support in Congress, as well as their constituents.

CBC member and former chair Charles Diggs had heavily criticized previous presidential administrations' policies toward Africa and, especially, South Africa, earning him the nickname of "Mr. Africa" by his congressional colleagues. Diggs praised the confrontation Mondale had with Vorster as a "forthright stand against apartheid" and went on to praise the Carter administration for initiating an "important departure in United States-South Africa relations." Diggs was "heartened" by Carter's calls for South Africa to reform its racial policies.<sup>18</sup>

The new tougher stance taken by Carter toward South Africa mirrored the growing strength of the American anti-apartheid movement. By the late 1970s, the anti-apartheid movement in America had matured with better organization, more radical stances, and more successful protest activities. For example, Ken Williams and Caroline Hunter organized the Polaroid Revolutionary Workers Movement (PRWM) in October 1970 to protest against the sale of Polaroid equipment in South Africa. By November 1977, deciding that the cost in time and money to deal with groups protesting their business in South Africa was too much, Polaroid decided to withdraw its business from

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<sup>17</sup> Peter G. Bourne, *Jimmy Carter: A Comprehensive Biography from Plains to Postpresidency* (New York, NY: Lisa Drew Book/Scribner, 1997), 296, 300, 313, 326.

<sup>18</sup> Subcommittee on African Affairs, "African Development Fund," 25; Subcommittee on African Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, "United States-South Africa Relations: Internal Change in South Africa," House of Representatives, 95<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, June 3, 1977, 1; Subcommittee on International Trade, Investment, and Monetary Policy of the Committee on Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs, "Export-Import Bank and Trade with South Africa," House of Representatives, 95<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, February 9, 1978, 27.



that country. The success of the Polaroid protest strengthened the resolve of activists who began targeting other organizations including universities and city governments.<sup>19</sup>

Between 1977 and 1978, ten universities withdrew their investments from companies that had any connections to South Africa. The amounts ranged from Hampshire College's \$40,000 to New York University's Law School's \$11 million. Such actions by universities and cities were often the result of protests on campuses by church organizations usually launched independently from established antiapartheid groups. The catalyst for the renewed call for action against apartheid and the successful implementation of such actions were the 1976 Soweto riots and South Africa's brutal response.<sup>20</sup>

Yet, on the national level, little substantial action accompanied the rhetoric to force South Africa to change its racial policies, as cooperation continued in a variety of fields. On December 14, 1977, the United States agreed to sell six Cessna airplanes to South Africa valued at \$500,000. Later, the number was increased to forty-four airplanes. On December 16, 1977, the United States abstained on a United Nations General Assembly vote to impose an oil embargo on South Africa. On January 29, 1978, Carter refused a recommendation that higher tariffs be placed on imports of South African chrome.<sup>21</sup>

Why did action not go along with the rhetoric? First, the United States wanted South Africa's cooperation to settle the civil war in Rhodesia, thus limiting American pressure. Prime Minister Vorster wanted this conflict between the white minority and the

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<sup>19</sup> Les de Villiers, *In Sight of Surrender: The U.S. Sanctions Campaign against South Africa, 1946-1993* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), 54-55.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 43, 56.

black majority to end. He distrusted the white Rhodesian leader, Ian Smith, and realized that Smith's actions prevented South Africa from improving relations with its black neighbors. Vorster was in a position to pressure Smith to end the civil war because the main supply routes to Rhodesia came through South Africa once neighboring Mozambique had closed its borders to Rhodesian trade.<sup>22</sup> Applying too much pressure on South Africa for its racial policies could cause it to rally behind Smith and prolong the civil war. Carter also wanted South Africa to settle the situation in South West Africa peacefully, and too much pressure endangered this objective. International opinion and law pushed South Africa to withdraw from South West Africa, which it had illegally occupied since the League of Nations had disbanded. The United States wanted South Africa voluntarily to give up control of the area before international pressure forced the issue militarily.

Second, international crises forced the Carter administration back into an East-West mentality. The 1978 invasion of Zaire from Angola by troops that the Carter administration assumed, incorrectly, had been backed by Cuba and the massive level of Soviet –Cuban involvement in the 1977-1978 Ogaden War in Ethiopia led Carter to become more of a Cold War warrior. Carter began heeding the advice of his National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski that it was important to maintain good relations with South Africa, which had always been a dependable ally. Furthermore, Brzezinski

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<sup>21</sup> Kerma Irogbe, *The Roots of United States Foreign Policy Toward Apartheid South Africa, 1969-1985* (Lexington, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), 90.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Kinloch Massie, *Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa in the Apartheid Years* (New York: Nan A. Talese, 1997), 392.

argued that if the United States wanted South Africa's racial policies to change it would first have to eliminate the Soviet-Cuban threat in southern Africa.<sup>23</sup>

Congressman Diggs was disappointed in the Carter administration's lack of action to support its rhetoric. He called the Carter policy toward South Africa "ambivalent" because of the rhetoric of condemnation but lack of action to push for change, such as America ending economic relations with South Africa. Diggs was upset enough at the lack of action by the Carter administration that he sponsored or cosponsored bills that would have heavily restricted America's economic activity with South Africa.<sup>24</sup>

American economic investment in South Africa had increased from \$778 million in 1970 to \$1.994 billion dollars by 1978 when Diggs and other members of Congress proposed the bills to restrict American investment. South Africa was America's major export recipient nation in Africa. In 1977, the United States exported \$1.05 billion worth of products to South Africa and increased that amount slightly in 1978 to \$1.08 billion. America imported \$1.26 billions worth of goods from South Africa in 1977 and nearly doubled that amount, \$2.26 billion, by 1978. In addition, South Africa became the number one exporter of coal to America.<sup>25</sup> Such strong economic ties seemingly indicated that the United States could use its economic leverage to pressure South Africa to reform its racial policies.

Congressman Stephen Solarz, Democrat from New York, proposed a bill, not passed by Congress, which would have prohibited new investment in South Africa and

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<sup>23</sup>Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa*, 219-20.

<sup>24</sup> Subcommittee on International Trade, "Export-Import Bank and Trade," 27.

<sup>25</sup> Irogbe, *The Roots of United States Foreign Policy Toward Apartheid South Africa*, 90; Subcommittee on Africa of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, "U.S. Interests in Africa," House of Representatives, 96<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, October 16, 18, 19, 22, 24, 25, 29, November 13, 14, 1979, 187, 188, 191.

would also have implemented a fair employment code for corporations already doing business there. A variety of Carter administration officials testified against this law. Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs C. Fred Bergsten testified that the Treasury Department opposed this legislation because it believed it would be ineffective, burdensome to implement for both businesses and the United States government, and would provoke retaliatory action by South Africa toward the United States. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Industry and Trade Stanley J. Marcuss described how foreign investment in South Africa's economy only amounted to 18 to 19 percent of total economic investment, with new investment from the United States accounting for only one-half of one percent. Marcuss argued that the elimination of new investment from the United States would have little effect on South Africa's economy and could be replaced by foreign investment from other sources.<sup>26</sup>

Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Richard M. Moose also opposed the proposed law. He argued the best way for the United States to urge South Africa to reform its apartheid policies was through a "steady, resolute application of" America's stated opposition to apartheid. He believed that significant pressure to reform had been placed on South Africa from the international community along with the United States and that "it is essential to give these actions time to work." Economic sanctions against South Africa would only make the government of South Africa more hostile to the United States than it already was. Even now, the apartheid government falsely asserted that the United States cared only about the rights of the non-white population and not the white

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<sup>26</sup> Subcommittees on Africa and on International Economic Policy and Trade of the Committee on International Relations, "United States Private Investment in South Africa," House of Representatives, 95<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, July 12, August 10, 15, 17, September 7, 1978, 2-6, 170, 174-75.

population. Moose further contended that the best way for America to demonstrate that it was not opposed to the whites of South Africa was to work with the South African government in settling the issues of independence for South West Africa and Rhodesia. Once the independence of these nations had been secured, with democratic elections and the rights of whites and non-whites assured, South Africa would be more willing to initiate reforms within its society. Because of these considerations, Moose concluded that the United States needed “to act with careful regard for timing and for the actual effect of our decisions” to insure that South Africans understood America was hostile to apartheid and not to whites.<sup>27</sup>

The Carter administration’s human rights foreign policy approach and its actions toward South Africa were, as Moose put it, “not producing results at a rate that is satisfactory...to any of us.”<sup>28</sup> This was partly due to the high expectations that members of Congress and others had regarding Carter’s foreign policy. These expectations were not unfounded as the rhetoric of Carter and his foreign policy officials described a new approach toward foreign policy. What many people had not taken into consideration were the limits that Carter and others had acknowledged were inherent in the administration’s foreign policy.

During Carter’s speech at Notre Dame, he recognized that he “understood fully the limits of moral suasion.” Secretary of State Vance also noted that “in pursuing a human rights policy, we must always keep in mind the limits of our power.” At that same time, Vance acknowledged that “we can nourish no illusions that a call to the banner of human rights will bring a sudden transformation in authoritarian societies.” Regarding

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 167, 168.

South Africa, Vance admitted during his speech to the NAACP that “we cannot impose solutions in southern Africa. We cannot dictate terms to any of the parties; our leverage is limited.” Even Andrew Young indirectly outlined the limits of Carter’s foreign policy when he testified that “I frankly approach Africa in terms of U.S. self-interest.”<sup>29</sup> Such a statement hardly coincides with the image of a foreign policy based solely on human rights in which American self-interests might need to be sacrificed for the greater good.

The vision of Carter’s foreign policy overshadowed the intrinsic practical restrictions that all of his foreign policy team admitted. Such limits, though, were never understood by members of Congress and others who began to criticize Carter’s foreign policy for its lack of effectiveness. The criticism intensified as foreign policy crises, notably the Iran Hostage Crisis and the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, came to engulf the Carter presidency.

One policy area in which the Carter administration did make significant changes was nuclear cooperation with South Africa. During the 1976 presidential campaign, Carter had campaigned against the proliferation of nuclear weapons as a part of his human rights based foreign policy. Carter’s nuclear proliferation stance was not unique, except that he also advocated limiting or even prohibiting the export of America nuclear technologies, such as reactors and nuclear fuel reprocessing equipment. Essentially, Carter saw no distinction between peaceful and non-peaceful uses of nuclear technology, because both could be used to produce nuclear weapons.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Carter, “A Foreign Policy Based on America’s Essential Character,” 623; Vance, “Human Rights and Foreign Policy,” 506; Vance, “The United States and Africa,” 168; Subcommittee on African Affairs, “African Development Fund,” April 18, 1977, 9.

<sup>30</sup> J. Michael Martinez, “The Carter Administration and the Evolution of American Nuclear Nonproliferation Policy, 1977-1981,” *The Journal of Policy History* 14, no. 3 (2002), 264-65.

Once in office, Carter continued his strong stance against nuclear proliferation by vetoing a bill that would have allowed the construction of a new type of nuclear reactor, a liquid metal fast breeder, and used his executive order authority to prevent the building of new nuclear fuel reprocessing plants. Carter contended that building new reactors and new reprocessing plants would increase worldwide nuclear proliferation by increasing the available supply of nuclear fuel.<sup>31</sup> All of these measures were a part of Carter's efforts to limit the export of nuclear technology.

Pakistan felt the effects of these stronger nonproliferation measures. During the waning months of the Ford administration, Congress passed the Symington and Glenn amendments to the Foreign Assistance Act. Both measures restricted America's nuclear cooperation with all nations but the amendments were specifically aimed at preventing Pakistan from acquiring a nuclear reactor from France. The Symington amendment prohibited the United States from providing any assistance to countries that imported uranium-enrichment plants that were not under IAEA safeguards. The Glenn amendment barred assistance to nations that imported plutonium-reprocessing technologies unless they were subject to IAEA safeguards and sought to limit the overall sales of reprocessing. These actions, combined with pressure from the Carter administration on France, eventually derailed the sale.<sup>32</sup>

In spite of these actions, the Carter administration backed off from further measures against Pakistan due to the December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Carter administration needed Pakistan's assistance in accomplishing its goal of

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 270-71.

<sup>32</sup> Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions since 1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 106.

removing the Soviet Union from Afghanistan as Pakistan shared a border with the invaded nation. The Carter administration suspended the use of the Symington amendment against Pakistan, which allowed America to resume its military assistance. Pakistan reciprocated by promising not to develop nuclear weapons or acquire them from international sources. Thus, the issue of Pakistan's nuclear status diminished in importance as strategic considerations took precedence over nuclear proliferation concerns.<sup>33</sup> Just as the Carter administration eased its pressure against South Africa in order to try and resolve issues in that region of the world, it practiced similar policies regarding Pakistan.

The Carter administration attempted to improve relations with India with varying degrees of success. Just as with Pakistan and South Africa, Carter was unable to persuade India to sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). America's closer ties to Pakistan also strained relations with India as it wanted America to stop Pakistan's nuclear program.<sup>34</sup> As the United States strengthened its relations with one nation in Southwest Asia, it strained relations with another mainly due to strategic considerations brought on by the Cold War.

