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Understanding coercive nuclear reversal dynamics: a comparative case study of US coercive diplomacy against the nuclear programs of Iran, Libya, and South Africa

Ndzana Ndzana, J.Y.

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THE US AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA

Coercive diplomacy is more likely to be successful if the side employing it is more highly motivated by what is at stake in the crisis than its opponent. — Alexander George, American political scientist.

Deterrent threats are a matter of resolve, impetuosity, plain obstinacy, or, as the anarchist put it, sheer character. — Thomas Schelling, American strategist.

The main goal of this chapter is to analyze the coercive nuclear dynamics between South Africa (S.A.) and the US. The time scope covered by the analysis spans from 1967 to 1989, when Pretoria respectively started and ended its nuclear weapons program. Just like the previous Iranian case study, we will analyze the coercive dynamics between Washington and Pretoria against the backdrop of our hypotheses.⁹⁰⁶ Hence, we will always consider to what extent the US coercive strategy exploited the weaknesses of South Africa and to what extent Washington demonstrated a motivation to maintain a sustained campaign to compel Pretoria. In essence, to what extent did Pretoria's response to Washington's demands stem from coercive-related domestic changes and fear of heightened threats?

Considering the propositions of our theoretical framework (proportionality, reciprocity, and credibility) and the choice of the structured-focused method, this chapter will also be divided into sub-sections which aim at answering the following questions: **what were the objectives pursued by the US after implementing coercive policies against the South African nuclear program? What were coercive strategies adopted to achieve these objectives? What were the expected outcomes of the US when implementing its coercive strategies against Libya's nuclear program? What were the actual results at the end of the process, and why such outcomes?**

The answer to these questions will help us to demonstrate the validity of the four essential elements regarding the effectiveness of a coercive strategy in the nuclear realm.⁹⁰⁷ In this regard, the first section will analyze the history of foreign relations between South Africa and the World, especially the US. This will help us understand the strategic importance of Pretoria for the US and the continuity or breaks of patterns in South Africa's foreign policy. The second section will dwell on the drivers behind South Africa's decision to obtain nuclear weapons. In contrast, the third section will delve into Pretoria's political system, emphasizing nuclear decision-making among all the South African leaders during the Apartheid era. The fourth section will analyze the coercive dynamics between Pretoria and Washington, while the fifth section will stress the theoretical conclusions about our research goal.

⁹⁰⁶ We hypothesized that coercive diplomacy could compel a State to abandon its nuclear (weapons) program under two conditions: if the coercer's strategy exploits the weaknesses of the target and if the coercer demonstrates a motivation to have a sustained campaign to compel the target.

⁹⁰⁷ The four core elements are the following: the display by the coercer of **strategic empathy towards its target**, the formulation of **clear and acceptable demands** to the target, the display by the coercer of **a higher resolve than the target** to achieve his/her objective, and the offer of **credible incentives** to the target if the target complies.

Before stressing the theoretical answers to the previous questions, it is essential to emphasize that, like the Libyan case, we did not conduct interviews with experts or former officials related to the Libyan nuclear issue. This is because many of the actors involved had already passed away or were too old to answer our questions. Nevertheless, we had access to primary sources such as speeches and interviews of officials who were directly or indirectly involved in the negotiation process. This permitted us to identify the parameters they considered when making their decisions. In addition, we also read memoirs from former negotiators and scholars who interviewed the people involved in the process. Combined with indirect sources like articles from experts or scholars and statistical data, we were able to identify the pattern of behavior of the actors involved in the Libyan nuclear dynamics and the driving factors behind their decisions.

6.1 SECTION I – A SHORT HISTORY OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE GREAT POWERS.

This section aims to understand the evolution of the relations between South Africa and foreign powers, especially those who played an incremental role in its decision to end its nuclear weapons program; those are the UK but mainly the US. This does not mean that only the States mentioned above interacted with South Africa during the lifespan of its controversial nuclear program. Instead, their role in *South Africa's nuclear decision* has been decisive for historical or structural reasons. Just like the previous Libyan case, the advantage of analyzing the foreign relations of South Africa is twofold. First, it will enable us to understand the international/bargaining positions of the States mentioned above based on the geopolitical importance of South Africa in their strategic calculus. Hence, identifying the drivers of their foreign policy with South Africa will help us to understand the bargaining approach of the US to the South African nuclear challenge. On the other hand, dwelling on the foreign relations of South Africa will also help us to understand the international responses of South Africa to foreign demands based both on international and domestic parameters.

With an area of 1,220,813 km², a coastline of 3 000 km⁹⁰⁸ and bordered by four countries (Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Eswatini), South Africa is usually described as “the southernmost country of the African continent.”⁹⁰⁹ These geographical specificities made South Africa a strategic location for international trade (seaports). This asset has been known in European countries since the discovery of the

⁹⁰⁸ An information from **South African Government. Let's grow South Africa together**. Accessed from <https://www.gov.za/about-sa/geography-and-climate> on the 28th of September 2021.

⁹⁰⁹ The Commonwealth, **South Africa**. Accessed on the 28th of September 2021 from the website <https://thecommonwealth.org/our-member-countries/south-africa>.

Cap of good hope (previously known as the Cape of Storms) in 1488 by Bartolomeu Dias, a Portuguese explorer.⁹¹⁰ In a geopolitical context of rivalry over the control of seas and a geo-economical context of rivalry over the supply of spice from India, the control of the Cape and its seaports undoubtedly constituted a major pillar of the Iberian Union (Portugal and Spain Kingdom) at the end of the 16th Century. However, in a broader context of political independence from Spain, the Dutch challenged the Portuguese over the control of the Cap.⁹¹¹ Yet, the Dutch finally and formally established an economic presence in the Cape via the Dutch East-Indian Company (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie – VOC) in 1652. Genevieve Klein confirms it as she declares: *the connection between the two countries dates back to 1652 when the Dutch company- the Verenigde OostIndische Compagnie (VOC)- set up a refreshment post in the Cape.*⁹¹² But the VOC was more than an economic (trading) company. Indeed, it also assumed political roles.

Unlike the trading companies of rival powers like the UK or France, which operated under one similar and increasingly dated system (...), the new Dutch establishments set out to change the antiquated system, breathing “semi-permanent life” into their companies.⁹¹³ But this technical ability was not the only comparative asset of the new Dutch trading giant. In fact, the VOC also enjoyed unprecedented economic and political powers under the new Charter granted by the Dutch government. Indeed, the charter granted the VOC a twenty-one-year monopoly over all trade east of the Cape of Good Hope ⁹¹⁴ and “the government had granted an official charter providing the new company with extensive powers. (...) Some sovereign rights were also transferred. The VOC was authorized to make treaties with rulers and states in Asia, to build fortifications, and to undertake military operations, but they could not operate completely independently from the Dutch government.”⁹¹⁵

Galvanized by the aforementioned political authority, the VOC could confidently set the administrative system of the land it had conquered. Concerning South Africa, the Dutch East India Company adopted a plantation colony policy in the areas under its control.

⁹¹⁰ PEARSE E., Geoffrey: **The Cape of Good Hope 1652-1833. An Account of its buildings and the life of its people**, Pretoria, J.L. van Schaik, 1956, p.13. Consulted online.

⁹¹¹ NIERSTRASZ, Chris: **Rivalry for trade in tea and textiles. The English and Dutch East India Companies (1700–1800)**, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p.5

⁹¹² KLEIN, Genevieve, **Nederland tegen apartheid? Government and anti-apartheid movements**, South Africa History Online (SAHO), 2012, p.2.

⁹¹³ CHARLES RIVER EDITORS: **The Dutch East India Company: The History of the world's first multinational corporation**, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017, p.21

⁹¹⁴ GERSTELL, Daniel, **Administrative adaptability: The Dutch East India Company and its rise to power**, Journal of Political Economy 99, 1991, N. 6, p.51

⁹¹⁵ PARTHESIUS, Robert: **Dutch ships in tropical waters. The development of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) shipping network in Asia 1595-1660**, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2010, p.35

Still, these campaigns did not go without conflicts as the Dutch settlers or Boers went to war against indigenous people several times, and these frictions are usually referred to as the Xhosa wars.⁹¹⁶ It is important to mention that the Dutch were not the only Europeans who migrated from their country to settle in South Africa, people from France and Germany and the British also settled in South Africa, and they all constituted the Afrikaners. But the biggest challenge to the Dutch presence in South Africa did not come from indigenous people but from abroad. Indeed, the British also coveted the territories under the control of the Dutch company.

According to John Brewer, "Britain had been without doubt the paramount external power in the area, with only minor competition from France and Portugal."⁹¹⁷ The British interest in South Africa harks back to the end of the 18th Century with the occupation of the Cap province by the British soldiers in 1795 after the war against France in 1793. Although the British had granted back the political administration of the Cape to the Dutch government Netherlands – then the Bavarian republic – through the Treaty of Amiens in 1802, the UK took back the administration of the territory in 1806.⁹¹⁸ Just like the Dutch before them, the British crown coveted South Africa (The Cap) for its strategic role in the supply of spice from India; considering the rise of the UK as the global power at the time, securing free access to the Cap constituted a strategic asset for the British Empire. However, it is essential to mention that the defeat of the Boers did not mean the end of the Dutch presence in the country. Instead, the Boers conquered additional lands in the hinterland and finally constituted their independent State (Transvaal and the Orange Free State). At the same time, the indigenous people kept their independent State (Natal). Though it seemed from the outlook that this confederation setting was the best compromise for relative peace among the parties living in the country, the discovery of diamonds and gold completely changed the country's political landscape.

"The discovery of diamonds in the Northern Cape in the late 1860s began South Africa's mineral revolution that had a profound impact on the region," Timothy Stapleton argues.⁹¹⁹ More concretely, Martin Meredith describes the abundance of diamonds in the region in these words: "a day's work for those in luck could provide them with as many as ten or twenty diamonds. Some made their fortunes before breakfast. A

⁹¹⁶ STAPLETON J., Timothy: **A military history of South Africa. From the Dutch-Khoi wars to the end of Apartheid**, California, Praeger, 2010, p.4

⁹¹⁷ BREWER D., John (ed): **Can South Africa survive? Five minutes to midnight**, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 1989, p.9

⁹¹⁸ BERGER, Iris: **South Africa in world history**, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p.40

⁹¹⁹ STAPLETON J., Timothy: **A military history of South Africa. From the Dutch-Khoi wars to the end of Apartheid**, *Op. Cit.*, p.52

penniless Englishman uncovered a 175-carat stone valued at £33,000.”⁹²⁰ Concerning the regional and global impact of the discovery of diamonds and gold resources, South Africa or, more precisely, the regions where those tremendous resources were discovered would play an incremental role in the global economy, considering the rise of the Gold Standard in international exchange. Consequently, the British quickly came to two conclusions: first, the necessity to control the abundant resources in the remaining regions of South Africa, especially since the controlled region of the Cap was relatively poor. And second, the danger of letting the Boers maintain an independent status on their territories under their control.⁹²¹ Unsurprisingly, frictions between the British and the Boers eventually led to two wars between the two parties: the Anglo-Boers wars.

The Anglo-Boers wars usually refer to the Boers’ resistance to the British military campaigns to annex the Boers-controlled republics (Transvaal and the Orange Free States). This was an explicit negation of the 1852 Sand River and the 1854 Bloemfontein Conventions, during which the British officially acknowledged the existence of the two republics mentioned above. The first Anglo-Boers wars occurred from 1880 to 1881 and were sparked by the British imposition of taxation on the Transvaal Boers, who had never paid tax before. In late 1880 British attempts to hunt down tax evaders in the Potchefstroom District led to an armed standoff in which a Boer was wounded. Across the Transvaal, the infuriated Boers mobilized 7,000 mounted men for military action.”⁹²² Despite the clear unbalance of the forces, the Boers won this first battle mainly thanks to their *blitzkrieg* strategy, as their *essential tactics were speed in concentration and attack, and a readiness to withdraw to a more favorable position in case the fire-fight was going against them.*⁹²³ Consequently, the British recognized the Transvaal’s independence during the Pretoria Convention of the 3rd of August 1881. But the British took their revenge eight years later during the second Anglo-Boers war or the “South African War.”

The second Anglo-Boers spanned from 1899 to 1902. Like the previously mentioned first Anglo-Boer war, the second was caused by the British territory expansionist ambitions related to the tremendous natural resources of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. In this regard, the British first attempt to annex the two independent States

⁹²⁰ MEREDITH, Martin: **Diamonds, gold, and war: The British, the Boers, and the making of South Africa**, New York, PublicAffairs, 2008, p.13

⁹²¹ MEREDITH, Martin: **Diamonds, gold, and war: The British, the Boers, and the making of South Africa**, *Ibid.*, p.24

⁹²² STAPLETON J., Timothy: **A military history of South Africa. From the Dutch-Khoi wars to the end of Apartheid**, *Ibid.*, p.52

⁹²³ PRETORIUS, Fransjohan, **The Boer wars**, BBC, History, 29 March 2011. Accessed from https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/boer_wars_01.shtml on the 28th of September 2021.

occurred via the Jameson's Raid when, *in December 1895, Rhodes and his co-conspirators in the mining industry attempted to use Uitlander resentment to ignite a rebellion, but the forces of his lieutenant, Jameson, were easily defeated by the Boers.*⁹²⁴ The two wars differed in many respects: first, in their scope, as all four territories of the future South African Republic were involved. Second, the duration of the hostilities as the "South African War" lasted three years, and lastly, the dynamics of the conflict. Indeed, the numerical and logistical disparities between the two parties led the Boers to rely on guerrilla warfare strategies. Nevertheless, the British ultimately won the war, and the Boers bitterly recognized the annexation of their republic through the Treaty of Vereeniging signed on the 31st of May 1902.⁹²⁵ About ten years later (1910), the Union of South Africa (Orange Free State, Cape colony and the Transvaal) was officially created as a British dominion with an autonomous government.⁹²⁶ Still, South Africa became an independent State in 1931. The US also played an incremental role in the evolution of the South African nuclear weapons program.

Richard Goldstone argues that the relationship between South Africa (as represented by the majority of South Africans) and the United States has a complex history.⁹²⁷ Several factors, including the tensions between American idealism and the imperatives of the interests of the project, can explain the complexity of these relations. In addition, "any discussion of American interests in southern Africa - and many other regions, for that matter - is bedeviled by two problems: the obvious lack of consensus on the question within recent administrations; and the common confusion in secondary analysis between historical accounts of what those interests are and prescriptive statements concerning what they should be."⁹²⁸ Consequently, the US strategy in the region and the country, in particular, was shaped by the factors mentioned above.

Following the end of WWII, the US interest abroad was focused on the European continent and the Middle East. Consequently, the African continent, which experienced decolonization processes in several countries, was a foremost priority for the US authorities. Nevertheless, certain countries proved to be instrumental for protecting and promoting US interests in the region, and South Africa was one of them. The bilateral relations between the US and South Africa hark back to the early 19th C.,

⁹²⁴ SURRIDGE T., Keith: **Managing the South African war, 1899-1902: Politicians V. Generals**, New York, Royal Historical Society, 1998, p.16 (Consulted online)

⁹²⁵ SURRIDGE T., Keith: **Managing the South African war, 1899-1902: Politicians V. Generals**, *Ibid*, p.155. (Consulted online)

⁹²⁶ PAXTON, John (Ed): **The Statesman's yearbook historical companion**, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 1988, p.232

⁹²⁷ GOLDSTONE, Richard, **Ambiguity and America: South Africa and US foreign policy** in MACK, Arien (Ed.): **Their America: The US in the eyes of the rest of the world**, *Op. Cit.*, p.811

⁹²⁸ BERRIDGE G., R., **The Role of the Superpowers** in BREWER D., John (ed): **Can South Africa survive? Five minutes to midnight**, *Op. Cit.*, p.9

precisely to 1799, with the creation of a Consulate in Cape Town.⁹²⁹ However, the political and economic relations between the two countries intensified in the 20th C when the US opened an Embassy in Pretoria in 1929 following the country's independence.

The US's soft interests in South Africa were driven by the desire of the US to spread liberal values (human rights, democracy) in the region. In contrast, two pillars essentially drove the *hard* interests: on the first hand, the ideological confrontation with the USSR during the Cold War and the economic interests, especially oil supplies via the Cape. Alex Thomson confirms it by arguing, "although always on the periphery of Washington DC's global strategic calculations, South Africa proved a useful ally during the Cold War. From 1945 through to the 1980s, the government in Pretoria proved to be a secure enemy of communism."⁹³⁰

Consequently, the US foreign policy toward South Africa was greatly influenced by the Pretoria's role in its anti-communism war. With specific respect to the Apartheid issue, the US reaction, both in terms of tone and action, was apathetic, at least at the beginning of the 50s. For example, *during the Eisenhower years, the United States never agreed to wording in the United Nations resolutions "condemning" apartheid. Before 1960, "regret and concern" was as far as the United States would go.*⁹³¹ The US soft stance regarding the Apartheid regime would evolve progressively to a firmer posture based upon the international criticism of the Apartheid's brutal repressions of the communities. For instance, this was the case with the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, which led to worldwide condemnation and the adoption of March 20 as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.⁹³² However, the US's *hard* interests prevailed as the US maintained good economic relations with South Africa's Apartheid regime, just as the following table illustrates perfectly.

⁹²⁹ The National Museum of American Diplomacy: **U.S. Embassy Pretoria, South Africa**. Accessed from <https://diplomacy.state.gov/places/u-s-embassy-pretoria-south-africa/> on the 29th of September 2021.

⁹³⁰ THOMSON, Alex: **U.S. foreign policy towards Apartheid South Africa, 1948–1994**, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p.6

⁹³¹ HOUSER, George, **Relations between the United States and South Africa**, The Black Scholar, Nov/Dec 1984, Vol. 15, N. 6, p.34

⁹³² REDDY S., Enuga, **The struggle against Apartheid: Lessons for today's world**, UN Chronicle. Accessed from <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/struggle-against-apartheid-lessons-todays-world> on the 29th of Sept 2021. Also read LODGE, Tom: **Sharpeville: An Apartheid massacre and its consequences**, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, 256 pages. (1st ed.)

Year	Total U.S. exports to South Africa (US\$ millions)	Total U.S. imports from South Africa (US\$ millions)	U.S. total direct investment in South Africa (US\$ millions)	Return on U.S. total direct investment in South Africa (percentage)
1950	126	142	140	9.29
1955	268	96	257	14.79
1960	288	108	286	11.89
1965	438	226	528	14.58
1970	536	290	868	16.60
1975	1,302	840	1,582	4.49
1980	2,463	3,321	2,350	28.30
1985	1,205	2,071	1,394	2.51
1990	1,732	1,698	775	21.03

Table 8: US economic relations with South Africa (exports, imports, and direct investment), 1950–1990.⁹³³

Regarding military cooperation, South Africa benefitted from the US logistical and human support to meet its security concerns, including the Communist threats. Indeed, *South Africa made its ports and airfields available to U.S. forces, supplied personnel to fight against communist forces worldwide, and provided vital minerals to the U.S. armaments industry. In return, the Union received military equipment and training.*⁹³⁴ In 1951 the country even received military support under the 1949 Mutual Defense Assistance Act, which was normally entitled to NATO members.⁹³⁵ This was a clear illustration of the strategic importance of South Africa in the US Cold War strategy. Unfortunately, as George Houser regrets it, “the United States’ obsession with East-West relationships and the refusal to recognize “on the ground” reality have prevented policymakers carving out a more creative policy.”⁹³⁶ Nevertheless, as we will analyze later regarding the US role in South Africa’s nuclear achievements, *whether it be in terms of military collaboration or nuclear cooperation, Pretoria and Washington DC developed significant bonds during the early Cold War era.*⁹³⁷ What lessons can be learned from the previous analysis?

The previous analysis of the foreign relations of South Africa clearly highlights the constant interference of Great Powers in the country’s domestic affairs. In addition, and consequently, South Africa had assumed only a passive role in global affairs, notably in the economic’. Indeed, the British conquest and subsequent imperialist policies in South

⁹³³ Source from U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census. *Historical statistics of the United States colonial times to 1957*. Washington DC: U.S. GPO, 1960. Accessed from THOMSON, Alex: **U.S. foreign policy towards Apartheid South Africa, 1948–1994, Op. Cit.**, p.11

⁹³⁴ THOMSON, Alex: **U.S. foreign policy towards Apartheid South Africa, 1948–1994, Op. Cit.**, p.18

⁹³⁵ Department of State, **Foreign relations of the United States, 1951**, The Near East and Africa, Volume V, 5th of February 1951. Accessed on the 29th of September 2021 from the link <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1951v05/d787>.

⁹³⁶ HOUSER, George, **Relations between the United States and South Africa, Op. Cit.**, p.35

⁹³⁷ THOMSON, Alex: **U.S. foreign policy towards Apartheid South Africa, 1948–1994, Op. Cit.**, p.21

Africa fostered a *siege mentality*⁹³⁸ syndrome in the psyche of its leaders. In other words, South African leaders, most of whom were descendants of the Boers, developed a perception of assault and occupation from the British invaders who tried to deprive their fathers of their God-granted land. Subsequently, the fact that the US and UK's relations with South Africa were mainly based on the supply of strategic resources nurtured a perception of inferiority in Pretoria. It also developed the imperative of a Status conquest in the South African leaders' mentalities. How did these two **international security and status issues shape Pretoria's nuclear calculus**? The next section, which dwells on the emergence of the South African nuclear program, will provide a meaningful beginning answer to the previous question.

6.2 SECTION II – THE EMERGENCE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM: ORIGINS, RATIONALE, AND REGIONAL IMPLICATIONS.

In Stephen Burgess's view, "to understand why and how South Africa covertly pursued the development of nuclear weapons, one needs to appreciate three characteristics usually associated with crime: motive, opportunity, and means."⁹³⁹ After the previous analysis of the relations between South Africa and the external world, especially the UK and the US, this section will dwell on the importance of a nuclear weapons program for South Africa. In other words, this section aims to answer the following questions: what were the drivers behind Pretoria's decision to seek nuclear weapons? In addition, what could have been the regional consequences of South Africa's acquisition of nuclear weapons? Answering these questions will help us understand the nuclear dynamics between the US and South Africa, and, more importantly, the bargaining positions of South Africa during the negotiations with the US over its controversial nuclear program.

