

SANCTIONS, CONSTRUCTION, How? When? Why?

- A Review Article

By Reginald Herbold Green

Sanctions ought to be effective We would like to see those sanctions applied by those who can make them effective. The countries which have economic power in South Africa must take the lead....

- President Joaquim Chissno,
Mozambique, 1980

However, if our call for their imposition is to be heeded, we have seriously to consider being directly involved. Those of us who can should impose sanctions of our own.

- President Kenneth Kaunda, Zambia 1987

If we have to conduct an armed struggle over an extended period of time the economy will be destroyed in a physical sense... The imposition of comprehensive mandatory sanctions... is the most effective way to ensure the non-destruction of that economy... It is not that we want sanctions so that our people can be out of work [but] so that apartheid can end... We are ready to make any sacrifice... to see this system ended... we will do all the things we can and must do for our own freedom, but sanctions are additional and sanctions alone would not bring about any results. We have to be involved in the two pressures from inside and from outside.

- Publicity and Information Secretary
Thabo Mbeki/President Oliver Tambo,
ANC, 1986

A Do It Yourself Guide For Whom

Joseph Hanlon and Roger Omond have written The Sanctions Handbook (Penguin, 399 pages, £4.95, London, 1987) for those potentially or actually interested in arguing the case for sanctions and in pressing for/participating in their construction. They do so with copious material - much of it familiar to experts but greatly adding to the understanding of anyone else. Their style is direct and while committed, relative non-emotional. The more ground-breaking second half of the volume by Joe Hanlon is, as he described his idea before it became a volume, a how-to guide - "You too can build a sanction".

This objective determines the main target audience - Western Europe and North America. The readership needing to be convinced that sanctions are justified, have black South African backing, can work and could be made to operate without crippling their own economies is primarily an Anglo-American (the countries not the company!) one with the EEC countries and Japan its outriders. For them the approach, the tone, the language (English) and the major paperback publisher with global distribution are fully appropriate.

The objective and main intended readership influence the emphasis - especially in the second half on "how to". Southern Africa ("South Africa's Dependent Neighbours") appear in the first half to show the negative impact of South Africa's regional strategy on them and their support for sanctions as a means of ending that cost. In the second half Southern Africa, the Front Line States and SADCC appear in passing as potential secondary actors in the imposition of sanctions with a warning (to the Western reader) that they have limited capacity to act and an admonition (to the same audience) that SADCC's dependence reduction priorities are the route to making sanctions practical without self-immolation and should, therefore, have the full backing of sanctions advocates.

The rest of Africa - slightly surprisingly given the negative psychological impact of OAU member's with a free choice entering into economic relations with South Africa - does not really appear nor do the Eastern European countries and China. For tactical and practical reasons this is probably quite justified - the book and its readers are unlikely to alter policies in these cases; their trade with South Africa is peripheral; their political stance against apartheid guarantees their not becoming serious bolthole providers as sanctions by North American and Western European states plus Japan and Australasia grow.

The Case For Action

The case for sanctions - including that they do historically have an impact - is set out cogently and with a wealth of detail. It is perhaps less forcefully put than in Richard Moorsom's The Scope for Sanctions: Economic Measures Against South Africa (Catholic Institute for International Relations/British Council of Churches, London 1987) but also more encyclopaedically with more quotations from supporters. The breadth of black support in South Africa is demonstrated first - and has become even firmer since with COSATU, after

detailed study of the costs to its members, reaffirming its support for sanctions as essential to a speedy change of system.

The absence of significant white South African support is also made clear. Even Frederick van Zyl Slabbert and Helen Suzman (who with Joe Slovo of the ANC appear after the predictable big five - Mandela, Tambo, Sisulu, Tutu and Boesak - in surveys of black South Africans' opinions as to acceptable national political leadership members) are anti-sanction although, intriguingly, both accept the value of threatened (as opposed to imposed) sanctions in forcing change. Whether the July 1987 South African white advocates of systemic change/ANC talks in West Africa will alter this is not clear.

The analysis of sanctions' serious potential impact on the South African economy is well done. No rosy dream world of instant collapse is posited - rather slow grinding down process analogous to what happened to Rhodesia is set out after (as in Rhodesia) a possible brief import substitution spurt.