As a part of the Carter administration's strong stance on nuclear proliferation, Ambassador Gerard Smith was sent to get South Africa to sign the NPT, which would have prohibited the country from developing nuclear weapons. In addition, the United States wanted South Africa to agree to use less highly enriched uranium to fuel SAFARI

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 107; Walton L. Brown, "Presidential Leadership and U.S. Nonproliferation Policy," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26 (Summer 1994), 566.

<sup>34</sup> George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1999), 221, 228.



I, which had been fueled with weapons-grade uranium enriched up to 93 percent and supplied by the United States. The Carter administration wanted to substitute 35-40 percent enriched uranium for the reactor, and for South Africa to place all of its nuclear activities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspection, not just those involving cooperation with other nations such as SAFARI I. The key reason the Carter administration pushed for this last measure was that it wanted South Africa's uranium enrichment plant under international inspection.<sup>35</sup>

Smith's negotiations proved to be difficult as Vorster and others in the South African government had a significant reservation about the NPT and IAEA inspection of their country's uranium enrichment plant. Because the NPT required such inspections for all nuclear facilities, South Africa feared that IAEA inspections would cause its uranium enrichment process to be revealed to the world.<sup>36</sup>

In return for signing the NPT and to alleviate these concerns, the South African government wanted some reassurances, such as maintaining the 93 percent enriched uranium fuel for SAFARI I. South Africa also wanted the United States to guarantee that it would supply the necessary amount of low enriched uranium for South Africa's other nuclear power reactors, Koeberg I and II, which were scheduled for completion by the 1980s. Additionally, South Africa requested that the United States provide equipment for use in its uranium enrichment plant and wanted American assistance in regaining its seat on the IAEA Board of Governors. South Africa had lost this seat in June 1977 when the

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<sup>35</sup> Ronald Walters, *South Africa and the Bomb: Responsibility and Deterrence* (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1987), 96; Walton Lyonaise Brown, "Assessing the Impact of American Nuclear Non-Proliferation Policy, 1970-1980: An Analysis of Six Cases" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1982), 176.

IAEA decreed that Egypt had the most advanced nuclear program in Africa, even though South Africa's nuclear program was actually more advanced. South Africa's policy of apartheid had caused African majority-ruled nations in the IAEA, in combination with Soviet bloc nations, to remove South Africa from the Board of Governors.<sup>37</sup>

Negotiations proved unsuccessful as neither side would modify its position. South Africa could afford to delay or prolong negotiations because the first Koeberg reactor was not finished, so that the fuel for the reactor was not yet needed. South Africa's own uranium enrichment plant was producing enough enriched uranium to fuel SAFARI I. If its enriched uranium needs became too great, South Africa could turn to Europe to purchase enriched uranium from such nations as West Germany or France.<sup>38</sup>

Negotiations were also strained due to activities within South Africa itself. From July 21-25, 1977, Soviet satellites photographed preparations being made for an apparent nuclear test in the Kalahari Desert. The test location was within South African territory near the borders of South West Africa (Namibia) and Botswana. The Soviet Union informed President Carter of its findings on August 6, 1977, and American satellites confirmed the Soviet Union's claim on August 11, 1977. The Soviet Union also informed Britain, France, and West Germany about the impending test.<sup>39</sup>

All of the above mentioned nations began exerting pressure on South Africa to forgo a nuclear test. France had particularly strong leverage as it threatened not to deliver

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<sup>36</sup> J. D. L. Moore, *South Africa and Nuclear Proliferation: South Africa's Nuclear Capabilities and Intentions in the Context of International Non-Proliferation Policies* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 85, 109.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 106, 115; Walters, *South Africa and the Bomb*, 96.

<sup>38</sup> Walters, *South Africa and the Bomb*, 97; J. Samuel Walker, "Nuclear Power and Nonproliferation: The Controversy over Nuclear Exports, 1974-1980," *Diplomatic History* 24 (Spring 2001), 241.

the Koeberg nuclear reactors South Africa had bought if it conducted a nuclear test. The South African government denied that it was preparing for a nuclear test and accused the Soviet Union of fabricating these charges to disparage South Africa further at the antiapartheid conference scheduled to be held in Lagos, Nigeria, in late August. Regardless of the accuracy of what the Soviet Union had detected, no test of any kind took place at the site.<sup>40</sup>

The United States pressured South Africa to such an extent that President Carter announced in late August that he was able to elicit a promise from Prime Minister Vorster regarding South Africa's nuclear program. Carter stated that Vorster had promised that South Africa did not have, and did not intend to develop, any type of nuclear explosives either for peaceful or military uses. Carter further announced that Vorster assured the United States that the Kalahari site was not a nuclear test site and that South Africa had no plans to test nuclear explosives presently or in the future. When Vorster objected to this description of what he had stated to President Carter and said that he had made no such promise, the Carter administration publicly released the letter written by Vorster stating his promises and assurances. Unfortunately the letter was not a legally binding document, and South Africa could renege on these promises if it wished.<sup>41</sup>

The Kalahari incident helped to complicate the negotiations to have South Africa adhere to the NPT. The Carter administration became more concerned with how far the South African nuclear program had advanced and wanted strong guarantees that South

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<sup>39</sup> Dan Smith, *South Africa's Nuclear Capability* (New York: UN Center Against Apartheid, 1980), 9; Moore, *South Africa and Nuclear Proliferation*, 111.

Africa would not take the next step and become a nuclear power. Kalahari demonstrated just how close South Africa appeared to be progressing toward becoming a nuclear power. In fact, officials within the South African Atomic Energy Commission, the successor to the South Africa Atomic Energy Board, confirmed after the end of apartheid that a test had been scheduled of a nuclear gun-type device but without using an actual nuclear core due to the lack of enriched uranium available.<sup>42</sup> Thus, American and other nations' suspicions concerning South Africa's nuclear programs and intentions were valid.

Not only did negotiations not become easier but they became more complicated when Carter signed into law the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act (NNPA) on March 10, 1978. The law was designed to expand limitations on nuclear weapons proliferation and the transfer of nuclear technology. The NNPA authorized the renegotiation of international nuclear cooperation agreements, to include clauses restricting the export of nuclear weapons technology abroad. It also established a formal nuclear fuel licensing system and procedures for controlling the nuclear enrichment, reprocessing, and retransfer activities of nations with which the United States had nuclear cooperation agreements. Many of these measures were designed so that the United States could have greater leverage over such nations as France, Japan, and West Germany.<sup>43</sup>

Many of the new NNPA restrictions on nuclear cooperation were already in place in regards to South Africa. For example, clauses in existing agreements limited how

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<sup>40</sup> Richard Betts, "A Diplomatic Bomb for South Africa?" *International Security* 4 (Fall 1979), 105.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 104-05.

<sup>42</sup> David Albright, "South Africa and the Affordable Bomb," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, July/August 1994, 41.

<sup>43</sup> J. Michael Martinez, "The Carter Administration," 272.

South Africa could use the nuclear technology and fuel it received from the United States. Procedures under the IAEA already monitored how South Africa used the nuclear technology transferred to it by the United States in SAFARI I. The NNPA, though, included a provision stating that only if all peaceful nuclear activities of a nation were under IAEA safeguards could nuclear exports occur. South Africa's nuclear enrichment plant was not under IAEA safeguards. Therefore, America could not continue its nuclear cooperation with South Africa unless this facility was placed under IAEA safeguards. Consequently, all nuclear exports to South Africa were frozen and the United States returned the \$1 million South Africa had paid for fuel for SAFARI I.<sup>44</sup>

Nuclear relations between the United States and South Africa were significantly strained by 1979. The United States was leery and watchful of South African nuclear activities largely due to what had been detected in the Kalahari Desert and by South Africa's refusal to sign the NPT. For its part, South Africa resented the pressure placed upon it by the United States to sign the NPT and the new restrictions the NNPA placed upon United States-South African nuclear cooperation.<sup>45</sup>

In September 1979, the Carter administration's concerns about South Africa's nuclear weapons status significantly increased as an explosion, resembling a nuclear detonation, was observed in South African territorial waters. If the test was confirmed, America's nuclear policy since 1957 of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons through cooperation with South Africa would be discredited.

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<sup>44</sup> Walters, *South Africa and the Bomb*, 95; Moore, *South Africa and Nuclear Proliferation*, 98; Brown, "Assessing the Impact of American Nuclear Non-Proliferation Policy," 177.

<sup>45</sup> Walters, *South Africa and the Bomb*, 95-96.

In late October, John Scali of ABC News broke the story of a possible nuclear explosion off the South African coast on September 22. The incident became known as the Vela Event after the Vela satellite that had first detected it. After the story broke, the Carter administration issued a statement indicating that it was investigating whether or not a nuclear explosion had actually taken place. Almost a full month had passed since the actual event, a delay that the State Department explained was due to the United States government's lack of information about what had occurred. The Carter administration did not want to create an international incident by accusing South Africa of a serious charge it could not prove.<sup>46</sup>

After the Vela Event was revealed to the general public, the Carter administration formed a scientific panel to investigate it under the supervision of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). This was unusual, because other government agencies, including the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency, were already investigating the incident. Why did the Carter administration feel it necessary to form another investigative body? Carter had advocated in his 1977 United Nations speech that he wanted a more open foreign policy and that the United States had nothing to hide regarding its human rights record. This same desire for openness could easily apply to a government investigation of a potentially controversial incident, especially with the delay in informing the public. A civilian panel of nongovernmental scientists seemed the best way to do this. With the Watergate scandal less than a decade old, the

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 42; John K. Cooley, "The 'Flash' Seen Round the World," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 31, 1979, 3.

Carter administration seemingly wanted to avoid any hint to an already skeptical public of a cover up.<sup>47</sup>

The scientific panel assembled by Frank Press, Carter's scientific adviser, to study the Vela Event was a virtual who's who of the scientific community. Jack Ruina of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology chaired the panel, which included Luis Alvarez, William Donn, Richard Garwin, Riccardo Giacconi, Richard Muller, Wolfgang Panofsky, Allen Peterson, and F. Williams Saries. These men came from universities and private research centers from around the country and represented expertise in physics, geology, engineering, and astrophysics. The panel's purpose was to evaluate the evidence gathered by the government about the Vela Event and to determine if it was in fact a nuclear explosion, a natural phenomenon, or some sort of mechanical "glitch" in the satellite, but the initial working hypothesis was that Vela was a nuclear explosion. Government agencies and outside contractors briefed the panel providing both classified and unclassified technical information when it convened on November 1, 1979.<sup>48</sup>

As a part of the Press Panel investigation, the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL), headed by Dr. Alan Berman, was asked to analyze some of the data collected on the phenomenon. In a memo dated January 31, 1980, Dr. John M. Marcum, OSTP staffer, specifically requested that the NRL study the ionospheric data from Puerto Rico. These data were the only known corroborative data on the Vela Event. It was hoped that this data would help determine whether a nuclear explosion had occurred. In his memo, Marcum stressed that there were foreign policy ramifications to the origin of the Vela

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<sup>47</sup> Carter, "Peace, Arms Control, World Economic Progress," 329, 332.

<sup>48</sup> Phillip J. Klass, "Clandestine Nuclear Test Doubted," *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, August 11, 1980, 67, 72; "Telegram from Department of State to Capetown Embassy, Subject: Press Panel

Event, urged a speedy resolution to the matter, and requested frequent informal reports on the progress of the study.<sup>49</sup>

Berman described to David Mann, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Engineering and Systems, the importance of this ionospheric data in a February 5, 1980, memo. Berman explained that the ionospheric data collected at the Arecibo Radio Observatory in Puerto Rico showed irregularities that moved from south to north on the date of the Vela Event. Experts at Arecibo theorized that a large atmospheric gravity wave could cause such a disruption and that a nuclear blast would be the most likely source.<sup>50</sup>

One of the strongest pieces of evidence that supported the theory that Vela was a nuclear explosion was hydro-acoustic data collected near Antarctica and the Vela site. Hydro-acoustic data are signals that have been recorded under the ocean. Because the Vela Event appeared to have occurred both in the air and over the ocean, hydro-acoustic data could confirm a nuclear explosion. The data in question was picked up at the right time from the direction of Vela, and it were consistent with a small nuclear explosion detonated near or barely under the ocean's surface. The NRL looked for anything that was similar to this data thirty days before and after September 22 and could not find anything. Berman felt that the signal was the strongest he had ever seen of a possible

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Review of South Atlantic Event," February 7, 1980, National Security Archive, *South Africa: the Making of U.S. Policy, 1963-1989* (Alexandria, Virginia: Chadwyck-Healey, 1991), no. 1007.

<sup>49</sup>Letter from John M. Marcum, Senior Adviser for Technology and Arms Control for the Office of Science and Technology Policy at the White House to Alan Berman, Director of Research for the Naval Research Laboratory," January 31, 1980, National Security Archive, *South Africa*, no. 1081.

