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## EFFECTIVENESS OF SANCTION POLITICS : THE CASE OF SOUTH AFRICA

Since the beginning of the twentieth century international sanction has made well its way in world politics. The word "sanction" which originated in Roman law implying a punishment imposed upon a person who violated the law, of course continues to be used in this narrow sense, particularly in municipal law.<sup>1</sup>

Sanction has been defined also in a wider sense, meaning "any measure taken in support of a social order regulating human behaviour."<sup>2</sup> The purpose of a sanction in general is to set a behavioral pattern in conformity with the standards of a given society and to prevent that pattern considered inconsistent with the set goals and standards. Sanctions, in addition to functioning as a mechanism of social control, also serve to integrate a society, affirming collectively-set norms and restating their validity when breached. Therefore, sanctions have both positive and normative values which include not only organised penalties of law, but also informal scorn by members of a community. Further, in terms of the nature of sanctions, they may be diffuse, that is spontaneous expressions by members of the group acting as individuals, or organised, actions that follow traditional and recognised procedures.

1. *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: The Macmillan Company and the Free Press, 1972), Vol. 14, p. 5.
2. Hans Kelsen, "Collective Security under International Law", *International Law Studies* (Washington: Govt. Printing Office, 1957) p. 101.



In international politics, the term "sanction" is customarily used in a wider sense involving the efforts of the international community to force a law-breaking state to comply with international law when diplomatic and legal techniques of dispute settlement have failed. The punitive measures may be directed unilaterally or collectively against some individually or collectively perceived deviant states not conforming to broadly-prescribed norms and standards either in its internal or external behaviour which pose threats to international peace and security. There is debate over effectiveness of sanctions in global politics because the organisation of sanctions in support of an international order faces a special difficulty in the absence of an enforcing authority unlike within a state where enforcement is done by appropriate agencies. Besides, nation-states in their external behaviour are guided by the concern of preserving and promoting national interests. Therefore, in the absence of an international authority to enforce the law, imposition of sanctions depends upon the degree of consensus within the international community and upon the willingness of each state to accept the share of responsibility to uphold the law.

For last several decades there has been an international clamour for imposition of wide-ranging sanctions against South Africa to end its policy of apartheid. The question of apartheid has been on the agenda of the UN General Assembly since 1952 and it has been recognized as an affront on human dignity and civilization posing a serious threat to global peace and security. Other international organizations and regional groupings are also in favour of sanctions against South Africa, so far to no effective avail due to counter arguments by some powerful quarters that sanctions would not work in case of South Africa.

Meanwhile the present situation in South Africa again called for renewed and vigorous action on the part of the international community. The country has been virtually in a state of siege for the last two years. Spiralling violence and repression are order of the day.



Internal dynamics of South Africa, both economically and politically, seems to be weakening to withstand the onslaught of international pressure. This has added new impetus to sanction lobby in all the international organisations and major world capitals. Therefore it is aposite to examine the effectiveness of sanctions against South Africa, bringing forth both its external and internal dynamics.

It is argued that while scholars have so far extensively dealt with the legal and organisational issues involved in the operation of a system of sanctions, relatively little attention has been given to the effects of sanctions upon the target states as well as those states joining in their application. Keeping this focus and scope in perspective, the first part of the paper briefly reviews some of the experiences of sanctions in global politics. The second part attempts to bring out the stakes of major involved countries in, and hence, their approaches, toward sanctions against South Africa, while the last part analyses the likely effects of sanctions on the internal dynamics of South Africa.

### Experience of Sanctions

Customary international law in the past has allowed the right of states to take unilateral action in support of their claims if settlement is not achieved through negotiation. These measures included withdrawal of diplomatic representatives and acts of reprisal including political, military and economic. Under the Covenant of the League of Nations, provision was made under Article 10 for joint guarantee of Member-States against external aggression and in Article 16 for sweeping economic and financial sanctions to be applied by every member against any State resorting to war in violation of its obligations under the Covenant. However, military sanctions under the Covenant were optional upon recommendation of the League Council.<sup>3</sup>

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3. *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, op. cit.* p. 6.



The concept of sanctions in the UN Charter was carried over from the League Covenant, but the Charter adopted a different approach to the issue. In cases of threats to the peace, breaches of the peace or acts of aggression, the Security Council may take decisions requiring members to apply collective measures, such as, interruption of economic relations, means of communication, severance of diplomatic relations and action by air, sea or land forces.<sup>4</sup> The Implementation of military sanctions was made dependent upon creation of an international armed force under the Security Council.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the delinquent states may be suspended and expelled from the Organisation.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it is evident that the Charter envisioned to involve deterrent sanctions (through the threat of force) for maintaining international peace and security.

However, the scope of prohibition for the use or threat of force under the Charter, combined with the lack of any effective enforcement provisions, has led some scholars to view that unilateral use of force is permissible as a sanction consistent with the purposes of the United Nations.<sup>7</sup> Whether such a view is justified or not, during the last several decades the world has witnessed innumerable instances of unilateral use of sanctions either individually or as a group against singular or plural targets. Therefore, from the point of view of sanctioning powers, sanctions can be divided into two broad groups: multilateral (adopted by the global organizations) and unilateral/bilateral (applied by a particular country or group of countries). Let us for elaboration first have a look at the experience of multilateral sanctions, adopted by the League and the UN.

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4. *UN Charter* (Articles 41 and 42).

5. *Ibid* (Art 43).

6. *Ibid* (Arts 5 and 6).

7. Julius Stone, *Aggression and World Order: A Critique of United Nations Theories of Aggression* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1958). pp. 94-95.



multilateral arrangements. Too much concentration on national interests as distinct from collective interests and lack of universality in the League membership doomed its failure in achieving any success in the collective security goals of the League, however vague they might have been. During the Italy-Ethiopian war of 1935, the League for the first time decided to apply economic sanctions against Italy. But the mild nature of sanctions, US refusal to cooperate, the conflicting interests of the sanctioning powers, particularly of Britain and France, could not ultimately frustrate Italian aggression. However, the application of limited economic and financial sanctions applied against Italy showed that international sanctions were technically feasible, given political will.