Three issues are problematic. The first is the degree of stress needed to cause a surrender of power. Sanctions against apartheid - as opposed to sanctions against continued occupation of Namibia or destructive engagement against Southern Africa - do not seek policy changes or even in any meaningful sense power sharing, but rather the transfer of power from the Afrikaaner establishment to the Liberation Movement (realistically defined as the ANC, the UDF, Cosatu and their allies). That is not the context in which sanctions have usually been used. The Rhodesian parallel is not a good one - the Lancaster House agreement (which did indeed result in a transfer of power) was possibly only because ZANU, ZAPU and Smithorewa all expected to win the election. The apartheid leadership can hardly be expected to operate under any similar illusion.

The second question posed, but only in passing is; "If Rhodesia survived so long because South Africa was its economic conduit and lifeline, who will be South Africa's South Africa?". South Africa has no larger, more economically advanced neighbour nor is any really large economy likely to wish to appear to be its economic and military protector. (Even Isreal appears to be recalculating costs and benefits and is really too small while South Africa's tenuous military alliance with the USA is indirect via Jonas Savimbi and cannot be made direct barring very unlikely changes in US public and congressional perceptions.

The third problematic issue is whether the main emphasis of sanctions should be - as argued - on export blocking. Realistically (as the authors half admit) gold cannot be blocked (albeit diamonds can) so that funds for the most crucial imports - though not for preserving white amenities or overall growth - will be to hand. On the other hand armaments, dual purpose goods (e.g. virtually all vehicles, vessels, aircraft, computers and communications equipment), high technology (low and medium RSA can produce or copy itself), finance (for major investment) and petroleum are a finite list of key imports whose cutting by even 50% would precipitate a downward economic and military capacity spiral.

And Some Priority Means And Modalities

In the second half of the volume Joe Hanlon underlines that sanctions do exist on a rapidly growing and fairly broad basis even if still full of holes and short on enforcement. The whole tenor of the Northern debate and of politicians' response to it has changed dramatically even since 1985. This is to no small extent the result of steady education efforts by often small liberation support groups and of their - largely symbolic - do it yourself boycotts and disinvestments (or divestitures). But their very success - and the much more visible and effective role now played by independent Southern African states and by the South African Liberation Movement - make a review of the situation, of strategic targets and of ways forward timely. Small group boycotts and similar exercises remain important. They have substantial publicity and educational value in the North; they are acts of solidarity which may be of psychological assistance to those suffering under or from apartheid; they can continue to spearhead drives for action by the big economic battalions, i.e. states and TNCs. But they need to be seen in that context and selected with a view to getting the big battalions on the move on the specific fronts on which South Africa is most vulnerable.

The most novel and valuable part of the book is the taxonomy - in the second half of the text and a "Directory of Sanctions" - about types of sanctions by coverage, purpose strengths and limitations and prospects. "Universal compulsory sanctions" is a valuable rallying cry and an unimpeachable goal. However, the reality of actual progress is and will remain the accumulation of specific sanctions by particular countries or groups of countries. Further some sanctions matter much more than others. Therefore, given limited

political capital and still more limited policing capacity, sanctions advocates should prioritise their attention to these.

From both a military and an economic point of view the key ones are:

- a. military equipment and technology (mandatory, compulsory but riddled with leaks at least the larger of which could be plugged);
- b. dual purpose equipment (especially all vehicles, planes and helicopters, ships computers and sophisticated communications equipment - an area now largely uncovered but to a substantial degree practicable as OECD state restrictions on transfers to the USSR, China and their allies demonstrate);
- c. high technology - whether embodied in machinery or in designs, blueprints and knowledge on production and use - needed in particular in the manufacturing and energy sectors (as with "b" now largely not covered but practicable so far as hardware and major corporation knowledge transfers are concerned);
- d. new financial flows (now largely halted for economic reasons but needing more general legislative bans to insure against any recovery);
- e. petroleum (a relatively leaky embargo net now greatly increases costs, an effective surveillance and publicity apparatus could cause serious operational problems to RSA).

Two more readily practicable (indeed on largely existing and one building up) sanctions - against sport/entertainment contact and air communications - are important primarily psychologically. Sports, entertainment and overseas travel matter to South African whites and their denial brings home the sense of being outcasts. Thus their effect on morale can be much more than trivial.

To a degree corporate disinvestment/withdrawal (the great direct success of North American and, to a lesser degree, British, Dutch and Nordic activists) is also important to increase the sense of isolation and to undermine morale. But it has two other practical results; first, it cuts down technology transfers and capacity to expand dual purpose and military production; second, it erodes the vested interest lobby in the North for South Africa and against sanctions.