<sup>50</sup>Memorandum from Dr. Alan Berman Commanding Officer of the Naval Research Laboratory to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy," February 5, 1980, National Security Archive, *South Africa*, no. 1005.



nuclear explosion and was similar to data that had been observed during nuclear tests in the Pacific Ocean.<sup>51</sup>

In early February 1980 the panel reported that the signal detected by the satellite resembled other nuclear explosion signals detected in the past, but admitted there were anomalies. The most significant discrepancy the panel noted involved the sensor on the Vela satellite called a bhangmeter that detected nuclear explosions. This device records light fluctuations on the sub-millisecond scale. In an atmospheric nuclear explosion, there are two flashes of light. The first is extremely short and lasts 1 millisecond. It is the brightest point of a nuclear explosion. The second flash takes longer to develop, several milliseconds depending on the size of the explosion, and lasts much longer. Of the two bhangmeters, one recorded more light than the other, which had not occurred in previously detected nuclear blasts. The panel, therefore, concluded that one bhangmeter had recorded a flash of light close to it and not near the earth's surface.<sup>52</sup>

Because it was unable to conclude decisively that the Vela Event had been a nuclear explosion, the panel speculated that the Vela Event had been the result of light being reflected off of an object, either a small meteoroid or a piece of space debris passing by the satellite. They also speculated that a small meteoroid may have collided with the satellite, producing the light that the satellite recorded. The panel also considered the possibility that the Vela Event was actually a "zoo event," or an unexplained anomalous signal, because the deviation in sensor data between the two bhangmeter sensors was similar to other recorded zoo events. One possible reason for the differing

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<sup>51</sup> Eliot Marshall, "Navy Lab Concludes the Vela Saw a Bomb," *Science*, August 29, 1980, 997.

measurements was that the sensors on the satellite had lost sensitivity due to age. The satellite had been in orbit since 1970 and had been designed to work for only seven years. It was known that another sensor, to detect electromagnetic pulses, was not working, which cast doubt on the credibility of all data collected from other functioning sensors.<sup>53</sup>

A key factor, other than the bhangmeter discrepancy, was that no corroborating evidence could be discovered identifying the Vela Event as a nuclear explosion. Other signals similar to the Vela Event had always had other evidence to support the supposition that they were nuclear explosions. In the case of the Vela Event, no such evidence existed to the satisfaction of the panel. The major piece of corroborating evidence rejected by the panel was the ionospheric ripple detected at the Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico coming from the southeast about the time of the incident. Some members of the panel questioned the calculations made by the Arecibo scientists.<sup>54</sup>

Several scientists agreed that not enough evidence was available to prove conclusively that Vela was a nuclear explosion. The Arecibo scientists felt that their evidence could not be interpreted as confirmation that a blast had occurred and that what they had observed was only one part of the whole picture.<sup>55</sup> Even the Press Panel believed that their explanation for what the Vela Event could have been was insufficient. They offered the explanation of light reflecting off space debris because it was the only

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<sup>52</sup> “Telegram from Department of State to Capetown Embassy, Subject: Press Panel Review of South Atlantic Event,” February 7, 1980, National Security Archive, *South Africa*, no. 1007; Eliot Marshall, “Navy Lab Concludes the Vela Saw a Bomb,” *Science*, August 29, 1980, 997.

<sup>53</sup> “Telegram from Department of State to Capetown Embassy, Subject: Press Panel Review of South Atlantic Event,” February 7, 1980, National Security Archive, *South Africa*, no. 1007; “Cable on Press Panel Review of South Atlantic Event,” June 13, 1980, *National Security Archive*, no. 1066; Phillip J. Klass, “Clandestine Nuclear Test Doubt,” *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, August 11, 1980, 67, 71; Eliot Marshall, “Flash not Missed by Vela Still Veiled in Mist,” *Science*, November 30, 1979, 1051.

<sup>54</sup> Eliot Marshall, “Scientists Fail to Solve Vela Mystery,” *Science*, February 1, 1980, 504-05.

<sup>55</sup> Eliot Marshall, “Flash not Missed by Vela Still Veiled in Mist,” *Science*, November 30, 1979, 1052.

one that fit all the facts. The problem with Vela was that there was not one piece of irrefutable evidence to conclude that a nuclear explosion had occurred.

There are possible explanations as to why no debris or radiation was detected from the Vela Event, even if it was a nuclear test. The small size of the explosion may be why no radiation was found. Another may be that a cyclone, which went through the area on the day of the Vela occurrence, could have picked up the radioactive cloud and carried it for several days. The turbulence of the storm and the associated rainwater then could have weakened and dispersed any concentrations of radioactivity. By the time equipment had been sent out to detect any radiation, it would have totally dissipated. After five days, it would have been impossible to pick up any remaining radiation.<sup>56</sup>

On the other hand, on December 15, 1980, evidence emerged that supported the conclusion that the Vela Event was not a nuclear explosion. American satellites again picked up an unusual flash in the ocean around South Africa. Unlike the Vela Event, America's intelligence agencies agreed it was not an atomic blast but a heat signal picked up by an infrared monitor used to detect missile launches. The fact that the second flash occurred in the vicinity of the first flash, and the near unanimous conclusion that it was not a nuclear explosion, helped to bolster the case for the Vela Event not being a nuclear explosion.<sup>57</sup>

If the Press Panel ruled that the Vela satellite had not detected a nuclear explosion, why did some still maintain that it was one? Berman of the NRL explained that Vela's principal function was to detect Soviet and Chinese nuclear tests and was,

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<sup>56</sup> "The 22 September 1979 Event: Interagency Intelligence Memorandum," December 1979, National Security Archive, *South Africa*, no. 00987.

<sup>57</sup> Eliot Marshal, " 'Flash' Near South Africa, Again," *Science*, March 6, 1981, 1020.

therefore, not positioned to monitor activity in the Southern Hemisphere where the event had occurred. He also pointed out that if the explosion had been small, under ten kilotons, it would have showed up on some sensors on the satellite and barely picked up on others. He also noted that if the signal had been large and unambiguous, the NRL would not have had to conduct an analysis of the data in the first place. He felt the available evidence about Vela was not solid enough to confirm a nuclear explosion to the panel's satisfaction. For sensor data, the certainty needs to be above fifty percent. Vela did not meet this criterion in the minds of the Press Panel. Berman expressed his attitude best on Vela with this statement: "Had I been an attorney arguing a civil case before a jury, based on the preponderance of evidence, I would have won the case. On the other hand, had it been a criminal case where the standard of proof was 'beyond a shadow of doubt' I would have lost."<sup>58</sup>

In 1993, South African President F. W. de Klerk publicly admitted that South Africa had developed nuclear weapons, confirming the suspicions of many governments, scientists, and reformers. Yet, he did not verify that the Vela Event was a nuclear explosion. In fact, de Klerk asserted that South Africa had nothing to do with that "mysterious event over the South Atlantic."<sup>59</sup> With this announcement and the end of apartheid in 1994, details of South Africa's nuclear program in the 1970s emerged but nothing that verified that Vela was an actual nuclear test.

The two main reasons South Africa developed a nuclear weapons program involved the strategic and political situation of South Africa in the 1970s and the

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<sup>58</sup> Dr. Alan Berman, director of the Navy Research Laboratory during the Vela Event, internet interview by author, July 25, 2000, Smithville, Tennessee.

<sup>59</sup> F. W. de Klerk, *The Last Trek: A New Beginning* (London: Pan Books, 2000), 273.

energetic support of Minister of Defense and later Prime Minister P. W. Botha. Even before the 1974 Portuguese coup dramatically changed the strategic situation in southern Africa, South African officials had growing concerns about the amount of Soviet and Chinese assistance provided to African-ruled nations. Indeed, Minister of Mines Carl de Wet gave his approval to begin research and development of nuclear weapons in 1971.<sup>60</sup>

On April 25, 1974, the Portuguese coup occurred, intensifying the threats against South Africa as it now bordered hostile African-ruled nations. In May, South African Atomic Energy Board (AEB) scientists tested a scale model for a gun-type device that could fire nuclear shells. South Africa had also completed work on its uranium enrichment plant, which would provide a domestic supply of enriched uranium to fuel a nuclear weapons program. With these technological advancements accomplished and the change in the strategic situation, Vorster approved the development of nuclear a weapons program.<sup>61</sup>

P. W. Botha was Minister of Defense during Vorster's government and succeeded him as prime minister in 1978. South Africa's strategic and international position had deteriorated with Cuban troops in Angola since 1975 and the imposition of a strong UN arms embargo in 1976. Domestically, South Africa suffered the lingering affects of the 1976 Soweto Riots and the political scandal involving the misappropriation of funds, dubbed Muldergate, that had toppled Vorster. With this background, Botha initiated a "total strategy" in order to ensure the survival of apartheid. A key part of this strategy was the use of the military, which Botha strongly believed had been

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<sup>60</sup> Helen E. Purkitt and Stephen F. Burgess, *South Africa's Weapons of Mass Destruction* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 41.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-42, 53.

underutilized by Vorster, to fight against the opponents of apartheid both domestically and abroad. This increased use of the military stimulated more violence within South Africa and further support for nuclear weapons development.<sup>62</sup>

In 1978, to formulate South Africa's nuclear policy, Botha formed the Witvlei Committee composed of representatives from the AEB, the South African Defense Force, and the parastatal organization, the Armament and Procurement Agency (ARMSCOR). The committee recommended the construction of seven nuclear weapons that could be quickly deployed and be easily deliverable via an aircraft or surface-to-air missiles. It also recommended that ARMSCOR take over production of the nuclear weapons program. The AEB had developed bulky prototype nuclear devices in 1979, but de Klerk asserted they had never been tested. Botha accepted the recommendations of the committee and ARMSCOR took over responsibility for the program. ARMSCOR did not develop a functioning nuclear device until 1987, well after the Vela Event.<sup>63</sup>

The complete story of the Vela Event has not yet been publicly revealed. Regardless of what it actually was, the event demonstrated how uncertain American nuclear detection techniques could be. American intervention to stop the 1977 Kalahari test only slowed but did not halt the progress of South Africa's nuclear program and may have led to the secretiveness that made the Vela Event so hard to detect and verify.

The Vela Event was yet another crisis for the Carter administration to manage in 1979 and 1980. Politically, Carter had to deal with a challenge from Ted Kennedy for the 1980 Democratic presidential nomination. Domestically, the nuclear reactor at Three Mile Island experienced a partial core meltdown, causing concerns regarding the safety

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 59-60.

of nuclear energy and undermining the industry. Internationally, the Carter administration was dealing with the revolution in Iran that eventually produced the storming of the American embassy in Teheran and the taking of American hostages. In addition, the Carter administration had to deal with the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, which further intensified the Cold War.

The Vela Event, then, largely faded into the background as other more spectacular and urgent developments occupied center stage. By concluding that the Vela Event was not a nuclear explosion, the Carter administration avoided having to terminate American nuclear cooperation with South Africa, which would have caused complications in all American-South African bilateral relations. Thus, the administration avoided a major foreign policy problem, but by sidestepping the issue reinforced perceptions of ineptitude.

The Carter administration's approach to addressing nuclear nonproliferation issues differed from its predecessors, especially the Nixon and Ford administrations. Instead of working privately with South Africa and other nations on nuclear proliferation issues, the Carter administration took a strong, public stance toward nuclear nonproliferation and denounced any nation that did not support its nuclear nonproliferation policies. Furthermore, unlike the Nixon and Ford administrations, the Carter administration reasoned that it could influence the nuclear policies of other nations by limiting sales of nuclear technology abroad and by curbing the development of nuclear

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 43-44, 61-64, de Klerk, *The Last Trek*, 273.

technology in America, which the administration believed contributed to nuclear proliferation abroad.<sup>64</sup>

The Carter administration did not have significant success in preventing nuclear proliferation either in South Africa or among other nations. This was not because of lack of resolve but because nuclear technology had been so disseminated throughout the world that the task of controlling nuclear proliferation was impossible. Had the strong nuclear proliferation concerns that came to fruition in the Carter administration existed in the 1940s and 1950s, when the United States was in a position to impose strong controls on the export of nuclear technology, they might have produced greater results.<sup>65</sup>

The Carter administration's foreign policy based on human rights abhorred apartheid and minority rule. Nothing substantial was done against South Africa largely because the Carter administration did not want to alienate South Africa, whose assistance was needed to help resolve the situation in Rhodesia. Other international crises also diverted attention from South Africa. During the Reagan administration, though, international and domestic pressure increased against South Africa to the extent that the United States imposed sanctions that affected all aspects of United States-South African relations, including nuclear.

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<sup>64</sup> Martinez, "The Carter Administration," 269.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 278-79.



CHAPTER 6  
REAGAN ADMINISTRATION: IMPROVING RELATIONS, SANCTIONS, AND  
NUCLEAR COOPERATION

American diplomatic relations with South Africa initially improved at the start of Ronald Reagan's presidency in 1981. The Reagan administration's policy of constructive engagement was designed to strengthen and influence relations with South Africa by increasing cooperation. The rationale for improving relations was to gain South African cooperation in order to settle the conflicts in Angola and Namibia (South West Africa) in which South Africa was deeply involved. The policy was also adopted as a conscious rejection of the Carter administration's approach of openly confronting South Africa to pressure it to reform its domestic and international policies.