What were the main drivers behind South Africa's decision to build a nuclear weapons program? Several factors, including security concerns,⁹⁴⁰ domestic features and bureaucratic configurations⁹⁴¹ or nationalist leadership style,⁹⁴² are usually highlighted

⁹³⁸ FAWCETT, Liz., *Under siege: A brief history of Afrikaners and Ulster Presbyterians* in CAMPLING, Jo (Ed.): **Religion, ethnicity and social change**, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2000, pp.15-46

⁹³⁹ BURGESS F., Stephen, **South Africa's nuclear weapons policies**, Nonproliferation Review, 2006, Vol. 13, N.3, p.519

⁹⁴⁰ CHARI, P. R., **South Africa's nuclear option**, India International Centre Quarterly, October 1976, Vol. 3, N. 4, p.222

⁹⁴¹ ASUELIME E., Lucky and ADEKOYE A., Raquel: **Nuclear proliferation in South Africa. History and politics**, Switzerland, Springer, 2016, p.125. And LIBERMAN, Peter, **The rise and fall of the South African bomb**, Quarterly Journal: International Security, Fall 2001, Vol. 26, N.2, pp.45-86

⁹⁴² ASUELIME Lucky and FRANCIS Suzanne, **Drivers of nuclear proliferation: South Africa's incentives and constraints**, Journal for Contemporary History, 2014, Vol. 29, p.56

as the sources of South Africa's decision to go nuclear. But before dwelling on these factors, it is important to understand the very context of the emergence of nuclear energy in the country. As previously analyzed, South Africa was endowed with several abundant natural resources, and Uranium is no exception. Indeed, the country's teeming Uranium resources were discovered in mid-1940, after *Great Britain requested South Africa's Prime Minister Jan Smuts to investigate reported deposits of uranium in South Africa and South West Africa (now called Namibia)*.⁹⁴³ After discovering its tremendous Uranium resources, South Africa built its nuclear research program by the end of the 60s.

Until the full running of its nuclear program, South Africa mainly assumed an energy supplier role for the UK and US nuclear weapons. This was the *quid pro quo* for the "extensive US and British aid" in developing the South African nuclear extraction plants.⁹⁴⁴ Yet, its abundant Uranium resources made South Africa a founding member of the AIEA and secured him a seat on the board of governors. It is worth emphasizing that Pretoria had already set the conditions for an autonomous nuclear program as the South African Atomic Energy Board (AEB) was created in 1948. In addition, just like Iran's Shah, South Africa also benefitted from US nuclear support after signing a *20-year agreement under the "Atoms for Peace" program*.⁹⁴⁵ From a nuclear reversal perspective, South Africa was an **outward looking (Etel Soligen)** regime although the country had **not yet built a nuclear program** (Eleonora Mattiacci and Benjamin Jones).

Consequently, Pretoria received logistical support from Washington for its early nuclear achievements. More precisely, "the USA agreed to supply South Africa with a light-water research reactor. The country's first research reactor was Safari-I, which began operating at Pelindaba in 1965 with a capacity of 20 MW."⁹⁴⁶ Concerning the Apartheid issue, even though racial incidents like the Sharpeville massacre mentioned above sparked worldwide criticism, the US maintained its nuclear cooperation with South Africa. This can be explained by several factors, including the US leadership and the strategic importance of Pretoria's Uranium for the US nuclear arsenal. Regarding the former, then-US President *Eisenhower himself was not comfortable discussing racial issues or meeting with non-Europeans, (while his) Secretary of State John Foster Dulles*

⁹⁴³ ALBRIGHT H., David and STRICKER, Andrea: **Revisiting South Africa's nuclear weapons program: Its history, dismantlement, and lessons for today**, Washington, Institute for Science and International Security, 2016, p.1

⁹⁴⁴ ALBRIGHT H., David and STRICKER, Andrea: **Revisiting South Africa's nuclear weapons program: Its history, dismantlement, and lessons for today**, *Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁵ ASUELIME E., Lucky and ADEKOYE A., Raquel: **Nuclear proliferation in South Africa. History and politics**, *Op. Cit.*, p.88. Read also LAVOY R., Peter, **The enduring effects of Atoms for Peace**, Arms Control Today, 2003, Vol. 33, N.10, p.28

⁹⁴⁶ ASUELIME E., Lucky and ADEKOYE A., Raquel: **Nuclear proliferation in South Africa. History and politics**, *Ibid.*, p.89

*exhibited little interest in racial issues and even demonstrated a certain insensitivity to such issues.*⁹⁴⁷ Regarding the latter, a 1955 National Security Council staff report listed receiving “uranium from abroad” as essential “to maintain[ing] the growth and effectiveness of our atomic strength.” Javan Frazier argues that *this statement described and explained the uranium ore purchasing relationship the United States had with South Africa under the Eisenhower administration.*⁹⁴⁸ However, the international scrutiny over South Africa’s nuclear intentions was caused by its leaders’ actions and declarations.

The fact that the US administration had deliberately ignored the racial issue in South Africa prevented the country from experiencing severe international pressure, at least temporarily. But its controversial nuclear behavior drew international attention to the country. Indeed, notwithstanding the country’s good nuclear behavior through its strategic role in the creation of the AEIA, South Africa’s leaders made comments which clearly hinted at the actual nuclear goal of the country. For instance, then PM Hendrik F. Verwoerd declared in 1965 that “the South African government had a duty to consider the military uses of nuclear technology.”⁹⁴⁹ Furthermore, Pretoria refused to join the NPT in 1970; instead, its leaders adopted *a policy of deliberate nuclear opacity [which] refers to a situation where the existence of a nuclear weapons programme ‘has not been acknowledged by a state’s leaders, but where the evidence for the existence of such a program is enough to influence of [sic] other nation’s perceptions and actions.’*⁹⁵⁰ South Africa’s refusal to join the NPT constituted the prominent bone of contention with the US, as we will see later in the chapter.

However, when the new South African Prime Minister B. J. Vorster embarked the country on an enrichment pattern, several governments urged the AIEA to conduct on-site visits to Pretoria’s nuclear infrastructure. The international suspicions over South Africa’s nuclear intentions were not empty-grounded. Indeed, the country had already secretly,⁹⁵¹ but unsuccessfully explored the feasibility of constructing an indigenous Uranium enrichment plant in 1967. Unfortunately, Pretoria rejected the request for inspections from the IAEA and consequently faced its first nuclear-related international

⁹⁴⁷ FRAZIER D., Javan: **Atomic Apartheid: United States-South African nuclear relations from Truman to Reagan, 1945-1989**, PhD thesis, Auburn University, 2006, p.60. Read also STUMPF, Waldo, **South Africa’s nuclear weapons program: from deterrence to dismantlement**, Arms Control Today, Dec. 1995/Jan. 1996, Vol. 25, N. 10, p.3

⁹⁴⁸ FRAZIER D., Javan: **Atomic Apartheid: United States-South African nuclear relations from Truman to Reagan, 1945-1989**, *Ibid*, p.63-64

⁹⁴⁹ ASUELIME Lucky and FRANCIS Suzanne, **Drivers of nuclear proliferation: South Africa’s incentives and constraints**, *Op. Cit.*, p.59

⁹⁵⁰ VAN WYK, Jo-Ansie and VAN WYK, Anna-Mart, **From the nuclear laager to the Non-Proliferation club: South Africa and the NPT**, South African Historical Journal, 2015, Vol. 67, N. 1, p.33

⁹⁵¹ COCHRAN B., Thomas, **Highly Enriched Uranium production for South African nuclear weapons**, Science & Global Security, 1994, Vol. 4, N. 2, p.162

pressure as *the Group of 77 removed South Africa from the African seat at the IAEA in 1979*.⁹⁵²

Nevertheless, South Africa maintained its objectives as the AEB carried out a top-secret Uranium enrichment project called “Gas Cooling Project”, divided into three components named “the XYZ project.”⁹⁵³ This South African stubbornness can also be explained by the increasingly strategic importance of nuclear enrichment right in the country. As Anna-Mart van Wyk and Jo-Ansie van Wyk described it, when pressurized by the IAEA in 1970 over its reluctance to ratify the NPT, *Pretoria explained that the country was reluctant to ‘surrender, almost irrevocably, long-held sovereign rights without having precise details of all the implications*.⁹⁵⁴ But the successful progress made during this project resulted from the expertise of South African scientists trained in the US and the experience gained thanks to the Safari-I project.

The decision by the South African authorities to build a covert enrichment program happened within a specific domestic and international context. The social and racial contest between the Black people and the Boers government characterized the domestic context. In contrast, the international context was shaped by the rise of pro-Communist regimes in the neighborhood of Pretoria. Concerning the former, the new South African authorities were experiencing demonstrations and attacks from black communities in response to the segregationist policies of the Apartheid regime. Indeed, it is important to mention that about forty years (1948) after their independence from the UK, the South African authorities instituted a segregationist and discriminatory policy named “apartheid.” From its Afrikaans roots, ‘apartness’ or ‘apart-hood’ which means ‘separateness,’ Apartheid can be defined as a policy of separating people by race, with regard to where they lived, where they went to school, where they worked, and where they died; (its philosophy is rooted) on the idea of separating physically all races within South Africa in a hierarchy of power with whites at the top and Africans at the bottom.⁹⁵⁵ The term was first used as a way of expressing the importance of Afrikaners maintaining a cultural identity separate from that of English-speaking Europeans in South Africa.⁹⁵⁶ However, the electoral political dynamics granted new momentum to the concept.

⁹⁵² ZONDI, Masiza, **A chronology of South Africa's nuclear program**, The Nonproliferation Review, 1993, Vol. 1, N.1, p.35

⁹⁵³ MOORE L., J.D.: **South Africa and nuclear proliferation: South Africa's nuclear capabilities and intentions in the context of international Non-Proliferation policies**, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 1987, p.84. (Consulted online)

⁹⁵⁴ VAN WYK, Jo-Ansie and VAN WYK, Anna-Mart, **From the nuclear laager to the Non-Proliferation club: South Africa and the NPT**, *Op. Cit.*, p.38

⁹⁵⁵ CLARK L., Nancy and WORGER H., William: **South Africa: The rise and fall of Apartheid**, New York, Routledge, 2011, pp.1-10.

⁹⁵⁶ CLARK L., Nancy and WORGER H., William: **South Africa: The rise and fall of Apartheid**, *Ibid.*, p.4

The notion of Apartheid was used as an election slogan by White nationalists during the 1948 election. The term “apartheid,” defined as a racial rallying cry, did not spark political enthusiasm initially. However, two social conditions gave this concept new momentum: first, the inferiority complex nurtured by the Afrikaans concerning the English speakers and the boom in the Black population. Consequently, when *the National Party’s official election campaign offered the country a choice between ‘integration and national suicide’ on the one hand and apartheid and the ‘protection of the pure white race’ on the other*,⁹⁵⁷ there was a racial rally around the flag of White supremacism. Even though the Apartheid system was firstly rooted in racial discrimination, the notion of White supremacism was not the only pillar in the discriminatory policy that was grounded.

The institution of the Apartheid regime can be explained by several other factors, among which is nationalism. Indeed, the Boers’ leaders were also driven by a strong sense of nationalism as *they believed that their identity was ‘God-given.’ They feared that the Afrikaner’s very existence was threatened by the mass of Africans that confronted them in South Africa*.⁹⁵⁸ There was also the social-history argument which explained the institutionalization of Apartheid, like the logical outcome of the dialectic between the poor people who fought against unjust laws on the one hand and the government, which imposed tighter rules and policies to control the population on the other hand.⁹⁵⁹ But the Apartheid system was not unfamiliar to the Boers leaders. On the contrary, “the Boer people have themselves gone through the crucible of imperialist and capitalist domination and exploitation. They still show the wounds and the bruises of it all. (...) They know what it means to see their own destroyed,” Robert Harvey argues.⁹⁶⁰ From this perspective, Apartheid can be perceived as the continuation of the discriminatory policies implemented by the Dutch and the British.⁹⁶¹

However, establishing the Apartheid regime was not a trouble-free adventure for the Afrikaners government. Indeed, the Black communities contested the establishment of the new segregationist regime during its early days. As Nancy Clark and William Worger confirm, “African opposition to segregation legislation began with the drafting of the Natives’ Land Bill in 1911 and led directly to the formation in 1912 of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC, renamed the African National Congress, ANC, in

⁹⁵⁷ DUBOW, Saul: **Apartheid, 1948-1994**, New York, Oxford University Press, 2014, p.9

⁹⁵⁸ APARTHEID MUSEUM: **Understanding Apartheid. Learner’s book**, Cape Town, Oxford University Press Southern Africa, 2008, p.11 (3rd ed.)

⁹⁵⁹ APARTHEID MUSEUM: **Understanding Apartheid. Learner’s book, Ibid.**, p.13

⁹⁶⁰ HARVEY, Robert: **The fall of Apartheid. The inside story from Smuts to Mbeki**, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2001, p.49

⁹⁶¹ CLARK L., Nancy and WORGER H., William: **South Africa: The rise and fall of Apartheid, Op. Cit.**, p.4

1923).”⁹⁶² But what happened in 1960 to spark racial fears among South African authorities? As we previously analyzed, the 60s witnessed the Sharpeville massacre, leading to worldwide condemnation. The Sharpeville massacre was caused by peaceful Black demonstrations against the *Pass Law*, which required the Blacks to possess identity documents always called *dompas* (originally dumbed pass) *everywhere and every time*. Under the 1952 Pass Law Act, “government officials possessed the power to expel the worker from the area by adverse endorsement in the passbook.”⁹⁶³ Surrounded by defiant yet peaceful Black demonstrators, the police officers brutally responded to the challenge by aimlessly shooting the crowd. Consequently, 69 people were killed and 180 injured.⁹⁶⁴

Increasingly isolated in the international arena after the Sharpeville events, the South African authorities tightened the screw on the Black community. Iris Berger confirms it in these terms: “from many perspectives, the 1960s looked bleak indeed for black South Africans. The apartheid state had succeeded in destroying the overt resistance movement within the country, imprisoning many key leaders for life, and forcing others into exile.”⁹⁶⁵ As the previous analysis demonstrates, the South African siege mentality mentioned above transpired in the authorities’ response to the political actions of the Black community. But the regional security dynamics, especially the Soviet support for liberation movements in neighbouring countries, exacerbated Pretoria’s security over-cautiousness.

South African leaders developed a sheer terror for the Soviet Union; indeed, “onslaught” is the commonly used term to describe the security perception of Pretoria’s leaders regarding the Soviet presence in their neighborhood.⁹⁶⁶ To understand South Africa’s fear, one must consider the regional dynamics prevailing at the time. Until 1974, Pretoria was surrounded by White minority-governed countries, including Mozambique and Angola (Namibia was still part of South Africa). This political configuration is important to consider as the presence of the previously mentioned regime made South Africa a sanctuary, as a segregationist regime governed the country.

⁹⁶² CLARK L., Nancy and WORGER H., William: **South Africa: The rise and fall of Apartheid**, *Op. Cit.*, p.20

⁹⁶³ **Key legislation in the formation of Apartheid**, accessed on the 30th of September 2021 from the link <https://www.cortland.edu/cgis/suzman/index.html>. Also read SAVAGE, Michael, **The imposition of pass laws on the African population in South Africa 1916-1984**, African Affairs, April 1986, Vol. 85, N. 339, pp. 181-205

⁹⁶⁴ BBC, **1960: Scores die in Sharpeville shoot-out**, 21 March 1960. An information accessed from http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/march/21/newsid_2653000/2653405.stm on the 30rd of September 2021.

⁹⁶⁵ BERGER, Iris: **South Africa in world history**, *Op. Cit.*, p.135.

⁹⁶⁶ ASUELIME E., Lucky and ADEKOYE A., Raquel: **Nuclear proliferation in South Africa. History and politics**, *Op. Cit.*, p.93. Also read BURGESS F., Stephen, **South Africa's nuclear weapons policies**, *Op. Cit.*, p.119

However, Pretoria's peacefulness began to fade when the Soviet authorities *aggressively portrayed the USSR as the defender of the cause of international justice*.⁹⁶⁷ This move signaled a growing Soviet interest in the Southern African region in general and the countries hosting national liberation movements in particular. Matching words with action, the Soviet, together with their Cuban allies, backed liberation movements in Southern Africa.

While there has never been an open confrontation (Cold War) between the two post-WWII Great Powers, indirect or proxy wars (hot wars) effectively happened between them in several regions of the world, like in Congo (ex-Zaire) and Angola. Concerning the latter, Luanda was a Portuguese colony until 1974, and thus part of the South African *buffer zone* or a "*cordon sanitaire*" of white-ruled states to permanently hold back the "*tide*" of black majority rule that had already swept the rest of the continent.⁹⁶⁸ However, the (25th of April) 1974 Carnation Revolution, which toppled the Dictatorial *Estado Novo* regime in Portugal, impacted the regional dynamics in Southern Africa. Indeed, following the departure of the Portuguese colonial power, three Angolan independent military groups – the FNLA, the UNITA and the MPLA⁹⁶⁹ – fought for the ruling of the future independent country. The US supported the two former military groups,⁹⁷⁰ while the Soviet Union backed the last. Yet, as the balance of power on the battlefield clearly favored the Soviet-backed MPLA, South Africa decided to intervene. Stephen Ellis confirms it in these terms: "in 1975, responding to the imminent independence of Angola, the SADF launched its first major operation since the Second World War, penetrating deep into Angola in an effort to prevent a Soviet-allied government from coming to power in Luanda."⁹⁷¹ But this military intervention was a clear failure, though it had received the US blessing.

South Africa's military intervention failed to achieve its political and military objectives and even backfired. In fact, Pretoria's most feared scenario – a Soviet-back foreign intervention – finally happened. As Michael Lerner corroborates, *South Africa's 1975 invasion of Angola was a disaster that not only failed to install a pro-Western government there, but actually provoked the countering intervention of a Cuban military force over*

⁹⁶⁷ MASSIE, Robert: **Loosing the bonds: The United States and South Africa in the Apartheid years**, New York, Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 1997, p.116. (Consulted online)

⁹⁶⁸ LERNER S., Michael, **A convenient excuse: Apartheid South Africa and the "Soviet Menace" during the Cold War**, Journal of Political Inquiry at New York University, 2012, Vol.5, N.5, p.2

⁹⁶⁹ The **FNLA** or *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* which means National Front for the Liberation of Angola while the **UNITA** (*União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola*) refers to the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola. The **MPLA** or *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* refers to the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola.

⁹⁷⁰ GUIMARAES A., Fernando: **The Origins of the Angolan civil war: Foreign intervention and domestic political conflict, 1961-76**, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2001, p.101. (Consulted online)

⁹⁷¹ ELLIS, Stephen, **The historical significance of South Africa's third force**, Journal of Southern African Studies, Jun 1998, Vol. 24, N.2, p.270

*11,000 strong, plus much more substantial Soviet support and direct involvement.*⁹⁷² Concerning South Africa's nuclear proliferation incentives, the Cuban intervention and the ousting of the SADF from Angola fostered the security concerns of Pretoria and the need for a credible deterrent capability on the verge of a perceived potential Soviet invasion of the country. "The build-up of the Cuban forces in Angola reinforced the perception that a deterrent was necessary—as did South Africa's relative international isolation and the fact that it could not rely on outside assistance, should it be attacked," Peter Liberman argues.⁹⁷³

Consequently, in response to Pretoria's perceived external "total onslaught" mentioned above, the South African authorities developed a "total strategy" which *consisted of mobilizing South Africa's political, human, industrial, and financial resources against a "total onslaught" that South Africa's white government believed it faced from regional liberation movements and Soviet inspired Marxist governments in the early 1970.*⁹⁷⁴ This strategy aimed at addressing both domestic and external threats the Apartheid regime was facing. Subsequently, it was rooted in several pillars or "characteristics." Among them was *a combination of tactical flexibility and intensity, which required the use of nearly all means of implementation are deemed acceptable, including pre-emptive cross-border strikes, assassinations, and sabotage.*⁹⁷⁵ Concerning proliferation issues, the nuclear input of the "total strategy" was composed of a *three-phased nuclear deterrent strategy* which led to the production of the country's first nuclear weapon in 1978. Anna-Mart van Wyk and Jo-Ansie van Wyk describe the previously mentioned three-phased nuclear deterrent strategy in the following table.

⁹⁷² LERNER S., Michael, **A convenient excuse: Apartheid South Africa and the "Soviet Menace" during the Cold War**, *Op. Cit.*, p.3

⁹⁷³ LIBERMAN, Peter, **The rise and fall of the South African bomb**, *Op. Cit.*, p.59

⁹⁷⁴ CRAWFORD C., Neta, **South Africa's new foreign and military policy: opportunities and constraints**, in *Africa Today*, 1st Qtr. - 2nd Qtr., 1995, Vol.42, N. 1/2, p.92

⁹⁷⁵ METZ, Steven, **Pretoria's "total strategy" and low-intensity warfare in Southern Africa**, *Comparative Strategy*, 1987, Vol. 6, N.4, pp.441

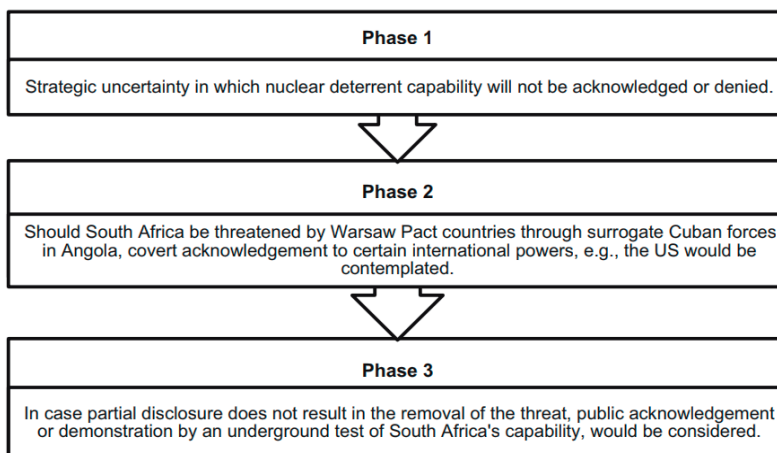


Table 9: South Africa's three-phased nuclear deterrent strategy.⁹⁷⁶

However, it is important to highlight that there is no consensus regarding the veracity and effectiveness of the Soviet invasion of South Africa. For instance, senior military officials questioned the feasibility of an actual Soviet threat against South Africa. "I don't think we ever thought it was feasible for anyone to attack us from the north. (...) The Communist bogey was set up at every stage – but we had no one in the military who read, spoke or studied Russian. (It was) silly to set the Soviets up as the force behind the total onslaught," Lt. Gen. Hein du Toit, a former South African Chief of Staff Intelligence, recalls.⁹⁷⁷ Then South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha goes further as he admitted that Pretoria "did not have a clinical, sober analysis of what the Soviet Union could do in Africa."⁹⁷⁸ Consequently, besides nationalism and security concerns, there was a third driving factor behind South Africa's proliferation initiatives. In this regard, Peter Liberman maintains that *organizational politics* should not be neglected when assessing the driving factors behind Pretoria's nuclear objectives. In other words, key actors like then Defense Minister P.W. Botha, who was "singularly fixated on getting nuclear weapons,"⁹⁷⁹ also played an incremental role in South Africa's decision to go nuclear.

⁹⁷⁶ VAN WYK, Jo-Ansie and VAN WYK, Anna-Mart, **From the nuclear laager to the Non-Proliferation club: South Africa and the NPT**, *Op. Cit.*, p.39

⁹⁷⁷ REISS, Mitchell: **Bridled ambition: Why countries constrain their nuclear capabilities**, Washington, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1995, p.28 (consulted online)

⁹⁷⁸ LIBERMAN, Peter, **The rise and fall of the South African bomb**, *Op. Cit.*, p.59-60.