UN experience with sanctions also has not been encouraging. The Security Council as the executive organ has largely been prevented from using its power of sanctions by lack of unanimity and the use of veto by the permanent members. The first ever peace-enforcement in the Korean crisis of 1950 in absence of the USSR from the Council

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subsequently showed the impracticability of taking any action in direct opposition to a superpower. The 'Uniting for Peace' resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 3 November 1950 which empowered the Assembly to recommend collective enforcement measures also was not enthusiastically pursued for the same reason. However, the General Assembly in exercise of its broad power recommended on numerous occasions to members the adoption of various sanctions to bring the conduct of particular states, such as, Spain, North Korea and China, South Africa and Rhodesia into line with norms set by the Charter, UN resolutions and international law.



The racial problems of Rhodesia first submitted before the General Assembly in 1962 deserve particular mention. The Unilateral Declaration of Independence by the Smith government in November 1965 was condemned both by the Assembly and the Council. The Security Council for the first time decided to impose economic sanctions against Rhodesia and in March 1970 the Council decided that the UN members should sever immediately all diplomatic, trade, military and other relations with the illegal white regime of Rhodesia.<sup>8</sup> The General Assembly through another resolution of 21st November 1975 reiterated its call for widening the scope of sanctions to include all the measures envisaged under Article 41 of the Charter.<sup>9</sup> But these punitive actions were frustrated by the non-compliance of Portugal and South Africa and Rhodesia could continue its external trade through Mozambique and South Africa. It is evident that the purpose of these measures by the UN ranges from maintenance of international peace and security to the implementation of obligations and policies in respect of self-determination and human rights. However, the problem of implementation lies in the fact that neither the Council nor the Assembly possess any appropriate means to secure compliance with their decisions and recommendations.

Let us now turn to see the experience of unilateral/bilateral economic sanctions, the aim of which is to attain foreign policy objectives. In the post-War years when Yugoslavia under Tito adopted an independent line in political and ideological issues, Moscow organized a communist bloc embargo and boycott against Yugoslavia. Initially, the action served as effective technique of punishment because Yugoslavia then economically was heavily dependent upon the communist bloc. However, the negative impact of sanctions was short-lived, for Tito was able to turn to the West for new trade agreements and to the World Bank for development funds.

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8. S. Mukherjee and I. Mukherjee, *International Organisation* (Calcutta, The World Press Pvt. Ltd., 1979), P. 80.

9. *Ibid.*



The Soviet imposition of economic sanctions against Finland in 1958 provides an example of success. After parliamentary elections, the non-inclusion of any communists in the coalition government headed by a Social Democrat and apparent postures of its moving closer to the West earned displeasure of Moscow and in November 1958, the latter abruptly halted all trade with Finland. This had seriously affected Finnish economy and employment situation, for their uncompetitive products did not find alternative markets in the West. Considering the gravity of the situation, several ministers resigned and a new government more to the liking of Moscow was subsequently formed.

The oil embargo imposed by the Arab countries in 1973 in support of their cause against the Western support of Israel showed that the militarily weak developing countries could take action on the mighty powers of the West. Because of strong Arab solidarity and the latter's dependence on Arab oil, they subsequently were bound to soften their attitude to the Arab cause and reduce support for Israel.

There are several instances of American imposition of partial or total economic sanctions against countries such as, Cuba, USSR, Poland, Iran, Nicaragua, Libya and others. In neither of these cases, USA had achieved desired success, because her allies did not always comply and the target countries always found alternative sources for compensation. In many of these cases the result was the opposite of what was expected—still sharper non-compliance with US foreign policy goals.

One study covering 18 cases where economic sanctions were imposed in international relations between 1918 and 1968 shows that only two of the sanctions worked successfully. The first one in 1933 when the Soviet Government had to release six British citizens it arrested once Britain imposed various economic pressures against the Soviets. The other one in 1962 when the Kennedy administration complied with an international system of sanctions imposed under auspices of the OAS against the Trujillo regime of the Dominican



Republic. Even after Trujillo's assassination, the US successfully maintained the embargo as a pressure to prevent the takeover of the government by any of Trujillo proteges.<sup>10</sup>

From the examples cited above and other experiences, what conclusions can be drawn regarding the efficacy of economic sanctions aimed at achieving a desired order? Scholars opine that aside from the two success just mentioned, as well as the Finnish case and possibly the Arab oil embargo, most other cases of economic sanctions—whether bilateral or multilateral, have had at best mixed results.<sup>11</sup> The *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* enumerates a variety of conclusions so far arrived by the Scholars about the role of international sanctions.<sup>12</sup>

(1) One conclusion, apparently widely held, is that the theory of international sanctions, particularly if it involves the use of military force, is fallacious, for no effective pressure can be exerted against a state except by another state and consequently, an international order depending on that form of pressure becomes a permanent source of conflict instead of a medium of order.

(2) Another view is that forces of coercion which are effective in case of individuals are not effective, at least to the same degree, in case of States. Even those pressures expected to be particularly effective, such as, embargoes and blockades, may temporarily have the opposite effect. Sanctions with all the entailing hardships generally strengthen popular support of the target governments. The enemy then becomes not the home regime but the states that apply sanctions.

(3) Another conclusion that has wide support among those who stress national interest as the motivating force in international relations is that international sanctions are unrealistic, for they

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10. K.J. Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1977), p. 252.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.



demand certain commitments which may not necessarily be compatible with immediate national interests. Thus, in the case of League sanctions against Italy, France was a reluctant participant because of her primary interest in enlisting Italian support against Germany. There are other examples from sanction experiences that support this view.