Policy planners assumed nuclear relations between the two countries would benefit from this effort to improve relations because South Africa would acquire materials for its nuclear experiments. Yet, the Reagan administration maintained the restrictions that the Carter administration had imposed upon United States-South African nuclear cooperation and, in some instances, increased restrictions. The rationale behind such policies was the importance of continuing strong international nonproliferation policies, regardless of how much the administration wished to improve relations. Ironically, the move to improve relations with South Africa, along with international and domestic events, would lead to the enactment of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act

of 1986 (CAAA) over the objections of the avowed Cold War warrior, Ronald Reagan.

The 1980 election of Ronald Reagan as president appeared to herald a renewed closeness between South Africa and the United States. During the 1980 presidential campaign, Reagan had criticized previous administrations for not doing more to prevent the intervention of the Soviet Union into Africa, specifically Angola. He also pledged to provide more financial support to such groups as the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), which with aid from South Africa, was fighting to overthrow the Marxist government of Angola. Shortly after his inauguration, Reagan asserted that the United States could not abandon South Africa, a country that had supported America in every war it had fought including Vietnam.<sup>1</sup>

Despite such declarations, South Africa was hardly a foreign policy priority of the Reagan administration. The activities of leftist groups in Central America, particularly El Salvador and Nicaragua, occupied the attention of senior foreign policy officials more than events in South Africa. Other areas of the world, such as the Middle East and Europe, were more important than Africa. In fact, the Reagan administration focused its energies on strategic and global issues involving the Soviet Union, making issues in South Africa of secondary or tertiary importance.<sup>2</sup>

Due to this lack of attention, formulation of a policy toward South Africa was largely left to Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Chester Crocker, who devised the concept of constructive engagement. Crocker envisioned this policy as a strategy for the entire southern African region and not just for South Africa. He saw

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<sup>1</sup> Peter J. Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis, and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 220.

<sup>2</sup> Robert I. Rotberg, "The Reagan Era in Africa," in *Reagan and the World*, ed. Dave E. Kyvig (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 119.

violence and external threats within one area of southern Africa affecting all the countries in the region. The United States needed to understand that in order for South Africa to change internally, the external threats represented by South Africa's neighbors, Cuban soldiers, and the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC), Umkhonto we Sizwe, needed to be resolved. Because the United States did not have the strength or influence to force South Africa to reform into a democratic society, America's role was to cultivate a climate in which compromise and accommodation were possible. Crocker conceded that this approach was not a radical departure in dealing with South Africa from previous administrations, except for his wider, regional approach to the problem.<sup>3</sup>

In March 1981, President Reagan approved Crocker's constructive engagement approach toward South Africa, his instructions becoming Crocker's "mandate" for the next eight years. Specifically, Crocker would work with South Africa to formulate a democratic constitution leading to independence for South West Africa that would be known as Namibia.<sup>4</sup>

After World War I, South Africa was given a mandate by the League of Nations to administer the territory of South West Africa, a former German colony. Following the formation of the United Nations, South Africa refused to relinquish control of South West Africa, maintaining that the League had not indicated what its wishes were for South West Africa, and that South Africa should retain control indefinitely. By 1967, South Africa's continued intransigence and its policy of apartheid had caused the United Nations to terminate South Africa's mandate over South West Africa and to create a UN

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<sup>3</sup> Chester Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighborhood* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), 75-79.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 66-67.

Council on Namibia. In 1971, the International Court of Justice gave an advisory opinion declaring South Africa's control of South West Africa illegal. Seven years later, the United Nations adopted a resolution advocating that South West Africa be granted its independence.<sup>5</sup> By 1980, Namibian independence had emerged as a key international issue that strained South Africa's relations with the world. If a Namibian solution could be found, South Africa's stature within the international community, which already suffered due to apartheid, would be improved.

As if that were not enough of a challenge, Reagan also instructed Crocker to negotiate for the withdrawal of Cuba's troops from Angola. In fact, independence for Namibia was deliberately linked with the withdrawal of Cuban troops, which had arrived in 1975 to assist the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) against the South African-backed UNITA, which also received indirect support from the United States via South Africa. Congressional fears of another Vietnam led to passage of the Clark amendment forcing the withdraw of American support to UNITA and leading to MPLA control of the newly independent nation in 1976. Termination of American aid did not end the conflict, as UNITA continued to fight with South African assistance against MPLA-controlled Angola.<sup>6</sup>

In order for constructive engagement to work, Reagan approved Crocker working toward a political reconciliation between UNITA and the MPLA. He was also to attempt to improve America's relations with other African nations by cooperating with them in

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 37; Thomas J. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation: the United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968*. (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1985), 176; Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 3<sup>rd</sup>. ed.(Yale: Yale University Press, 2001), 214.

<sup>6</sup>Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa*, 66-67; Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa*, 212-13; Chris Alden, *Apartheid's Last Stand: The Rise and Fall of the South African Security State* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996), 25.

reaching a settlement on the situation in Angola. To have any hope of resolving the situations in Angola and Namibia, the United States needed to involve and engage South Africa, which Crocker understood to mean improving relations following the strains of the Carter years.<sup>7</sup>

Though the Reagan administration desired to improve relations with South Africa, some of the first meetings did not go smoothly. In March 1981, a group of four South African government officials visited the United States. Fred Wattering, from the White House Office of Political Affairs-Africa Office, met with the group and filed a report with National Security Adviser Richard V. Allen. Wattering's impressions were not favorable. He described one member as "manipulative...and grasping for something to quote me on," as well as someone who "will likely misrepresent much of what I said." Another he described as "having an extremely simple Manichean view of everything." He summed up the group by stating that "diplomacy is not the South Africans' long suit."<sup>8</sup>

About ten days after the meeting with Wattering, the Department of State discovered that the South African officials had obtained their visas under false pretenses. The South African Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) claimed that these men came to the United States as officials from the DFA even though they had military ranks. The State Department knew all this but later discovered that these officers still served with the South African Defense Force (SADF) and had no affiliation with the DFA. The DFA had

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<sup>7</sup> Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa*, 66-67.

<sup>8</sup> Fred Wattering, "Memcon Between South African and Myself," March 13, 1981, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Records PA: Country File, African Affairs Box 91340, South Africa Vol. 1 (1/20/81-12/31/82) Box 7, Ronald Reagan Library, Simi Valley, California. (hereafter Reagan Library).

used its position and powers to allow SADF personnel to visit the United States, which was a violation of government policy.<sup>9</sup>

The Reagan administration authorized Ambassador William S. Edmondson to lodge an oral complaint with the South African government. In a written message sent to the ambassador for the South African government, Secretary of State Alexander Haig chastised South Africa's behavior and wrote "the USG [United States Government] would like to close this episode with an invitation to the SAG [South African Government] to deal with the new administration in the spirit of mutual respect and conciliation."<sup>10</sup> Secretary Haig went on to write that "unless we are to suffer future public strains such as was provoked by this incident we must put our dealings on a constructive and not a divisive basis."<sup>11</sup> Finally, Haig stated, "It is not our interest to further contribute to public speculation on this subject. We hope the SAG will exercise similar restraint."<sup>12</sup>

This incident illustrates that relations between the Reagan administration and South Africa, though they should have been cordial, were not always so. Even so, Crocker continued to negotiate with the South Africans on the issues of Namibia and Angola throughout the Reagan administration. His consistent efforts and changes in the international situation eventually brought success on December 22, 1988, when South Africa agreed to hand over control of Namibia to the United Nations for eventual independence in 1990. In addition, Cuba agreed to begin withdrawing its troops from

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<sup>9</sup> Alexander Haig, Jr., "Demarche to SAG on Visit by South African Military Officers to the United States," March 24, 1981, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Records PA: Country File, African Affairs Box 91340 South Africa Vol. 1 (1/20/81-12/31/82) Box 4, Reagan Library.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Angola, and South Africa agreed to end its support of UNITA. Finally, the ANC had to vacate its bases in Angola and transfer its forces to Tanzania, making raids into South Africa practically impossible due to the distance from South Africa.<sup>13</sup>

One area where negotiations improved quickly between the United States and South Africa was nuclear cooperation. This relationship had become strained during the Ford administration as increased congressional scrutiny over all executive branch initiatives, due to Watergate and the detonation in 1974 of a nuclear device by India, had led the Ford administration to cancel some United States-South African nuclear activities, such as the sale of a nuclear power reactor. During the Carter administration, the 1978 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act (NNPA) curtailed United States-South African nuclear cooperation because it required all of a nation's peaceful nuclear activities to be under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspection in order for nuclear cooperation to continue with the United States. South Africa refused to adhere to these inspections because it feared the IAEA would reveal its atomic secrets to the world, or IAEA inspectors would use their position to embarrass South Africa because of apartheid. In addition, the 1979 Vela Event, a suspected South African test of a nuclear device, caused uncertainty and anxiety over the status of South Africa as a nuclear weapons power and further strained relations between the two nations.<sup>14</sup>

Officials from the Reagan administration agreed to meet with South African officials in Paris on March 30-31, 1981, to discuss nuclear-related issues. France had built two nuclear reactors, Koeberg I and II, to produce electricity for South Africa. The

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<sup>13</sup> Rotberg, "The Reagan Era in Africa," 129.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 122; Ronald Walters, *South Africa and the Bomb: Responsibility and Deterrence* (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1987), 94-95.

United States agreed to supply the fuel for the reactors but had suspended shipments in 1975, when South Africa refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The United States had shipped no new nuclear exports to South Africa since that time. By signing the NPT, South Africa would agree not to try to manufacture or purchase nuclear weapons. American officials hoped his meeting might resolve some of these issues by getting South Africa to sign the NPT, so that the United States could resume shipments of nuclear fuel. The meeting produced no fruitful results but illustrated the Reagan administration's willingness to meet and talk to South Africa about contentious issues in order to better relations, which was a major part of constructive engagement.<sup>15</sup>

In July 1981, the Reagan administration publicly committed itself to continuing strong controls on the export of nuclear materials, equipment, and technology, plus it reasserted its support for the IAEA. Yet the administration also announced its goal of reestablishing the United States as a dependable supplier of peaceful nuclear technology and stated it would cooperate with nations that had advanced nuclear power programs which did not constitute a nuclear proliferation threat. Thus, the Paris meeting with South African officials demonstrated the Reagan administration's nuclear nonproliferation policy of promoting controls but also working to demonstrate the dependability of America as a nuclear supplier.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> William S. Edmondson, "South African Nuclear Issue," March 1981, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Records PA: Country File, African Affairs Box 91340 South Africa Vol. 1 (1/20/81-12/31/82) Box 1, Reagan Library.; Alexander Haig, Jr., "OES Press Guidance-US-South Africa Meeting in Paris," March 1981, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Records PA: Country File, African Affairs Box 91340, South Africa Vol. 1 (1/20/81-12/31/82) Box 4, Reagan Library.; Alexander Haig, Jr., "Discussion of Nuclear Cooperation with South Africa," April 27, 1981, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Records PA: Country File, African Affairs Box 91340, South Africa Vol. 1 (1/20/81-12/31/82) Box 4, Reagan Library; Walters, *South Africa and the Bomb*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Walton L. Brown, "Presidential Leadership and U.S. Nonproliferation Policy," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26 (Summer 1994), 567.



Regardless of the July 1981 announcement, with the Reagan administration's policies of increased defense spending, lack of interest regarding arms control, and its anticommunist rhetoric, it is noteworthy that the administration did not try to modify or eliminate the NNPA. The Reagan administration, like the Carter administration, pressured South Africa to sign the NPT, a major step toward adhering to the NNPA. Because the administration tried to bring South Africa to the negotiating table regarding Angola and Namibia, it is surprising that it did not eliminate or offer to eliminate the restrictions imposed by previous administrations on United States-South African nuclear cooperation.<sup>17</sup>

The Reagan administration appeared to be as focused on nuclear proliferation as was the Carter administration. Though relations between the United States and the Soviet Union were strained during Reagan's first term, both nations continued regular meetings to ensure the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons. Reagan also announced his commitment to limit the transfer of nuclear materials, equipment, and technology, especially where there was a danger of nuclear weapons proliferation. Early in Reagan's second term, both nations agreed to work to strengthen the NPT and increase the number of signatories.<sup>18</sup>

Yet, the Reagan administration did not pressure all nations as strongly as it did South Africa regarding their nuclear programs. The administration minimized Pakistan's nuclear program as the United States continued to work with it to expel the Soviet Union

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<sup>17</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *Russia, The Soviet Union, and the United States: An Interpretative History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1990), 315-18.

