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SPECIAL ISSUE ON

NEW HISTORIES OF ANTI-NUCLEAR ACTIVISM IN AFRICA

GUEST EDITED by Anna-Mart van Wyk, Luc-André Brunet and Eirini Karamouzi

The Thinker

A PAN - AFRICAN QUARTERLY FOR THOUGHT LEADERS

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The University of Johannesburg acquired *The Thinker* in April 2019 from Dr Essop Pahad. Over the last decade, *The Thinker* has gained a reputation as a journal that explores Pan-African issues across fields and times. Ronit Frenkel, as the incoming editor, plans on maintaining the pan-African scope of the journal while increasing its coverage into fields such as books, art, literature and popular cultures. *The Thinker* is a 'hybrid' journal, publishing both journalistic pieces with more academic articles and contributors can now opt to have their submissions peer reviewed. We welcome Africa-centred articles from diverse perspectives, in order to enrich both knowledge of the continent and of issues impacting the continent.



Prof Ronit Frenkel

Nedine Moonsamy is an associate professor in the English department at the University of Johannesburg. She is currently writing a monograph on contemporary South African Fiction and otherwise conducts research on science fiction in Africa. Her debut novel, *The Unfamous Five* (Modjaji Books, 2019) was shortlisted for the HSS Fiction Award (2021), and her poetry was shortlisted for the inaugural New Contrast National Poetry Award (2021).



Nedine Moonsamy

Silindile Ngcobo is an English Literary Scholar with research interests spanning across Black feminist theory, Black radical thought, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Gender Studies. Apart from being a scholar, Ngcobo works as a full-time high school English Home Language teacher under the Gauteng Department of Basic Education since 2019. In 2019, Ngcobo also dabbled in journalism and writing under the *Rising Sun* (Lenasia).



Silindile Ngcobo

ABOUT THE COVER IMAGE



All contributing analysts write in their personal capacity

Luc-André Brunet is a Senior Lecturer in Contemporary International History at The Open University in the UK and Co-Director of the Peace and Security Project at LSE IDEAS. He earned his PhD in International History at LSE and has since held visiting fellowships at the University of Cambridge, Sciences Po (Paris) and the University of Ottawa. His research focuses on the dynamics between peace and anti-nuclear activism, on the one hand, and policymaking and diplomacy, on the other. He is the Principal Investigator of the AHRC-funded project 'Global Histories of Peace and Anti-Nuclear Activism' and is currently completing a book on Canada, the global nuclear order and the end of the Cold War. He is also the editor of NATO and the Strategic Defence Initiative: A Transatlantic History of the Star Wars Programme and, with Eirini Karamouzi, a forthcoming volume entitled *Beyond the Euromissiles: Global Histories of Anti-Nuclear Activism in the Cold War*.

Renfrew Christie spied on the Apartheid Nuclear Weapons Programme, for the African National Congress. Imprisoned as a terrorist for over seven years in Pretoria, he was in solitary confinement for over seven months; and on death row for two and a half years. He listened to some 300 hangings.

Christie is a Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa; and a Member of the Academy of Science of South Africa. For 24 years, he was the Dean of Research at the University of the Western Cape. For ten years, he was cleared for Top Secret and was an Adviser to the South African Minister of Defence, on the Defence Force Service Commission. He was Professor of History in the University of Kentucky, Spring Semester, 2015.

Christie's 1979 Oxford DPhil treated the Electrification of South Africa. His handwriting was on the second draft of the South African Bill of Rights. He was Chair of the Board of Trustees of South Africa's premier Human Rights Law unit, the UWC Community Law Centre. He co-founded the Macro Economic Research Group and the National Institute for Economic policy, which helped set South Africa's economy right after Apartheid. He holds the *Certificate of Commendation* of the Chief

of the South African Navy, for work "which helped to make the SA Navy the navy the people need."

Christie held visiting fellowships in the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C.; the Stiftung für Wissenschaft und Politik, then in Ebenhausen; and the Indian Ocean Peace Centre, in Perth, Western Australia. He has addressed the Groupe Crises of the Institut de France on the Quai de Conti, Paris. He has twice addressed meetings in the Pentagon. He is co-author of *Doing Global Science: A Guide to Responsible Conduct in the Global Research Enterprise* (Princeton University Press, 2016), a book on scientific research ethics, which gained the imprimatur of almost all the Academies of Science on earth.