(4) A more optimistic and positive view about sanctions is that while experience to date may not be encouraging, a system of organised sanctions in support of law and order is the only alternative to anarchy. Scholars argue that experience with sanctions as applied to organized groups is not so discouraging as is often contended. In

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fact, sanctions have been considerably effective in deterring undesirable conduct by states and with a fuller and greater appreciation of the extent of coincidence of individual and general interests in public order, international sanctions can be expected to become more effective. For this, however, the following conditions must be fulfilled to make the exercise effective :

- (1) The target state should be convinced that there is a genuine need for avoidance of the punishment;
- (2) No alternative market or source of supply should be readily available to the target;
- (3) The hardship to be incurred by the target state should outweigh that of the states applying sanctions;
- (4) Finally, a firm commitment by the participants to share burdens and risks that entail the application of sanctions.



### International Community and South Africa

South Africa became an international pariah since it officially adopted the policy of apartheid in 1948 when the National Party came to power. The question of race conflict in South Africa first appeared before the UN General Assembly in 1946, when India complained that South Africa had passed discriminatory laws against South Africans of Indian origin.<sup>13</sup> Since 1952 when the question of apartheid was placed on the agenda of the General Assembly, the issue has been always on the forefront of deliberations in the world organization. In 1962, the General Assembly adopted a resolution requesting all members to cut off diplomatic relations with South Africa and boycott all South African goods. The Security Council through its resolution of 4 December 1963 called upon members to refrain from shipping arms and munitions to that country so long as it practised racial discrimination, which it found "seriously disturbing international peace and security". The two UN Conventions—one on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination adopted in 1965 and the other on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid adopted in 1973, came into force after ratification by an overwhelming majority of UN members. In fact, the General Assembly for the last several years adopted countless resolutions calling on the international community to impose sanctions against South Africa to end its policy of apartheid. But these recommendations have had little tangible effect on South Africa.

The Commonwealth have had historical affinity with South Africa although it withdrew from the Organization in 1961. All the members of the 49-member organisation except Britain support for comprehensive sanctions against South Africa. During the last Summit meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of State/Government in October 1985 in Nassau, the leaders adopted an 8-point package of sweeping economic sanctions against South Africa. The Summit also appointed a 7-member Eminent Persons Group, a panel of

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13. S. Mukherjee and I. Mukherjee, *op. cit.* p. 79.



Commonwealth notables to prepare a Report on the situation in South Africa after making field trips and meeting both the Government and black leaders. The mini-Commonwealth Summit in London during the first week of August 1986, participated by the leaders of Australia, Britain, The Bahamas, Canada, India, Zambia and Zimbabwe studied the Report. It called for tougher stance on South Africa to compel the white regime to negotiate with the black majority leaders. The Group concludes its findings by saying that the black majority in South Africa must ultimately prevail, either by negotiation or by revolution for "South Africa is predominantly a country of black people. To believe that they can be indefinitely suppressed is an act of delusion."<sup>14</sup>

But the mini-Summit was split between Thatcher on the one side and other six leaders on the other. The final communique from the London Summit expressed regret that "the UK does not join (the)... agreement".<sup>15</sup> Going beyond the list of sanctions drawn up at Nassau the six countries also decided to ban new bank loans to South Africa and withdraw consular facilities. They will also ban uranium imports from South Africa and will go ahead immediately with a ban on imports of coal, iron and steel without waiting for an EEC decision in September. Also the Six will set up a *task force* to call on the international community to join in sweeping sanctions against South Africa.<sup>16</sup>

The Eighth Summit meeting of the Non-aligned Movement held in Harare during the first week of September 1986 adopted a Special Declaration on South Africa. It called upon the international community to impose sweeping and mandatory sanctions against South Africa and render assistance to the front-line states. It also called upon the Movement members to implement a package of 13 voluntary sanctions. The Non-aligned Movement also decided to set up a

14. *World Focus* p. 4.

15. *The Guardian*, 10 August 1986, p. 1.

16. *Ibid.*



Solidarity Fund for Southern Africa. The Declaration pointed out that apartheid is the root cause of all violence and instability in the region and called upon the US to abandon its policy of 'constructive engagement'.

In the 1970s five black-ruled countries, namely, Tanzania, Angola, Zambia, Botswana, Mozambique and the would-be leaders of Zimbabwe declared themselves in the "front-line of opposition" to white minority rule in South Africa. These countries are helping in different ways the black majority people of South Africa in their struggle against apartheid and also trying to mobilize international pressure against South Africa. All these are being done at a great risk in terms of their economic development and security. Some of these countries alongwith Lesotho, Swaziland and Malawi are economically substantially dependent on South Africa. 90% of Zimbabwe's external trade and 60% of that of Zambia, the total foreign trade of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland are shipped through South Africa's trade routes. The smaller countries get their oil and electricity from South Africa. Besides, several hundred thousands black migrant workers earn their livelihood in South Africa.

The Botha regime sometimes goes for military incursions into territories of Angola, uses proxy rebel forces in Mozambique and Zimbabwe to intimidate them. In early 1984 the Botha Government had agreements with both Angola (Lusaka Agreement) and Mozambique (Nkomati Accord) to foster good neighbourliness. South Africa used its economic might in early 1986 against Lesotho, which apparently was harboring anti-Pretoria activities, through putting up an economic blockade and within 19 days there was a military takeover. South Africa already announced retaliatory measures against countries in the region that have joined international sanctions against it. The government announcement that import licenses would be required for goods imported from Zimbabwe was seen by observers as a deliberate warning of possible retaliatory action against the black state.