<sup>18</sup> Anatoly Belov, "Soviet-American Cooperation in Dealing with the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons," in *International Nuclear Trade and Nonproliferation: The Challenge of the Emerging Suppliers*, ed. William C. Potter (Lexington, KY: Lexington Books, 1990), 382; Joseph Pilat, "The Major Suppliers: A Baseline for Comparison," in *International Nuclear Trade and Nonproliferation: The Challenge of the Emerging Suppliers*, ed. William C. Potter (Lexington, KY: Lexington Books, 1990), 56.

out of Afghanistan and increased its military and economic aid. Reagan also took no action against Israel even as it imported material designed to manufacture nuclear weapons and information slowly leaked out of Israel of its nuclear weapons capability.<sup>19</sup> Thus, if the strategic importance of a nation was strong enough, the Reagan administration would not pressure it regarding its nuclear programs.

Still the policy of constructive engagement needed the cooperation of South Africa in order for it to work but no significant modifications were made by the Reagan administration regarding its nuclear nonproliferation stance toward South Africa. Such actions were not taken because the suspicions surrounding South Africa's nuclear program were stronger than those for Pakistan. Events in 1977 and 1979 indicated that South Africa came close to or did test a nuclear device, while Pakistan's program was still developing. The extent of Israel's nuclear program was still widely unknown within the international community.

Furthermore, South Africa's policy of apartheid made any cooperation with it difficult and nuclear cooperation nearly unacceptable to the international community, Congress, and various advocacy groups. Even though the Reagan administration touted South Africa as an important ally, it could easily justify following the established policy of working to limit the number of nuclear powers in the world regardless of their allegiance as South Africa's strategic importance paled in comparison to nations such as Pakistan and Israel. Given these circumstances, Reagan administration officials sometimes found themselves in awkward situations with South African officials regarding nuclear cooperation as they would only aid South Africa so far.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

On May 7, 1981, Secretary of State Haig informed Reagan that he had invited South African Foreign Minister R. F. (“Pik”) Botha to meet with Haig on May 14. Botha wanted to deliver a message to President Reagan personally. Haig could only speculate about what Botha wished to discuss because South African Ambassador Donald Sole himself had no clear idea. Haig did think that the meeting could be about nuclear cooperation, given the previous discussions in March.<sup>20</sup>

Haig discussed his encounter with Botha in his report to President Reagan dated May 20. The bulk of the memorandum concerned the Namibia situation and the Soviet Union’s activities in Africa. He stated that the United States would publicly endorse a policy of constructive engagement, restore a military attaché program, and resume Coast Guard training exercises with South Africa. Haig’s comments on nuclear issues, though, indicated that little had changed. “On the nuclear matter,” Haig wrote, “we will seek relief for the South African Government on their Department of Energy contract and will make a best effort on fuel supply for their reactors within our legal and legislative constraints.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, the Reagan administration would only go so far in addressing nuclear issues and would not work to override the legal restrictions on United States-South African nuclear cooperation already in place.

The administration continued to aid South Africa’s nuclear program. In October 1981, a delegation of four American officials from the State Department, the Department

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<sup>20</sup> Alexander Haig, Jr., “Appointment Request: R. F. Botha, South African Minister of Foreign Affairs and Information,” May 7, 1981, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Records PA: Country File, African Affairs Box 91340, South Africa Vol. 1 (1/20/81-12/31/82) Box 6, Reagan Library.

<sup>21</sup> Alexander Haig, Jr., “Summing up of Pik Botha Visit,” May 20, 1981, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Records PA: Country File, African Affairs Box 91340, South Africa Vol. 1 (1/20/81-12/31/82) Box 6, Reagan Library.

of Energy, and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency visited South Africa to negotiate full-scope inspections of South Africa's nuclear facilities. They informed Haig that they had been approached by South African government officials about helping them convert SAFARI I to a low enriched uranium (LEU) fuel facility from a highly enriched uranium (HEU) plant. By doing this, the South Africans could use less than twenty percent enriched U-235 instead of forty-five percent U-235 to power their reactor. Haig argued that such changes would allow more international safeguards to be placed on South African nuclear activities, and would reduce the use of HEU in research plants, and in turn reduce the worldwide production of HEU.<sup>22</sup> Such changes by South Africa, with the help of the United States, would contribute to easing the threat of international nuclear proliferation. The change would also benefit South Africa by allowing it to use its own enriched uranium longer than it could if it continued to employ HEU.

Such reassurances were not enough for members of Congress who were concerned about South Africa's nuclear program in the early months of 1982. On April 29, Republican Senator Charles H. Percy from Illinois sent a letter to Secretary of Commerce Malcolm Baldrige concerning an application under consideration to export ninety-five grams of Helium-3 (He-3) to South Africa. Percy requested that Baldrige delay action on the application until he answered twelve questions the senator had about He-3 and South Africa.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Alexander Haig, Jr., "SAFARI I Research Reactor Fuel Conversion to Low Enriched Uranium," December 1981, *National Security Archive: South Africa*, no. 1926; Caryle Murphy, "U.S. Nuclear Team Holds Talks in S. Africa," *Washington Post*, October 22, 1981, A32.

<sup>23</sup> Letter from Charles H. Percy to Malcolm Baldrige, April 29, 1982, *National Security Archive: South Africa*, no. 01383.

In May, representatives from both the Departments of Commerce and Energy replied to Percy's concerns. The Department of Commerce handled the license for He-3 because it was a dual-use material, which, like computers, can be used for other purposes besides nuclear activities. It was legal to export He-3 to South Africa, because it was not considered a strictly nuclear material like enriched uranium. South African scientists did plan to use the He-3 at SAFARI I to conduct research on varying the fission rate of nuclear fuel. Few alternatives were available to conduct similar experiments, and the South African Atomic Energy Board had promised to obey all regulations concerning this material. The letter also addressed the issue of tritium, a material that can be used in thermonuclear bombs, by stating that if South Africa wished to make this material it could do so starting with lithium, which was readily available in South Africa.<sup>24</sup>

Other senators also expressed reservations about the sale of He-3 and South African nuclear cooperation. In August, Republican Senator Mark O. Hatfield of Oregon wrote a letter to the president expressing his reservations about the He-3 sale and his fears that allowing the sale of dual-use materials to South Africa would undermine America's nuclear proliferation policies. Hatfield questioned why South Africa should conduct such experiments because Swedish facilities had conducted similar experiments and could share the data with South Africa. He also brought up the question of how easily He-3 converted into tritium, a component of thermonuclear weapons. Finally, Hatfield argued that selling such materials would damage American relations with other

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<sup>24</sup> Letter from Malcolm Baldrige to Charles H. Percy, May 12, 1982, *National Security Archive: South Africa*, no. 01394; Letter from Powell A. Moore to Charles H. Percy, May 28, 1982, *National Security Archive: South Africa*, no. 01404; Letter from Richard T. Kennedy to Charles H. Percy, May 10, 1982, *National Security Archive: South Africa*, no. 1404.

African countries and make it more difficult for America to prevent its allies from selling nuclear materials to South Africa in the future.<sup>25</sup>

Powell A. Moore, the Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations, replied to Senator Hatfield's letter nearly five months later because the White House had been waiting for consultations with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. His response was similar to the letter sent to Senator Percy.<sup>26</sup>

The administration's response did not end congressional apprehension regarding United States-South African nuclear cooperation. Democratic Congressman Charles Rangel of New York sent a letter to the White House dated October 19, 1982, expressing his worries based on the 1979 Vela Event that South Africa had developed nuclear weapons. Powell A. Moore replied that the United States was still trying to get South Africa to sign the NPT and accept IAEA safeguards for all of its nuclear activities. Moore hoped that this information would satisfy Rangel's concerns. Apparently Rangel was not satisfied, because he introduced H. R. 1020 on January 27, 1983, "to prohibit the export or other transfer to the Republic of South Africa of nuclear material, equipment, and technology." Rangel justified his bill by arguing that South Africa had not signed the NPT, had not allowed IAEA safeguards at all its nuclear facilities, nor had it renounced the intention of building nuclear weapons. Furthermore, no other nation in sub-Saharan

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<sup>25</sup> Letter from Mark O. Hatfield to President Reagan, August 24, 1982, WHORM Subject File FO003-02, Casefile 095932, Reagan Library.

<sup>26</sup> Letter from Powell A. Moore to Mark O. Hatfield, February 24, 1983, WHORM Subject File FO003-02, Casefile 095932, Reagan Library.

Africa had become a nuclear power, and it was in America's national interest to contain the development of nuclear energy for non-peaceful purposes.<sup>27</sup>

The bill would terminate any cooperation allowed by the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, which was the basis for the 1957 treaty South Africa and the United States had signed. The proposed legislation would prohibit the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Department of Commerce, the Department of Energy, and the Department of State from issuing any nuclear fuel licenses or authorizing the transfer of nuclear materials and equipment to South Africa. The bill also required that these agencies compile a list of materials not covered in the bill that could also be used to help South Africa further its nuclear program. It also required that dual-use items be included as well. Furthermore, it prohibited government employees in all agencies from providing any type of information or material to aid South Africa in its nuclear program.<sup>28</sup>

The House Committee on Foreign Affairs requested the views of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), headed by Kenneth Adelman, on the bill. The ACDA replied that it opposed the bill because it would undermine America's nuclear nonproliferation goals in South Africa. The ACDA argued that restrictions already were in place on exporting nuclear materials and that the only major change proposed by this bill was the export restriction on dual-use items. Such restrictions were unwarranted because South Africa could get such materials elsewhere and cutting off trade with South Africa would hurt American efforts to get South Africa to sign the NPT. The ACDA argued that procedures already existed to insure the utilization of dual-use items only for

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<sup>27</sup> Letter from Powell A. Moore to Charles B. Rangel, *National Security Archive: South Africa*, no. 02002; "H.R. 1020 to prohibit the export or other transfer to the Republic of South Africa of nuclear material, equipment, and technology," WHORM Subject File TA003-131544, Reagan Library.

<sup>28</sup> "H.R. 1020 to prohibit the export," WHORM Subject File TA003-131544, Reagan Library.

peaceful purposes. Finally, the ACDA argued that the bill's intention of forcing nuclear nonproliferation policies on South Africa would fail and that the current policy of attempting to solve South Africa's regional issues should continue without additional restrictions.<sup>29</sup>

Opposition to nuclear cooperation with South Africa arose from nongovernmental agencies as well. The United Church Board for World Ministries, the overseas arm of the United Church of Christ, sent a letter on January 13, 1983, to President Reagan protesting nuclear cooperation with South Africa. The General Program Director for World Issues, Audrey C. Smock, and the Africa Secretary for World Issues, Richard E. Stenhouse, both signed the letter. They argued that shipping dual-use materials to South Africa legitimized what they saw as South Africa's attempt to develop nuclear weapons. The export of He-3 to South Africa and the training of South African personnel at American facilities also disturbed them, and they requested such activities be terminated as soon as possible.<sup>30</sup>

Daniel H. Simpson, Director, Office of Southern African Affairs in the Department of State, in his reply to the United Church Board on February 17, 1983, first cleared up what he saw as inaccuracies in the letter. The United States had not approved the sale of He-3 to South Africa, and no South African citizens were receiving training at United States government facilities. The shipment of dual-use items underwent extensive review before approval. The shipment of such items, Simpson believed, encouraged

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<sup>29</sup> "ACDA's Comments on H.R. 1020," March 2, 1983, WHORM Subject File TA003-131544, Reagan Library.

<sup>30</sup> Letter from Audrey C. Smock and Richard E. Stenhouse to President Reagan, January 13, 1983, WHORM Subject File TA003-119947, Reagan Library.



South Africa to sign the NPT and place all of its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards.<sup>31</sup>

The concerns of Congressman Rangel and the United Church Board were not enough to bring about passage of H.R. 1020, which did not even come up for a vote on the House floor. Other members of Congress, such as Democrat Stephen J. Solarz of New York, supported the bill with public statements, but general congressional support was lacking.<sup>32</sup>

The He-3 license debate illustrates the influence of constructive engagement and nuclear nonproliferation policies on America's relations with South Africa. Granting the He-3 license would improve both nuclear and diplomatic relations between the two countries and thereby benefit negotiations regarding Namibia and Angola. Although the delivery of He-3 would allow South Africa to conduct some nuclear experiments, such activities were under strict controls, and allowing such cooperation permitted the United States to continue to have influence on South Africa's nuclear program. Furthermore, trusting South Africa to uphold the limits imposed upon the use of the He-3 would also help to improve relations between the two countries.

The He-3 application also illustrates the lack of understanding by Congress and the public regarding the administration's nuclear and foreign policies toward Africa, which the administration acknowledged. In a February 8, 1985 memorandum, James Devine, of the Department of State (DOS) Bureau of Oceans and International

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<sup>31</sup> Letter from Daniel H. Simpson to Audrey C. Smock and Richard E. Stenhouse, February 17, 1983, WHORM Subject File TA003-119947, Reagan Library.

<sup>32</sup> Congress, House, "U.S. Policy on Apartheid", May 26, 1983, *Congressional Record*, 14168; *United States Statutes at Large* 97, v, A12, A17 (1983).