⁹⁷⁹ HIBBS, Mark, **South Africa's secret nuclear program: from a PNE to a deterrent**, NuclearFuel, May 10, 1993, p. 5. Cited by LIBERMAN, Peter, **The rise and fall of the South African bomb**, *Op. Cit.*, p.64

From the previous analysis, three main factors should be considered in analyzing the causes of South Africa's decision to build nuclear weapons. First, the nationalist approach of its leaders; second, the security threats posed by internal and regional politics; and third, the key stakeholders' role in the country's nuclear bureaucratic settling. Although there is no consensus regarding the actual role of each of the previous factors,⁹⁸⁰ they nevertheless played an incremental role in shaping Pretoria's nuclear decisions. To what extent can each of them explain South Africa's compliance or defiance concerning the US demands regarding its controversial nuclear weapons program? The section on the coercive nuclear dynamics between the US and South Africa would attempt to answer the previous question. But before that, the next section will dwell on South Africa's foreign policy decision-making characteristics.

6.3 SECTION III – THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM.

This section will analyze the characteristics of the South African domestic political system in general and the country's foreign policymaking in particular. Consequently, this section is divided into two main sub-parts. We will first analyze the features of the South African political system under the Apartheid regime. Then our focus will be on the characteristics of the foreign policy-making of South Africa before its disarmament in 1989. The general goal of the section is to identify the key actors and their actual political weight in the decision-making of South Africa's foreign policy.

6.3.1 The features of the South African political system under the Apartheid regime.

The South African polity during the Apartheid regime was mainly based on the British Westminster system. The *Westminster model*, as it is usually referred to in comparative politics studies, can be defined as a *form of democracy based on the supreme authority of Parliament and the accountability of its elected representatives*.⁹⁸¹ Without dwelling on its core doctrines, we will only highlight the fundamental principles underpinning this political system. Among the principal features of this political we have: first, "a parliamentary system, with the head of state having only a ceremonial role, the

⁹⁸⁰ In this regard, Peter Liberman challenges the psychological input of the country's nuclear decision defended by Helen E. Purkitt, Stephen F. Burgess. He refutes this argument on the basis that there is a clear distinction between the psychology or the personal vision of the country's leaders and the political culture or identity of the country – the Afrikaner nationalism. Read PURKITT E., Helen, BURGESS F., Stephen and LIBERMAN, Peter, **South Africa's nuclear decisions**, International Security, Summer 2002, Vol. 27, N. 1, p.193

⁹⁸¹ KESSELMAN, Mark, KRIEGER, Joel and JOSEPH A., William (Ed.): **Introduction to comparative politics. Political challenges and changing agendas**, Boston, Cengage Learning, 2015, p.47 (7th ed.) Accessed online.

concentration of political power in the executive of the central government, which experiences minimal or no checks and balances, with the executive or cabinet dominating the legislature and the prime minister, thus, a powerful political figure; *lastly* two-party system based on a Single-Member Plurality (SMP) electoral system—or at least a single-member electoral system—with this electoral system’s bias in favor of larger parties.”⁹⁸²

With specific respect to South Africa, the Head of State was the Governor-General, who served as the Representative of the British Crown in the country. This can be explained by the fact that although South Africa obtained its independence from the UK in 1910, as we previously analyzed, from an international legal perspective, Pretoria remained a British dominion. This status also impacted the shaping of its foreign policy, as we will see later. Formally established on the 15th of November 1926, the Balfour Imperial Conference defined “dominions” as *autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations*.⁹⁸³ Consequently, as the South African Constitution – formally known as the South African Act (SAA) of 1909 – stipulated in its Art. 8, *the Executive Government of the Union is vested in the King, and shall be administered by His Majesty in person or by a governor-general as His representative*.⁹⁸⁴ The members of the Executive Council or the government were *chosen and summoned by the Governor General and sworn as executive councilors, and shall hold office during his pleasure*.⁹⁸⁵ This meant that the Governor General still had an essential role in the country’s political game, despite its ceremonial constitutional prerogatives.

However, the political weight of the British Crown in Pretoria’s domestic affairs progressively diminished. Indeed, after the adoption of the 1931 Statute of Westminster, which granted more autonomy to the British dominions, Pretoria’s parliament adopted the 1934 Statute of the Union Act, which stipulated, among others, that *the Parliament of the (South African) Union shall be the sovereign legislative power in and over the Union, and notwithstanding anything in any other law contained, no Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland passed after the eleventh day of December 1931, shall extend, or be deemed to extend, to the Union as part of the*

⁹⁸² SIAROFF, Alan: **Comparing political regimes. A thematic introduction to comparative politics**, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2013, p.204. (3rd ed.) Consulted online.

⁹⁸³ **Imperial Conference 1926**, Inter-Imperial Relations Committee Report, Proceedings and Memoranda E (I.R./26) Series, p.3. An information accessed on the 1st of October 2021 from the link https://www.foundingdocs.gov.au/resources/transcripts/cth11_doc_1926.pdf.

⁹⁸⁴ **Art. 8 of South Africa Act, 1909**. Accessed on the 1st October 2021 from the link https://media.law.wisc.edu/s/c_8/jzhy2/cbsa1.pdf.

⁹⁸⁵ **Art. 12 of South Africa Act, 1909, *Ibid.***

*law of the Union, unless extended thereto by an Act of the Parliament of the Union.*⁹⁸⁶ These Constitutional reforms only paved the way for the advent of the Republican political system in 1961. Indeed, after the 1958 general elections, the National Party ruling government organized a referendum in 1960 over the issue of the Republican nature of the political system of the country, and 52.3%⁹⁸⁷ of the electorate voted “yes.”

Consequently, South Africa officially became a republic in May 1961. Nonetheless, the Westminster specter still loomed in the country’s political landscape as the President merely replaced the Governor General. At the same time, the Prime Minister remained the most powerful political actor as the Head of government. Logically, South Africa adopted a more assertive and independent foreign policy after the advent of the Republican State. It is, therefore, interesting to emphasize the characteristics of Pretoria’s foreign policy before and after 1960. In other words, what were the differences in South Africa’s foreign policy-making between the dominion status and the republican State?

6.3.2 The characteristics of South African foreign policymaking.

The dominion status of South Africa before the advent of the Republican State impacted its foreign policy. Indeed, although Boers were authorized to administrate their daily domestic affairs, the British Empire still handled foreign policy issues (BE). Deon Geldenhuys accurately describes this impact in these terms: “in practice, this meant that the British Foreign Office, via the Department of the Union Prime Minister and the governor-general, served as the channel for South Africa’s diplomatic activity.”⁹⁸⁸ As the PM was constitutionally the Head of government, he was also the highest foreign policy decision-maker in principle. Yet, Pretoria’s response to international challenges was channeled through the Governor General. Hence, combined with the global status of the country, the leading foreign issue of the country at the time precluded the creation of a formal diplomatic bureaucratic settling with specialized departments or offices.

In fact, the very creation of the South African Foreign Ministry (South African Department of External Affairs - DEA) happened in 1927,⁹⁸⁹ with Dr HDJ Bodenstein being the first Foreign Minister of the country or Secretary of the DEA. that is twenty years after the independence of the country. Due to the omnipresence of the UK in its

⁹⁸⁶ W. P. M. K., **Status of South Africa**, The University of Toronto Law Journal, 1935, Vol. 1, N.1, p.150

⁹⁸⁷ STULTZ M., Newell and BUTLER Jeffrey, **The South African general election of 1961**, Political Science Quarterly, March 1963, Vol. 78, N. 1, p.87

⁹⁸⁸ GELDENHUYS, Deon: **The Diplomacy of isolation: South African foreign policy making**, Johannesburg, Palgrave Macmillan, 1984, p.2. (1st ed.)

⁹⁸⁹ MULLER, Marie, **South Africa. The Ministry of foreign affairs: from isolation to integration to coherency** in HOCKING, Brian (Ed.): **Foreign ministries: change and adaptation**, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 1999, p.188. (Consulted online)

diplomacy, Pretoria's main international focus was oriented towards its bilateral relation with London and its goal to emancipate from the British diplomatic tutelage. At this stage, the main *formulators* of South Africa's foreign policy were the Governor General, who represented the Crown, the Prime Minister (Jan Smuts at that time) and the Secretary of the DEA. However, South Africa's foreign policy changed progressively after WWII. Bhekithemba R. Mngomezulu confirms it in these terms: *it was only after the Second World War that South Africa consciously and assiduously developed an independent foreign policy*.⁹⁹⁰ This change was done against the backdrop of the values and norms set by the winning Powers of WWII.

In fact, with the downfall of the Axes powers, the post-War international system witnessed the rise of what Deon Geldenhuys described in terms of the *new international morality* based upon the respect of human rights. Since Pretoria was already implementing its institutionalized discriminatory policy against its Black community, Prime Minister Smuts unhappily found himself *in the dock of world opinion*.⁹⁹¹ The subsequent internationalization of the Apartheid-related issues led the South African leaders to progressively adopt a more aggressive foreign policy stance, as we will see later. Regarding the setting of the foreign policy, unfortunately, the opacity of the Apartheid system does not allow easy access to the organigram of the foreign policy-making of the country. Yet, several authors who investigated the making of South Africa's foreign policy during the Apartheid era agree on the central role played by the Prime Minister, who was, until the 1984 Constitutional reform, the Head of the Executive.

In addition, key ministers also provided inputs in the country's foreign policy making. This was the case especially for the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Economy, probably because of the external threats and sanctions the country would face due to its racial policy. However, except for John Siko's work,⁹⁹² which *provided a good discussion of how the DFA –Department of Foreign Affairs – was sidelined by the Department of Defense from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980*, the literature does not provide substantial insights into the interactions between these ministries and the PM when addressing specific issues. Another interesting feature of South African foreign policy-making was the non-interference of public opinion-related groups in international affairs. In other words, interest groups like civil society organizations

⁹⁹⁰ MNGOMEZULU R., Bhekithemba: **Foreign policy posture in post-Apartheid South Africa**, Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020, p.24. Consulted online

⁹⁹¹ GELDENHUYS, Deon: **The Diplomacy of isolation: South African foreign policy making**, *Op. Cit.*, p.6

⁹⁹² SAUNDERS, Chris, **Inside South Africa's foreign policy. Diplomacy in Africa from Smuts to Mbeki**, South African Journal of International Affairs, 2015, Vol. 22, N.1, p.138. This is a review of SIKO, John: **Inside South Africa's foreign policy: diplomacy in Africa from Smuts to Mbeki**, London, I.B. Tauris, 2016, 352 pages.

were not associated with or considered in making the country’s foreign policy. Peter Vale argues in this regard that *foreign policy was the preserve of dictatorial figures - Hendrik Verwoerd on the Republican decision and PW Botha on the country's destabilization of the region. [...] The policy process in South Africa was entirely cut off from the domestic public. Organized public interest in foreign policy and international relations - such as there was - supported, rather than challenged, exclusivity around the making of foreign policy.*⁹⁹³

Nonetheless, interest groups like the South African Defense Force (SADF) also played an incremental role in formulating the country’s foreign policy. Neta C. Crawford shares this point of view as she argues that the SADF had a tradition of involvement in politics. For example, under de Klerk's predecessor, P. W. Botha, the SADF was integral to high-level decision-making in both domestic and foreign policy issue areas. But as the following table illustrate, the DFA went under substantial bureaucratic transformations in the 1980s, probably because of the previously mentioned Constitutional reform and the external pressure the regime was facing. The following section will dwell on the coercive dynamics between South Africa and the Great Powers, notably the US

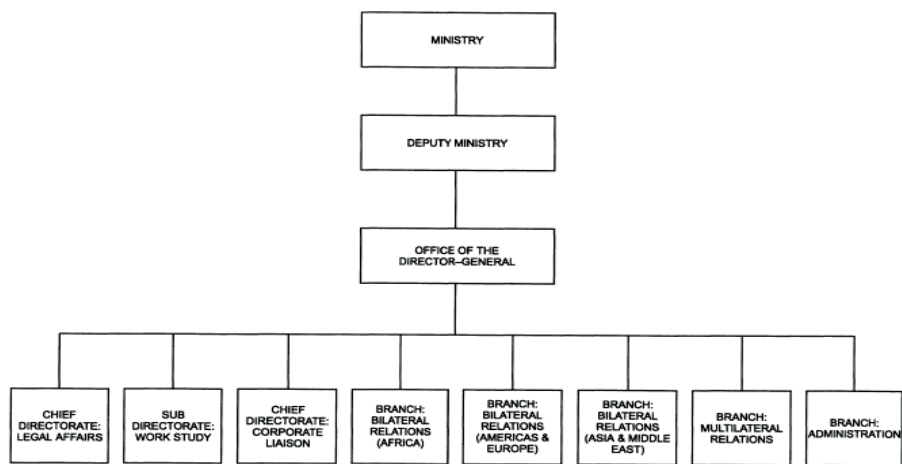


Table 8: Structure of the Department of Foreign Affairs.⁹⁹⁴

⁹⁹³ VALE, Peter, *Continuity rather than change: South Africa’s ‘new’ foreign policy*, Indicator SA, Vol. 12, N.3, pp.79-84
⁹⁹⁴ MULLER, Marie, *South Africa. The Ministry of foreign affairs: from isolation to integration to coherency*, Op. Cit, p.190

6.4 SECTION IV – THE COERCIVE DYNAMICS BETWEEN THE US AND SOUTH AFRICA.

The main goal of this section is to analyze the coercive dynamics between the US and South Africa. As we previously mentioned, this part will deeply analyze South Africa's and the US's coercive dynamics. This will be done against the backdrop of our hypotheses. In other words, when addressing the South African nuclear challenge, did the US coercive strategies exploit the weaknesses of South Africa? Did the US demonstrate the motivation to have a sustained campaign to compel South Africa to abandon its nuclear weapons program? Also, were these coercive strategies and threats credible, proportionate and reciprocal to the South African response? Considering our theoretical lens (neoclassical realism), we will also highlight the transmitting-belt role played by the intervening variables between the independent variable (systemic pressures/international demands) and the dependent variable (foreign policy). In other words, we will demonstrate how the perceptions of the South African leaders, the strategic culture of the country, the nature of the regime, and the configuration of the domestic institutions or domestic balance of power among the institutions and the State-society relations shaped the nature of the nuclear responses of Pretoria to the coercive demands of Washington. This will enable us to emphasize the relevance of the four ingredients of an effective coercive strategy in the nuclear realm: the display by the coercer of strategic empathy towards its target, the formulation of clear and acceptable demands to the target, the display by the coercer of a higher resolve than the target to achieve his/her objective, and the offer of credible incentives to the target if the target complies.

Following our structured-focused comparative methodology approach, just like the previous Iranian and Libyan chapters, our research design will also be based on the following questions: **what were the objectives pursued by the US when implementing his coercive policies against South Africa? Which coercive strategies were adopted to achieve these objectives? What were the expected outcomes of the US after implementing his coercive strategies? What were the actual outcomes of the coercive dynamics, and why such outcomes?** Concerning the differences between Libya and South Africa, conversely to Libya, South Africa successfully built nuclear weapons⁹⁹⁵ and dismantled them later. Considering the strategic importance of nuclear weapons (both politically and militarily), dismantling its nuclear arsenal must be the outcome of the long process we will try to describe. In addition, unlike Libya, which was under the leadership of a single authority during the entire coercive process, several leaders – Prime Ministers – conducted the country's

⁹⁹⁵ VENTER, AL. J. and BANDENHORST, N.P: **How South Africa built six atom bombs and then abandoned its nuclear weapons program**, New York, Ashanti, 2008, 233 pages.

foreign policy during the coercive dynamics against Foreign Powers. Hence, it is important first to analyze these leaders' ideas and beliefs, which will shed insightful light on the reasons for their response to external pressure. Consequently, the section will be divided into four main sub-sections, which correspond to the mandates of the four leaders who exerted power before the country's denuclearization. The first leader was Hendrick Verwoerd, PM, from 1958 to 1966.

6.4.1 During the Mandate of Hendrick Verwoerd.

6.4.1.1 Hendrick Verwoerd's foreign policy: ideas and beliefs.

Born on the 8th of September 1901, Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd was the 6th Prime Minister of South Africa. Despite having a background in psychology, he followed a professional political pattern and had firm racial beliefs. Indeed, he had zealous conviction regarding the merits of communitarian-based separatist ideologies like Nazi's, and his *anti-Semitism was matched by his anti-British outlook*.⁹⁹⁶ With specific respect to South African politics, his political ascension to the top leadership of the National Party first and the country later happened in the context of a political crisis as *it had become increasingly urgent to find an answer to the question "what is Apartheid?"*, *the Government had come to the crossroads: only Dr Verwoerd stood out as the man who claimed to know the answer. [...] It was just someone like this that the Nationalist Party wanted—someone who would face the future with absolute confidence and banish the gnawing anxiety over the fate of apartheid*.⁹⁹⁷ Hence, it is not surprising that PM Verwoerd was described as the architect of Apartheid.

Regarding foreign policy, Hendrick Verwoerd's vision can be summarized in the following sentence: "our motto is to maintain white supremacy for all time to come over our own people and our own country, by force if necessary."⁹⁹⁸ Donald Sole goes further as he argues that Verwoerd's foreign policy *was shaped accordingly and was based on the assumption that South Africa would increasingly be exposed to international sanctions in one form or another - an accurate assumption, more particularly after the Sharpeville uprising*.⁹⁹⁹ From a strictly personal perspective, several analysts agree that Verwoerd had a sturdy character, and his leadership style, even in foreign policy, could easily be described as authoritarian. John Siko confirms that in these terms: "Verwoerd had an almost superhuman certainty in his decision-making, with even his wife acknowledging that he would not make concessions once he had made a decision, which he tended to

⁹⁹⁶ UYS, Stanley, *Dr Hendrick Frensch Verwoerd, Prime Minister of South Africa* in SEGAL M., Ronald (ed): *Africa South*, Jan-March 1959, Vol.3, N.2, p.4

⁹⁹⁷ UYS, Stanley, *Dr Hendrick Frensch Verwoerd, Prime Minister of South Africa, Ibid*, p.7

⁹⁹⁸ BARBER, James and BARRATT, John: *South Africa's foreign policy: the search for status and security, 1945-1998*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.2

⁹⁹⁹ SOLE, Donald, *South African foreign policy assumptions and objectives from Hertzog to De Klerk*, South African Journal of International Affairs, 1994, Vol.2, N.1, p.108

do quickly. [He] would tolerate opposition neither from supporter nor critic.”¹⁰⁰⁰ With all the previous elements in the backdrop, one would expect South Africa not to bend in front of external pressure.

6.4.1.2 The coercive dynamics between South Africa and the Great Powers under Hendrick Verwoerd. (1958-1966).

As previously noted, the sanctions imposed by the US against South Africa were firstly Apartheid-related and not nuclear-related. Thereof, the first coercive measures imposed by the US through the UN were related to the Sharpeville massacre in 1961. In this regard, the first serious Resolution adopted by the SC concerning Apartheid was Res. 181 on the 7th of August 1963, after the adoption of Res. 134 on the 1st of April 1960. Indeed, in the latter Resolution, which was submitted to the SC by twenty-nine Member States,¹⁰⁰¹ and which focused on Apartheid, the UN *deplored that the recent disturbances in the Union of South Africa should have led to the loss of life of so many Africans and extends to the families of the victims its deepest sympathies (and) deplores the policies and actions of the Government of the Union of South Africa which have given rise to the present situation (Art.2 and Art.3 of Res. 134).*¹⁰⁰² Consequently, the SC *called upon the Government of the Union of South Africa to initiate measures aimed at bringing about racial harmony based on equality in order to ensure that the present situation does not continue or recur, and to abandon its policies of apartheid and racial discrimination.*¹⁰⁰³ However, the South African disregarded this first resolution as the brutal and racial repressions of the Black community reached their peak with the 1961 Sharpeville massacre.

Following the Sharpeville massacre, the UNSC adopted Res. 181, which mainly called upon the Government of South Africa to abandon the policies of apartheid and discrimination, as called for in Security Council resolution 134 (1960) and to liberate all persons imprisoned, interned or subjected to other restrictions for having opposed the policy of Apartheid. (Art.2) In addition, it solemnly called upon States to cease forthwith the sale and shipments of arms, ammunition of all types and military vehicles to South Africa. (Art.3).¹⁰⁰⁴ Although the tone seemed similar to that of Res. 134, the SC

¹⁰⁰⁰ SIKO, John: **Inside South Africa's foreign policy: diplomacy in Africa from Smuts to Mbeki**, *Op. Cit.*, p.236. (Consulted online)

¹⁰⁰¹ **S/4279**, 25th March 1960. Accessed from <https://undocs.org/en/S/4279> on the 2nd of October 2021

¹⁰⁰² **Security Council Resolution 134 (1960) [Question relating to the situation in the Union of South Africa]**. Accessed from <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f1893c.html> on the 2nd of October 2021.

¹⁰⁰³ Art.4 of Res.134, **Security Council resolution 134 (1960) [Question relating to the situation in the Union of South Africa]**, *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰⁴ **UNSC Res. 181** of 7th August 1963. Accessed on the 2nd of October 2021 from the link [https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/S/RES/181\(1963\)](https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/S/RES/181(1963)) .

expressed its willingness to take the Apartheid issue a step further and adopted a **coercive denial strategy** as it solemnly called upon all States to cease forthwith the sale and shipment of arms, ammunition of all types and military vehicles to South Africa.¹⁰⁰⁵ What was the impact of these first UN coercive measures against Pretoria?

The first international coercive measures against the Apartheid regime did not significantly impact South Africa; instead, Pretoria blatantly ignored the UN's request to undo its racial policy. In a letter addressed to the UN Secretary-General on the 11th of October 1963, then South African foreign affairs Minister Eric H. Louw replied that *the South African Government has never recognized the right of the United Nations to discuss or consider a matter which falls solely within the jurisdiction of a Member State; [In addition,] since nothing done by the South African Government in its own territory or elsewhere is a threat to the peace, it is impossible to see how the resolution adopted by the Security Council on 7 August 1963, can be reconciled with the provisions of the Charter*.¹⁰⁰⁶ In other words, South Africa did not plan to comply with the UN demands as it considered the Apartheid issue as a domestic affair. Considering Pretoria's deafness, the UN adopted another series of Resolutions to compel Pretoria to stop implementing the Apartheid policy. Furthermore, *the government of South Africa reacted with two strategies against the first (voluntary) arms embargo of 1963. As a result of Government decisions, the composition of the suppliers changed, and instead of importing finished weapon systems, the Government systematically tried to establish an arms industrial base, relying more on the import of the relevant technologies*.¹⁰⁰⁷

The UN subsequently adopted Resolutions 182 and 191, which "solemnly called upon all States to cease forthwith the sale and shipment of equipment and materials for the manufacture and maintenance of arms and ammunition in South Africa."¹⁰⁰⁸ (Art.5 of Res.182) In addition, the UN "requested all Member States to take such steps as they deem appropriate to persuade the Government of the Republic of South Africa to comply with present resolution." (Art.13 of Res.191)¹⁰⁰⁹ Yet, Pretoria refused again to comply with the international demands regarding its Apartheid policy. But what factors can explain this persistent defiant policy of the South African leaders?

¹⁰⁰⁵ Art. 3 of UNSC Res. 181, *Op. Cit.*

¹⁰⁰⁶ Report by the Secretary-General in pursuance of the Resolution adopted by the Security Council at its 1056th meeting on 7th of August 1963 (S/5386). Accessed from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/614957> on the 2nd of October 2021.