Despite all these threats and intimidations, these countries particularly Zambia and Zimbabwe are pressing all along, specially in the Commonwealth, to go for comprehensive sanctions against South Africa. Kaunda admitted that "many of us would suffer and perhaps starve".<sup>17</sup> In fact, with a view to lessening economic dependence on South Africa, the six front-line states plus Lesotho, Swaziland and Malawi had set up an organization called the South African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) in 1980 and already put into operation several projects, giving priority to development of regional transport and communications network.

The SADCC was a response to the strategy of creating a Constellation of 11 Southern African States (CONSAS) by South Africa in the 1970s. During 21-22 August 1986 the two overlapping groupings—the front-line states and SADCC members held summit meetings in Luanda to review the latest situation in South Africa and progress in regional cooperation. The leaders of the front-line states decided to issue a joint invitation to President Reagan to visit the region and to agree to a Summit meeting with them either in the region or in Washington.

The EEC, a major trade partner of South Africa is also gathering steam, although slowly, over sanctions against South Africa. In the last Community Summit meeting in Hague in late June 1986, the leaders demanded release of Nelson Mandela and chalked out a package of sanctions which includes a ban on new investment in South Africa, and a ban on imports of coal, iron, steel and Krugerrands (gold coins) from South Africa. But the leaders agreed to withhold a vote on sanctions for three months, upto late September, pending a visit to Southern Africa by British Foreign Secretary on an EEC mission. Sir Geoffrey already visited Southern Africa with no tangible progress in persuading the Botha Regime to negotiate with the black majority leaders. Finally, the EEC Foreign Ministers agreed in late September 1986 to exclude coal from the

17. *Time*, 7 July 1986, p. 28.



list of banned products. Since the Community is a significant buyer of South African coal, the impact of sanctions is markedly reduced. It may be mentioned that in West Europe, the Netherlands, Ireland and the Scandinavian countries are in the forefront of those favouring sanctions.

From the above discussion it follows that all the major international and regional organisations representing an overwhelming majority of States do want an end of apartheid and all of them are pressing for, in varying degrees, some kind of sanctions to pressurize the white minority regime to end apartheid and go for power-sharing with the black population. Still then, why no tangible progress is achieved in this regard? The reason is—the countries that really matter to South Africa in her external interaction, both politically and economically, are either strong holdouts on mandatory sanctions,

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*Sanctions against South Africa are rendered ineffective largely by the fact that countries with political and economic leverage on Pretoria are either strong holdouts on mandatory sanctions, or are at the best, ready to go for token gestures.*

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or are, at the best, ready to go for token gestures. They include mainly Britain, USA, West Germany, Japan and Switzerland. But, why are they against sanctions? Are they being guided purely by short-term national self-interests, or by some other reasonable arguments against punitive actions? In order to answer these queries, let us first examine the economic stakes of these countries in South Africa.

Britain, the number one holdout on sanction, has the greatest stake, reflecting its long-time historical association with South Africa. It has \$18 billion total investment in South Africa,<sup>18</sup> with

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18. *Time*, 18 August 1986 p. 8.



more than \$2.5 billion in annual trade (Table-I). Thatcher noted in her press conference after the mini-Commonwealth Summit that Britain stands to lose a great deal from a trade war with South Africa. The unemployment situation is likely to be sharpened with an estimated loss of 120,000 jobs that would result from an economic boycott.<sup>19</sup> Culturally, there is a 'kith and kin' feeling among the British towards South Africa. About 2 million of the 4.6 million South African whites are British by birth or by descent and 800,000 of them hold British passports. Britain fears that should the situation in South Africa go out of control, she would have to give them refuge.

Next comes USA in terms of her economic stakes in South Africa with about \$5 billion investment, both portfolio and direct in 1983. Of this, direct investment amounts to \$2.2 billion. This comprises about 20% of total direct foreign investment in South Africa and it is strong in growth sectors such as oil (44%), cars (33%) and computers (70%). Another \$1.7 billion was in public sector stock, including loans to the government. Such investment is estimated to be highly profitable. A 1983 Survey<sup>20</sup> suggested the rate of return in mining in South Africa was 25% against 14% in the rest of the world and in case of manufacturing industry the rates are 18% against 13%. Thus South Africa until recently remained a favourable climate for foreign investment. But due to uncertainties, US banks reduced their outstanding loans to all South African borrowers from \$5 billion in 1984 to \$3.24 billion at the end of 1985.<sup>21</sup> Although US still remains South Africa's largest trade partner, her exports to the latter declined to \$1.3 billion in 1985 while imports have remained fairly steady at slightly above \$2 billion. A trade embargo would, thus, have little financial effect on the US.<sup>22</sup> The main leverage South Africa can apply in its trade with the US is its near

19. *Time*, 7 July 1986 p. 28.

20. *The Economist*, 30 March 1985, pp. 31-32.

21. *Time*, 4 August 1986, p. 10.

22. *Ibid.*



monopoly of some strategic metals, such as chromium, manganese and platinum. This worries Washington very much.

West Germany and Japan are also leading commercial partners, the former being the biggest import supplier and the latter, the biggest export customer of South Africa.<sup>23</sup> In 1985 Germany's total trade with South Africa amounted to about \$2.8 billion (Table-I). Although Switzerland is not a big trade partner of South Africa, and traded goods worth only \$271 million in 1985 (Table-I), her role as the main international processing point for South African gold figures prominently to South Africa. As most of the countries now do not buy gold directly from South Africa, she processes and sells most of her yearly 20 million ounces of gold through Switzerland. This explains why the anti-sanctions principle of 'neutral' Switzerland was not undermined by the imprisonment of two Swiss pastors in South Africa.<sup>24</sup>

Table-I : Trade of European Countries with South Africa.