Environmental and Scientific Affairs Office, elaborated upon what the administration saw as a popular misconception.

U.S. policy toward South Africa has been widely misunderstood and severely criticized by those who believe that our policy supports the continuance of apartheid. We have been publicly accused of close cooperation with South Africa in the nuclear field. It is, therefore, essential to the credibility of our foreign policy both at home and abroad not only that we uphold U.S. law and limit the U.S. presence at South Africa's facilities, but also that our decisions in this area allow no possibility of misinterpretation of our policy.<sup>33</sup>

The gap between perception and reality was actually larger than the Reagan administration initially acknowledged. In January 1985, hearings were held on Capitol Hill concerning American citizens employed at South Africa's Koeberg I nuclear reactor. While discussing possible ways to increase South Africa's adherence to nuclear nonproliferation policies during an October 1984 visit there, Department of Energy (DOE) officials discovered American citizens working at Koeberg without DOE authorization.<sup>34</sup>

According to Section 57b of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended, and Part 810 of Title 10 of the Code of Federal Regulations, American citizens who were involved in unclassified activities involving the design, construction, operation, or maintenance of nuclear facilities abroad did not have to apply to the DOE for authorization. This exemption included nuclear engineers, nuclear reactor operators,

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<sup>33</sup> Letter from James B. Devine to B. G. Cook, February 8, 1985, *National Security Archive: South Africa*, no. 01757.

<sup>34</sup> George Shultz, "U.S. Citizens at Koeberg: Briefing on the Hill," January 1985, *National Security Archive: South Africa*, no. 01736.

trainers of nuclear reactor operators, former reactor operators employed in some other capacity, maintenance personnel, and others engaged in reactor work.<sup>35</sup>

In February 1983, the DOE withdrew this general exemption and required American citizens working in Argentina, Brazil, India, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Libya, Pakistan, and South Africa to obtain authorization to work in the nuclear industries of these nations. These countries were deliberately singled out due to the fact they had not signed the NPT and because of some states' political instability. A specific reason the DOE had changed its regulations was to prevent American companies from providing aid to Pakistan's Chasma nuclear reactor. In addition, the DOE wanted to know what type of activities American citizens were involved in with countries that did not adhere to full safeguards in their nuclear programs.<sup>36</sup>

Carl Thorne for the DOE, Carl Stober of the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES), and Ed Fugit from the Department of State noted that most of the people working in South Africa had inadvertently failed to get DOE approval. The policies had only changed in 1983, and those working at Koeberg were doing so at an IAEA-safeguarded facility that only produced electricity. They were not concerned that the work of these individuals would harm American nonproliferation policy because Americans had worked in South African reactors for years. Nonetheless,

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<sup>35</sup> Memorandum from Patricia G. Norry to All NRC Employees, March 12, 1985, *National Security Archive: South Africa*, no. 01775; Shultz, "U.S. Citizens at Koeberg" January 1985 *National Security Archive: South Africa*, no. 01736.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

the DOE was committed to keeping better track of American citizens' and companies' activities in South Africa.<sup>37</sup>

Though the Reagan administration continued to improve its relations with South Africa, it also tightened its nuclear nonproliferation policy, sometimes affecting United States-South African nuclear cooperation. Allowing American personnel to work at South Africa's nuclear reactors strengthened relations between the two nations—a major goal of constructive engagement. Nonetheless, South Africa's refusal to sign the NPT caused the DOE to strengthen its restrictions on nuclear cooperation. That American personnel were actively assisting South Africa's nuclear program would only fuel the apprehensions of members of Congress.

On January 4, 1985, Congressman John Conyers, a Democrat from Michigan, who had before tried to end American nuclear cooperation with South Africa, and Congressman Parren Mitchell, a Democrat from Maryland, sent a letter to Reagan expressing their concern over South Africa's nuclear program and the increased cooperation America had provided over the past four years. They argued that South Africa should not receive aid due to apartheid, its failure to sign the NPT, and its unwillingness to submit all its nuclear facilities to IAEA inspection. They requested that the United States not export enriched uranium to South Africa and opposed the re-export of enriched South African uranium from three American nuclear plants. The pair also expressed concern with the number of American firms allowed to do business with South Africa's Koeberg facility. Fourteen applications had been filed, with two already approved. They requested such activities end because continuing these activities was

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<sup>37</sup> Shultz, "U.S. Citizens at Koeberg," January 1985, *National Security Archive: South Africa*, no. 01736.

synonymous with aiding South Africa's nuclear weapons program. Finally, they urged the denial of He-3 to South Africa by the Departments of Commerce and Energy, because this material could be converted into tritium for use in thermonuclear weapons.<sup>38</sup>

On February 13, 1985, Robert F. Turner, the Acting Assistant Secretary of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs for the White House, responded to the Conyers and Mitchell letter. Turner stated that the Reagan administration shared their concerns about South Africa's nuclear program. Nevertheless, he claimed that continued dialogue with the South African government had secured its promise to conduct its nuclear affairs in a way that was compatible with the principles and goals of the NPT. Turner reassured the lawmakers that no re-export of uranium would be allowed under American law and that the Koeberg facility was under IAEA inspections. He did not address the licensing applications mentioned by the congressmen. The Helium-3 application from South Africa had already been denied by the Department of Commerce on June 29, 1984. Turner hoped that the Reagan administration and the congressmen could work together toward achieving nuclear safeguards for South Africa.<sup>39</sup>

By the mid-1980s, the elements were in place to launch a successful campaign on Congress to implement economic sanctions against South Africa. Antiapartheid groups, building on their success in the 1970s, had won several victories in campaigns aimed at corporations, universities, and local governments. The strong propaganda machine that South Africa formed to justify apartheid to the world, especially the United States, had been dismantled due to a funding scandal in 1978 and not replaced. In Congress the CBC

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<sup>38</sup>Letter from John Conyers and Parren Mitchell to President Ronald Reagan, January 5, 1985, WHORM Subject File ND018-Casefile 271934, Reagan Library.

<sup>39</sup> Letter from Robert F. Turner to John Conyers, February 13, 1985, WHORM Subject File ND018-Casefile 271934, Reagan Library.

and other members of Congress opposed to apartheid were powerful allies. The organization TransAfrica had grown into an important lobbying group for African issues since its inception in 1977 and actively drew attention to American-South African relations. The reelection of Reagan had invigorated antiapartheid activists, who feared his administration would increase ties with South Africa rather than diminish them. Demonstrators began a series of sit-ins at South African consulates protesting apartheid beginning on November 21, 1984. Finally, on September 3, 1984, a fresh wave of repression started in South Africa when a new constitution gave a legislature to the nation's Indian and Colored populations but not to the African population. Protests and violence erupted that the Botha government was not able to suppress, and the call for sanctions by antiapartheid groups became louder.<sup>40</sup>

Congress answered with two bills, one in the House and the other in the Senate, which included measures against all forms of cooperation and exchange, including nuclear, between the United States and South Africa. Based on provisions in Atomic Energy Act of 1954, the House bill prohibited the export of any material, equipment, or technology that could aid South Africa's nuclear program. No nuclear material could be transferred, and no export licenses could be issued by the secretaries of energy or commerce that could directly or indirectly aid South Africa's nuclear developments. Within six months of the bill's enactment, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the secretaries of commerce, energy, and state would compile a list of goods that could aid South Africa's nuclear program, and said goods would be prohibited from being shipped to South Africa. No government employee in any agency could aid South Africa in

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<sup>40</sup> Francis Njubi Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans against Apartheid, 1946-1994* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 105, 123-25.

nuclear matters with information not already made available to the public.<sup>41</sup> Some of these provisions were in Congressman Rangel's earlier bill.

The Senate bill included similar restrictions on the issuing of licenses or transferring nuclear fuel and technology to South Africa. The Senate's version, on nuclear matters, was shorter than that of the House but it also included a provision that if, sometime in the future, the secretary of state certified to the House of Representatives and the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relation of the Senate that South Africa had signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, licenses for dual-use items could be issued.<sup>42</sup>

During hearings before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Chester Crocker expressed the Reagan administration's opposition to the House version of the 1985 Anti-Apartheid Act, as the bill was known. Crocker first attacked the critics of the Reagan administration who claimed that the United States was giving South Africa essential assistance with its nuclear program. Crocker noted that American law and policy prevented extensive cooperation with countries such as South Africa that did not have safeguards over all their nuclear facilities and did not have strict control over their nuclear transfers. Stressing the extensive review of exports of nuclear-related material and that only unclassified, nonsensitive materials sent to fully safeguarded facilities were allowed, Crocker pointed out the positive results the policy of constructive engagement had achieved in gaining South Africa's agreement to adhere to the London Nuclear

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<sup>41</sup> House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittees on International Economic Policy and Trade and on Africa, *The Anti-Apartheid Act of 1985*, 99<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session, April 17, 18, 30; May 2, 1985, 320-22.

<sup>42</sup> "S. 995," 99<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, June 1985, Jeremiah Denton Papers 600-87-021, Box 56 of 151-Folder South Africa, Auburn Special Collections and Archives, Auburn, AL.

Supplier Group's guidelines on nuclear exports. He also noted that negotiations looked promising between South Africa and the IAEA to implement its guidelines at South Africa's uranium enrichment plant. Finally, in addressing critics who said South Africa could not have reached its present level of nuclear progress without America's supposedly ill-advised assistance, Crocker pointed out that South Africa had pursued an independent nuclear program for decades without American aid because it was a technologically advanced country.<sup>43</sup>

Testifying to the same committee, Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth W. Dam made some of the same points as Crocker and elaborated more on the damage sanctions would cause to United States-South African nuclear relations. He pointed out that severe restrictions already were in place that limited America's nuclear relationship with South Africa and that license applications for dual-use items were already carefully reviewed. Dam expressed concern over other bills before Congress that would further limit America's nuclear relationship with South Africa. He argued that such "blanket prohibition[s]" on the export of nuclear equipment and technology would undercut America's ability to influence South Africa, and other nations, to accept full-scope safeguards.<sup>44</sup>

Dam further argued that continuing a dialogue with South Africa on nuclear matters and allowing some assistance influenced South Africa to make three important decisions concerning its nuclear program. First, South Africa began to require IAEA safeguards on its nuclear exports; two, it exported nuclear material using only Nuclear Suppliers Group guidelines; and third, it renewed talks with the IAEA to impose IAEA

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<sup>43</sup> *The Anti-Apartheid Act of 1985*, April 17, 18, 30: May 2, 1985, 56-57.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-89, 93-95.



guidelines on its enrichment facility. Any interference with the administration's approach could delay, if not end, any progress on these issues.<sup>45</sup>

In spite of the administration's assurances, both bills passed through their respective bodies, and a House-Senate conference committee was established to iron out the differences between the two bills. Crocker argued that Congress needed to be stopped from implementing sanctions because allowing it to do so would take a measure of foreign policy control away from the White House. To prevent the implementation of sanctions and to try to assuage Congress, Reagan issued Executive Order 12532, which blocked the Senate from voting on the bill that had emerged from the House-Senate conference committee and stopped further congressional action regarding sanctions for that term. The order addressed nuclear cooperation with some of the same restrictions in the congressional bills. No nuclear fuel, technology, licenses, or material could be transferred to South Africa. E.O. 12532 differed in two ways from the congressional bills. One, dual-use items could be shipped to South Africa with the secretary of state's approval if he thought such items would not be used in a nuclear facility, produce nuclear material, or aid in the development of nuclear devices. Second, nothing within E.O. 12532 would prohibit the United States from assisting South Africa in implementing IAEA safeguards or programs such as helping South Africa reduce its enrichment of uranium from highly-enriched to low-enriched.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 93-95

<sup>46</sup> Crocker, *High Noon*, 276-78; Ronald Reagan, "Executive Order 12532—Prohibiting Trade and Certain Other transactions Involving South Africa," September 9, 1985, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Ronald Reagan, 1985, Book II June 29 to December 31, 1985* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988), 1058-60.