The authors see gold sanctions as an addition, but their scenario of gold dumping by central banks seems likely to be a piece of wishful thinking. Diamonds, however, are much more practicable than they suppose. The Central Selling Organisation (safely based in London) could operate as profitably as now on non-South African stones - a solution agreeable to its proprietors as good capitalists and to all other producers. As diamonds can be identified as to mine of origin (unlike remelted gold) and the floating stock of uncut stones is small, such a policy could be forced on the CSO.

General RSA export sanctions can - as already seen where sanctions are in force - work. South Africa's economic problems (and the hassle factor with visibly RSA products) are already having that effect, e.g. 1987 UK imports from RSA are likely to be barely £600 m versus nearly £1000 m in 1985 and a 1982-86 average of £780 m. More boycotts and more sanctions - building on existing partial measures, e.g. in the USA and EEC - can help those trends along.

Southern Africa - What Is To Be Done?

The Sanctions Handbook does set out the situation and positions of the independent Southern African states lucidly and fairly - even if as a secondary topic. Namibia is not treated separately but as an integral part of South Africa which is legally absurd and temporally probably wrong, but as far as tactics for achieving sanctions go is perhaps a just permissible form of reductionism.

For Southern Africa the primary problem is not sanctions against apartheid (South Africa) but apartheid's (South Africa's) sanctions against them. Because the FLS and SADCC see no end to these South African sanctions until apartheid is ended the logic of their support for global sanctions against South Africa is very much like that of the ANC and COSATU. Better - to paraphrase SADCC Ministerial Chairman Peter Mmusi - to endure the pains of a woman in childbirth and bring a new life into the world than be hit over the head indefinitely by a thug with a sjambok.

The nature and magnitude of the price Pretoria exacts from its neighbours is set out albeit sketchily. The 1987 SADCC Summit figure of 1986 direct costs of \$2 billion (presumably \$1.25 to 1.4 billion excess military costs, \$.3 to .4

billion excess transport costs and lost transport earnings, \$.3 to .6 billion directly military damage) and the UNICEF (Children On The Front Line) detailed estimate that 1986 regional GDP was of the order of \$6 billion lower than it would have been in the absence of 1980-86 South African destabilisation and aggression make the point more forcibly at macro level. At sectoral and overall social level, Hanlon (Beggar Your Neighbours), CIIR/Curry, London 1986), David Martin and Phyllis Johnson (Destructive Engagement: Southern Africa at War, Zimbabwe Publishing, Harare, 1986) and UNICEF (especially in the grim estimation of the 500,000 direct and indirect infant and under-five war inflicted deaths) over 1980-86 are much more cogent. And at the human level the voices of Southern Africans, e.g. speaking to reporters after the July mass murder of nearly 400 souls (including pregnant women, nursing mothers, babies at the breast and unborn infants) at Homoine near Inhambane by South Africa's armed bandits (Independent, 25 July 1987) on what mass terrorism is and, e.g. of Namibian women in the occupied territory speaking to Caroline Allison (Its Like Holding The Key To Your Own Jail, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1985) about day-to-day and year-to-year life under military occupation are the most eloquent. The Mozambican video on terrorism in their country ("Killing The Dream") and the SWAPO film on the Kassinga massacre ("Remember Kassinga") are arguably even more effective, but unless and until they can be placed on at least educational and "fourth channel" (special interest) TV in the North will be seen by very few of those whom sanctions advocates need to convince.

Omond and Hanlon also set out the contradiction confronting Southern Africa. To be convincing in saying sanctions are needed most Southern African states see a need to act more than symbolically themselves. But to do so without self-immolation - except for Angola and Tanzania who do operate complete or 99% complete sanctions now - requires reducing dependence on South Africa. South Africa uses destabilisation and armed aggression to maintain that dependence partly because its hopes to use Southern Africa as a hostage against sanction in the same way it is trying to use its own black workers.

Arguably - albeit Omond and Hanlon do not touch on the issue - FLS strategy and tactics on sanctions to be imposed by themselves have not been adequately articulated and planned on a sequential basis. In 1986 the Commonwealth, EEC and USA debates forced Zambia and Zimbabwe to take a lead on arguing for and committing themselves to sanctions. Whether they could have avoided implying 1986 or early 1987 implementation and indeed tied implementation to global action to allow them to restore and safeguard Mozambican and Angolan transport

routes deserves reappraisal because the latter option remains open. Certainly the apparent - in many Western and some African eyes - backsliding and the collapse of a premature attempt to cobble together a package of air transport sanctions have not helped Southern Africa's external prestige or influence, nor, more important, the struggle for effective Northern sanctions against apartheid.