Country	Imports+ Exports 1985 (\$m)	Share in Total Trade (%) of respective country
West Germany	2,755	0.8
Britain	2,562	1.2
Italy	2,175	1.3
France	1,030	0.5
Belgium/Luxembourg	532	0.5
Holland	367	0.3
Spain	304	0.6
Switzerland	271	0.5
Denmark	218	0.6
Sweden	154	0.3

Source : *The Economist*, 16 August 1986.

23. *The Economist*, 30 March 1985, pp. 31-32.

24. *Ibid.*



Having briefly reviewed the stakes of major countries opposing sweeping economic sanctions against South Africa, let us examine their arguments against sanctions. As Britain and USA are most vocal and others mostly take shelter behind them, we would concentrate particularly on Britain and USA.

First, sanctions against South Africa are "immoral" to Thatcher and a "historic act of folly" to Reagan. The leaders of Britain and USA base such assertions on the argument that sanctions will hurt the blacks of Southern Africa more than the whites. In the words of President Reagan, "Victims of an economic boycott of South Africa would be the very people we seek to help".<sup>25</sup> It is true that as a result of sanctions, the front-line states and 65% of the labour force of South Africa who are blacks would be significantly affected. Both Britain and USA made it clear that in case sanctions are applied, they would not bail out the front-line states. Thatcher told to Robert Mugabe, Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, at Nassau in October 1985, "If you want to cut your own throat, don't come to me for a bandage."<sup>26</sup> But sanctions are expected to serve as a strong pressure for a time being when the blacks themselves are ready to undergo more suffering to end seemingly endless suffering. Australian Prime Minister Hawke talked of hearing nothing more ludicrous than continuation still of such a proposition in case of South Africa.<sup>27</sup> It is to be noted that sanctions by the front-line states towards South Africa would entail for the latter also a loss of cheap labour and a regional trade surplus estimated as high as \$ 1.5 billion a year.<sup>28</sup>

Second, anti-sanctions lobby argues that sanctions are not effective, rather they are counterproductive. Thatcher points out the Rhodesian experience in the '60s and '70s where sanctions apparently did not work. But over the last several years, she herself imposed sanctions on Soviet Union, Poland, Argentina and some other countries

25. *Time*, 4 August 1986, p. 5.

26. *Time*, 7 July 1986, p. 29.

27. *Ibid*, p. 23.

28. *Time*, 4 August 1986, p. 11.



and USA so far did so in case of about 20 countries including Cuba, Vietnam, Soviet Union, Kampuchea, North Korea, Nicaragua, Iran and Poland. The latest case is Libya where President Reagan imposed a total economic embargo in early January 1986, because of Libya's alleged involvement in worldwide terrorism. Reports suggest that the USA is reviewing its aid policy towards Zimbabwe for its virulent attack on the West for their present policy regarding South Africa. Therefore, the problem clearly lies not in the debate over effectiveness of sanctions, but in individual cases and hence, approaches: Experience of international sanctions till date is not that discouraging and it is to be noted that a sanction-affected Rhodesia was then largely bailed out by South Africa. In the field of economy South Africa is already feeling the pinch, but detailed discussion on this follows in the next section.

Third, Britain and the US plead for engagement and persuasion rather than ostracism and coercion as the effective way of ending racial discrimination in South Africa. Thatcher is the lone voice against all the Commonwealth members and reports suggest that she had even rift with the Queen who tried to persuade Thatcher to go for some kind of punitive actions in order to preserve the unity of the Commonwealth. All the opposition parties of Britain including the moderate section in the Conservative party are critical of her stubborn attitude. Recent opinion polls in Britain suggest that more than half the British support a tougher policy on South Africa and two-thirds sympathize more with the blacks.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, in a recent interview with the Guardian, Mrs. Thatcher showed an utter insensitivity to the nature of apartheid, as if it's a social problem which is absent from any major sector of South Africa and minor leftovers are being removed through reforms by Botha regime.<sup>30</sup> Thatcher says, "I think we should have had more contact. We would have influenced her more."<sup>31</sup>

29. *The Economist*, 16 August 1986, pp. 29-30.

30. *The Guardian*, 20 July 1986. p. 4,

31. *Ibid.*



President Reagan since 1981 pursues a policy of "constructive engagement", the aim of which is to persuade the Botha regime through greater involvement in South Africa. In a recent speech on South Africa, the President asserted, "we need not a Western withdrawal, but deeper involvement by the Western business community, as agents of change and progress and growth".<sup>32</sup> The engagement advocates point out that in Western companies operating in South Africa, there is no racial segregation and they worked out anti-apartheid codes. But these arguments harping on minor reforms no longer hold good among the US public. This is well-reflected in the sanction bills passed by the House and the Senate and their overriding of Reagan's Veto on economic sanctions. This was a clear setback for Reagan on a major foreign policy issue. Japan also recently announced a ban on import of South African iron and steel. Therefore, as the pro-sanctions lobby in the West gathers storm, Mrs. Thatcher cannot snub it, as she did in the Commonwealth.

Fourth, the Governments of Britain and the US often argue that the outside world has not much leverage over South Africa to cause internal change. This is not at all true, rather it's a subtle evasion of responsibility. The policy of 'constructive engagement' itself contains the premise that it has something to do with internal change in South Africa. It has already been shown earlier that the West has

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enough economic leverage in terms of trade, loans and investment and Mrs. Thatcher herself agreed that the pressure of international banks in 1985 for repayment of South African debt had some effect.<sup>33</sup> One school in the West suggests the most effective way to hurt South

32. *Time*, 4 August 1986, p.5.

33. *Guardian*, 20 July 1986, p. 4.



African economy without creating higher unemployment among blacks is to force down the price of gold from which South Africa earns more than \$ 7 billion a year. This could be done by countries holding large amounts of gold through issuing a threat to sell major quantities unless Pretoria goes for wanted change. Therefore, what really needed is a *constructive disengagement* from the minority whites and a *reconstructive engagement* towards the majority blacks.