¹⁰⁰⁷ ANTHONY, Ian (Ed.): **Arms export regulations**, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991, p.242. (Consulted online)

¹⁰⁰⁸ UNSC Resolution 182. Accessed from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/182> on the 2nd of October 2021.

¹⁰⁰⁹ UNSC Resolution 191 adopted on 18th June 1964. Accessed on the 2nd of October 2021 from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/191>.

Several internal and external factors can explain the South African defiant policy towards the first UN demands. Among the UN-related internal factors is the soft tone or approach used by the UN. Indeed, as we previously analyzed, the UN merely **deplored the policies and actions of the Government of the Union of South Africa**, which have given rise to the present situation (Art.2 of Res. 181) and **called upon States to cease forthwith the sale and shipments of arms, ammunition of all types and military vehicles to South Africa**. (Art.3 of Res.181). The choice of these words indicates that States were not obliged to implement the UN Resolutions mentioned above; in other words, this was a *non-mandatory UN arms embargo on South Africa*.¹⁰¹⁰ Concerning the external factors, one should note the controversial behaviors of certain Great Powers who had substantial economic/military interests in South Africa. Deon Geldenhuys confirms it by arguing, “like the Americans, the British decided that existing contracts with South Africa for arms, parts and maintenance would be exempted from the embargo. [However,] the British and Americans withdrawal from the South African arms market created new openings for other States that chose to ignore the Security Council’s voluntary arms embargo. France and Italy emerged as the two principal suppliers in the period 1963 to 1977; their respective shares of reported arms transfers to South Africa between 1970 and 1976 were 51% and 19%.”¹⁰¹¹

In addition, one should also consider the determination of the South African authorities to assume their new international status officially and assertively as a fully sovereign State. This means that the South African leaders expected from their foreign counterparts the same respect as any other leader of a Great Power. L. Butler and S. Stockwell illustrate this mindset in these words: *the tone of the private discussion between Macmillan and Verwoerd was rather more hard-edged than was the case in Ghana or Nigeria, where Macmillan naturally fell into a more avuncular – or paternalistic – mode as he proffered advice on matters such as the workings of Westminster-style democracy. South Africa, it should be remembered, was fully into its post-colonial moment, whereas other African States visited by Macmillan were only achieving their statehood*.¹⁰¹²

Hence, it’s not surprising to witness the South African authorities not complying with the UN demand. Instead, the *high priest of apartheid*, Hendrik Verwoerd,¹⁰¹³ firmly maintained the Apartheid policy. He took the racial issue a step further by calling for a

¹⁰¹⁰ SIPRI, **Non-mandatory UN arms embargo on South Africa**. Last updated on 29th October 2012. Consulted online from https://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/un_arms_embargoes/south-africa-non-mandatory/non-mandatory-un-arms-embargo-on-south-africa?fbclid=IwAR3h-r6TITmYE-GIkHkZRs1U6ijrHbekjcNwF-RylfqkSb0Q2kroBMc8TWI on the 3rd October 2021

¹⁰¹¹ GELDENHUYS, Deon: **Isolated States: A comparative analysis**, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011, p.504 (Consulted online)

¹⁰¹² BUTLER Larry and STOCKWELL Sarah: **The Wind of change: Harold Macmillan and British decolonization**, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p.41. (Consulted online)

¹⁰¹³ HARVEY, Robert: **The fall of Apartheid. The inside story from Smuts to Mbeki**, *Op. Cit.*, p.7

national rally-round - the flag (neoclassical realism intervening variable of the State-society relations) regarding the necessity to protect the White identity and values. Michael T. Schieber maintains that this decision “represented a significant shift away from Afrikaner nationalism toward white nationalism, a move which took advantage of the fact that many English-speaking South Africans resented the external threats and hostile criticism.”¹⁰¹⁴ Worse, PM Verwoerd even challenged and threatened the Great Powers in these terms: “I want to echo through the world, right into the forums of the United Nations Organization and right into the government bodies of the mightiest nations in the world, namely, that they will have to deal with a united South Africa should they try to force us off our course.”¹⁰¹⁵ But PM Verwoerd was assassinated later by Dimitri Tsafendas, a Parliament service officer, on the 6th of September 1966.¹⁰¹⁶ Yet, his successor, John Vorster, continued to carry the flame of the Apartheid high.

6.4.2 During the Mandate of John Vorster.

6.4.2.1 John Vorster’s foreign policy: ideas and beliefs.

Balthazar Johannes Vorster, commonly called John Vorster, was the South African PM for twelve years (1966-1978). Although the Parliament had consensually elected him, his rise at the highest decision-making level of the country was almost surprising since his predecessor Hendrick Verwoerd had nurtured then Minister of Defense Botha to be his successor. David Dal canton maintains that the unexpected election of John Vorster can be explained by the fact that *as the Minister of Justice, he had acquired the reputation of being the most unyielding defender of white South Africa in the cabinet next to the Prime Minister himself. His anti- liberalism campaign in the early 1960s and his sponsorship of increasingly authoritarian legislation had indicated to many Nationalists that Vorster offered the best hope of overcoming the Republic’s enemies.*¹⁰¹⁷ Yet, he significantly differed from his predecessor regarding international visions and leadership style.

Concerning his vision of South Africa’s foreign policy, John Vorster’s international ideas sharply contrasted with that of his predecessor. Though a firm proponent of the Apartheid principles, John Vorster could make concessions when addressing the

¹⁰¹⁴ SCHIEBER T., Michael, **Apartheid under pressure: South Africa’s military strength in a changing political context**, Africa Today, 1976, Vol. 23, N. 1, p.28

¹⁰¹⁵ SCHIEBER T., Michael, **Apartheid under pressure: South Africa’s military strength in a changing political context**, *Ibid*.

¹⁰¹⁶ **SA Prime Minister H. F. Verwoerd stabbed to death**, South Africa History Online, 6 September 1966. Last updated on the 4th September 2021. Consulted from <https://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/sa-prime-minister-h-f-verwoerd-stabbed-death> on the 3rd of October 2021.

¹⁰¹⁷ DALCANTON C., David, **Vorster and the politics of confidence 1966-1974**, African Affairs, Apr. 1976, Vol. 75, N.299, p.163

Apartheid issue abroad. In fact, his conciliatory foreign policy was consecrated in his “Outward Policy,” which was “based explicitly on the proposition that South Africa’s future ‘lay in Africa and nowhere else included economic aid offers and low-key diplomatic overtures.”¹⁰¹⁸ Consequently, his limited openness regarding diplomatic relations with certain African States should be analyzed against the backdrop of this *outward policy*. This was illustrated, for example, by symbolic diplomatic actions such as his State visits to countries like Ivory Coast or Liberia. South Africa even opened its first diplomatic mission under his leadership in a Black country – Malawi.¹⁰¹⁹

From a leadership style perspective, unlike his predecessor, John Vorster adopted a democratic or participatory leadership style. John Biko confirms it by arguing, “whereas Verwoerd was a micromanager, Vorster saw his role as more of a ‘chairman of the board,’ making decisions when necessary but generally allowing his ministers to run their own portfolios, seeking consensus wherever possible.”¹⁰²⁰ Deon Geldenhuys digs in as he argues that “Prime Minister Vorster, to many people’s amazement, soon displayed a remarkable degree of political flexibility compared with Verwoerd’s typical “granite” stance. While undoubtedly subscribing to the basic tenets of separate development, Vorster did not display the same unmerciful consistency as Verwoerd in rigorously applying apartheid to virtually all facets of human interaction in South Africa.”¹⁰²¹ However, did PM John Vorster’s conciliatory foreign policy beliefs change Pretoria’s stance on the Apartheid system and its nuclear weapons program?

6.4.2.2 The coercive dynamics between South Africa and the Great Powers under John Vorster. (1966-1978).

Despite the flexibility of PM John Vorster, the Apartheid regime maintained the noose tightened on the Black population and the colored minorities in the country. Worse, PM John Vorster progressively radicalized some of its policies. For instance, “he extended the already far-reaching carapace of security legislation to suppress ‘communism’ and was responsible for creating the Bureau of State Security (BOSS) in 1969, headed by the notorious police chief H. J. van den Bergh. Operating beyond parliamentary scrutiny and with a special budget, this secretive and fearsome body accrued wide powers to act against anyone deemed to be a traitor, Communist, or terrorist.”¹⁰²² In addition, during

¹⁰¹⁸ JASTER S., Robert: **The Defence of White power: South African foreign policy under pressure**, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 1989, p.11

¹⁰¹⁹ JASTER S., Robert: **The Defence of White power: South African foreign policy under pressure**, *Ibid.*, p.11

¹⁰²⁰ SIKO, John: **Inside South Africa’s foreign policy: diplomacy in Africa from Smuts to Mbeki**, *Op. Cit.*, p.236. (Consulted online)

¹⁰²¹ GELDENHUYS, Deon: **The Diplomacy of isolation: South African foreign policy making**, *Op. Cit.*, p.33

¹⁰²² DUBOW, Saul: **Apartheid, 1948–1994**, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, p.153

his mandate, the 1976 brutal repression of Black children protesting against the adoption of a new policy imposing Afrikaans as the mandatory teaching language. Stanley Tookie Williams recalls these events in these terms, “on the morning of June 16, 1976, the black students of Soweto decided to leave school and protest, peacefully, the Apartheid-era conditions they faced – overcrowded school rooms, high dropout rates (...) and the fact that they were being forced to learn Afrikaans, the language of their oppressors. (...) The children were fed up and, (and) in large number that day, decided to march down a main road with signs of protest. But as they marched, these defenseless children were shot down and killed – a total of 172 – by South African police.”¹⁰²³

However, the regional dynamics in the country’s neighborhood impacted the PM’s foreign policy. Indeed, several countries around South Africa surprisingly obtained their independence from their former Western colonial Powers. Among these countries, there’s Mozambique, for example, which became an independent State on the 25th of June 1975, following the previously mentioned Carnation Revolution in Portugal. In addition, the Portuguese also withdrew from Angola in November of the same year. These two withdrawals greatly impacted the regional balance, particularly Pretoria’s security and international status. This is because the successors of the White-led governments in these countries were hostile to the Apartheid regime. Robert Jaster argues in this regard that, *Mozambique gained its independence under the guerrilla leader, Samora Machel, a self-declared Marxist who immediately allowed Rhodesian guerrillas sanctuary from which they could open the fateful second front against the Smith regime.*¹⁰²⁴ Feeling increasingly insecure after the collapse of two central pillars of its previously mentioned *buffer zone or cordon sanitaire*, the South African leaders were compelled to launch a military intervention in Angola.

As previously analyzed, the hasty departure of the Portuguese colonial authorities led to a power vacuum in Angola. Consequently, several rival military groups fought for the country’s leadership: the FNLA, the UNITA and the MPLA. The two first military groups were ideologically close to the West, while the last was clearly Marxist, hence closer to the Soviet ideology. Consequently, thanks to the foreign support (notably from the US and South Africa) they benefitted, the two former military groups first achieved several victories. Indeed, the FNLA and the UNITA received substantial logistical and financial support from the US and South Africa.¹⁰²⁵ However, the MPLA, who had lost many

¹⁰²³ WILLIAMS T., Stanley: **Blue rage, Black redemption: A Memoir**, New York, Touchstone, 2007, p.352. (Consulted online.)

¹⁰²⁴ JASTER S., Robert: **The Defence of White power: South African foreign policy under pressure**, *Op. Cit.*, p.xv

¹⁰²⁵ COX, Courtland, **The U.S. involvement in Angola**, New Directions, 1976, Vol. 3, Issue 2, Art. 4, pp.39-40

battles to its rivals at the beginning of the crisis, progressively reversed the balance of power on the battlefield and defeated its rival groups on several fronts. These military victories were caused mainly by the logistical and human support provided by the Soviet Union and Cuba.¹⁰²⁶ The South African authorities did not witness the progress of the MPLA passively. Indeed, the SADF intervened and repelled the soldiers of the MPLA. But an unexpected third party intervened and changed the outcome of the South African military expedition: the Cuban soldiers.

The clash between the Cuban and the SADF in the Angolan theatre is another illustration of the indirect or “hot” wars between the Soviet Union and the US. Regarding the Angolan war of independence, Christabel Gurney stresses that *the biggest provocation to the US and other Western powers was the arrival of Cuban troops in Angola in November 1975 to defend the MPLA government against South African attack*.¹⁰²⁷ Nonetheless, the Cuban intervention helped to prevent the defeat of the MPLA. But this intervention alone does not explain the rout of the SADF in Angola. Another decisive factor was the withdrawal of US support to the SADF.¹⁰²⁸ Consequently, the US adopted a new regional strategy following the defeat of the SADF. The Carter administration’s regional strategy goal was *to head off further revolutions in the region by installing pro-Western black majority governments in Namibia and Zimbabwe that would maintain the economic and political status quo. With the victory of Jimmy Carter in the 1976 US presidential election, there was a change in the tone, but not the substance, of US Southern Africa*.¹⁰²⁹

Concerning South Africa, the defeat of the SADF in the Angolan theatre greatly impacted Pretoria’s security and political calculus. *With hostile neighbors and increasing internal unrest, the South African government in 1977 announced a ‘Total Strategy’ to overcome this ‘Total Onslaught,’* Nancy Clark and William Worger argue.¹⁰³⁰ Anna-Mart van Wyk digs in as she argues that “the communist involvement in Angola convinced Pretoria once more that South Africa’s security was in serious jeopardy and that they needed nuclear weapons not only as a deterrent but also as a strategy for securing the survival of apartheid. (...) Consequently, Vorster, aided by a few high-ranking officers of the Atomic Energy Board and the Minister of Defense, P. W. Botha, approved the

¹⁰²⁶ STEVENS, Christopher, **The Soviet Union and Angola**, African Affairs, Apr. 1976, Vol. 75, N. 299, p.144

¹⁰²⁷ GURNEY, Christabel, **The 1970s: The Anti-Apartheid Movement’s difficult decade**, Journal of Southern African Studies, Jun. 2009, Vol. 35, N. 2, p.484.

¹⁰²⁸ NOER J., Thomas, **International credibility and political survival: The Ford Administration’s intervention in Angola**, Presidential Studies Quarterly, Fall, 1993, Vol. 23, N 4, pp. 779-780

¹⁰²⁹ GURNEY, Christabel, **The 1970s: The Anti-Apartheid Movement’s difficult decade**, *Op. Cit.*, p.483

¹⁰³⁰ CLARK L., Nancy and WORGER H., William: **South Africa: The rise and fall of Apartheid**, *Op. Cit.*, p.87

development of a single Peaceful Nuclear Explosive (PNE). This step followed the successful testing in 1974 of a gun-type nuclear scale model with a projectile containing non-nuclear material. Vorster also authorized funding for an underground test site in the Kalahari Desert.”¹⁰³¹ However, if PM Vorster sowed the seeds of Pretoria’s nuclear weapons, the actual manufacture of the South African ultimate weapon happened under PM Botha. But before dwelling on the coercive dynamics between the US and South Africa, we will first analyze the international reaction to the previous Apartheid and nuclear activities of Pretoria.

The 1976 brutal repression of the children’s demonstrations in Soweto added another layer to the increasing pressure the South African Apartheid regime faced. Indeed, Pretoria had been progressively excluded from several international organizations of several domains (political, sport). For example, Pretoria was excluded from the Commonwealth in 1961¹⁰³² and the Olympic games three years later (1964). Furthermore, the country was even banned from the UN General Assembly in 1974 *after a recorded vote of 72 in favor to 37 against, with 13 abstentions, rejecting the credential of the South African government.*¹⁰³³ But one of the boldest international reactions to the 1976 massacre was the adoption by the UN of Res. 392 on the 19th of June 1976. Through this Resolution, the UN *strongly **condemned** the South African Government for its resort to massive violence against and killings of the African people, including schoolchildren and students, and others opposing racial discrimination, (Art.1) and recognized the legitimacy of the struggle of the South African people for the elimination of apartheid and racial discrimination, (Art.4) and **called upon the South African Government urgently to end violence against the African people and to take urgent steps to eliminate apartheid and racial discrimination. (Art.5)***¹⁰³⁴ How did Pretoria react to this Resolution?

South Africa maintained its defiant policy toward the UN Resolutions, and Resolution 392 was no exception. However, unlike the previous cases, Pretoria avoided an open clash and a blatant challenge to this Resolution. Instead, the South African authorities carefully circumvented this external pressure by helping the US to achieve its strategic goal of securing like-minded Black regimes in the new African independent countries. As we previously noted, the defeat of the SADF in the Angolan military theatre led the

¹⁰³¹ VAN WYK, Anna-Mart, **South Africa’s nuclear programme and the Cold War**, History Compass, 2010, Vol. 8, N.7, pp. 563-564

¹⁰³² HAYES, Frank, **South Africa's departure from the Commonwealth, 1960-1961**, The International History Review, Jul. 1980, Vol. 2, N. 3, pp. 453- 484

¹⁰³³ SUTTNER, Raymond, **Has South Africa been illegally excluded from the United Nations General Assembly?**, The Comparative and international law journal of Southern Africa, November 1984, Vol. 17, N. 3, p. 281

¹⁰³⁴ **UNSC Resolution 392** adopted on the 16th of June 1976. Accessed on the 5th of October 2021 from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/93718>.

US to reassess its African regional policy. This paradoxical foreign policy behaviors of Pretoria can be explained by the US choice to condemn the brutal repression of the Apartheid regime. As Alex Thomson described it, "Washington DC had joined the rest of the U.N. in "strongly" condemning "the South African Government for its resort to massive violence. Under these circumstances, Pretoria calculated that comprehensive punitive economic sanctions might not be too far away."¹⁰³⁵ In other words, Washington's actions signaled to Pretoria the potential risk of losing a key actor who had hitherto shielded most of the effect of the sanctions Pretoria should have logically faced due to its controversial Apartheid policy.

Concerning the US regional policy, after emphasizing security-based policies in the Black Continent (Cold War), Washington decided to add economic incentives to its strategy to secure the ideological allegiance of the new African independent States. In this regard, then Secretary of States Henri Kissinger emphasized that "the United States stands ready to work with the nations of southern Africa to help them achieve the economic progress which will give meaning to their political independence and dignity to their struggle for equality."¹⁰³⁶ With regards to the Apartheid policy, Kissinger considered the Apartheid issue to be "a different phenomenon" from the type of minority rule practiced in Namibia and Rhodesia. Consequently, "conditions in South Africa are more complicated and require a much longer timespan for their evolution."¹⁰³⁷ This was a clear message that Washington was not yet eager to substantially increase the economic pressure needed to compel Pretoria to undo its controversial racial policies.

In addition, during this 1976 Address in Lusaka, Kissinger emphasized that "our policy toward South Africa is based upon the premise that within a reasonable time we shall see a clear evolution toward equality of opportunity and basic human rights for all South Africans. (...) In the immediate future, the Republic of South Africa can show its dedication to Africa and its potential contribution to Africa by using its influence in Salisbury to promote a rapid negotiated settlement for majority rule in Rhodesia."¹⁰³⁸ Consequently, the new US-African regional policy provided a golden opportunity for the South African leaders to align their interests with those of the US, thus escaping from the coming external pressure. Alex Thomson confirms it by arguing that "the (South African) Republic, therefore, saw the Kissinger initiative as a way of diverting attention

¹⁰³⁵ THOMSON, Alex: **U.S. foreign policy towards Apartheid South Africa, 1948–1994**, *Op. Cit.*, p.86

¹⁰³⁶The New York Times, **Text of Kissinger's Address in Zambia on U.S. Policy Toward Southern Africa**,

April 28, 1976. Accessed from <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/04/28/archives/text-of-kissingers-address-in-zambia-on-us-policy-toward-southern.html> on the 7th of October 2021.

¹⁰³⁷ THOMPSON, Alex: **U.S. foreign policy towards Apartheid South Africa, 1948–1994**, *Op. Cit.*, p.85

¹⁰³⁸ WALTON J., Hanes et al: **The African foreign policy of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger: A documentary analysis**, Plymouth, Lexington Books, 2010, p.127. (Consulted online)

from its domestic troubles, and a chance of regaining favor with the international community. What better way to do this than by partaking in international diplomacy with Dr Kissinger himself ?”¹⁰³⁹ Hence, Pretoria relied on **strategic opportunism** to circumvent the effects of the coercive strategy of the UN. However, the “total onslaught” counter-strategy which was progressively implemented paradoxically provided a golden opportunity to the US to impose more restrictive sanctions on Pretoria.

As previously analyzed, the regional (defeat of the SADF in Angola and the independence of Mozambique) and internal dynamics (anti-Apartheid demonstrations) led the South African authorities to design a counter strategy to what they (mis)perceived as a Soviet-led “total onslaught” strategy. A central pillar of this strategy was the building of an invincible weapon which will deter any potential Soviet intervention: nuclear weapons. It’s important to mention that certain scholars discard this theory of the South African nuclear strategy and argue that Pretoria built a nuclear weapon program to compel *an ambivalent ally, the United States*, to intervene militarily in the region.¹⁰⁴⁰ In the same logic, Lucky Asuelime and Raquel Adekoye argue that “the objective of the Kalahari nuclear test preparations was a bargaining chip to win important concessions from the proliferation-sensitive US Carter administration. By threatening to employ nuclear weapons or by promising to refrain from their use, South Africa could attempt to secure its various political, economic, or security interests in political bargaining with the West.”¹⁰⁴¹ This idea is similar to Tristan Volpe’s theory of **nuclear latency as a target’s bargaining card** to extract political and security concessions from the nuclear gatekeeper.¹⁰⁴²

Irrespective of the rationale of South Africa’s nuclear strategy, “in August, the Soviet Union reported that its satellites had discovered nuclear testing facilities on the Southern edge of the Kalahari Desert, in the northern marches of the Cape Province. (...) The governments of the United States, France, Britain, and West Germany demanded explanations and reassurances; in response, Prime Minister B. Johannes Vorster denied that a test site existed. He said that South Africa had not been about to explode a nuclear weapon.”¹⁰⁴³ Furthermore, relying on the **framing strategy**, he considered the Soviet accusation as the new avatar of the external world agenda to marginalize Pretoria and topple the Apartheid regime. As he declared during the Congress of the National Party of Cape Province, “you will remember that, when I announced to the world (...) that our

¹⁰³⁹ THOMSON, Alex: **U.S. foreign policy towards Apartheid South Africa, 1948–1994**, *Op. Cit.*, p.86

¹⁰⁴⁰ GOODSON L. R., Donald, **Catalytic deterrence? Apartheid South Africa's nuclear weapons strategy**, *Politikon*, 2012, Vol. 39, N.2, pp. 209-230.

¹⁰⁴¹ ASUELIME E., Lucky and ADEKOYE A., Raquel: **Nuclear proliferation in South Africa. History and politics**, *Op. Cit.*, p.94

¹⁰⁴² VOLPE A., Tristan, **Atomic Leverage: compellence with nuclear latency**, *Op. Cit.*, p.518.