In his letter to Congress concerning the executive order, Reagan described his prohibition of nuclear exports and transactions to South Africa as being within certain “narrow exceptions.” During a question-and-answer session with the media, Reagan mentioned the prohibition against nuclear cooperation, except for implementing IAEA controls and “those necessary for humanitarian reasons to protect health and safety.”<sup>47</sup>

Reagan’s executive order did not end the calls for more sanctions against South Africa. In 1986, a movement began within Congress to pass more restrictions, leading to the writing of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA). Section 307 of this law concerned nuclear trade with South Africa and prohibited the export to South Africa of “material, component parts, items, substances or technical data to be used in connection with any nuclear power plant or other nuclear facility.” The exception to this ban was nuclear materials under the general licenses issued by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Department of Commerce, which included items like pacemakers. The ban could be lifted if the secretary of state ever certified to the speaker of the house and the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relation of the Senate that South Africa had signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and subjected all of its nuclear facilities to IAEA safeguards. Section 309 of the law prohibited the importation of South African uranium ore, uranium oxide, and coal. An amendment allowed the president to

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<sup>47</sup> Ronald Reagan “Message to the Congress Reporting on the Prohibition of Trade and Certain Other Transactions Involving South Africa,” September 9, 1985, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Ronald Reagan* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988), 1061-62; Ronald Reagan “Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With Reporters on Signing the Executive Order Prohibiting Trade and Certain Other Transactions Involving South Africa,” September 9, 1985, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Ronald Reagan, 1985* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988), 1055.

recommend banning the importation of all strategic minerals from South Africa if it had not showed progress toward ending apartheid within one year of implementing the law.<sup>48</sup>

On the floor of the Senate, Kentucky Republican Mitchell McConnell tried to offer an amendment eliminating the provisions in the CAAA on uranium imports. Edward Kennedy, Democrat from Massachusetts, opposed this move. Procedural questions on McConnell's amendment effectively killed it.<sup>49</sup>

The CAAA passed over Reagan's veto, but that did not prevent challenges to the nuclear restrictions by some lawmakers. A group of six senators, including McConnell, sent a letter to Reagan expressing their concern about how his administration interpreted Section 307 of the CAAA. Regulations were being developed for the implementation of the CAAA, and the senators had some indications that uranium oxide bought from South Africa by foreign firms would not be allowed into the United States to be processed. They expressed concern that misunderstandings of congressional intentions occurred because such restrictions were not the intention of this portion of the CAAA. So interpreted, the law would take jobs away from Americans because the uranium oxide was converted first into uranium hexafluoride at facilities in Virginia, Oklahoma, Missouri, South Carolina, and North Carolina and then processed into enriched uranium at a Kentucky facility.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, *Setting U.S. Policy Toward Apartheid*. 99<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, August 6, 1986, Report 99-370, 14; Congress, House, *Oversight of the Administration's Implementation of the Comprehensive Antiapartheid Act of 1986 (Public Law 99-440) and an Assessment of Recent South African Political and Economic Developments*. 100<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, June 16, 1987, 182-83.

<sup>49</sup> Congress, Senate, "Senator McConnell of Kentucky attempting to propose an amendment to the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986," August 15, 1986, *Congressional Record*, 21839.

<sup>50</sup> Letter from Mitch McConnell, etc., to President Ronald Reagan, December 15, 1986, *National Security Archive: South Africa*, no. 02391.

Democratic Congressman Bill Richardson of New Mexico also challenged the Reagan administration's interpretation of the CAAA restrictions on nuclear activity, but he wanted them stronger. He noted that the Treasury Department interpreted the CAAA as banning the import of South African uranium and coal but not the products of its processed form. He argued that this was not the intention of the law, and that such an interpretation would be similar to banning the import of South African dairy cattle while still allowing their milk into the United States. Richardson hoped to clarify the intent of the CAAA toward nuclear materials by amending Section 309A to state, "It is the sense of the Congress that no uranium compounds in any form, which is derived from uranium that is produced or manufactured in South Africa, should be imported into the United States." Richardson's proposals to strengthen the CAAA never passed, but McConnell's attempts to weaken the law did not pass either.<sup>51</sup> Even so, both incidents illustrated how congressmen advocated stricter and looser interpretations of the CAAA for political and economic reasons.

Despite the CAAA and the strain it caused in relations with South Africa, the Reagan administration continued its nuclear relations with the country. In 1987, the United States supported South Africa when the IAEA considered its expulsion due to its apartheid policies. The United States objected to such an action because it would have harmed efforts to have South Africa sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and because South Africa was the most advanced African country in nuclear technology. Still, the United States was only able to prevent South Africa's expulsion when President

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<sup>51</sup> Congress, House, "South African Uranium Imports," February 4, 1987, *Congressional Record* 2682; Congress, House, "Sec. 1804 South African Uranium Exports," December 10, 1987, *Congressional Record* 34724; *Statutes at Large* 101, v, A27-8, A36.

Botha announced on September 21, 1987, that South Africa hoped to sign the NPT soon, which garnered the support of the Soviet Union and Great Britain to stop expulsion.<sup>52</sup>

The Carter administration had worked to get South Africa to reform its policy of apartheid rather than focusing exclusively on its security concerns, believing that once South Africa initiated racial reforms its strategic situation would improve as external pressures decreased. The Reagan administration reversed this logic by arguing that the external threats were more of a problem for South Africa than was apartheid. In addition, South Africa's position as a dependable Cold War ally made working for its external security easier than advocating internal reform. Solving the threat posed by ANC and Cuban troops in nations bordering South Africa became the priority of constructive engagement and what Crocker actively worked for and accomplished.

Yet, the constructive engagement strategy did not satisfy antiapartheid forces in the United States and in Congress who successfully pushed for strong sanctions against South Africa through the CAAA. Constructive engagement might have acquired more support from critics if the situation in South Africa had not continued to deteriorate. A convergence of years of antiapartheid protests with some significant successes, increased violence in South Africa, and a foreign policy that antiapartheid groups interpreted as too pro-South Africa had led to sanctions.

The Reagan administration move to improve nuclear relations with South Africa was one way of gaining credibility that had been eroded during the Carter years. United

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<sup>52</sup> "IAEA Board of Governors: Suspension Motion Likely Against South Africa," June 1987, Herman J. Cohen Files, South Africa Nuclear, Box 91876, Reagan Library; National Security Council Secretariat, "South Africa and the IAEA," September 1987, Herman J. Cohen Files, South Africa Nuclear, Box 91876, Reagan Library; Davis Fischer, *Stopping the Spread of Nuclear Weapons: The Past and the Prospects* (London: Routledge, 1992), 214-25.

States-South African nuclear relations during the 1980s demonstrates Reagan's strong support for America's anticommunist allies and its efforts to maintain and increase cooperation with them. Cooperation took on various forms such as helping South Africa to convert its nuclear reactors to use low enriched uranium instead of highly enriched uranium and to allow the transfer of He-3 for nuclear experiments.

Yet, the Reagan administration continued policies started by the Carter administration of withholding nuclear cooperation from South Africa until it signed the NPT. It also increased restrictions on American assistance to South Africa's nuclear program by requiring American personnel working in South Africa's nuclear industry to obtain the permission of the United States before working there. Thus, the Reagan administration did not give South Africa a "blank check" when it came to nuclear issues and even increased restrictions against it, while negotiating with South Africa to end the conflicts in Namibia and Angola. The United States followed such diametrically opposed policies because it wished to obtain a settlement on Namibia and Angola but would not alter its policy of preventing international nuclear proliferation in order to do so as such territories were not strategically important enough for such a policy change.

## CONCLUSION

This study traces the evolution of United States-South African nuclear relations and demonstrates how these relations became a liability for American foreign policymakers by the end of the Cold War. This change occurred due to modifications in American attitudes toward race and nuclear proliferation, rather than changes in white South African ways of thinking.

American attitudes toward nuclear power changed during the Cold War years. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, nuclear power was perceived as both a blessing and a curse with scientists, politicians, and journalists discussing not only the dangers of nuclear war but also its promise. During the 1960s and early 1970s, the strong promotional efforts of the burgeoning nuclear industry and the federal government to accent the positive aspects of atomic power had created a similar attitude among the general populace. By the 1970s and 1980s, atomic weapons became a liability as old nuclear nations, such as the United States, enlarged their stockpiles while new nuclear nations, such as India, emerged and the power of atomic weapons increased making the possibility of another world war more likely than in the intervening years. The hope that this new technology could solve the world's energy needs mutated into a terror that humanity would use nuclear weapons in a war so destructive as to make the world uninhabitable. Even without a war, the potential damage a nuclear accident could cause

made the use of nuclear power problematic for many Americans.<sup>1</sup>

South Africa became caught up in this change of outlook regarding nuclear power. Starting out as an important supplier of uranium to the United States during the early stages of the Cold War, by the end of the Cold War, South Africa had become part of the problem of nuclear proliferation when it developed its own nuclear weapons capability. In addition, it kept secret how advanced its nuclear program was, further straining relations with the international community, which were already poor due to apartheid.

American attitudes regarding race also changed during the four decades following World War II. Reformers challenged through protests, court cases, and legislation customs and laws that had deprived nonwhites, primarily African-Americans, of their civil rights. The most overt forms of racism were removed from American society, and reforms continued to counter the lingering remains of covert racism.

Yet, during this same period, South Africa implemented and enforced a rigid policy of apartheid based on overt racism. People of dark skin whose ancestors originated in sub-Saharan Africa, along with people whose ancestors originated in India, and those who were of mixed African, white, and Malay descent, all were placed in an inferior economic, social, and political position to those of Afrikaner or English ancestry.<sup>2</sup> Peaceful protests accomplished no significant reforms of the apartheid system; conversely, violent clashes with government forces, at Sharpeville in 1960, Soweto in 1976, and throughout South Africa in 1984, caused reformist groups, such as the African

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 109, 114, 357-58.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle: The United States and South Africa in the Early Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), xiii.



National Congress (ANC), to form guerrilla armies to fight the apartheid government. In contrast to the United States, many reformers saw the armed overthrow of the apartheid government as the only way change could occur in South Africa.

The administrations of Truman through Reagan found themselves in the difficult situation of defending their relations with apartheid South Africa, which contradicted the ideals of freedom and democracy that the United States upheld. Yet, the United States reasoned that it needed South Africa's support in its fight against the Soviet Union, due to South Africa's strategic position at the Cape of Good Hope, its steadfastness as a Cold War ally, and its large deposits of such strategic minerals as uranium. Thus, Cold War imperatives placed the administrations of Truman through Reagan in the difficult and awkward position of defending relations with South Africa.

Throughout the greater part of the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, the United States maintained good relations with South Africa. Eventually, international and domestic outrage regarding apartheid became so great that the United States had to address its relationship with South Africa. The Kennedy and Johnson administrations imposed arms embargoes against South Africa to promote reform, but to little effect. The Nixon and Ford administrations attempted to increase cooperation with South Africa in order to encourage reform but, again, no substantial improvements in South Africa's racial policies occurred. The Carter administration implemented an aggressive public policy of pressuring South Africa to reform that also accomplished little. Finally, the Reagan administration attempted closer cooperation with South Africa to promote racial reform, but this policy also proved to be largely unsuccessful. The anti-apartheid movement in the United States had become strong enough by the Reagan administration

that it finally pushed through Congress economic sanctions against South Africa that it had first proposed during the 1950s.

Although each wanted South Africa to reform its policies, all of the presidential administrations opposed sanctions against South Africa. The Democratic administrations of Kennedy and Carter and, at times, Johnson, tended to be openly critical of South Africa but still hoped to influence South Africa to reform its racial policies. Republican administrations -- Eisenhower, Nixon, Ford, and Reagan--wished to avoid publicly criticizing South Africa, believing behind-the-scenes efforts were more likely to encourage change. The Truman administration did not face the same criticisms that the other administrations faced for its involvement with South Africa due to the beginnings of the Cold War, the lack of international outrage toward racism generally, and the relatively few apartheid laws implemented by South Africa during the Truman years.

Democratic administrations appeared to be more hostile to South Africa than their Republican counterparts due to increased public criticism of South Africa, which arose because these administrations were generally more concerned with attracting the support of African-Americans than Republican administrations. Openly questioning South Africa's racial policies was one way to garner support from the African-American community; while for Republican administrations openly condemning South Africa usually had no political benefit. On the other hand, relations between the United States and South Africa sometimes appeared to be closer during the administrations of Republicans because they tended to avoid publicly criticizing South Africa. In addition, the Nixon and Reagan administrations had a publicly stated or publicly known policy of closer cooperation with South Africa in order to promote reform.

Yet, the reality is that the approaches of the Democratic and Republican administrations differed in tone rather than in substance. All administrations maintained relations with South Africa in a variety of fields regardless of their rhetoric. Cooperation with South Africa was curtailed only when larger strategic and political concerns interceded.

The necessity of America's nuclear partnership with South Africa arose when American and British officials started seeking uranium sources during World War II for their atomic weapons program. After the war, both nations' need for uranium increased as Great Britain developed its own atomic capability and the United States built up its nuclear weapons arsenal in response to the onset of the Cold War. On November 23, 1950, South Africa signed an agreement with the United States and Britain that provided South Africa with economic aid to develop a uranium extraction industry. Once such an industry was developed, South Africa became a dependable supplier of uranium for both nations.

For the United States, its uranium supply problems appeared solved, but relations with South Africa carried a liability evident even at this early stage of cooperation-apartheid. The Nationalist party, which came to power in 1948, sought to establish a nation based on racial identity instead of democratic principles.

South African government officials used America's need for uranium to demonstrate their country's usefulness to the United States as a dependable Cold War ally. When the Korean War erupted on June 23, 1950, South Africa sent a squadron of combat aircraft. Though making only a modest contribution to the fighting, South Africa

wanted to show that it was not only an important supplier of uranium but also a staunch ally of the United States against communism throughout the world.