Fifth, supplementary to the above no-leverage argument, some circles substantiate that South African economy is strong enough to withstand sanctions. South Africa produces much of what it needs including armaments, nuclear power and about 60% of its oil through a coal-liquifaction process. Three of Pretoria's leading exports, gold, platinum and diamonds are rare and easy to sell. Also chromium and manganese are in high demand for strategic reasons. This invincibility argument is however not indisputable as the next section would show.

Sixth, the geographical location of South Africa and therefore, the problem of logistics show an apparent impracticability of imposing sanctions. She has a too colossal coastline to be quarantined. And Mrs. Thatcher asserts, "Whatever sanctions were put on, materials would get in and get out."<sup>34</sup> This is a problem that cannot be wished away, where commercial interests always try to find leakage. But, if there is real commitment, effective, comprehensive and coordinated measures might be taken to check the flow of goods in and out.

Seventh, sanctions would hurt Western strategic interests by (a) denying them the flow of rare strategic minerals, (b) increasing the power of the Soviet Union having these minerals and putting the supply solely in their hands and finally (c) destabilising the 'stabiliser' (South Africa) who apparently serves as the guard against onslaught of communism in Southern Africa. Thatcher apprehends that like Zimbabwe where a Mugabe ( Marxist), not a Muzarewa-Nkomo (Liberal), victory ultimately prevailed, South Africa also may witness

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34. *Ibid.*



the same fate. President Reagan in his speech denounced the "Soviet-armed guerrillas" of the African National Congress. This is the usual branding by Reagan of anybody as communists who take to fighting for internal change. But Oliver Tambo, the President of the ANC stated, "Violence was forced down our throat, we had to swallow it".<sup>35</sup> It is true that there are communists in the Executive Committee of the ANC, but it is grossly exaggerated by the Botha regime. However, to alienate the majority who are not communists is to risk enlarging the communist ranks. Observers point out that time is running out soon for the moderates like Mandelas, Tutus and Tambos. The Co-Chairman of the Eminent Persons Group, Malcom Fraser wrote, "If the United States and the United Kingdom persist in policies that have patently failed over the past five or six years, the black South Africans will take irreversible decisions to fight for political participation and freedom. The emerging government would be pro-Soviet and anti-West."<sup>36</sup> The US should have had this lesson from her recent experiences worldwide.

Finally, the argument that punitive action will undermine the forces of reform seems to be based on mere apologetics. Although Reagan praised Botha regime for bringing about what he termed as "dramatic change" in South Africa, few cosmetic eyelash is far away from addressing the main issue of dismantling apartheid and gradual transition to majority rule. The whole international community except a few countries insists that coaxing and cajoling would on longer work. In the words of Canadian Prime Minister, "the absence of sanctions has not provided any degree of freedom for those in South Africa."<sup>37</sup>

### Sanctions and Internal Dynamics of South Africa

The internal dynamics of South Africa, both politically and economically, seems to have been significantly influenced in recent

35. *South*, December 1985, p. 10

36. *Time*, 4 August 1986, p. 8.

37. *Newsweek*, 18 August 1986, p. 16.



years by the allout clamour for international sanctions. The experience of sanctions shows that usually they consolidate domestic support for the regime in power. But the case with sanctions against South Africa presents us a different picture. Although the National Party regime, in power since 1948 and now headed by P. W. Botha, remains in control, is gripped in deep trouble with the country's opposition forces, represented by different quarters—blacks and whites, left and right. This trouble has undoubtedly been precipitated by the politics of sanctions aimed at ending apartheid and minority rule in South Africa. Such a proposition warrants a simultaneous scrutiny of the multi-pronged strategy of regime survival and reaction to it by the forces today at work in South Africa. The main elements of the Botha strategy of regime survival can be laid down as follows:

1. Liberalisation through a 'graduated' reform programme
2. Repression of the black opposition
3. Finding out a pliable black interlocutor
4. Regional destabilization and
5. Self-reliance

1. First about the policy of liberalization through a 'graduated' reform programme. With the introduction of a new Constitution in 1984 the Botha regime devised a tricameral Parliament, with one house for each racial group, excepting the blacks. The aim obviously is to placate the Coloreds and the Indians. House of Assembly (178 members) represents Whites, House of Representatives (85 members) represents Coloreds and House of Delegates (45 members) represents Indians. This broke the former monopoly of white political representation but it is based on a 4:2:1 ratio reflecting the current population balance between the three communities (Table -2). Naturally this does not do away with the built-in and permanent white majority and the blacks continue to be excluded from any form of representation in central government other than in the Homelands. Moreover, neither of the House of Coloreds and Indians will have the same



power as the white Assembly and so they are not able to challenge the bases of apartheid. In addition, during the last several years the regime introduced limited reforms for the blacks, aimed at removing what the government calls 'the most negative and discriminatory aspects' of apartheid legislation. These include among others :

**Table 2 : Community-wise Distribution of Population (%)**

<b>Blacks :</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>Whites :</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>
Zulu	20		Afrikaans-speaking		10
Xhosa	18		English-speaking		7
Sotho	13		Others		1
Tswana	9		<b>Coloreds :</b>		9
Tsonga	3		<b>Indians :</b>		3
Ndebele	2				
Swazi	2				
Venda	2				
Others	1				

Source : *Newsweek*, 13 January, 1986.

- a) abolition of 'petty apartheid rules separating whites from blacks in some restaurants, major hotels, theatres and some public places;
- b) ending of decades-old prohibition of inter-racial sex and marriage;
- c) extending of property rights to blacks living in townships ;
- d) abolition of the repugnant 'pass laws' restricting black movement in white areas.

Together, the government formally recognized the permanence of millions of blacks in 'white' South Africa and the need to give them some form of political representation (Hitherto the government treated blacks as temporary residents in South Africa whose political rights were limited to the Homelands). The regime proposed to create a 'National Statutory Council', sort of an advisory body that might



draw 'cooperative' blacks into the making of central government decisions.