¹⁰⁴³ ROTBERG I., Robert: **Suffer the future – Policy choices in Southern Africa**, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1980, p.155. (Consulted online)

scientists could enrich uranium, and that they had developed a process for doing so in the most indigenous way possible, the world laugh at us. (...) Now this “backward” nation is being accused because she suddenly wants to explode a nuclear bomb. (...) I ask the world by what rights are they pressurizing South Africa (...) when there are so many other countries and even 13 who are sitting on the (AIEA) Board itself, why must South Africa again be singled out.”¹⁰⁴⁴ This illustrates the strategic role of neoclassical realism intervening variable of the **leaders’ perceptions**. Yet, unconvinced by the South African response to their request, the Western Powers decided to tighten their grip on South Africa by adopting Resolution 418.

Resolution 418 was unanimously adopted on the 4th of November 1977 by the UNSC members. After recalling the previous Resolutions condemning the Apartheid policy, the UNSC members, for the first time, acted under the Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Indeed, they *recognized that the military build-up by South Africa and its persistent acts of aggression against the neighbouring States seriously disturb the security of those States*. They also *recognized that the existing arms embargo must be strengthened and universally applied (...) in order to prevent a further aggravation of the grave situation in South Africa*.¹⁰⁴⁵ Subsequently, the UNSC decided that “all States shall cease forthwith any provision to South Africa of arms and related materiel of all types, including the sale or transfer of weapons and ammunition, military vehicles and equipment, paramilitary police equipment, and spare parts for the aforementioned.”¹⁰⁴⁶ (Political escalation). In addition, the SC “called upon all States to review (...) all existing contractual arrangements with and licenses granted to South Africa relating to the manufacture and maintenance of arms, (...) with a view to terminating them. (Art.3). The SC also decided that “all States shall refrain from any co-operation with South Africa in the manufacture and development of nuclear weapons.” (Art. 4)¹⁰⁴⁷ What was the coercive goal of the UNSC with the adoption of Res. 418?

With the adoption of Resolution 418, the SC opted for the “**gradual turning of the screw**” version of coercion. As previously analyzed, this was the first time that a UN Resolution on South Africa was adopted under the Chapter VII of the UN. It’s worth noting that the UN Security Council is *vested with broad competences as any other organ of the UN, and its empowerment with the responsibility to restore and maintain peace and security by using all necessary available means allowed it to have the “last say” in many*

¹⁰⁴⁴ Extract from speech by the South African Prime Minister at Congress of the National Party of Cape Province, 24th August 1977. Accessed on the 7th of October 2021 from the website <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116617>

¹⁰⁴⁵ UNSC Res. 418. Accessed from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/418> on the 7th of October 2021.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Art. 1 of UNSC Res. 418, *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁴⁷ UNSC Res. 418, *Op. Cit*.

conflicts and situations.¹⁰⁴⁸ The Security Council can preserve international peace and security by imposing economic sanctions (Art. 41 of the UN Charter) or relying on the threat or actual use of force (Art. 42 of the UN Charter). Consequently, the subtle message the US and the other Great Powers were sending to South Africa was that they could consider using force as a credible option to compel its authorities to stop implementing the Apartheid policy. Sufyan Droubi confirms it in these words: “Resolution 418 (...) is of great historical importance as it constitutes the first SC resolution to explicitly adopt a mandatory embargo under Chapter VII against a UN Member. The Council highlighted its grave concern that South Africa was ‘at the threshold of producing nuclear weapons’ (...) and considered government policies and practices “fraught with danger to international peace and security.”¹⁰⁴⁹

With specific respect to the coercive strategy, the SC adopted a **coercive denial strategy** which aimed at depriving Pretoria of the military assets or instruments of its racial policy. Aware of the potential loopholes of this strategy, the SC tried to associate almost all the international actors in implementing their new measures. This is why they “called upon all States, including States non-members of the United Nations, to act strictly in accordance with the provisions of the present resolution.”¹⁰⁵⁰ Nonetheless, what impact did the adoption of Resolution 418 have on South Africa? As the primary goal of this Resolution was to prevent South Africa from having access to (advanced or not) military equipment, the logical direct impact of this Resolution on South Africa was the cancellation of several military contracts with world-known manufacturing States. (Vertical escalation) This was the case with the cancellation by France of the *delivery of two submarines and two corvettes under construction for South Africa*.¹⁰⁵¹ How did South Africa react to this first credible list of sanctions?

South Africa’s vehemently rejected Resolution 418 on the ground that it was illegitimate. But more importantly, the adoption of Resolution 418 comforted the South African leaders in their belief that they could not rely on a godfather, not even the US, to guarantee the survival of their regime. **(Intervening variable of the leader’s perception)** This is because Resolution 418 was adopted in a specific context: the international pressure on Pretoria to grant independence to Namibia, an increasing animosity from Washington and the country’s exclusion from many international

¹⁰⁴⁸ BOCAJ, Alma: **Discuss how Chapter VII of the U.N Charter is structured and meant to operate. Point to potential systematic weakness/strong points while suggesting improvements**, Munich, GRIN Verlag, 2013, p.3

¹⁰⁴⁹ DROUBI, Sufyan: **Resisting United Nations Security Council Resolutions**, Abingdon, Routledge, 2014, p.60. (Consulted online)

¹⁰⁵⁰ **Art. 5 of UNSC Res. 418, Op. Cit.**

¹⁰⁵¹ KANDELL, Jonathan, **French cancel sales to South Africa navy**, New York Times, 9th November 1977. Accessed from <https://www.nytimes.com/1977/11/09/archives/french-cancel-sales-to-south-africa-navy-rule-out-delivery-of-4.html> on the 7th October 2021.

organizations etc. Terence McNamee and Greg Mills rightly described the mindset of the South African authorities in these words: *fearful and isolated, the regime considered its options. The lure of nuclear weapons proved irresistible. South Africa had, after all, been a significant player in the nuclear age from its beginning by virtue of its large uranium reserves and mining-oriented economy.*¹⁰⁵²

Pretoria needed absolutely an autonomous defense system capable of convincing any external intruder not to attack the country. Consequently, one can logically conclude that 1977 was a watershed year for South Africa's nuclear goals; indeed, the South African leaders intensively sought to obtain nuclear weapons at all costs this year. In other words, just like we previously analyzed with the Iranian and Libyan cases, the South African leaders also embarked on smuggling activities to obtain nuclear weapons. And their efforts were fruitful as the country finally built several nuclear weapons in the second half of the 80s. But this achievement happened under the leadership of a new Prime Minister: Pieter Botha. Indeed, PM Vorster was forced to resign after the Mulder gate.¹⁰⁵³

6.4.3 During the Mandate of Pieter Botha.

6.4.3.1 Botha's foreign policy: ideas and beliefs.

Pieter Willem Botha succeeded PM Vorster as South Africa's third Prime Minister and assumed this position from 1978 to 1984. He crisply differed from his predecessor regarding his foreign policy and leadership style. Robert Jaster argues that *Pieter W. Botha's accession to the premiership in September 1978 brought dramatic changes in personality, style and substance to the policy-making process.*¹⁰⁵⁴ Concerning the leadership style, Pieter Botha seemed to be a reincarnation of former PM Hendrick Verwoerd. Indeed, just like his predecessor, he opted for an authoritarian leadership style. Certainly, "where Vorster had been a sloppy and often indecisive leader, Botha, in the words of one veteran observer, was "a manager, an organizational virtuoso, a leader who relies on expert advice, planning, preparation, structure and follow-through." And where Vorster eschewed long-term planning, developing policies reactively only when

¹⁰⁵² MCNAMEE Terence and MILLS Greg, **Denuclearizing a regime: what South Africa's nuclear rollback might tell us about Iran**, Defence and Security Analysis, 2006, Vol. 22, N.3, p.331

¹⁰⁵³ Named after Connie Mulder, then South African Minister of Information, the Muldergate (1977) refers to a political scandal related to South Africa's government's attempts to counter international propaganda war against the country by bribing international newspapers to polish South Africa's reputation abroad.

¹⁰⁵⁴ JASTER S., Robert: **The Defence of White power: South African foreign policy under pressure**, *Op. Cit.*, p.28

crises necessitated new responses, Botha, guided by the “Total Strategy,” showed himself to be an aggressive initiator of action right from the outset.”¹⁰⁵⁵

Another distinctive feature of Pieter Botha’s leadership approach was his belief in the efficiency of centralization and hierarchy concerning policy and decision-making. In this regard, he completely reformed the country’s administration and established a formal top-down structure, enabling a smoother and more linear decision-making chain. Robert Jaster confirms it by arguing that “in contrast to Vorster’s personalized, haphazard, secretive style of leadership, Botha immediately introduced a system to the decision-making process and opened it up to broader policy input. (...) He created for the first time an office of the Prime Minister, with a sizeable staff and a formal role in the policy process. (...) And he set up five permanent Cabinet committees to replace the 20 ad hoc committees established (and frequently ignored) by his predecessor.”¹⁰⁵⁶ Yet, one of these reforms’ most prominent and visible aspects was the transformation of the State Security Council (SSC – see table below). While the SSC had been almost a consultative body under PM Vorster, it became a formal and binding institution under PM Botha. The SSC’s “decisions, formulated at regular closed session meetings, always have been accepted by the full cabinet with little or no discussion. The secret, central role of the SSC has given Botha the capability to conduct the kind of secret diplomacy and covert military operations that have become his trademark.”¹⁰⁵⁷

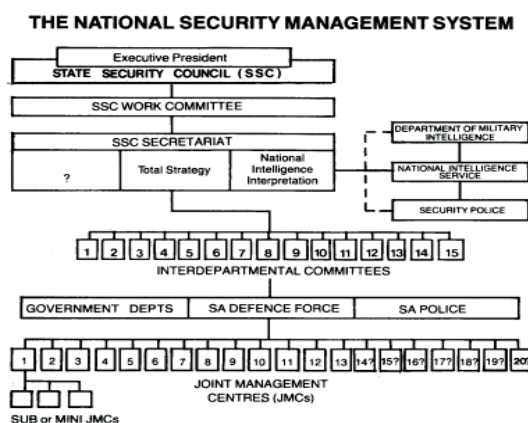


Table 10: South Africa’s National Security Management under PM Botha.¹⁰⁵⁸

¹⁰⁵⁵ SHEPARD B., ROBERT and GOLDMAN H., Christopher, **P. W. Botha's foreign policy**, The National Interest, Spring, 1989, N.15, p.71

¹⁰⁵⁶ JASTER S., Robert: **The Defence of White power: South African foreign policy under pressure**, *Op. Cit.*, p.29

¹⁰⁵⁷ SHEPARD B., Robert and GOLDMAN H., Christopher, **P. W. Botha's foreign policy**, *Op. Cit.*, p.70

¹⁰⁵⁸ CAWTHRA, Gavin: **Brutal force: Apartheid war machine**, London, International Defence & Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1986, p.35. (Consulted online.)

Regarding his vision of South Africa's foreign policy, Robert Shepard and Christopher Goldman argue that under Botha's tenure, every aspect of South African foreign policy has undergone a sweeping transformation. He has redefined radically the criteria for South Africa's security as well as the means by which his country deals with both southern Africa and the international community.¹⁰⁵⁹ PM Botha's approach to South Africa's foreign policy aimed at implementing a main strategic doctrine which is that the Republic will have to be practical in helping to counter foreign intervention and especially communism far north of its present borders.¹⁰⁶⁰ Therefore, security can be rightly considered to be not only the main criterion of his foreign policy but also an obsession for Pieter Botha. His preferences for military-based solutions to foreign policy challenges quickly earned him the nickname of "Piet Wapen", which means Piet the Weapon.¹⁰⁶¹ And a clear sign of this assertive foreign policy was the increasing role of the military in his decision-making. **(From a nuclear reversal theory perspective, he was an oppositional nationalist – Jacques Hymans).**

"The 1970s witnessed a rapid and accelerating militarization. (...) With P. W. Botha as Head of Government, the military gradually became more and more involved in political decision-making and civil law enforcement," Tjoenneland Elling argues.¹⁰⁶² Neta Crawford digs in by arguing that "the SADF had a tradition of involvement in politics. For example, under de Klerk's predecessor, P. W. Botha, the SADF was integral to high level decision-making in both domestic and foreign policy issue areas."¹⁰⁶³ Two factors can explain this central role of the military in PW Botha's foreign policy: first, his background as the former Minister of Defense, which justified why his closest colleagues had military experience, like Magnus Malan, who was the Chief of Staff of former PM Vorster; second his deep mistrust toward the external world and the US in particular, especially after the withdrawal of Washington's military support to the SADF under the Reagan administration as we will see later. This is the reason why he dedicated substantial budget resources to the Defense sector. For instance, *South Africa's annual military budgets ran from 2 to 4.5 billion rand, or between 4 and 5 percent of gross national product, from the late 1970s through the 1980s.*¹⁰⁶⁴ Considering all the previous information regarding PM Botha's foreign policy vision, one can only expect

¹⁰⁵⁹ SHEPARD B., Robert and GOLDMAN H., Christopher, **P. W. Botha's foreign policy**, *Ibid.*, p.68

¹⁰⁶⁰ GELDENHUYS, Deon, **Some foreign policy implications of South Africa's "total national strategy" with particular reference to the "12-point plan"**, South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), 1981, p.31

¹⁰⁶¹ ALLEN, John: *Rabble-Rouser for Peace: The authorized biography of Desmond Tutu*, The US, Rider, 2006, p.177. Consulted online.

¹⁰⁶² ELLING N., Tjoenneland, **Militaristic Apartheid**, Taylor & Francis, Ltd Third World Quarterly, Vol. 9, N. 2, 1987, p.725

¹⁰⁶³ CRAWFORD C., Neta, **South Africa's new foreign and military policy: opportunities and constraints**, *Africa Today*, 1st Qtr. - 2nd Qtr., 1995, Vol. 42, N. 1/2, p.90

¹⁰⁶⁴ LIBERMAN, Peter, **The rise and fall of the South African bomb**, *Op. Cit.*, p.55

South Africa to adopt a recalcitrant behaviors toward the demands of the US and the other Great Powers.

6.4.3.2 The coercive dynamics between South Africa and the Great Powers under P. W. Botha (1978-1989).

As previously analyzed, 1977 was a strategic year for South Africa for at least two reasons: on the first hand, the first mandatory arms embargo was imposed on Pretoria through the adoption of Resolution 418; on the other hand, South Africa experienced a leadership transition with the election of P. W. Botha as the new PM. These two events had a great impact on the country's foreign policy. With a hawkish leader like Pieter Botha, Pretoria adopted a firmer stance regarding its international behaviors. **(From a nuclear reversal theory perspective, he was an oppositional nationalist – Jacques Hymans).** While Resolution 418 doubtlessly impacted Pretoria's room of maneuverability as we previously analyzed, nevertheless, the South African leaders adopted several **circumventing strategies**. Gavin Cawthra identified three main strategies developed by South Africa to escape from the burden of the UN embargo, with most of them related to the dual use of the sensitive components Pretoria was importing. "Firstly, covert deals have been conducted, usually arranged through third parties, and involving false shipping papers, bribes and the establishment of front companies. Secondly, the South African regime has acquired military equipment such as computers, radar, and aircraft on the grounds that they could also be considered as civilian items. Thirdly, components, technology and industrial assembly lines have been transferred to South Africa, often disguised as civilian materials, enabling the regime to establish new military manufacturing facilities."¹⁰⁶⁵

Paradoxically, firms from key States that played an incremental role in implementing the UN embargo also helped South Africa escape the effects of the sanctions. For example, SADF signed a \$155 million with a US/Canadian firm to deliver a 155 mm artillery system in 1970. "Through a highly complicated series of transactions, in which a number of front companies were established, and millions of dollars changed hands, at least four of the 155mm guns, 60,000 shells, and a number of accessories were provided to Armscor."¹⁰⁶⁶ But one of the most important actors who played a decisive role in South Africa's circumvention strategy is Israel. Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi maintains that *any portrayal of the Israel-South Africa alliance is bound to be partial and limited, because the scope of this alliance is so broad, and the relationship so multifaceted.*¹⁰⁶⁷

¹⁰⁶⁵ CAWTHRA, Gavin: **Brutal force: Apartheid war machine**, *Op. Cit.*, p.94

¹⁰⁶⁶ CAWTHRA, Gavin: **Brutal force: Apartheid war machine**, *Op. Cit.*, p.94

¹⁰⁶⁷ BEIT-HALLAHMI, Benjamin: **The Israeli connection: Whom Israel arms and why**, New York, Pantheon Books, 1987, pp.108-109.

Before dwelling on Israel's (potential) role in South Africa's nuclear developments, it's important to emphasize that the US non-proliferation policy towards Tel Aviv, Islamabad and even Pretoria is subject to controversies. Indeed, concerning Islamabad, certain authors like Adrian Levy and Catherine Scott-Clark argue that "Pakistan was a necessary buffer against Communism, Carter was advised and needed to be wooed. In return for resisting Soviet advances, Washington was willing to turn a blind eye to General Zia's nuclear aspirations."¹⁰⁶⁸ On the contrary, Or Rabinowitz and Nicholas L. Miller refute the previous argument as they argue that "successive U.S. administrations did not believe that an Israeli bomb was in the national interests of the United States; they were not indifferent to the South African nuclear program; and US opposition to the Pakistani program never fully receded, even during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan."¹⁰⁶⁹ Just like the US, Israel's incremental role in the South African nuclear developments has also been subject to controversies.

What was Israel's fundamental role in South Africa's nuclear improvement? It is difficult to accurately answer the previous question, considering the sensibility of the topic and hence the unavailability of objective data on this issue. Nevertheless, certain authors maintain that Tel Aviv assisted Pretoria in developing its nuclear program. Concerning their bilateral nuclear relationship, previous CIA reports acknowledge the importance of Tel Aviv in Pretoria's nuclear improvement. However, they could not assess precisely the scope of the cooperation between the two countries. For instance, in a 1983 report, CIA agents admitted that they had "little confirmed information about South Africa-Israeli nuclear cooperation, despite numerous reports and/or rumors linking the two States."¹⁰⁷⁰ It is important to note that this previous information contradicts a previous 1979 CIA report which established that "Israelis... participated in certain South African nuclear research activities over the last few years."¹⁰⁷¹ These contradictions confirm the difficulty of accessing precise and accurate information regarding Israel and South Africa's nuclear cooperation. Nevertheless, a former Senior Official of the State Department acknowledged the awareness of the US officials of Israel and South Africa's nuclear cooperation during secret Congressional hearings.

¹⁰⁶⁸ LEVY, Adrian and SCOTT-CLARK, Catherine: **Deception: Pakistan, the United States, and the secret trade in nuclear weapons**, New York, Walker & Co, 2007, p.4. Consulted online

¹⁰⁶⁹ RABINOWITZ Or and MILLER L., Nicholas, **Keeping the bombs in the basement: U.S. Nonproliferation policy toward Israel, South Africa and Pakistan**, International Security, 2015, Vol. 40, N.1, p.50.

¹⁰⁷⁰ **CIA Report, 'New Information on South Africa's Nuclear Program and South African-Israeli Nuclear and Military Cooperation' (redacted)**, March 30, 1983, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, FOIA request, National Security Archive, p.3. Obtained and contributed by Sasha Polakow, Suransky.

¹⁰⁷¹ LIBERMAN, Peter, **Israel and the South African bomb**, The Nonproliferation Review, Summer 2004, Vol.11, N.2, p.8

Indeed, Herman J. Cohen, then Africa Director in the National Security Council from 1987 to 1988, remembers that: “when I was asked about Israeli cooperation with the (South African) nuclear program, I answered that we had received good intelligence that it was taking place.”¹⁰⁷² In addition, Tyler Drumheller, formerly Chief of CIA covert operations in Europe, dwells further as he declared in an interview with Derek Leebaert that by 1980 the CIA “had 11 cases officers in South Africa, four of them with deep cover. (...) We were regularly able to obtain swipe samples from its enrichment facilities.”¹⁰⁷³ Derek Leebaert argues that the previously mentioned South African Project Circle *was already within reach of perfecting a usable, deliverable atomic bomb*. Furthermore, Tyler Drumheller described how Israel had helped South Africa to circumvent US and international embargoes by providing key nuclear materials like the VAX computers, which were necessary for the completion of Pretoria’s nuclear program. “Project Circle needed that VAX, (and) it came via the Israelis and TamCo,” he added.¹⁰⁷⁴

As we will see later, Tel Aviv also provided missiles which were instrumental to South African-designed nuclear weapons. Consequently, Martha van Wyk rightly described the intensity of the bilateral relationship between Pretoria and Tel Aviv in these terms: “as far as South Africa was concerned, Carter’s non-proliferation efforts came too late. In addition to its own unique uranium enrichment process, South Africa in 1977 and 1978 started carrying through a secret nuclear trade agreement that had been reached in April 1976 between Vorster and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.”¹⁰⁷⁵ Why, then, did the US not effectively hamper the nuclear progress of the Apartheid regime, considering the previous information? The beginning of the answer is that Israel/South Africa relations were not limited to strategic areas like the military in general, and nuclear in special. In fact, the two countries also had good economic relations.

Regarding economic relations, Israel and South Africa maintained intensive trade relations irrespective of the sanctions imposed on the Apartheid regime. For example, in 1970, *Israeli exports to South Africa amounted to \$10.7 million, while imports amounted to \$10.2 million. (...) Israel imported from South Africa nearly half as much as it imported from the rest of the continent as a whole*.¹⁰⁷⁶ Japan is another country which played an incremental role in South Africa’s economic life. Tokyo and Pretoria’s

¹⁰⁷² LIBERMAN, Peter, **Israel and the South African bomb**, *Ibid.*, p.9

¹⁰⁷³ LEEBAERT, Derek, **How Israel helped a rogue State go nuclear**, The Globalist. Rethinking globalization, April5, 2013. Accessed from <https://www.theglobalist.com/how-israel-helped-a-then-rogue-state-go-nuclear/> on October 10, 2021.

¹⁰⁷⁴ LEEBAERT, Derek, **How Israel helped a rogue State go nuclear**, *Ibid.* TamCo was then a front company used by the Mossad to escape from the international restrictions on specific military activities.