Nola Dippenaar completed a BSc and BSc Hons at the University of Stellenbosch, majoring in Chemistry and Physiology, followed by an MSc in Physiology. She earned a second Masters degree, this time in Biochemistry, from Cambridge University in the UK. On her return from the UK she commenced with her lecturing career at Medunsa, where she completed her PhD working in the field of essential fatty acids and cancer. She was appointed as Professor during this period. In 1999 she moved across to the medical school at the University of Pretoria, where she was responsible for the integration of Physiology and Biochemistry in the undergraduate and postgraduate medical courses.

She has been voted lecturer of the year by the UP medical and dental students on two occasions, and she has delivered many local and overseas papers at various conferences. She is presently the Chair of the SA National Pugwash Group – a division of the International Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs. Her present main area of research and interest lies in the field of Insulin Resistance and Metabolic Syndrome, in the field of Functional Medicine. She consults privately to companies and individuals on the physiology and biochemistry of the human body; including health aspects, all of which empowers individuals to take responsibility for their health. To this end she has established a company called "Health Insight" in April 2006, and up to 2013 was an extraordinary Professor with the

Department of Physiology, School of Medicine, University of Pretoria. Presently as Professor Emeritus (UP), she has now also opened a second office in Cape Town, and a third office in Bettys Bay, dividing her time between these 3 locations.

Keith Gottschalk is an Adjunct Professor of Political Studies at the University of the Western Cape. He was a Fulbright Scholar in 2009-2010, and retired in 2011. He is an alumni of the University of Cape Town. He has over forty scholarly peer-reviewed publications. The latest is “African Integration: Six Decades of Successes and Failures”, published in the Journal of the Institute for African Studies. In 2006, as HoD of the Political Studies Department at UWC, he hosted the annual conference of the South African Association of Political Studies. He frequently contributes commentary to the media and publishes analyses in *The Conversation*. He has also brought out two poetry collections: *Emergency Poems* (1992) and *Cosmonauts do it in Heaven* (2022). He helps run the literary magazine *New Contrast*, and the *Off-the-Wall* Monday night virtual poetry readings. In 2023, Keith was awarded the Order of Ikhamanga: Silver “for using his creativity to draw critical attention to oppressive and unjust laws through performative political poetry. His work provided strength and motivated many people to fight for liberation.” He was detained without trial during the 1985 State of Emergency, and was an activist in several civil rights organisations during the twentieth century.

Mike Kantey graduated with majors in English and isiXhosa from the University of Cape Town in the early 1980s. He started out as an editor in the African languages for the schools’ market, with what was then Longman Penguin (now Pearson Education), before joining David Philip Publishers in the late 1980s. During that time, he doubled up as an anti-nuclear activist, and was elected Chairman of the Tenants’ Committee at Community House. In the 1990s, Mike started his own media & development company, Watercourse, which acted as a consultant for book publishing, magazines, and newspapers. At the same time, his work in the environmental sector brought him into research, strategic planning, evaluations, and fundraising for a range of sectors, including mining & energy;

water & sanitation, solid waste management, safety & security; and food security.

After facilitating a delegation of Western Cape activists to the 2002 World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg as part of the Environmental Justice Networking Forum, Mike was invited by the European Greens to attend the P7 Summit in Nairobi, hosted by the late Wangari Ma’athai’s Green Belt Movement. In 2009, he was a South African delegate to the founding conference of the African Anti-Uranium Mining Alliance in Tanzania, before being appointed National Chairperson of the South African Coalition Against Nuclear Energy (CANE).

In 2007, Mike moved to the coastal resort town of Plettenberg Bay, where he initiated the Watermark Press, a specialised service agency for self-publishing authors, limited to under 500 units at a time.

Eirini Karamouzi is Professor of Contemporary European History at the American College of Greece/University of Sheffield. She is the author of *Greece, the EEC and the Cold War: The Second Enlargement* (2014) and co-editor of *The Balkans in the Cold War* (2017). She has held fellowships at EUI, LSE, Yale University, and the University of Tampere. She has published extensively on issues relating to the Cold War, peace mobilization and civil society in Southern Europe. She co-directs an AHRC network grant on global histories of peace and anti-nuclear activism.

Chloë Mayoux is a global historian of technology and empire, currently serving as a Postdoctoral Fellow in History and Public Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School. She completed her PhD in International History at the London School of Economics, which included a Visiting Fellowship at Sciences Po Paris’s Centre for History. Based on archival work in Europe and Africa, her dissertation examined the relationship between the nuclear age and decolonisation. Chloë holds a BA in European Studies from King’s College London, a Certificate in International Affairs & Strategy from Sciences Po Paris, and a Master’s in Global and Imperial History from the University of Oxford.