These cosmetic reforms, not touching the core of apartheid (separate development of communities, Group Areas Act, establishing residential areas by race etc) have been meant to assuage both the international anti-apartheid lobby and the domestic reformist opposition. In the National Party Congress held at Durban on 12 August 1986 Botha reaffirmed his commitment to apartheid, aimed at reassuring the nervous white voters. He also lashed out at the international community for failing to recognise the four 'independent' Homelands created so far.<sup>38</sup> But whites of both left and right seem not to be satisfied, because of opposite reasons. The liberal Progressive Federal Party (PFP) represented mostly by the English-speaking whites which increased its parliamentary representation to 36 seats in the last election, compared to 27 in 1977, opposed the new Constitution on the ground that more than 70% of population would have no form of political representation. Besides, the PFP is dissatisfied with 'petty' reforms and government stubbornness against a negotiated settlement. Exasperated, the leader of the PFP Helen Suzman resigned from his parliamentary seat to pursue independent negotiation with the banned African National Congress (ANC). In October 1985 a delegation from the PFP also met ANC leaders in Lusaka for talks, but main differences between them still lie in (a) PFP recognition of Chief Minister Gatsha Buthelezi of Kwazululand, (b) its opposition to sanctions and (c) its refusal to accept the ANC's armed struggle.<sup>39</sup>

On the other hand, the ultra-conservative and extreme-rightist elements, mostly of the Afrikaner whites are dismayed at the prospect of losing the minority grip who still dream of a 'white' South Africa without any blacks. Of late there has been a mushroom growth of ultra-rightist parties, such as Conservative Party (a break-away faction of the National Party established in 1982 which now

38. *The Economist*, 16 August 1986, p. 17

39. *South*, December 1985, p. 10.



controls 18 seats in Parliament), Herstige Nasionale Party (which has no parliamentary representation, but progressed in getting votes—12% in the last election) and Afrikaner Resistance Movement. The 1983 by-election results also indicate the whites tilting more towards far right. This is indicative of a trend towards polarisation among the minority whites—between liberals and rightists. But they all oppose sanctions against their country. Also some other factors are likely to cause some unity among the whites, such as (a) well-to-do whites fear endangering their privileges, (b) low-income whites fear that increased opportunities for blacks could threaten their jobs and (c) above all, a fear of revenge by the blacks once majority rule prevails in South Africa.<sup>40</sup>

On the other hand, the struggle of the black majority over the years passed through phases, from mere protest to challenging the system to the demand for majority rule. The birth of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in August 1983 as a loose federation of anti-apartheid organisations claiming membership in excess of 2 million and over 600 affiliates (cutting across racial, religious and ideological lines) became a new challenge to the white regime. Exclusion of the black majority from the tricameral Parliament, seen by its critics as a broad alliance against the blacks, coalesced black opposition around the UDF. Still Pretoria continues to reject categorically the fundamental demand of the ANC, UDF and other black organisations for one-man, one-vote in a unitary South African state. In his key-note speech winding up the parliamentary session on 19 June 1985 Botha clearly stated, "I do not believe in a so-called unitary state based on one-man one-vote. I do not believe in a system in which minority groups can be dominated."<sup>41</sup> Only to respond to such white rigidity the black majority leaders, except Chief Buthelezi claiming to represent 6.5 million Zulus, strongly support imposition of sanctions. Archbishop Tutu epitomizes black sentiments

40. *Newsweek*, 24 March 1986.

41. *Africa Guide*, 1986, p. 274.



saying "Blacks are saying, 'we are suffering already. To end it, we will support sanctions, even if we have to take on additional suffering.'"<sup>42</sup> Therefore, as the internal struggle of the blacks gradually gain momentum with international support through sanctions, the ANC believes negotiations with the minority regime to be premature until government accepts the principle of a transfer of power to black majority.

(2) Next comes the repression of black radical opposition. South Africa in fact became a total police state with a death rate of 130 a month compared to 70 in 1985. The government adopted a set of repression rules with devolution of power in this regard under emergency declared again on 12 June 1986. The government in a concerted attempt to break the UDF arrested more than one-fourth of its leaders. Also with a view to fomenting black disunity, the regime reportedly highlights the black-on-black violence. After emergency, several thousands were thrown behind bars and many simply disappeared. Helez Suzman, the best-known white opposition figure in South Africa, recently told the newsmen, "South Africa has become like El Salvador and Argentina where thousands of people go missing and the governments won't acknowledge where they are or whether they are dead or alive."<sup>43</sup> Also the government clamped down on press freedom, barring the newsmen of reporting security actions and visiting the black townships. In his speech to the Party Congress, Botha strongly renounced violence and invited 'plausible' black leaders to participate in a negotiation process. But the radical opposition with its armed struggle will not yield to short of total dismantling of apartheid. In recent years, starting from bombing of the Air Force Headquarter in Pretoria in 1983, the urban guerilla activities have significantly increased and now the targets of the Spear of the Nation, military wing of the ANC, cover not only 'hard' but 'soft' civilian targets as well. Oliver Tambo declared, "we are calling

42. *Time*, 7 July 1986, p. 23.