¹⁰⁷⁵ WYK VAN S., Martha, **Ally or critic? The United States’ response to South African nuclear development, 1949–1980**, Cold War History, Vol. 7, N. 2, May 2007, p.213

¹⁰⁷⁶ Journal of Palestine Studies, **South Africa and Israel**, Autumn, 1973, Vol. 3, N. 1, p.179

economic relations hark back to the beginning of the 20th Century. Indeed, *Japan's exports to South Africa, valued at 454,000 yen in 1912, increased to 18,343,000 yen in 1918, while its imports, which were practically non-existent in 1912, jumped to 29,449,000 yen by 1918.*¹⁰⁷⁷ But the economic relations between the two countries skyrocketed between the 60s and the 80s as *between 1962 and 1968, the value of Japanese-South African trade rose from about \$ 178,974,000 to \$551,591,000, and by 1980 the figure stood at \$3,593,738,000, twenty times what it was in 1960.*¹⁰⁷⁸

6.4.4 The EU's actions against the Apartheid regime.

Concerning the EU (then European Community), most of the European countries were still healing the wounds of WWII; consequently, the Apartheid policy was not yet a major source of concern for the Europeans at the beginning of the 60s. However, with the growing international consensus against Apartheid, several European countries started raising their voice against Pretoria. One of the first European countries which publicly criticize Pretoria was the UK, with PM Harold McMillan denouncing the segregationist policies of South Africa's regime. Other States like Spain and Austria tightened administrative procedures (visa restrictions) for South African citizens.¹⁰⁷⁹

But one of the boldest European political actions against Apartheid was the adoption of the Code of Conduct for EC companies in South Africa on November 23, 1977. "Between 1977 and 1984, the Code represented the EC's sole foreign policy instrument framed within the procedure of EPC designed to bring about the Community's stated objective of removing apartheid. (...) Firms were encouraged 'to abolish any practice of segregation, notably at the workplace and in canteens, sports activities, education and training'. Although the *Code* did not impose any legal obligations, the European based parent companies were requested to report annually on the progress made in applying the Code's provisions."¹⁰⁸⁰ Yet all these efforts could not be efficient as the US-South Africa's bilateral economic relations shielded all the potential impact of all the economic sanctions imposed on Pretoria. For instance, *(US) exports to South Africa rose from US\$131 million in 1945 to US\$2,463 million by 1980. Imports from South Africa to the United States followed a similar pattern, registering US\$104 million at the end of the war,*

¹⁰⁷⁷ PAYNE J., Richard, **Japan's South Africa policy: Political rhetoric and economic realities**, African Affairs, April 1987, Vol. 86, N.343, p. 168

¹⁰⁷⁸ PAYNE J., Richard, **Japan's South Africa policy: Political rhetoric and economic realities**, *Ibid.*, p.168

¹⁰⁷⁹ KONSTANTINOS, Margaritis, **An outline of the Europe – South Africa relations during and post the Apartheid era**, 2012, CES Working Papers, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Centre for European Studies, Iasi, Vol. 4, Issue 4, p.761

¹⁰⁸⁰ HOLLAND, Martin, **Disinvestment, sanctions and the European Community's code of conduct in South Africa**, African Affairs, Oct. 1989, Vol. 88, N.353, p.534

and US\$3,321 million by 1980.¹⁰⁸¹ The following table provides a more accurate on the impact and the evolution of the US input on the South African economy.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total U.S. exports to South Africa (US\$ millions)</i>	<i>Total U.S. imports from South Africa (US\$ millions)</i>	<i>U.S. total direct investment in South Africa (US\$ millions)</i>	<i>Return on U.S. total direct investment in South Africa (percentage)</i>
1950	126	142	140	9.29
1955	268	96	257	14.79
1960	288	108	286	11.89
1965	438	226	528	14.58
1970	536	290	868	16.60
1975	1,302	840	1,582	4.49
1980	2,463	3,321	2,350	28.30
1985	1,205	2,071	1,394	2.51
1990	1,732	1,698	775	21.03

Table 11: U.S. economic relations with South Africa (exports, imports, and direct investment), 1950–1990.¹⁰⁸²

Considering the previous elements – the vision of the new leader of South Africa and the economic support of the US, – one can easily understand South Africa’s defiance toward UN Resolution 418. However, external factors only do not explain Pretoria’s challenge toward international demands. Indeed, internal elements also shed insightful light on the weakness of Resolution 418, and, consequently, South Africa’s recalcitrant behaviors. Among those internal elements stood the wide room of interpretation granted to States regarding the nature of the notion of the “arms” that were supposed to be banned from the South African market. Gavin Cawthra confirms it in these words: *(Resolution 418) merely called for the review of existing licensing arrangements; it left it up to member countries to decide what exactly constituted arms and related material. In addition, it did not call for a total ban on nuclear collaboration and the committee set up to monitor and enforce the embargo had limited powers.*¹⁰⁸³ Nevertheless, irrespective of the loophole of Resolution 418, the very fact that there had been an international

¹⁰⁸¹ THOMSON, Alex: **U.S. foreign policy towards Apartheid South Africa, 1948–1994**, *Op. Cit.*, p.11

¹⁰⁸² U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census. Historical statistics of the United States colonial times to 1957, Washington DC, U.S., GPO, 1960. Accessed from THOMSON, Alex: **U.S. foreign policy towards Apartheid South Africa, 1948–1994**, *Op. Cit.*, p.11

¹⁰⁸³ CAWTHRA, Gavin: **Brutal force: Apartheid war machine**, *Op. Cit.*, pp.93-94

consensus on South Africa's controversial social, political, and nuclear policy sent an undoubtful political and security message to Pretoria. These events can explain the radicalization of South Africa's domestic and regional policies under P. W. Botha. **(South Africa moved from an outward looking to a hybrid compromise regime under Botha – Etel Solingen).**

Concerning domestic politics, PM Botha was a reform-driven leader, though many analysts maintain that his reforms aimed at strengthening the pillars of the Apartheid regime. After all, he was a major figure of the National Party which officially advocated for White Supremacy and the Segregationist policy of Apartheid. In this regard, he emphasized that his government policies aimed at *maintaining orderly government and stability while striving to move along an evolutionary and constitutional road. This presupposes a responsible key role for white South Africa, which must retain the initiative through strong but amicable leadership.*¹⁰⁸⁴ But in a speech during a National Party Congress, he also stressed that “whilst he did not agree with the idea of a permanent and total separation of the races with legally defined white supremacy, he continued to see ethnicity as a central factor in South African political life, demanding recognition in the form of a measure of social and political separation.”¹⁰⁸⁵ Consequently, PM Botha proposed Constitutional reforms in 1982, which were implemented in 1983.

The Constitutional reforms proposed by PM Botha did not have a major impact on the South African political landscape. While they allowed Indians and minority-Colored citizens to enjoy certain political rights thanks to the creation of a separate Chamber in the Parliament, yet they did not address the fundamental issues of Apartheid, as the Blacks were still not integrated into the country's political life. Subsequently, those reforms were criticized and described “*as totally inadequate*” by most Black leaders who *hoped that after further negotiations, the government will make more concessions.*¹⁰⁸⁶ Another important reform proposed by PM Botha was the creation of the Position of the President of the Republic with more political powers, and he became the “first” President of the new Republic of South Africa in 1984. But Botha's intransigence led to demonstrations and riots from the Black communities.

¹⁰⁸⁴ SPICER, Michael, **Change in South Africa? Mr P. W. Botha's strategy and policies**, The World Today, January 1980, Vol. 36, N. 1, p.35

¹⁰⁸⁵ SPICER, Michael, **Change in South Africa? Mr P. W. Botha's strategy and policies**, *Ibid*, p.34

¹⁰⁸⁶ STUCKS, Kevin, **Botha Regime facing a test in South Africa. Parliament elections should indicate if White support broadened voting rights**, The Wall Street Journal, October 29, 1982. Accessed from **AF Press Clips**, Washington DC, July 1982, Vol. 17, N.26, p.11. Consulted online.

The government’s inflexibility regarding the demands for more social and political justice and equity from the Black communities sparked demonstrations and riots in Soweto and even abroad, like in the US. As the following tables illustrate, there had been about twenty (20) anti-Apartheid annual demonstrations in the US in 1985 and around three hundred (300) in South Africa. Regarding the segregationist social and political policies in South Africa in the 80s, Spencer Tucker argues that *under Botha’s leadership, Apartheid entered the most brutal phase both at home and abroad. Units in the security forces carried out assassinations, torture was rampant, and neighboring States were destabilized.*¹⁰⁸⁷ Hence, faithful to his conflict management style, Botha brutally repelled the manifestations. For instance, “in 1984, the South African Defense Force was deployed, for the first time, in the black townships alongside the South African police to quell revolutionary activity. Later, as “unrest” intensified, the Botha government declared the first state of emergency in 1985.”¹⁰⁸⁸

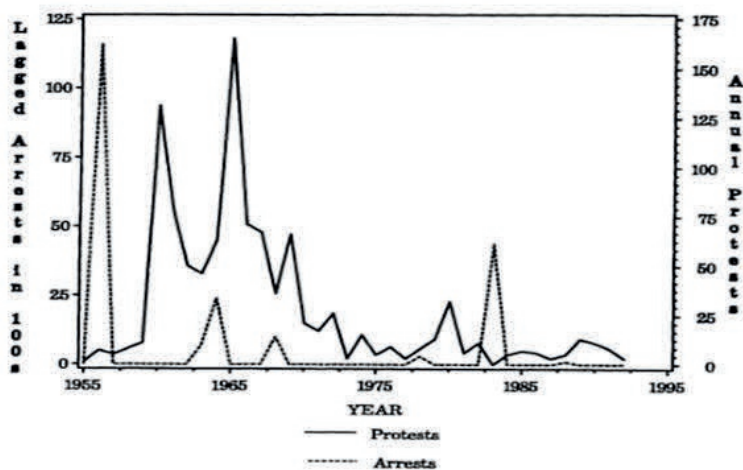


Table 12: Arrests and protests in the US, 1955-1992.¹⁰⁸⁹

¹⁰⁸⁷ TUCKER C., Spencer: **The Cold War: The Definitive encyclopedia and document collection**, California, Greenwood Press, 2020, p.197. Consulted online.
¹⁰⁸⁸ CRAWFORD C., Neta and KLOTZ Audie (Eds): **How sanctions work: lessons from South Africa**, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 1999, p.9
¹⁰⁸⁹ OLZAK Susan and OLIVIER L., Johan, **Racial conflict and protest in South Africa and the United States**, European Sociological Review, September 1998, Vol. 14, N.3, p.266



Table 13: Detentions and protests in the US, 1970-1986.¹⁰⁹⁰

Concerning South Africa's nuclear development, as we previously analyzed, Pretoria attempted to proceed to a nuclear test in the Kalahari Desert. But due to the Soviet alert and the subsequent Western reactions, South Africa's leaders were forced to reconsider their plans. Consequently, the nuclear ambitions in general, and the nuclear test were postponed but not cancelled. Indeed, two years later, Pretoria was again involved in another controversial nuclear weapons activity when *on 22 September 1979, a US surveillance satellite detected a brief but intense double flash of light emanating from an area over the South Atlantic, near the Cape.*¹⁰⁹¹ As the Mulder gate forced PM Vorster to resign, he could not orchestrate and witness the nuclear developments of the country. Yet almost a decade before his stepping down, he took several steps which paved the way for his successor. Among them was the reform of the Atomic Energy Board in 1970, which was divided into two specific organs: the Atomic Energy Corporation (AEC) and the Uranium Enrichment Corporation (UEC). *The former would continue with*

¹⁰⁹⁰ OLZAK Susan and OLIVIER L., Johan, **Racial conflict and protest in South Africa and the United States, *Op. Cit.***, p.267

¹⁰⁹¹ ALBRIGHT David and GAY Corey, **A flash from the past; South Africa – nuclear proliferation**, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, November/December 1997, Vol. 53, N. 6, p.15. Cited in HORTON III E., Roy, **Out of (South) Africa: Pretoria's nuclear weapons experience**, INSS Occasional Paper 27, Counterproliferation Series, August 1999, p.7. See also SPENCE J., E., **South Africa: The nuclear option**, African Affairs, 1981, Vol. 80, N. 321, p.442

*fundamental research at Pelindaba, while (the latter) would construct the country's first enrichment facility at the Valindaba site adjacent to Pelindaba.*¹⁰⁹²

The bureaucratic reforms of the nuclear program organization continued under President Botha with the transfer of the management of the nuclear program from the AEC to the Armaments Corporation of South Africa Ltd (Armcor).¹⁰⁹³ This decision was not without consequences. In fact, by granting the responsibility of the nuclear project to Armcor, the South African leaders officially greenlighted the weaponization of the nuclear program as the military establishment – the securocrats – became involved in the nuclear program; “positioning themselves against the international regime, they promised the politicians that they could deliver security.”¹⁰⁹⁴ Nevertheless, Armcor alone could not provide all the elements needed to complete the nuclear weapons program successfully. Finally, three entities worked toward the achievement of the nuclear goal: “Armcor would make the deliverable nuclear devices, focusing initially on the development and production of a number of deliverable gun-type devices. The Atomic Energy Board would provide the nuclear explosive materials health physics support, and theoretical studies, and contribute to the development of more advanced nuclear weapons technologies. The South African Defense Force was responsible for providing the delivery vehicles, logistical arrangements, communications, and the deployment of nuclear weapons. In practice, this task went to the Air Force, which was developing a television-guided long-range glide bomb, called the h3 and later the Raptor, which would become the delivery system for the nuclear device.”¹⁰⁹⁵

With their specific roles clearly defined, each of the previously mentioned organs actively began to play their role in achieving their common goal. Concerning the delivery means for the nuclear weapons, by the 80s, Pretoria could confidently rely on its autonomous missile system based on the experience of the Jericho missile it had acquired from Israel. Indeed, Tel Aviv offered to supply Pretoria with its nuclear-capable Jericho missiles. *On April 3, 1975, Peres and Botha signed a security and secrecy agreement governing all aspects of the new defense relationship. The agreement, known by its abbreviation SECM NT, even provided for denial of its own existence. (...) Israel's*

¹⁰⁹² FIG, David, **Political fission: South Africa's nuclear programme**, Energy & Environment, Special issue: Energy policy and nuclear power - 20 Years after the Chernobyl disaster, 2006, Vol. 17, N.3, p.461.

¹⁰⁹³ Armcor is South Africa's State-owned arms and munition company. *It was established to meet South Africa's needs for armaments and related products and services. The Corporation has roots going back to 1948 and dates from 1977, when the South African Armaments Board and the Armaments Development Corporation were amalgamated. ARMSCOR - Armaments Corporation of South Africa.* An information accessed from <https://nuke.fas.org/guide/rsa/agency/armcor.htm> on October 10, 2021.

¹⁰⁹⁴ ASUELIME E., Lucky and ADEKOYE A., Raquel: **Nuclear proliferation in South Africa. History and politics**, *Op. Cit.*, p.125

¹⁰⁹⁵ ALBRIGHT H., David and STRICKER, Andrea: **Revisiting South Africa's nuclear weapons program: Its history, dismantlement, and lessons for today**, *Op. Cit.*, pp.85-86

offer of nuclear missiles, code-named “Chalet,” came up again two months later, on June 4, when Peres and Botha held a second meeting in Zurich. (...) Minutes from the June meeting reveal that Botha expressed interest in buying the Jerichos if they came with “the correct payload,” and that “Minister Peres said that the correct payload was available in three sizes.”¹⁰⁹⁶ Although both countries never actually signed the agreement, South Africa’s interests in the Israeli offer constituted a “smoking gun” evidence that Israel had at least offered to sell off-the-shelf Jericho missiles to South Africa by early 1975, Peter Lieberman argues.¹⁰⁹⁷ Of course, Israeli leaders have always denied the veracity of the previous information regarding Israel/South Africa’s military and nuclear cooperation.¹⁰⁹⁸

Regarding the logistical components of its nuclear weapons program, Pretoria’s defiance towards the external world led the South African authorities to opt for an indigenous delivery system. However, in the absence of enough local expertise and facing international sanctions, South Africa – just like Libya – could only rely on the black market and partners who shared the same global “pariah” status and the *siege mentality*. Regarding the former, André Buys, a leading scientist involved in the country’s secret nuclear program, recalls that “[when] such equipment arrived, I’d say ‘thanks.’ I didn’t ask how it got there ... Sanctions busting was a big business back then. (...) In the 1980’s Wisser’s firm, Krisch Engineering, was a “key supplier of equipment” to the South African Atomic Energy Corporation, according to Wisser’s plea agreement filed with South African prosecutors.”¹⁰⁹⁹ Michael Montgomery dwells on this as he argues that “estimates for the total cost of the South African nuclear bomb program range from \$500 million to \$1 billion (in early 1980s valuation). Part of the money, according to Buys, went to an international network of smugglers for technology and know-how not available on the domestic market.”¹¹⁰⁰

Regarding the foreign partners who shared the international “pariah status” and the *siege mentality* as South Africa, Israel stood among the first, if not the only country which secretly supplied the country with elements necessary for the completion of the nuclear program. “We couldn’t buy any damn aircraft,” says Hannes Steyn, Armscor’s R&D director in the 1980s.” Israel, therefore, became a vital source for the South African Air Force, and it was heavily involved in Pretoria’s quest to maintain air supremacy in Angola,

¹⁰⁹⁶ POLAKOW-SURANSKY, Sasha: **The Unspoken alliance: Israel’s secret relationship with Apartheid South Africa**, New York, Pantheon Books, 2010, p.82. Consulted online

¹⁰⁹⁷ LIBERMAN, Peter, **Israel and the South African bomb**, *Op. Cit.*, p.20

¹⁰⁹⁸ BBC, **Israel’s Peres denies South Africa nuclear weapons deal**, 24 May 2010. Accessed on the 15th of October 2021 from <https://www.bbc.com/news/10146075>

¹⁰⁹⁹ SCHAPIRO, Mark, **South Africa’s nuclear underground**, Reveal, April 10, 2008. Accessed on the 15th of October 2021 from <https://revealnews.org/article/south-africas-nuclear-underground/>.

¹¹⁰⁰ MONTGOMERY, Michael, **Building the South African bomb**, Reveal, April 10, 2008. Accessed on the 16th of October 2021 from <https://revealnews.org/article/building-the-south-african-bomb/>

*modernizing the aging mirage III fleet that Pretoria had acquired from France in the 1960s.*¹¹⁰¹ But South Africa also largely capitalized on the foreign assistance it received from partnerships for its alleged peaceful nuclear program. For example, in 1976, France supplied two light-water reactors to South Africa destined to be operational at the Koeberg nuclear power plant in 1982 and 1983.¹¹⁰²



Figure 9: Koeberg pressurized water nuclear reactor.¹¹⁰³

¹¹⁰¹ POLAKOW-SURANSKY, Sasha: **The Unspoken alliance: Israel's secret relationship with Apartheid South Africa**, *Op. Cit.*, p.151

¹¹⁰² BETTS K., Richard, **A diplomatic bomb for South Africa?**, *International Security*, Fall, 1979, Vol. 4, N. 2, p. 92

¹¹⁰³ JORDAN, Bobby, **Leaky Koeberg steam generator to be repaired, says Eskom. Power utility says the leak poses no danger**, *Times Lives*, 04th of January 2021. Accessed on the 15th October 2021 from the link <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2021-01-04-leaky-koeberg-steam-generator-to-be-repaired-says-eskom/>.



Figure 10: RSA-3 -- South Africa missile.¹¹⁰⁴

Concerning his foreign and regional policy, PW Botha developed a bellicose policy towards its neighbors. The main targets of the SADF were logically Angola and Mozambique, considering the previous military defeats of South Africa. Security imperatives were the main drivers of their neighborhood's South African raids and military campaigns. Indeed, those countries served as sanctuary to the ANC military groups whose main objective was to topple the Apartheid regime. One of the first military campaigns of South Africa under Pieter Botha was *Operation Protea*, "in which more than 5000 South African troops occupied all the main towns in Cunene for several weeks. (But) Angolans troops by then were much better trained and equipped than they had been when they faced the South African invasion in 1975, so they were able to stop the African advance at Cahama."¹¹⁰⁵ Two years later, Pretoria launched *Operation Askari* against the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO). It's important to highlight that unlike the military interventions in Angola or Mozambique, which were carried out of survival imperatives – as the MPLA and the FRELIMO¹¹⁰⁶ who aimed at overthrowing the Apartheid regime – the SWAPO's goals, were different, despite also being driven by Marxism. Therefore, *the war in Namibia, objectively speaking, never became a question of survival for the South Africans, although a SWAPO take-over there,*

¹¹⁰⁴ WEINTZ, Steve, **How South Africa built nuclear weapons (And then gave them up). A nuclear program that is not well understood—until now**, The National Interest, July 29, 2018. Accessed on the 15th of October 2021 from <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/how-south-africa-built-nuclear-weapons-and-then-gave-them-27066>.

¹¹⁰⁵ HANLON, Joseph: **Beggar your neighbours: Apartheid power in Southern Africa**, London, Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1986, p.159. (Consulted online.)

¹¹⁰⁶ FRELIMO refers to the Liberation Front of Mozambique.

*in the minds of some South Africans, would indeed increase the pressure on their core base.*¹¹⁰⁷

Pretoria launched several other military operations in the region, like *Operation Plecksy* or the Raid on Gaborone in Botswana (1985) or the simultaneous raids in Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe in 1986. Besides those overt military campaigns, South African military and intelligence forces also conducted covert operations, like the bomb attack in Harare in 1982.¹¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, these military campaigns undoubtedly impacted the behaviors of countries which hosted or sympathized with ANC members. For example, *Operation Skerwe* in Mozambique in 1983 led to a tightened control of ANC fighters in Swaziland, as *the police began to raid the homes of ANC members to search for weapons. (Furthermore,) Lesotho announced that South African military and economic pressure had forced it to expel 3000 South African refugees.*¹¹⁰⁹ But the consequences of the SADF raids and covert actions did not only impact the neighbouring countries; by 1984, *the raids had resulted in a drastic shrinkage of the ANC's sanctuaries. Its military planners were forced to move to Zambia, which was too distant from South Africa's borders, to enable them to plan and oversee the execution of sophisticated sabotage attacks. ANC leaders acknowledged that a new strategy was required.*¹¹¹⁰ But how did the world react to South Africa's aggressive regional policy?

The 80s can also be considered as a watershed decade for Pretoria, as several factors – political, economic and security – shaped its security interests and led the latter to consider the nuclear option seriously. Concerning the (international) political factors, Pretoria's regional policy was widely condemned internationally, and Pretoria was increasingly isolated. For example, *a study by the UN Secretary-General released in 1980 concluded that the NP's policy of apartheid posed the 'greatest threat' to peace in Southern Africa. The report*¹¹¹¹ *concluded that "the greatest threat to peace in the region stems from a racist regime's denial of basic rights to the overwhelming majority of the population and its willingness to use strong repressive means, both internally and*

¹¹⁰⁷ SCHOLTZ, Leopold, **The Namibian Border War: An Appraisal of the South African Strategy**, Scientia Militaria - South African Journal of Military Studies, 2011, Vol. 34, p.20

¹¹⁰⁸ LELYVELD, Joseph, **Bombs kill three in South Africa and Swaziland**, New York Times, June 5, 1982. Accessed on October 12, 2021, from <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/06/05/world/bombs-kill-three-in-south-africa-and-swaziland.html>

¹¹⁰⁹ JASTER S., Robert: **The Defence of White power: South African foreign policy under pressure**, *Op. Cit.*, p.121

¹¹¹⁰ JASTER S., Robert: **The Defence of White power: South African foreign policy under pressure**, *Op. Cit.*, p.121

¹¹¹¹ United Nations, Department for Disarmament Affairs, **South Africa's nuclear-tipped ballistic missile capability: A report of the Secretary General**, New York, 1991, A/45/571. Accessed on October 13, 2021, from the link <https://documents.in/document/south-africas-nuclear-tipped-ballistic-missilecapability.html?page=1>

*externally, to preserve its interests and privileges.”*¹¹¹² From a (domestic) political perspective, as we previously analyzed, PM Botha imposed a state of emergency in the country in 1985; yet this was not only the consequence of the riots caused by the minor reforms he introduced in the South African domestic landscape. Instead, SADF destabilization activities in the region led the ANC military leaders to reshape their military strategy as they opted for guerrilla warfare to achieve their political objectives. Stephen Davis described this new approach as the ANC’s *underground resistance and counter insurgency/repression strategy*.¹¹¹³

Regarding the economic factor, South Africa experienced a debt crisis in 1985. Although it was rooted in the country’s poor economic performance at that time (with a GDP of -1,21% - see the table below), the debt crisis was also rooted in political factors. Indeed, *in 1985 the debt crisis emerged not because of an immediate shortage of export earnings with which to service the debt, as with many other economies, but because of foreign creditors’ reactions to the State of Emergency declared in July 1985*, Laurence Harris argues.¹¹¹⁴ But this situation appeared to the Europeans as the golden opportunity to impose further economic sanctions on Pretoria and hopefully compel it to abandon its segregationist policy. Consequently, except for the UK opposition, the other members of the European Community imposed trade sanctions (ban on oil), and military sanctions (military equipment and halt in nuclear cooperation). Leo Tindeman, then Belgian Foreign Affairs Minister, emphasized that the Europeans were ready to impose additional sanctions shall Pretoria not undo its Apartheid policy. *“If things don’t change, we will do more,” he said at the conclusion of nearly 10 hours of deliberations by foreign ministers of the 10 Common Market nations.*¹¹¹⁵

It’s worth noting that the Reagan administration *exceptionally* imposed sanctions against the Apartheid regime. President Reagan signed Executive Order 12532 after *finding that the policies and actions of the Government of South Africa constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy and economy of the United*

¹¹¹² United Nations, **South Africa’s nuclear-tipped ballistic missile capability: A report of the Secretary General**, *Ibid.* Cited by VAN WYK, Jo-Ansie and VAN WYK Anna-Mart, **The African National Congress and Apartheid South Africa’s nuclear weapons program**, NPIHP Working Paper, November 2020, N.16, p.24

¹¹¹³ DAVIS R., Stephen: **The ANC’s war against Apartheid. Umkhonto we Sizwe and the liberation of South Africa**, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 2018, p.132

¹¹¹⁴ HARRIS, Laurence, **South Africa’s external debt crisis**, Third World Quarterly, July 1986, Vol. 8, No. 3, p.794

¹¹¹⁵ L.A. Times Archives, **European Community approves sanctions on S. Africa**, Los Angeles Times, September 11, 1985. Accessed from <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1985-09-11-mn-7171-story.html> on October 12, 2021.