During the Eisenhower administration, the American relationship with South Africa changed into a cooperative partnership wherein the United States aided in the development of South Africa's nuclear technology. The cost of South African uranium caused the United States to terminate its purchases. Nevertheless, ties increased between the two countries when South Africa signed an agreement of peaceful nuclear cooperation with the United States in 1957.

The agreement was part of the Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace program whereby America would provide nuclear information and technology to any nation as long as that nation agreed to develop only peaceful uses for nuclear power and not weapons. One of the objectives of the Atoms for Peace program was stemming the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Before Eisenhower became president, the Soviet Union and Great Britain had already detonated nuclear bombs, and France would also test a bomb by the end of his second term. Wanting to limit the spread of nuclear weapons, the administration argued that helping nations develop a peaceful nuclear capacity under American or international supervision would allow everyone to enjoy the benefits of atomic power without the dangers of nuclear weapons.

The Eisenhower administration also had legitimate reasons for being anxious about what was going on in South Africa. The Nationalist party began aggressively to implement its racial policies in South Africa during the Eisenhower years, and American officials, particularly Ambassador Waldemar J. Gallman, expressed concern about these

actions. Apprehension increased when South African authorities shot into a group of apartheid protestors at Sharpeville and killed sixty-seven people on March 21, 1960.

The Eisenhower administration had been reluctant to becoming involved with racial issues in the United States, as seen by its lukewarm response to the *Brown* decision. Yet, Sharpeville forced the administration to take a stronger position against apartheid than it had previously taken and pushed racial issues to the forefront of America's policy toward South Africa. Eisenhower and Secretary of State Christian Herter were equally furious that a statement condemning the Sharpeville incident had been issued without their authorization but they did support an investigation of the incident by the United Nations. For future Cold War presidential administrations Sharpeville marked the beginning of apartheid as a major influence in how the United States dealt with South Africa. The issue could no longer be minimized as a foreign policy consideration after violence increased in South Africa and international condemnation grew.

The Kennedy administration made only minor modifications to America's nuclear cooperation agreement with South Africa. One major issue that emerged during the Kennedy administration, which was resolved during the subsequent Johnson administration, was a proposed barter agreement trading agricultural goods for uranium between the United States and South Africa. The program never materialized due to domestic concerns about how such transactions would undermine American trade. Thus, domestic economic concerns, not racial and nuclear proliferation issues, prevented this expansion of United States-South African nuclear cooperation.

When Lyndon Johnson came to power in 1963, he focused his administration on Europe and Southeast Asia and left issues involving Africa to the State Department. By allowing the State Department to formulate African policy, Johnson laid the foundation for the near termination of nuclear cooperation with South Africa, as his administration faced two critical decisions regarding the continuance of this form of assistance. The first was whether or not to ship the enriched uranium that would be used to fuel SAFARI I, scheduled to go critical in late 1964. The debate centered on how the international community would perceive American nuclear cooperation with South Africa. With the burgeoning number of independent African states and the Sharpeville massacre, international attention on South Africa had significantly increased. Johnson administration officials were concerned that nuclear cooperation would be seen as providing support for apartheid.

Fearing the repercussions on other international agreements if the United States reneged on a contract that had been signed in good faith and that South Africa had not violated, the Johnson administration decided to go through with the uranium sale. In addition, the United States persuaded South Africa to subject SAFARI I to IAEA inspection instead of American inspection. This distanced the United States from South Africa's nuclear program by bringing in an international body to oversee South Africa's nuclear program.

The second important decision made by the Johnson administration regarding South African nuclear relations was extension of the 1957 nuclear cooperation agreement. The key obstacle to this was South Africa's policy on international uranium sales. The United States wanted South Africa to guarantee that it would only sell

uranium to nations that agreed not to use it to produce nuclear weapons. South Africa's policy had been to sell uranium only to nations that already had a nuclear weapons capability but placed no restrictions on the use of the uranium. Johnson administration officials feared that sales of uranium without stipulations on its use would increase nuclear weapons proliferation, particularly in France with whom South Africa had a uranium sales contract.

Nuclear proliferation was high on the international agenda in the mid-1960s. The Cuban Missile Crisis had brought the world dangerously close to nuclear war, and the Kennedy administration, along with the Soviet Union, had agreed to the Limited Test Ban Treaty, restricting where nuclear test explosions could occur. The Johnson administration continued the Kennedy administration's policy of trying to limit nuclear activities through implementation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which called for nations with nuclear weapons not to aid non-nuclear nations in developing them. It also stipulated that those nations that had not yet developed nuclear weapons must renounce their intentions to build them. It is within this context that the United States pushed for South Africa to implement stronger safeguards on its uranium sales, though South Africa had done nothing particularly provocative to force the United States to require stronger safeguards.

The Johnson administration was particularly concerned with how nuclear cooperation with the apartheid government of South Africa would appear to the supporters of civil rights in the United States. The Johnson administration had advocated strong civil rights legislation in 1964 and 1965 that had started the process of guaranteeing first-class citizenship for African-Americans. Continued cooperation with

South Africa in the nuclear field, as well as in other areas, would indicate a disconnect between President Johnson's foreign and domestic policies that could evolve into a political liability.

Nevertheless, the Johnson administration decided to extend nuclear cooperation with South Africa because of events not directly connected to that country. During negotiations with European powers and Japan to join the NPT, the administration encountered strong resistance to any safeguards on sales of uranium. South Africa's policy of selling uranium only to nations that already had nuclear weapons seemed reasonable in the face of strong opposition to any safeguards by America's other allies. Once the Johnson administration changed its position regarding uranium sales to accommodate its other allies, approval of South Africa's extension went ahead.

With the election of Richard Nixon to the presidency, the United States deliberately followed a policy of strengthening ties to South Africa based on recommendations made in National Security Study Memorandum 39 (NSSM39). As a result of efforts to better relations and improvements to America's nuclear cooperation with South Africa, that country asked that the nuclear cooperation agreement be extended. Approved without significant debate or objections within the Nixon administration, the agreement relaxed some restrictions the United States had previously implemented, such as allowing South Africa to transfer enriched uranium it received from the United States to other nations with similar cooperation agreements.

The Nixon administration could have decided to expand nuclear cooperation with South Africa further but refused to do so. In 1973, South African authorities sought American assistance for their newly developed uranium enrichment process. The Nixon



administration decided not to become involved with this project, believing it increased South Africa's capability to produce nuclear weapons, which was a concern because South Africa had not signed the NPT. Also, Nixon officials were concerned with how increased cooperation with apartheid South Africa would appear to the international community, if not to potential constituents at home.

Although the Nixon administration followed a policy of increased cooperation, events not directly connected to either South Africa or the United States changed diplomatic and nuclear relations between the two. The 1974 coup in Portugal started the process of decolonization in southern Africa, leaving South Africa and Rhodesia as the only remaining white minority-ruled nations in the region. In the same year, India detonated a nuclear device using technology and material it had gained from Canada and the United States through a program designed to develop peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The coup challenged the assertion of NSSM39 that white minority governments were a permanent fixture in southern Africa and placed South Africa in the uncomfortable strategic position of being almost entirely surrounded by hostile African-ruled nations. The Indian explosion challenged the idea that programs promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy would prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Along with the Watergate scandal, the test increased congressional interest in America's nuclear cooperation program and in how the executive branch of government conducted foreign affairs.

The administration did not have an opportunity to deal with these changes because Nixon resigned in August 1974 and Gerald Ford took office. The Ford administration faced the daunting challenge of defending America's nuclear policy

toward South Africa and dealing with the changing strategic situation in southern Africa. The Ford administration argued that nuclear cooperation with South Africa was the best way to get South Africa to sign the NPT and to monitor the development of its nuclear program.

Many congressmen questioned this approach and advocated limiting or ending nuclear cooperation with South Africa until it signed the NPT. So much scrutiny was placed on South African nuclear cooperation with America that South Africa awarded France, instead of the United States, a contract to build two nuclear reactors to produce electricity.

The Carter administration's approach toward South Africa was more public and confrontational than previous administrations. Although it pushed hard for South Africa not only to reform its nuclear policies but also its racial policies, no results were forthcoming. The Carter administration faced three crises regarding nuclear cooperation with South Africa. The first occurred in 1977 when the Soviet Union and then the United States observed what appeared to be preparations for a nuclear weapons test in the Kalahari Desert in South Africa. International pressure prevented the test, but the test preparations, regardless of South African denials, indicated how close South Africa was to testing a nuclear weapon.

The second crisis occurred in 1978 after the passage of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act (NNPA), requiring that all nuclear activities of a nation be under IAEA safeguards and inspections in order for the United States to assist the development of its nuclear program. Because South Africa's domestic program was not under such scrutiny, the Carter administration was forced to suspend all shipments of enriched uranium.

The final crisis emerged in 1979 when South Africa was suspected of detonating a nuclear device within its territorial waters. The Vela Event, as the incident came to be called due to the satellite that detected it, became a matter of controversy within the Carter administration due to the inconclusiveness of the data the satellite recorded. A scientific panel established to determine what had actually occurred, ruled that the Vela Event was not a nuclear explosion. Still, many within and outside the government remained skeptical. These crises helped not only to undermine America's past policy of peaceful nuclear cooperation but also the Carter administration itself, reinforcing an image of weakness and ineptitude that larger problems such as the Iran Hostage Crisis and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan dramatically illustrated.

Meanwhile South Africa's nuclear program had reached a stage where it could withstand American pressures, such as withholding enriched uranium shipments. South Africa had developed its own enrichment capability and was able to continue operating its reactors, though at a limited capacity. Before the Carter administration, withholding nuclear fuel from South Africa might have forced it to submit to the NPT and full IAEA safeguards on its nuclear program. Yet, efforts to stem nuclear proliferation and trying to stop it did not take hold of the American government until the late 1960s and early 1970s, by which time South Africa's nuclear program was too advanced to rein in. Even international concern about nuclear proliferation did not produce a substantial nonproliferation instrument, the NPT, until 1970, again making actions against South Africa difficult as it had already developed a uranium enrichment capability by 1970.

The Reagan administration's policy, known as constructive engagement, was reminiscent of Nixon's policy advocated under NSSM39 in that it advocated closer

relations with South Africa in order to promote reform. Though the Reagan administration promoted closer ties with South Africa, it continued to follow the strong nuclear nonproliferation policy initiated by the Carter administration. The United States continued to push for South Africa to sign the NPT in order for it to receive enriched uranium shipments. The Reagan administration did cooperate with South Africa in what nuclear areas it could, but congressional opposition, along with previously passed laws, limited its actions.

Continuing concerns about America's nuclear and general relations with South Africa resulted in continued congressional efforts to eliminate all forms of nuclear cooperation with South Africa. South Africa was still sending uranium to the United States to be processed and sold to other nations. It also requested Helium-3 to assist in its own nuclear experiments. The Reagan administration argued that such limited cooperation provided America with an opportunity to continue to promote the NPT to South Africa and that eliminating such cooperation would severely restrict opportunities for dialogue.

Reagan attempted to circumvent further congressional limitations on South African nuclear cooperation by issuing Executive Order 12532 on September 9, 1985. This order applied some additional restrictions to United States-South African nuclear relations but still allowed for some collaboration to continue. Congressional opponents of cooperation were not satisfied, and the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA) of 1986 allowed them significantly to limit and monitor United States-South African nuclear relations. The Reagan administration fought hard against the CAAA but failed to stop the new law.

This study of United States-South African nuclear relations demonstrates that when South Africa's nuclear program was in its infancy America had considerable influence. Once South Africa's program was well established, particularly once it could produce enriched uranium, that influence diminished. When the United States started questioning the logic of peaceful nuclear cooperation to prevent nuclear proliferation, it was too late to prevent South Africa from developing a nuclear weapons program independent of American assistance. Furthermore, trying to use various forms of cooperation with South Africa, including nuclear, to promote reforms of apartheid proved to have little effect.

Nuclear cooperation with South Africa was one way the United States cultivated relations with an important ally. Other nations such as West Germany and Great Britain were more important allies due to their proximity to the heart of the Cold War conflict in Europe. Yet, by maintaining good relations with allies outside Western Europe such as South Africa, the United States could demonstrate its commitment to fighting the Cold War and maintain its international alliance against communism. Furthermore, in the context of Cold War relations, America's commitment to South Africa is hardly surprising because the nation demonstrated itself as a dependable Cold War ally and supplied America with strategic minerals and other resources needed for the global fight against communism. Noteworthy, in spite of all the strategic considerations, were domestic concerns about apartheid and nuclear proliferation that were strong enough to strain relations between the United States and South Africa. Cold War priorities were not significant enough for American policymakers to ignore such forces, especially during the Ford, Carter, and Reagan administrations demonstrating the growing interrelationship

between the United States' domestic and foreign policy. Thus, America's nuclear cooperation with South Africa illustrates how Cold War priorities led the United States to initiate and maintain a relationship with South Africa, but that other international and domestic considerations ultimately developed that strained and disrupted that relationship as American policymakers attempted to balance the Cold War issues of communism, race and nuclear proliferation.

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