43. *Ibid.*



for a rapid, extensive escalation of our military offensive."<sup>44</sup> The Economist comments that from Sharpeville to Swoeto to Uitenhage the lesson is the same : the chief threat to law and order in South Africa is from the anarchic policemen and not from black radicals.<sup>45</sup>

(3) The government policy of divide-and-rule towards the blacks seems not to be working well as expected. No black leader as yet joined the Statutory Council for future participation in national government, although Chief Buthelezi was believed to be the lone leader to join the same. He as the leader of the 6.5 million Zulus forming 20% of the total population was being groomed up by the regime as the most 'collaborative' among the blacks with whom some negotiation can be started. Despite all political activities being banned in South Africa, the *Inkatha* movement led by Buthelezi is allowed a free rein and on 29 June 1986 in an apparent 'prayer rally' drawing only a small crowd, he talked full politics and argued strongly against sanctions in line with the government. In 1977 Germany's Bergstraesser Institute through a Survey reckoned him as the most popular black leader, but in a recent research by a South African Pollster, Mark Orkin suggests that Buthelezi now barely has a majority of Zulus of Natal.<sup>46</sup> One ANC official recently commented, "The West is trying to find a moderate alternative to Botha, preferably with a black face. Chief Buthelezi was at one time being groomed as a kind of South African Muzarewa. Now they are losing confidence in his drawing power, but they have not been able to find a credible black leader".<sup>47</sup>

(4) With the rising clamour for sanctions in the neighbouring States, the Botha regime again renewed a vigorous policy of destabilisation in the region to keep them subservient to South Africa's economic and military might through intimidation and coercion. She

44. *Newsweek*, 20 August 1986, p. 11.

45. *The Economist*, 21 June 1986, p. 9.

46. *The Economist*, 5 July 1986, pp. 19-20.

47. *The Guardian*, 13 July 1986, p. 8.



already threatened retaliatory measures against flexing of sanction muscle by the neighbouring States. The Botha regime did not live up to the Lusaka Agreement or Nkomati Accord signed respectively with Angola and Mozambique in early 1984 and even in mid-May 1986 the South African Defence Forces (SADF) raided three neighbouring countries. She already engineered a coup in Lesotho when its leader talked of punitive measures against Pretoria. In her destabilization policy South Africa uses economic (closing transport network and supply of South African goods), political (support of dissident groups in the neighbouring states) and military (direct armed incursion) means against those not toeing her line in the region. Reports suggest that the SADF now has an upper hand in formulation of her regional policy. This is dictated by her fear that in case sanctions are applied by the black neighbouring countries, her economy would be greatly affected.

(5) Finally, about the strategy of economic self-reliance pursued by the white regime from the mid-1960s onward. The anti-sanctions lobby in the West points out that the limited sanctions so far applied against South Africa did not work well because of relative self-sufficiency and strength of her economy. They substantiate the argument indicating that because of sanctions in arms and oil supply, South Africa today reached a near self-reliance (85%) in arms production with export abroad and in energy needs (60%) through development of a sasol-oil-from-coal process and nuclear energy. But this proved to be very costly taxing significantly the instability-torn South African economy. Over the last years defence budget and defence-related investments increased manifold. It is wrong to conclude that South African economy is not vulnerable to sanctions. The most vulnerable area proved to be the sector of finance. Last year in response to pressure by international banks, the government declared a moratorium on repaying its \$ 14 billion short-term debt of a total of \$ 24 billion foreign debt. The national currency Rand plummeted an all time-low, from a level of R 1.25 to a Dollar in 1984 to R 2.24 in mid-1986.



Whereas South Africa had been a lucrative place for foreign investment even upto 1983, now the increasing loss of business confidence itself is serving as an informal sanction against South Africa. The vulnerability of the economy to ominous political developments was greatly underlined in the aftermath of emergency by the accompanying boost to disinvestment plans by the countries which are both major investors and trading partners of South Africa. A rapid flight of capital is already underway and foreign securities in the public sector stock are increasingly being sold out. Faced with this, the government again reimposed foreign exchange regulations, but to no avail. Since 1985 already 63 US firms left South Africa, compared to only 7 in 1984.<sup>48</sup> The decision by the US, EEC, Japan and other countries not to buy South African coal, iron and steel, would be a severe blow since she exports 25% of the yearly 170 million tons of coal and 44% of her produced iron and steel to world markets. If added to this is the suggested large-scale gold sale, as discussed earlier, which brings about 50 % of her export earnings, South African (largely colonial pattern) economy would come to a creeping halt. Together, domestic business expansion is also deterred by the onsetting nervousness all around. Although Botha retorted in the Party Congress that the threatened sanctions are one of the "most extreme forms of political fraud of the twentieth century"<sup>49</sup>, a recent public opinion Survey of the whites in South Africa showed that 71% believed the economy not strong enough to withstand sanctions.<sup>50</sup> Jamaican Prime Minister Edward Seaga said, "If Pretoria will not listen to arguments based on rights, it will listen to arguments based on Rands".<sup>51</sup>

## Conclusion

From the preceding discussion it is clear that the international clamour for imposition of sanctions to end apartheid in South Africa

48. *The Economist*, 21 June 1986, p. 69.

49. *The Economist*, 16 August 1986, pp. 17-18.

50. *Time*, 7 July 1986, p. 28.

51. *Ibid.*



is gathering increasing storm in all quarters. The anti-sanctions lobby represented by a few, though major, governments are gradually yielding to both domestic and international pressure for adopting punitive measures against South Africa. In fact the whole mankind is united in recognising apartheid as a grave affront on human dignity and civilization. What is required is giving practical policy effect to this pious recognition. This calls for a firm commitment on the part of all sovereign nation-states to make South Africa feel the real and lingering pinch.

By now it is fairly evident that the minority white regime of South Africa will not go for real reforms to end the core of apartheid and share power with the black majority unless it is compelled to. Current trends indicate that internal situation in South Africa would go only worse if the natural process of history is indefinitely held up by applying sheer force against an overwhelmingly majority population. Unlike in most other cases, application of sanctions against South Africa would further undermine the white regime and weaken its domestic base. It can be argued that both the short and long-term interests of those opposing sanctions would best be served by a democratic government headed by a moderate leadership. Sooner the international anti-sanctions lobby comprehend this, the better for both Southern Africa and world peace and security.