States.¹¹¹⁶ Reagan’s coercive measures included, among others, the prohibition of *the making or approval of any loans by financial institutions in the United States to the Government of South Africa or to entities owned or controlled by that Government.* (Section 1-a) In addition, he banned the export of computers and computer software destined for the military, the police, or the prison system. (Section 1-b). President Reagan also prohibited *the import into the United States of any arms, ammunition, or military vehicles produced in South Africa or of any manufacturing data for such articles.* (Section 1-d). However, those coercive measures did not significantly impact the South African economy and sparked criticism from several members of Congress.

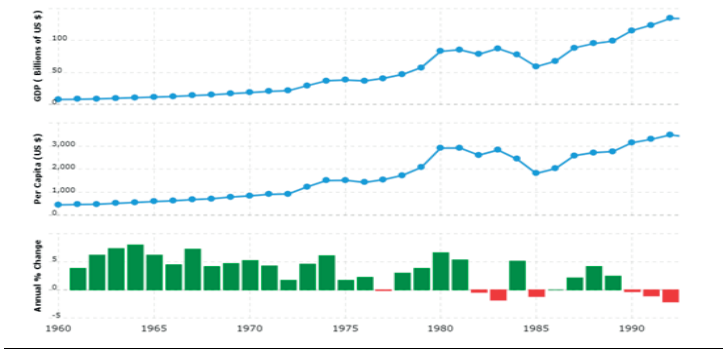


Table 14: South Africa’s GDP from 1960 till 1990.¹¹¹⁷

As previously noted, President Reagan *exceptionally* imposed sanctions on South Africa. This is because he had always apprehended Pretoria against the backdrop of his worldview in general and the Cold War in particular. According to Robert Fatton, Reagan’s worldview was characterized by several factors: first, *the belief that any radical disruption of the international status quo is masterminded by the Soviet Union and, therefore, that any revolutionary movement of national liberation constitutes a Soviet surrogate.*¹¹¹⁸ Reagan was also of the opinion that progressive social changes and not abrupt social transformations or revolutions; the third factor was a clear distinction between “authoritarian” and “totalitarian” regimes. Making a difference between these

¹¹¹⁶ Office of the Federal Register, **Executive Order 12532--Prohibiting trade and certain other transactions involving South Africa**, 9th September 1985. Accessed on October 15, 2021, from the website <https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/executive-order/12532.html>

¹¹¹⁷ **South Africa’s GDP from 1960 to 1990**. Source from World Bank accessed on the October 15, 2021, from the website <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/ZAF/south-africa/gdp-gross-domestic-product>

¹¹¹⁸ FATTON, Robert, **The Reagan Foreign policy toward South Africa: The ideology of the new Cold War**, *African Studies review*, Mars 1984, Vol. 27, N. 1, p.57

two political regimes could shed an insightful light on the US behavior toward each specific regime it was confronting. When addressing an authoritarian regime, the US could adopt a *benign opposition* as he argued that *these regimes are allegedly capable of democratic transformations*. On the contrary, the US should have an *unbending antagonism* when confronted with totalitarian regimes as they are *supposedly unchangeable tyrannies destroyable only through war*.¹¹¹⁹

Considering the previous elements, it is no surprise that the Reagan administration opted for a “constructive engagement.” At the same time, several countries expected the US to adopt a stricter stance against South Africa. Certain experts even argue that Reagan’s ideology-driven foreign policy constituted a *laissez-passer* or blessing to Pretoria’s aggressive and bellicose behavior in the region. In this regard, Joseph Hanlon argues that *the Carter administration in the United States seems to have served as a restraining hand on the South African military. With the election of Ronald Reagan, that was removed, and the SADF quickly lashed out in both Mozambique and Angola*.¹¹²⁰ But scholars were not the only ones to regret and denounce President Reagan’s softness toward the Apartheid regime.

Frustrated by President Reagan’s sluggishness toward Pretoria, several members proposed and successfully imposed tougher sanctions against South Africa by adopting the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986, notwithstanding President Reagan’s veto.¹¹²¹ Indeed, President Reagan attempted not only to prevent the adoption of the CAAA, but when he realized that his veto would be overridden, he tried to lessen the toughness of the Congress’ sanctions. For instance, “in his letter to Dole and House Speaker Thomas P. O’Neill Jr., D-Mass., sent hours before the House vote, Reagan condemned South Africa’s racial policies and urged the House and Senate to join him in a united foreign policy. He offered to impose new sanctions and measures by executive order. (...) The new steps would expand a list of sanctions Reagan issued last year but would fall short of the harsh measures called for in legislation passed by the House and Senate - measures which would carry the United States close to outright and total disinvestment from South Africa.”¹¹²²

¹¹¹⁹ FATTON, Robert, **The Reagan Foreign policy toward South Africa: The ideology of the new Cold War**, *Op. Cit.*, p.58

¹¹²⁰ HANLON, Joseph: **Beggar your neighbours: Apartheid Power in Southern Africa**, *Op. Cit.*, p.159

¹¹²¹ GLASS, Andrew, **House overrides Reagan apartheid veto, Sept. 29, 1986**, Politico, September 29, 2017. Accessed from <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/09/29/house-overrides-reagan-apartheid-veto-sept-29-1986-243169> on October 17, 2021.

¹¹²² KNUTSON L., Lawrence, **House votes to override Reagan veto on South Africa sanctions**, AP News, September 30, 1986. An information accessed on the 17th of October 2021 from <https://apnews.com/article/ea34db543dfe6ee8ddff3fcadd51026b>.

In response to the Congress's move, President Reagan declared that: "(the Congress vote) underscores that America — and that means all of us — opposes apartheid, a malevolent and archaic system totally alien to our ideals. The debate ... was not whether or not to oppose apartheid but, instead, how best to oppose it and how best to bring freedom to that troubled country. (...) Punitive sanctions, I believe, are not the best course of action; they hurt the very people they are intended to help. My hope is that these punitive sanctions do not lead to more violence and more repression."¹¹²³ Before dwelling on the provisions and the efficacy of the *Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 (CAAA)*, it's worth emphasizing that human-rights imperatives have not always driven the US Congress's behavior toward South Africa. Indeed, economic factors, notably oil exploitation, have shaped its reaction toward Pretoria. This was the case when *in July 1985, the US Congress repealed the Clark Amendment, allowing US federal support for UNITA to resume*.¹¹²⁴ This move from the US Congress mainly targeted Chevron-Gulf, which was deemed to be one of the biggest fund providers of the Soviet/Cuban-backed MPLA in Angola. Yet, the CAAA was an unprecedented political action from the US regarding its provisions and effects.

Voted in the House by 313 against 83 and by 78 against 21 in the Senate,¹¹²⁵ the CAAA was adopted by the US Congress on October 2, 1986. Its main goal was *to set forth a comprehensive and complete framework to guide the efforts of the United States in helping to bring an end to apartheid in South Africa and lead to the establishment of a non-racial, democratic form of government*.¹¹²⁶ In this regard, the US lawmakers adopted several measures to undermine the SA government's actions or assist the victims of Apartheid. Concerning the assistance to the victims of the Apartheid regime, one of the most decisive decisions of the US Congress was "to furnish direct financial assistance to those whose non-violent activities had led to their arrest or detention by the South African authorities and to the families of those killed by terrorist acts such as "necklacing's." (Section 103-b.4 of the CAAA) Concerning the US policy toward the neighbouring countries in the region, the Congress committed, among others, the US government "to help to secure the independence of Namibia and the establishment of Namibia as a non-racial democracy in accordance with appropriate United Nations Security Council resolutions." (Section 104-b.1 of the CAAA)

¹¹²³ GLASS, Andrew, **House overrides Reagan apartheid veto, Sept. 29, 1986, *Op. Cit.***

¹¹²⁴ ANGEL, Austin, **Cabinda and the company: Chevron-Gulf, the CIA, and the Angolan civil war**, History, CLA Journal, 2018, Vol. 6, p.80. See also SCOTT M., James, **Angola: Dissensus, competing agendas, and the struggle over constructive engagement** in: **Deciding to intervene: The Reagan doctrine and American foreign policy**, Durham, Duke University Press Books, 1996, 352 pages

¹¹²⁵ KLOTZ, Audie: **Norms in International Relations: The struggle against Apartheid**, New York, Cornell University Press, 1999, p.109. Consulted online

¹¹²⁶ Section 4 of the **Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act**, Public Law 99-440—Oct. 2, 1986. Accessed from <https://www.congress.gov/99/statute/STATUTE-100/STATUTE-100-Pg1086.pdf> on the 17th of October 2021.

Concerning the measures aiming at undermining Apartheid, the US lawmakers decided, among others, that no person, including a bank, may import into the United States any South African krugerrand or any other gold coin minted in South Africa or offered for sale by the Government of South Africa. (In addition,) no arms, ammunition, or military vehicles produced in South Africa or any manufacturing data for such articles may be imported into the United States.¹¹²⁷ Several other measures were also adopted by the US Congress, including the prohibition on the importation of products from parastatal organizations (Section 303 of the CAAA) or the bans on nuclear trade with south Africa (Section 307 of the CAAA).

Concerning the financial sanctions, Congress decided that “a United States depository institution may not accept, receive, or hold a deposit account from the Government of South Africa or from any agency or entity owned or controlled by the Government of South Africa except for such accounts which may be authorized by the President for diplomatic or consular purposes.” (Section 308 of the CAAA) In addition, *no national of the United States may, directly or through another person, make any new investment in South Africa.* (Section 310-a of the CAAA). Lastly, regarding trade sanctions, US lawmakers prohibited the importation of South Africa’s uranium and coal. (Section 310-a of the CAAA). How did Pretoria react to the adoption of the CAAA, and what was its political and economic impact on the country?

Unfortunately, the CAAA did not significantly impact the South African economy. While the imposed economic sanctions undoubtedly limited the capacity of the country to borrow money in the international market, it failed to achieve its goal of crippling Pretoria’s economy. This is because South Africa crafted effective **circumventing strategies** to escape the sanctions burden. As Philippe Levy argues confirms it, *South Africa developed extensive measures to circumvent the sanctions, although these (measures) sometimes involved costly import-substitution. South Africans also were able to transship through countries that were not participating in the embargoes. In sum, from 1985 to 1989, export volumes rose by 26 percent, although terms of trade suffered. One estimate of the marginal cost to South Africa of the mid-1980s trade sanctions was \$354 million annually, or 0.5 percent of GNP.*¹¹²⁸

Hence, it’s not surprising to see the South African authorities denouncing the adoption of the CAAA as a **blatant interference of the Western Powers in the country’s domestic affairs**. Instead of complying, the regime defied the US and the other Global

¹¹²⁷ Section 301 and 302 of the **Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act**, *Ibid*

¹¹²⁸ LEVY I., Philip, **Sanctions on South Africa: what did they do?**, Yale University, Center Discussion paper N.796, February 1999, p.7

Powers by tightening the grip on human rights (freedom of press restrictions).¹¹²⁹ Furthermore, the South African leaders attempted to **deviate** the international attention from the human rights issues it faced by **framing** the ANC activists as the avatars of communism. In this regard, President Botha declared that *the struggle in South Africa is not one between Blacks and Whites. It is an ideological struggle between supporters of genuine freedom and stability, and those who wish to force a socialist dictatorship of a small clique on South Africa with the support of international terrorism*.¹¹³⁰ But South Africa was not only subject to US sanctions; the UN added an extra layer to the sanctions burden Pretoria faced.

South Africa's continuous deafness to the international calls for the end of the Apartheid regime led the UN to adopt several other Resolutions. Among them was Resolution 473, adopted on June 13, 1980, following the killings of the students who criticized the Apartheid regime. Just like the previous Resolutions (417 or 418), the *UNSC strongly condemned the racist regime of South Africa for further aggravating the situation and its massive repression against all opponents of apartheid, for killings of peaceful demonstrators and political detainees and for its defiance of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 417 (1977)*.¹¹³¹ But the major innovation of Resolution 973 was its description of Apartheid as *a crime against the conscience and dignity of mankind and is incompatible with the rights and dignity of man, the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and seriously disturbs international peace and security*. (Art. 3)

Regarding the Constitutional reforms introduced by then PM Botha, the SC adopted Resolution 554 on August 17, 1984. This Resolution, among others, declared that *the so-called "new constitution" is contrary to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, that the results of the referendum of 2 November 1983 are of no validity whatsoever* (Art. 1); in addition, *the UNSC strongly rejected and declares as null and void the so-called "new constitution" and the "elections" to be organized in the current month of August for the "colored" people and people of Asian origin as well as all insidious manoeuvres by the racist minority regime of South Africa further to entrench white minority rule and apartheid*.¹¹³² While the tone used by the UNSC members differed and signaled the gravity of the issue for the international system, more restrictive and practical actions were needed to push the Apartheid regime toward more human

¹¹²⁹ BRANAMAN M., Brenda: **South Africa: U.S. policy after sanctions**, Congressional Research Service, Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, May 1, 1987, p.6

¹¹³⁰ NAGAN P., Winston, **An appraisal of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986**, Journal of Law and Religion, 1987, Vol. 5, No. 2, p.335.

¹¹³¹ Art. 1 of **UNSC Res. 473**. Accessed from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/473> on the 17th of October 2021.

¹¹³² **Art. 1 and Art. 2 of UNSC Res. 554**. Accessed from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/554> on the 17th of October 2021

rights-based policies, and the adoption of Resolution 591 was a positive signal in this regard. But before dwelling on the provisions of Resolution 591, the UNSC adopted Resolution 558.

Resolution 558 was adopted by the UNSC on December 13, 1984. After acknowledging South Africa's intensified efforts to manufacture armaments, the SC requested all States to refrain from importing arms, ammunition of all types and military vehicles produced in South Africa.¹¹³³ In addition, the SC requested all States, including States not Members of the United Nations, to act strictly in accordance with the provisions of the present resolution.¹¹³⁴ Based upon the previous provisions, Resolution 558 was obviously a reminder to all the States to comply with the previous Apartheid-related sanctions. Indeed, as we previously analyzed with Resolution 418, there were several loopholes in the very notion of arms and munitions.

But in the 80s, the spectacular military progress of the South African military industry (Armcor) and its affiliates clearly highlighted the incapacity of the UN to effectively hamper Pretoria's capacity to buy or sell critical elements of its military and security forces. For example, *Mohawk Data Systems equipment is used by Kentron, the ARMSCOR subsidiary that makes guided missiles. (...) Advanced computers licensed for sale by the U.S. government have played a key role in Pretoria's ability to manage the African, "colored," Asian, and Indian populations.*¹¹³⁵ Thomas Conrad stresses that "one of the most troubling weak spots in implementing the embargo is the licensing process, which involves the Departments of State and Commerce. Most sales to South Africa are licensed by the Commerce Department, which is responsible for overseeing commercial exports of general commodities as well as dual-use equipment that is on the "Commodity Control List!"¹¹³⁶

Based on the previous elements, the UNSC adopted Resolution 591 on November 28, 1986, to fix the loopholes of both Resolutions 418 and 558. This Resolution filled the definition vacuum of "arms and related materials." Indeed, in Article 4, Resolution 591 clearly emphasizes that the term "arms and related materiel" referred to in resolution 418 (1977) shall include, in addition to all nuclear, strategic and conventional weapons, all military, paramilitary police vehicles and equipment, as well as weapons and ammunitions, spare parts and supplies for the aforementioned and the sale or transfer

¹¹³³ **Art. 2** of UNSC Resolution 558. Accessed from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/558> on the 18th of October 2021.

¹¹³⁴ **Art. 3** of UNSC Resolution 558, *Ibid.*

¹¹³⁵ CONRAD, Thomas, **South Africa circumvents embargo**, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 1986, Vol. 42, N.3, p.9

¹¹³⁶ CONRAD, Thomas, **South Africa circumvents embargo**, *Op. Cit.*, p.11

thereof.”¹¹³⁷ In addition, UNSC Res. 591 *requested all States to implement strictly its resolution 418 (1977) and to refrain from any co-operation in the nuclear field with South Africa, which will contribute to the manufacture and development by South Africa of nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices.*¹¹³⁸ (Vertical escalation) How did South Africa react to Resolution 591?

South Africa’s reaction vis-à-vis Res. 591 remained the same as the previous Resolutions adopted by the Security Council. Rather than complying with the international demands, Pretoria chose to maintain its course of action regarding domestic (Apartheid) and international politics (nuclear issue). Regarding the former, “although these sanctions were in place, the repression of the black majority continued and at times intensified. In early 1988, for example, the government banned all major non-white opposition groups and prohibited political activity by trade unions.”¹¹³⁹ Regarding the latter (nuclear behavior), Pretoria took steps that could allow the country to achieve its nuclear ambitions quickly. Among those steps is the increase of the defense budget. Indeed, as the table below clearly illustrates, South Africa’s military budget kept increasing during the 80s. For instance, the defense budget increased from 2.66 billion to 3.60 billion from 1980 to 1987, one year after the CAAA and Resolution 591 were adopted.

In addition, while there have been doubts regarding the actual role of Israel in South Africa’s increasing military capabilities in the late 70s, Tel Aviv’s implication in Pretoria’s defense capabilities became more visible in the late 80s. “One of the best-publicized exchanges between Israel and South Africa involved rocket technology and tests. South Africa granted Israel access to the De Hoop missile test site and supplies of uranium in exchange for help building indigenous South African missiles with greater range,” Helen Purkitt and Stephen Burgess argue.¹¹⁴⁰ All these elements explain how Pretoria built up to six nuclear warheads by the end of the 80s.¹¹⁴¹ **(Regarding the nuclear reversal theory, South Africa had reached the third phase - weaponization of the nuclear program - Eleonora Mattiacci and Benjamin Jones).** Yet, due to health issues, President Botha was forced to resign in 1989, and South Africa elected a new President: Frederick De Klerk.

¹¹³⁷ Art. 4 of UNSC Res. 591. Accessed from <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/591> on October 25, 2021.

¹¹³⁸ Art. 5 of UNSC Res. 591, *Ibid.*,

¹¹³⁹ LEVY L., Philip, **Sanctions on South Africa: what did they do?**, *Op. Cit.*, p.8

¹¹⁴⁰ PURKITT E., Helen and BURGESS F., Stephen: **South Africa’s Weapons of Mass Destruction**, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2005, p.76. Consulted online.

¹¹⁴¹ VENTER AL., J and BADENHORST N., P: **How South Africa built six Atom bombs and then abandoned its nuclear weapons program**, *Op. Cit.*

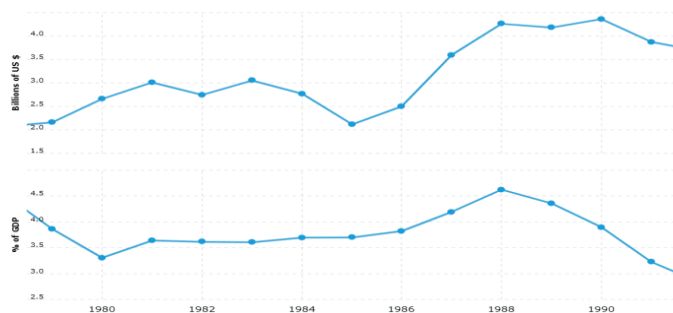


Table 15: South Africa's military spending/defense budget.¹¹⁴²



Figure 11: South Africa nuclear weapons.¹¹⁴³

¹¹⁴² **South Africa's military spending/defence budget.** Data from World Bank, accessed from <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/ZAF/south-africa/military-spending-defense-budget> on November 10, 2021

¹¹⁴³ Atomic Heritage Foundation, **South African nuclear program**, August 15, 2018. Accessed on November 10, 2021 from <https://www.atomicheritage.org/history/south-african-nuclear-program>.

6.4.5 During the Mandate of Frederick De Klerk.

6.4.5.1 Frederick De Klerk's foreign and domestic policy: ideas and beliefs.

Frederick Willem de Klerk was South Africa's President from September 20, 1989, till May 9, 1994. As previously analyzed, his ascendance as South Africa's second post-1984 Constitution President happened after President Botha's health issues. According to many observers, he was also a hard-liner in the beginning; but due to political reasons, he progressively reoriented his beliefs to be elected. Dickson Mungazi confirms it in these terms: "De Klerk, twenty years younger than Botha, was at first considered a hard-liner, the Richard M. Nixon of South Africa. But as de Klerk played a role in creating the political tragedy unfolding for Botha, he was forced to change positions and adopt a more liberal stance, very much like Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union."¹¹⁴⁴ Little information was available regarding his vision of South Africa's foreign policy. Nevertheless, as he successfully moved Pretoria from its international pariah status, one could conclude that he considered peaceful relations with its neighbors and the other members of the international system to be the guarantee of South Africa's security and economic interests.