Abdul S. Minty was born in Hartebeesfontein on the 31st of October 1939, in what is now called the

Limpopo Province. He grew up in Johannesburg and left South Africa in 1958 for Britain to join the anti-apartheid movement and pursue his studies. He holds a BSc (Econ) degree in International Relations (University College, London) and a MSc (Econ) in International Relations from the same institution.

Minty was a stalwart of the anti-apartheid struggle, and he played an instrumental role in exposing the apartheid government's nuclear armaments programme. He was a leading figure in South Africa's unique role internationally as an exemplar of voluntarily dismantling its nuclear armaments in the interests of world peace (the first country in the world to have done so) and the use of science for human development, rather than destruction. He played a pioneering role in the development of South Africa's principled position on advancing the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and on the need for nuclear weapon states to disarm in a transparent and verifiable manner.

Between 1962 and 1994, Minty was the Honorary Secretary of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement, and he played a central role in exposing and isolating the apartheid state and supporting the struggle against apartheid. Amongst others, he worked for the International Defence and Aid Fund, which provided legal and humanitarian support for those fighting against the apartheid state.

Minty also led the lobbying of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which was instrumental in securing South Africa's suspension from the Olympic movement, and the wider sports boycott against the apartheid state. As apartheid South Africa rapidly built up its military strength, he undertook research on its defence establishment and the support it received from external sources. His study of South Africa's Defence Strategy, published in 1969, attracted wide attention and helped develop the campaign by the Anti-Apartheid Movement for the abrogation of the Simonstown Agreement between Britain and South Africa and the ending of all military links with South Africa. Minty was called to give evidence as an individual expert on four occasions to the United Nations (UN) Security Council Arms Embargo Committee between 1977 and 1994. From 1979 to 1994, he

was the Director of the World Campaign against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa. During this period, he worked closely with the African Group, the Non-Aligned Movement, and other members of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) over South Africa's nuclear programme and lobbied for sanctions against the regime. He was instrumental in the removal of South Africa from the designated seat for Africa on the IAEA Board of Governors.

In the post-apartheid period, Minty was a key advisor to South Africa's delegation at the 1995 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and then led South Africa's delegation at the subsequent Review Conferences in 2000 and 2005. He played a pioneering role in the development of South Africa's principled position on advancing the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and on the need for nuclear weapon states to immediately disarm in a transparent and verifiable manner. In 2006, Minty was elected president of the IAEA's General Conference, which marked the beginning of activities commemorating the IAEA's 50th anniversary.

One of Minty's keen interests at the IAEA was nuclear safeguards, and he was drawn into re-establishing trust between the Agency, some of its key members and the Republic of Iran. At one point he was the only board member who could talk to both sides in this stand-off. In the post-apartheid period, Minty had a distinguished career in the public service in South Africa. He was the Deputy Director-General: Ambassador and Special Representative: Disarmament in South Africa's Department of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador Minty chaired the South African Council for the Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, he was a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors as well as a member of the Board of the South African Nuclear Energy Corporation of South Africa (NECSA). He took a special interest in promoting programmes applying nuclear technology in development, for example in agriculture, public health, and hydrology. Minty further chaired the Space Council and the Non-Proliferation Council for several years, holding these positions because of his deep understanding of multilateralism and

his thorough knowledge of global security and its connections with trade. Minty was also the South Africa's Ambassador and Head of the South African mission to the United Nations in Geneva and the Personal Representative of the President to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Steering Committee and the representative of the Department of Foreign Affairs on the National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC). In recognition of his long-standing contributions to the struggle against apartheid, he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate Degree by the University of the Witwatersrand in 2023.

Joelien Pretorius is a Professor in the Department of Political Studies at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa, where she teaches International Relations and Security Studies. She holds a PhD from the University of Cambridge (UK) and is on the executive committee of the South African chapter of Pugwash. Her research focuses foremost on nuclear politics, but she also publishes more broadly on security and foreign policy.

Melanie Reddiar is Head of the Secretariat to the South African Council for the Nonproliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, which is the regulatory body responsible for implementation of South Africa's nonproliferation obligations. With over 20 years of experience in strategic trade controls, specialised knowledge in counter-proliferation mechanisms, and qualifications in Chemistry, Biotechnology and Management, Melanie leads the Secretariat in implementing South Africa's international and national nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction obligations. In this role, she works closely with non-proliferation stakeholders both nationally and internationally. At the national level, Melanie facilitates technical and outreach activities for industry compliance with the regulatory systems that the Council oversees. At the international level, Melanie has represented South Africa in various roles at meetings of the different treaties and conventions and multilateral export control regimes covering nuclear, chemical, biological weapons as well as missile / delivery systems. Melanie is also a PhD student in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Johannesburg.

