This article examines the cultural distinction of technical/political that appears specific to the global political order in the long twentieth century. The technical/political distinction is not only important for theories of rational governance but has also played a defining role as an analytic in social scientific scholarship. It has been the insight of the scholarly literature on STS and the history of science and technology that distinguishing between politics and technology is generally an ideological move, especially for important "state-building" technoscientific projects such as nuclear technologies. Furthermore, this literature tends to assert that the two domains are not, in fact, separable, but mutually constitutive, whether that is in the idiom of "coproduction" or defined as "technopolitical." In this article, I will bring insights from the theoretical contributions on language ideology in linguistic anthropology to bear on this cultural distinction, examining it—as Susan Gal has done for the private/public distinction—as an ideology of differentiation. I will show how this cultural distinction is semiotically maintained, particularly drawing attention to the ideological effects of the distinction and its political consequences. This article also mobilizes the notion of "bureaucratic objectivity" as a key anchor of the technical/political distinction for projects of technocratic governance, and explores a controversy around the transformation of knowledge practices at the International Atomic Energy Agency where the technical/political distinction becomes salient. I will analyze the ways that the distinction is mapped onto people, places, and activities using examples from the IAEA's Department of Safeguards.