Regarding domestic politics, De Klerk was considered to be a reformist. However, he first appeared as a hard-liner to secure his election as the President of South Africa and a politically favorable parliament. After achieving those two goals, *De Klerk now revealed himself, rather surprisingly, as a dynamic reformer. He drew on his political capital as a conservative in order to persuade reactionaries in his own cabinet to follow his lead or at least not to block him.*¹¹⁴⁵ In other words, President De Klerk was a pragmatist who did not completely adhere to the core ideology of Apartheid; he *acknowledged the hard reality that no country can build itself and become a happy society unless its institutional structures are based on justice and equality. This was the first time in the history of South Africa that a national leader had ever acknowledged this.*¹¹⁴⁶ But David de La Testa, Florence Lemoine and John Strickland argue that President De Klerk's reformist actions were not only driven by his beliefs in *improved and equitable Black-White relationships. De Klerk moved to eliminate Apartheid in South Africa (also) because of the economically crippling international embargo on South Africa goods, a growing threat of guerrilla warfare over Apartheid emanating from Namibia.*¹¹⁴⁷

¹¹⁴⁴ MUNGAZI A., Dickson: **The last defenders of the laager: Ian D. Smith and F. W. de Klerk**, London, Praeger, 1998, p.99. (Consulted online).

¹¹⁴⁵ DUBOW, Saul: **Apartheid, 1948-1994, Op. Cit.**, p.263

¹¹⁴⁶ MUNGAZI A., Dickson: **The last defenders of the laager: Ian D. Smith and F. W. de Klerk, Ibid.**, p.184

¹¹⁴⁷ DE LA Testa David, LEMOINE Florence and STRICKLAND John: **Government leaders, military rulers, and political activists. An encyclopedia of people who changed the world**, Connecticut, The Oryx Press, 2001, p.53. (Consulted online)

Irrespective of his actual motives, De Klerk's actions influenced international behavior toward South Africa under his leadership.

6.4.5.2 The International dynamics between the Great Powers and South Africa under Frederick W. De Klerk (1989-1994).

As previously noted, President De Klerk's conciliatory approach toward the segregationist policies of the Apartheid regime and the country's nuclear policy led to a different reaction from the international system. This is why this sub-part, unlike the previous ones, is not entitled "the coercive dynamics between the US and South Africa." Regarding the Apartheid regime, upon entering office, President De Klerk immediately pursued the negotiations with the US despite that they had actually started under his predecessor between 1987 and 1989. President De Klerk could not be luckier: his main rival - Botha - suffered from a stroke and his firmness to social reforms precluded him from playing a significant role in the country's political landscape. In addition, as the end of the Cold War was tiptoeing closer, the ANC leaders could no longer enjoy the political and financial support of the Soviet Union. Hence, President De Klerk could confidently negotiate with the ANC and obtain concessions that his predecessor could not achieve.¹¹⁴⁸ Consequently, he adopted anti-Apartheid measures which were compatible with both international demands and social demands.

Concerning the international demands, President De Klerk announced the liberation of Nelson Mandela after 27 years in jail, as requested by the Security Council in several Resolutions.¹¹⁴⁹ In addition, President De Klerk also unbanned many political organizations formerly excluded from the country's political landscape. These groups were naturally the ANC, the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), the Black Conscious Movement or the United Democratic Front.¹¹⁵⁰ Concerning domestic policies, President De Klerk repealed many segregationist laws, including discriminatory laws on housing or land property. "The South African statute book will be devoid, within months, of the remnants of racially discriminatory legislation which have become known as the cornerstones of apartheid," De Klerk said in a speech opening South Africa's Parliament.¹¹⁵¹ All these gestures were praised by the Great Powers, especially the US. Indeed, Margaret Tutwiler, then spokeswoman of the State Department,

¹¹⁴⁸ LOUW P., Eric: **The Rise, fall, and legacy of Apartheid**, London, Praeger, 2004, p.74. (Consulted online)

¹¹⁴⁹ **Art. 4 of Resolution 569**. Accessed from <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/87856?ln=fr> on November 14, 2021.

¹¹⁵⁰ GUMEDE, Vusi: **Political economy of Post-Apartheid South Africa**, Dakar, CODESRIA, 2015, p.137 (Consulted online)

¹¹⁵¹ KRAFT, Scott, **De Klerk calls for end to all Apartheid laws: South Africa: His proposal includes the abolition of segregated housing, curbs on black ownership of land**, Los Angeles Times, February 2, 1991. Accessed on the 17th of November 2021 from <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-02-02-mn-319-story.html>.

declared that “we welcome President De Klerk’s historic announcement that his government will introduce legislation to repeal the Group Areas Act, the Lands Act and the Population Registration Act.”¹¹⁵²

Regarding the nuclear program, President De Klerk acknowledged that South Africa had built six nuclear warheads during a session in Parliament in 1993.¹¹⁵³ This was already a bold move from a South African leader, considering the nuclear ambiguity strategy of the country. Yet, confirming the existence of the nuclear program was one thing; providing details regarding the dismantlement of the nuclear program was another. As David Albright and Andrea Sticker put it, *South Africa’s initial position on transparency was not adequate*.¹¹⁵⁴ In fact, the South African leaders wanted to keep the information related to the acquisition and production of the components of their nuclear weapons as secret as possible. *However, in reaction to calls for more transparency, fortunately, the government agreed. The evolution of President de Klerk’s thinking from 1991 to 1993 was especially important*.¹¹⁵⁵ Consequently, IAEA’s inspectors were finally allowed to visit sensitive nuclear infrastructures of the country. *Through this process, the declared inventory was found to be consistent with the declared production and usage data, but the calculated isotopic balance indicated “apparent discrepancies” with respect to the highly enriched uranium (HEU) produced by the defunct pilot enrichment plant (called the Y-plant) and with respect to the low-enriched uranium (LEU) produced by the semi-commercial enrichment plant (called the Z-plant)*.¹¹⁵⁶ What were the drivers behind De Klerk’s decisions?

Just like the two previous analytical cases (Iran and Libya), the issues related to the actual motivations behind Pretoria’s nuclear and Apartheid decisions are subject to tense debates. Confident analysts argue that sanctions played an incremental role in leading Pretoria toward abrogating the Apartheid policies, hence toward nuclear disarmament.¹¹⁵⁷ On the contrary, other analysts argue that the regional dynamics lifted

¹¹⁵² KRAFT, Scott, **De Klerk Calls for end to all Apartheid laws: South Africa: His proposal includes the abolition of segregated housing, curbs on black ownership of land, *Ibid.***

¹¹⁵³ **Speech by South African President F.W. De Klerk to a Joint Session of Parliament on Accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty**, March 24, 1993, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive. With a contribution of Jo-Ansie van Wyk. An information accessed from <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116789.pdf?v=18e596b5c687bf689edc48a01ddcf64b> on the 17th of November 2021.

¹¹⁵⁴ ALBRIGHT H., David and STRICKER, Andrea: **Revisiting South Africa’s nuclear weapons program: Its history, dismantlement, and lessons for today, *Op. Cit.***, p.281

¹¹⁵⁵ ALBRIGHT H., David and STRICKER, Andrea: **Revisiting South Africa’s nuclear weapons program: Its history, dismantlement, and lessons for today, *Ibid.***

¹¹⁵⁶ BAECKMANN VON Adolf, DILLON Gary and PERRICOS Demetrius, **Nuclear verification in South Africa. Verifying South Africa’s declared nuclear inventory, and the termination of its weapons programme, was a complex task**, IAEA Bulletin, 1994, Vol. 37, N.1, p.43

¹¹⁵⁷ MILLER L., Nicholas, **The Secret success of Nonproliferation sanctions**, International Organization, 2014, N.68, pp.913-944

the security threats Pretoria faced. "The timing of the decision shows how regional changes can powerfully influence national choices in the nuclear realm. The tripartite agreement between South Africa, Angola, and Cuba in December 1988 for a phased withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola, South Africa's granting of independence to Namibia in 1989, and the end of the Cold War contributed to the decision," T. V. Paul argues.¹¹⁵⁸

But according to President De Klerk himself, South Africa's nuclear reversal decision was the outcome of a set of factors, including his personal beliefs regarding the utility of nuclear weapons, the evolution of the regional dynamics, and the desire to end the international isolation of the country. During an interview with Uri Friedman, he outlined these reasons: "I felt that it's meaningless to use such a bomb in what was essentially a bush war. (...) With the coming down of the Berlin Wall, and the breakup of the U.S.S.R., the threat of Soviet communist expansionism fell away. (...) It was a combination of everything, but I can add to that that I wanted to end the isolation even before we finalized agreements through the constitutional negotiations. (...) All those factors brought us to the point where, even if you were a supporter of having nuclear weapons, the rationale for that fell away and the nature of [the] threats changed fundamentally."¹¹⁵⁹ As South Africa complied with all the international demands related to its controversial Apartheid policy and the related-nuclear program, it progressively regained its legitimate position in the international system. The election of Nelson Mandela as the country's first Black President was evidence that it had closed the Apartheid chapter of its history. Consequently, the US lifted the sanctions imposed on Pretoria¹¹⁶⁰ while the UN lifted all the arms embargos and removed the South African case from the SC table by adopting Resolution 919. What lessons can be learned from the South African nuclear issue?

¹¹⁵⁸ PAUL T., V: **Power versus prudence: Why nations forgo nuclear weapons**, Ithaca, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000, p.116. (Consulted online)

¹¹⁵⁹ FRIEDMAN, Uri, **Why one President gave up his country's nukes?**, *Op. Cit.*

¹¹⁶⁰ KEMPSTER, Norman, **Bush lifts economic sanctions on S. Africa: Apartheid: He sees 'irreversible' progress by Pretoria. Opponents in Congress plan no effort to undo the move**, The Los Angeles Times, July 11, 1991. Accessed on November 22, 2021 from <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-07-11-mn-2867-story.html>

6.5 SECTION V – THEORETICAL LESSONS FROM THE COERCIVE NUCLEAR DYNAMICS BETWEEN THE US AND SOUTH AFRICA.

As previously highlighted, the main goal of this chapter was to answer the main questions related to our research design: what were the objectives pursued by the US when they implemented their coercive policies against South Africa? What were coercive strategies adopted to achieve these objectives? What were the expected outcomes of the US after implementing its coercive strategies against South Africa? What were the actual outcomes at the end of the process, and why such outcomes? The analysis was conducted against the backdrop of our hypotheses: the exploitation by the US coercive strategies of the weaknesses of South Africa and the demonstration by Washington of a motivation to have a sustained campaign to compel Pretoria. Also, we would consider whether or not the US coercive strategies and threats were credible, proportionate and reciprocal to the South African response. Considering our theoretical lens (neoclassical realism), we would also highlight the transmitting-belt role played by the intervening variables between the independent variable (systemic pressures or international demands) and the dependent variable (foreign policy). This research design would help us to confirm the relevance of the following four ingredients regarding the implementation of a successful coercive strategy in the nuclear realm: the display by the coercer of strategic empathy towards its target, the formulation of clear and acceptable demands to the target, the display by the coercer of a higher resolve than the target to achieve his/her objective, and the offer of credible incentives to the target if he complies.

Regarding the coercive goals, the primary objective of the US was to compel Apartheid South Africa to undo its segregationist policy. However, shaped by the Cold War imperatives and the strategic role South Africa played in shielding the expansion of the Soviet Union in the Southern Africa region, the US did not adopt tough sanctions against the Apartheid regime as it did with the other Pariah States in the international system. Yet Pretoria did not only shine at the international level through its controversial race-based social and political policies. Indeed, thanks to its tremendous natural resource in Uranium, South Africa also played an incremental role in the emergence of the international nuclear regime. However, just like with Iran, Pretoria's alleged peaceful nuclear relied on components or devices with dual-use capabilities. Consequently, the second main goal of the US was to prevent South Africa from going nuclear. In short, the US had faced two core issues of its traditional foreign policy goals when interacting with South Africa: human rights and non-proliferation.

Concerning to the coercive strategies, together with other Great Powers, Washington opted essentially for a coercive denial strategy. Indeed, most of the multilateral sanctions adopted by the UNSC aimed first at depriving Pretoria of the logistical means

of its repressive policy toward minorities (Colored people) and Black people. Even unilateral sanctions like CAAA also followed a denial strategy pattern as it prevented the US companies from conducting business or even investing in sectors where the labor/working conditions did not respect certain human rights standards. Though this strategy targeted corporations involved directly or indirectly in the implementation of one of the two controversial issues mentioned above, they nevertheless failed to achieve their objectives.

And the causes of this failure are at least twofold: on the first hand, dictated by strategic imperatives, (economic, energy or geopolitical), the US adopted a contradictory behavior: while officially condemning the racial policies or the nuclear progress, it watered the initiatives taken by other actors in order to compel Pretoria to comply with the international demands, as it was the case with Reagan's attempt to soften the Congress stance regarding the adoption of the CAAA. But Reagan's behavior was not unprecedented; indeed, "as part of this policy, the Nixon administration relaxed the arms embargo and, while ostensibly criticizing apartheid in the media, abstained from key UN votes on anti-apartheid measures yet extended trade between the United States and South Africa."¹¹⁶¹ The second main cause of the failure of the US strategy is the crafting by Pretoria of counter-coercive strategies, which consisted mainly of circumventing the effects of the sanctions adopted by the UN or the US. Among those **circumventing** strategies stood **strategic opportunism**, which consisted of deviating away from the international attention on the country by presenting its incremental role in the management of strategic stakes. Other circumventing strategies consisted of **signing covert deals, capitalizing on the dual use of sensitive components, or dissimulating the actual nature/origins of the imported items**

Regarding the expected mechanisms, by adopting the coercive sanctions, the US expected South Africa to experience a **power-base erosion**. Indeed, the calculus was that the more sanctions were imposed, the more the leader will suffer from the criticism of its core supports both in the bureaucratic establishment and in public opinion. But the contrary actually happened, as South African leaders could capitalize on the sanctions to foster White nationalism in the governing group of the population and other affiliated national companies. As André Wessels and Lauren Marx put it, "the growth of the domestic arms industry was cited by the government as evidence of the "failure" of the sanctions campaign, and thus, by implication, of any further sanctions efforts. Indeed, the government claimed that the "creative response" of South African talent and industry had been such that the actual effect of the arms embargo had been the reverse of what had originally been intended – and that the embargo had thus been

¹¹⁶¹ GOLDSTONE, Richard, **Ambiguity and America: South Africa and US Foreign Policy**, in MACK, Arien (Ed.): **Their America: The US in the eyes of the rest of the world**, *Op. Cit.*, p.815

undermined.”¹¹⁶² This counter-coercive strategy illustrates the strategic role of **State-society relations**, one of the two main intervening variables of our theoretical model (neoclassical realism) in this chapter. The importance of the previously mentioned intervening variable explains why Armscor could develop an underground smuggling network which could help it to acquire sensitive devices from the black market without forgetting the strategic role played by countries like Israel.

Another coercive counter-strategy developed by South African leaders like P. W. Botha is the **framing strategy** which consisted of picturing the Black social revendication’s as echoes of the Soviet propaganda. This mechanism undoubtedly achieved its intended goal in a country with a deeply rooted laager mentality. This framing strategy is closely related to the **leaders’ perceptions**, the second intervening variable of the neoclassical realism that transpired in the coercive dynamics between the two main protagonists in this chapter. Indeed, South African leaders’ security perceptions profoundly shaped the nature of their answers to the US demands regarding Apartheid and nuclear policies. However, the risks of a Soviet invasion were not the only security driver of the South African leaders’ perceptions. Pretoria was also aware of the US reluctance to impose crippling sanctions against its economy or take military initiatives that could threaten the regime’s security. This awareness mainly explains their persistent defiant policy toward the US demands. Hence, one can conclude with Thomas Schelling that “deterrent threats are a matter of resolve, impetuosity, plain obstinacy, or, as the anarchist put it, sheer character.”¹¹⁶³ In other words, as Alexander George described it: “coercive diplomacy is more likely to be successful if the side employing it is more highly motivated by what is at stake in the crisis than its opponent.”¹¹⁶⁴

As this chapter has demonstrated, the importance of the leader’s perceptions as mentioned above support the relevance of our choice of Whytock and Jentlesson’s analytical model of the success of coercive diplomacy (credibility, proportionality and reciprocity). For, Washington’s actions or inactions towards Apartheid South Africa explain Pretoria’s continuous defiant policy. Did Washington wield **credible** threats to address the Apartheid and nuclear policy? No! As the previous analysis has demonstrated, the economic sanctions adopted by Washington did not substantially impact South Africa’s decisions. The arms embargo, the only military leverage wielded by Washington, was easily circumvented by South Africa. The strategic imperative of the Cold War largely explains Washington’s softness toward Pretoria. Indeed, South Africa was a decisive ally of the US in its strategic battle against the Soviet Union. This

¹¹⁶² WESSELS André and MARX Lauren, **The 1977 United Nations mandatory arms embargo against South Africa: a historical perspective after 30 years**, *Op. Cit.*, pp.75-76

¹¹⁶³ SCHELLING, Thomas: **Arms and influence**, *Op. Cit.*, p.42

¹¹⁶⁴ GEORGE L., Alexander: **Forceful persuasion: coercive diplomacy as an alternative to war**, *Op. Cit.*, p.77

was evidenced by President Reagan's reluctance to impose tougher sanctions against Pretoria. Conscious of this strategic role of their country, South African leaders confidently defied the US demands to undo their controversial policies (Apartheid and nuclear proliferation). Logically, Washington did not back its demands towards Pretoria with **proportional** threats, as demonstrated by the nature of the coercive instruments wielded by Washington. Regarding the last variable (reciprocity), Washington's reciprocal actions to Pretoria's goodwill gestures happened after South Africa's decision to acknowledge the existence and destruction of the nuclear weapons and the abolition of the Apartheid regime; but all these actions were driven by specific factors.

Regarding the causes of the reversal of South Africa's nuclear program, contradicting schools of thought shared their point of view. While the sanctions undoubtedly played a role in shaping the calculus of the leaders, they did not play a major role in the decision to roll back the nuclear weapons program. The empirical evidence of our argument is that the more sanctions were imposed, the more the defense budget increased, and the more South Africa developed its nuclear warheads. This means that the decision to disarm was the result of a combination of several factors. Yet, as President De Klerk argued, two main variables played a decisive role in that decision: first was the regional dynamics which are related to one of the main causes of the beginning of the nuclear program, second is the role of the leadership. Indeed, as we previously analyzed, though achieving a nuclear capability was a shared goal among all the predecessors of President De Klerk, each of them had a single approach to coping with external pressure or conducting the country's foreign policy. . Also noteworthy is the fact that unlike his predecessors who were oppositional nationalists, President De Klerk can be considered as a *sportsmanlike subaltern* leader.¹¹⁶⁵ This conclusion confirms also Rupal Mehta's argument of the instrumental role of new leaders' preferences in the achievement of a nuclear reversal objective.¹¹⁶⁶

In the case of President De Klerk, the role of the leadership was even more visible since he did not perceive either the military or the political utility of nuclear weapons in the beginning. Therefore, the other variables like economic incentives or bureaucratic considerations were only added values in his original vision. This case study also demonstrated the relevance of our four ingredients regarding the implementation of a successful coercive strategy. In this case, the coercer did not display either a **higher resolve** than its target or **strategic empathy**, as the US did understand the importance of the perceived security threat posed by the Soviet Union; closely related is the role of

¹¹⁶⁵ Sportsmanlike subaltern usually would lack either the motivation or the certitude required to take such a dramatic step as building the bomb. See HYMANS E. C., Jacques: *The Psychology of nuclear proliferation: Identity, emotions and foreign policy*, *Op. Cit.*, p.14

¹¹⁶⁶ MEHTA N., Rupal: *Delaying doomsday: The politics of nuclear reversal*, *Op. Cit.*, p.27

this perceived threat in fostering the Apartheid regime's legitimacy and its nuclear behavior, which made the US **demands unacceptable**. Hence, only the **credible incentives** variable transpired explicitly, though the timing was perfect with the election of President De Klerk, who had different perceptions compared to his predecessors. Providing credible security incentives, such as the US nuclear umbrella, could have nullified the relevance of the Soviet argument in South Africa's domestic politics. Based on the previous elements, one could therefore conclude that providing incentives to the leader not to pursue his/her nuclear pattern is one of the best ways to prevent nuclear proliferation. As Frederick De Klerk observed, "inner conviction weighs heavier on the scale than international pressure."¹¹⁶⁷

Like in the Libyan chapter, before the concluding chapter of the thesis, we summarized the findings of the coercive nuclear dynamics between Washington and Pretoria in the following table. Indeed, table 17 encapsulates the substance of the previously mentioned interactions by highlighting the main actors (sender and target), the driving factors behind the target's controversial actions (the building of the nuclear program), the international context under which the interactions occurred, the issue at stakes between the protagonist overtime, the goals of the sender, its coercive strategy, the instruments used to implement its strategy, the expected outcomes of its strategy, the actual outcomes after the implementation of the coercive strategy, the reasons and mechanisms behind the actual outcomes of the coercive dynamics between the protagonists, and lastly, the nature of the demands formulated by the sender or coercer.

¹¹⁶⁷ FRIEDMAN, Uri, **Why one President gave up his country's nukes?**, *Op. Cit.*

COERCER	TARGET	ISSUE	DRIVERS OF THE TARGET	OBJECTIVES	INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT	STRATEGY	INSTRUMENT	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	ACTUAL OUTCOMES	MECHANISMS	NATURE OF THE DEMANDS	
USA (EU, UN)	South Africa (1948-1990)	South Africa's Apartheid Policy: (1948-1990)	Security threat (White minority vs Black majority)	Undoing the Apartheid policy	Cold War	Denial	Unilateral trade sanctions (C.A.A.A), military sanctions	Undoing of the Apartheid policy thanks to power-base erosion.	Continuation of the Apartheid policy.	US sending mixed signals and clear lack of resolve. Instrumentalization of sanctions to foster White nationalism.	Weak and unacceptable.	
										Arms smuggling and role of circuit breakers like Israel.	No offer of incentives.	
			Security threat (White minority vs Black majority)			Denial	European public condemnation Legal instruments (Visa bans and the adoption of the Code of conduct of EC companies in South Africa.) Adoption of trade sanctions (oil ban), military sanctions.	Undoing of the Apartheid policy	Continuation of the Apartheid policy.	The shielding effect of the economic relation between the US and South Africa.	Weak and unacceptable.	
											No offer of incentives.	

South Africa (1948-1990)	Apartheid Policy: (1948-1990)	Security threat (White minority vs Black majority)	Undoing the Apartheid policy	the	Cold War	Multilateral trade sanctions (UNSC Resolutions)	Undoing of the Apartheid policy tanks to power-base erosion.	Minor domestic reforms but overall continuation of the Apartheid policy.	Framing strategy, instrumentalization of dual use technology, disinformation strategies.	Weak and unacceptable. No offer of incentives.
South Africa (1948-1990)	Nuclear Weapons (1977-1990)	Security threat (siege mentality with the Soviet led hostile neighbourhood)	Preventing South Africa from acquiring nuclear weapons	Denial		Limited political pressures (political condemnations). Arms embargo	Halting the improvement of South Africa's nuclear weapons program.	Continuation of the country's nuclear weapons program	Lack of a firm resolve from the US to compel South Africa. Circumventing strategies (covert deals, acquisition of dual-use sensitive equipment, disinformation of the actual nature of the imported or transferred equipment computers or technology.	Acceptable and presence of incentive (security guarantee with the end of the Cold War in 1990)

Table 18: Findings of the coercive dynamics between the US and South Africa.