Michaelan Sinnett is a master's student in the Department of Political Studies at the University of the Western Cape. She received her BA and honours degree in Political Studies at UWC. She has a deep-seated interest in non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament, and nuclear verification. Michaelan is passionate about exploring the role that civil society can play in advancing nuclear disarmament initiatives. Her current research focuses on developing effective strategies for nuclear disarmament verification to ensure global compliance with disarmament treaties.

Noël Stott is a Senior Researcher for VERTIC's Verification and Monitoring Programme with a current focus on harnessing and sustaining countries' capacity to contribute to nuclear disarmament verification (NDV). The project aims to support long term capacity-building and education and to help foster a new generation of nuclear experts in regions of the Global South by developing a network of research and innovation 'hubs' that will contribute to NDV nationally, regionally and internationally. For more than 14 years, prior to joining VERTIC. Noel worked for the African-based Institute for Security Studies' on the challenges facing African States by the proliferation of conventional weapons and items related to weapons of mass destruction. In 2007, he established and led the ISS' programme on 'Africa's Development and the Threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction.' This programme aimed to enhance Africa's role in international efforts to strengthen weapons of mass destruction disarmament and non-proliferation initiatives in the context of Africa's developmental imperatives through the provision of primary research, policy recommendations and training activities.

Anna-Mart van Wyk is a nuclear historian and Professor of International Relations at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. Her doctoral thesis investigated the implementation of the 1977 United States arms embargo against South Africa and its impact on US-South African relations. She subsequently went on to specialise in South Africa's nuclear history, and teaches courses in international conflict and arms control and disarmament. Her multi-national archival research has been published in numerous international publications and she is a regular invited speaker at

international conferences. She is a former Public Policy Scholar of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and a collaborator in various international research projects, including the Nuclear Proliferation International History Project (NPIHP), the Consortium on Rewriting the History of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and Global Histories of Peace and Anti-Nuclear Activism. She is also a member of the African Nuclear Disarmament Verification Hub.

Jo-Ansie van Wyk is a Research Professor in International Politics, Department of Political Sciences, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa. She has published widely on South Africa's nuclear history and contemporary nuclear-related developments, as well as the country's nuclear diplomacy, and foreign policy. Her latest book is *Key Issues in African Diplomacy: Developments and Achievements* (Bristol University Press, 2024), co-edited with Sven Botha.

Rodney Wilkinson planted four bombs inside the Koeberg nuclear power station in Cape Town in 1982. It was a meticulously planned act of sabotage as part of ANC military wing uMkhonto weSizwe's struggle against apartheid. It was the only act of 'nuclear terrorism' ever carried out on the African continent. It caused damages of at least R500-million and pushed the start-up of the power station back with almost two years. uMkhonto weSizwe listed the event as one of its greatest triumphs, and it has been described as one of only a few successful attacks on nuclear facilities in world history. Wilkinson's identity as the so-called 'Koeberg bomber' was only made public in 1995. He was pardoned and worked for the National Intelligence Agency for much of his post-apartheid career.

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FOREWORD



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By the Guest Editors, Anna-Mart van Wyk, University of Johannesburg,
Luc-André Brunet, The Open University, Eirini Karamouzi, University of Sheffield.

Africa's role in nuclear debates and in opposing nuclear weapons is at once consequential and overlooked. Since the 1996 Treaty of Pelindaba, the African continent has been a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ), providing a powerful example of opposition to nuclear weapons on the world stage. More recently, African governments have played leading roles in the implementation of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), with the aim of worldwide nuclear disarmament. Nuclear debates are becoming more pressing in a number of African countries, as Rosatom, Russia's state-owned nuclear power company, is building or plans to build new nuclear power plants in Egypt, Burkina Faso, Kenya and Rwanda, amongst others. In South Africa, plans are underway to increase nuclear energy to 2,500 megawatts, while the Koeberg Nuclear Power Station is undergoing

refurbishment in order to extend its operating life to 2045.

Despite Africa's importance in these nuclear debates, the continent's nuclear history remains relatively unfamiliar. South Africa occupies an important place in the scholarly literature on nuclear history. It is the only African country to have developed its own nuclear weapons. It also remains the only country in the world that has chosen to unilaterally dismantle its own nuclear weapons, a landmark decision in the history of nuclear disarmament. It has also played a leading role in the history of nuclear power in Africa, with the Koeberg Nuclear Power Station being the first – and to date, the only – nuclear power plant on the continent.

While South African nuclear history is an exciting field, existing studies have largely focused on its

political, diplomatic and scientific dimensions. By contrast, the study of civil society and particularly of activism against nuclear weapons or nuclear power in South Africa has been largely overlooked. This is equally true of anti-nuclear activism elsewhere in Africa, which remains strikingly understudied.

Meanwhile, recent years have seen an exciting proliferation of studies of anti-nuclear and peace activism during the Cold War. The focus of these studies has overwhelmingly remained on Western Europe and the United States, however, with an emerging literature on anti-nuclear activism in the Pacific. Africa, by contrast, has received scant attention by historians of anti-nuclear activism. In his landmark three-volume study of the world nuclear disarmament movement, for example, Lawrence Wittner in *Toward Nuclear Abolition: A History of the World Disarmament Movement, 1971 to the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), devotes a single paragraph to the continent, noting that “the movement had little presence in Africa” and suggesting “the nuclear arms race had less relevance and many other issues seemed more urgent” (Wittner, 2003: 13).

This special issue addresses these lacunae by exploring the history of anti-nuclear activism in Africa, with a particular focus on South Africa. In an effort to de-centre the history of anti-nuclear activism, the editors of this special issue and other academics around the world set up the research project ‘Global Histories of Peace and Anti-Nuclear activism’, funded by the British Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). As part of this project, we organised a two-day workshop hosted at the Johannesburg Institute of Advanced Study at the University of Johannesburg in April 2023. The workshop marked what we believe is the first academic event in South Africa that brought together academics, activists, and policymakers, to discuss the issue of anti-nuclear activism. These fruitful exchanges between scholars and stakeholders were revelatory for those present, and we have sought to capture the diversity of views and methods in this special issue. As such, this special issue includes cutting-edge research by leading and emerging scholars, opinion pieces and personal reflections by activists, and the testimony of those involved in some of the continent’s most

consequential acts of anti-nuclear activism. This plurality of voices and approaches provides a multi-faceted and unprecedented analysis of anti-nuclear activism in Africa.

The special issue opens with four peer-reviewed articles by academics. Anna-Mart van Wyk and Jo-Ansie van Wyk explore the anti-nuclear weapons position and activism of the African National Congress (ANC) throughout the apartheid era. Chloë Mayoux explores the diplomatic ramifications of France’s nuclear weapons testing in Algeria in 1960—tests which stoked the rise of anti-nuclear sentiment in Africa. Turning to the contemporary period, Micaelin Sinnett and Joeliën Pretorius analyse the role of African transnational civil society in the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and the TPNW. Concluding this section, Melanie Reddiar reviews South Africa’s non-proliferation policy and strategic trade controls. These four research articles all focus on the overlooked importance of anti-nuclear positions and activism in Africa since the beginning of the nuclear age.

The second section of this special issue consists of four eyewitness accounts by those with first-hand knowledge and experience of anti-nuclear activism in Africa. Nola Dippenaar and Joeliën Pretorius discuss African involvement in Pugwash, the international and Nobel Peace Prize-winning organisation working for nuclear disarmament in an opinion piece. This is followed by Noël Stott’s account of the development of the Treaty of Pelindaba, which established Africa as a NWFZ. Mike Kantey explains the formation and development of Koeberg Alert and the movement to stop nuclear power in South Africa since the 1980s. Keith Gottschalk analyses the changing dynamics of decision-making around nuclear policy in South Africa from the apartheid era to the present. Together, these accounts highlight the importance of African activism against nuclear weapons and nuclear power during and after the Cold War.

The final section features testimonies of those responsible for some of the most significant incidents of anti-nuclear activism in South Africa and indeed in Africa as a whole. Abdul S. Minty, a

distinguished diplomat, explains his work leading the World Campaign Against Military and Nuclear Collaboration with South Africa. Working in exile during the apartheid era, Minty worked through the UN, the IAEA and the Commonwealth, among others, to raise awareness of South Africa's covert nuclear weapons programme and to prevent countries from aiding the regime's military and especially nuclear programmes. Next, Renfrew Christie and Rodney Wilkinson share their recollections of how they bombed the Koeberg Nuclear Power Plant, then still under construction,

in 1982. These fascinating oral histories provide unprecedented insights into the nature of anti-nuclear activism in South Africa, and particularly how this was inseparable from opposition to the apartheid regime.

Taken together, this special issue provides the most wide-ranging account to date of anti-nuclear activism in Africa. It should be of interest to scholars, activists and members of the public, and it is our hope that it encourages future research on this important topic.