The crucial point - which Hanlon makes briefly - is that for the SADCC members to impose sanctions and resist South African reprisals on top of present regional war levels, they must be enabled to carry out SADCC's core dependence reduction (on South Africa) programme in transport and energy and the FLS must be made able to safeguard these routes, other key economic units and the lives of its peoples.

The cost is not impossibly high - especially set against \$2 billion annual direct war bill and \$6 billion annual output loss and up to 200,000 lives snuffed out annually directly or as a consequence of South Africa's destructive engagement with the region. Over three years it might be about \$6 billion (\$2 billion key SADCC priority transport and certain additional energy programmes, \$1.5 billion additional security costs, \$1.5 billion to re-employ migrant workers expelled by South Africa and provide an airlift to Lesotho). By the end of that time annual gains and cost savings should be running at \$1 billion a year and rising while annual costs should fall.

That programme should be presented as part of any serious global sanctions against apartheid package and "sold" internationally as such. If that is done, the FLS can indeed afford to impose sanctions. Indeed once the first chunks of the programme - upgrading of the Beira and Dar corridors to 3 million tonnes dry and 1 million tonnes petroleum each per year plus reopening the Nacala and either the Chicualacuala/Maputo or Lobito corridors - which are now financially in hand and in the first three cases physically under way are complete, and proven defence cordons set up around them, the FLS can (and presumably will feel they should) move ahead unitedly on sanctions. Until then risking a South African transport blockade for a token sanction would - especially for Botswana - be courting martyrdom for no probable gain to the liberation of South Africa.

The key themes of this argument are - as noted - presented by Hanlon. To any Southern African they will seem to be presented too briefly and without enough stress on the need to make economic liberation and effective security of the

Southern African region an integral part of sanctions against apartheid. That message can be communicated. While more liberation supporters in the North should be voicing it, the prime duty for formulating and expressing it more effectively rests with Southern Africans and the Front Line States' governments.

SSA Beyond The Front Line

In Omond and Hanlon Africa seems to begin at the northern frontiers of Angola, Zambia and Tanzania. The other OAU members and Morocco are not mentioned except for Nigeria (and the OAU itself) in passing. For present sanctions promotion this is tactically wise. But it is not the same for Africans, especially Southern Africans.

The OAU record on sanctions against South Africa is sound as are those of several member states, e.g. Algeria, Nigeria, Burkina to cite a few. But overall too many African states who do not need to have economic relations with South Africa have too many. Zaire's transport routings; Cape Verde's open (and others' semi-secret) landing right provision for Sud Afrikaans Lugdienst; Sierra Leone's massive concessional contracts with a South African/Israeli joint venture - these do Africa's good name; the cause of South African liberation and the struggle for sanctions harm out of all proportion to their size or the cost of eliminating them.

Collective consultation and coordinated action are needed. For example Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique and Angola do need to arrange to make alternative transport routes available to Zaire (and the external friend of any or all to help finance them). A pooled buy-out of SAL's (SAA's) Cape Verde landing rights - which are perhaps \$5 million a year but a very large proportion of Cape Verde's export earnings - is surely not impossible. But many other trade and other economic links could and should be broken unilaterally. They are crowed over in Pretoria and raise morale disproportionately to their size and are pounced upon by Africa's enemies and denigrates as evidence of lack of will, presence of hypocrisy or both. Only Africa - led by Southern African states as those most affected plus others with clean hands - can lance these boils on the body of the liberation struggle.

Sanctions Strikes and Armed Struggle; Alternatives or Components?

One weakness of the book - an endemic one in sanctions promotion literature - is to present sanctions as an alternative to violence. It is more than a trifle late for that - any reader of Children On The Front Line will be aware that the annual lives lost as a result of apartheid are in the hundreds of thousands. Equally any reader of SWAPO and ANC documents will be aware that South African non-response (more accurately violent response) to non-violent protest and struggle has already forced the Liberation Movement to take up armed struggle as one of their tactics. Finally it is fairly clear that sanctions against Rhodesia would not have forced Smithorewa to Lancaster House in 1979 (by 1989 perhaps) without the interlocking pressure from the military front spearheaded by ZANU(PF).

Sanctions are not an alternative to violence - violence exists now. Sanctions cannot prevent the loss of life - lives have been and are being lost by the scores and hundreds of thousands. Sanctions alone cannot bring a speedy end to apartheid - only together with strikes to dislocate the economy (and the white life style) and armed struggle (to raise costs - including lives - to the beneficiaries of apartheid) can they contribute to negotiated handing over of power to the Liberation Movement within a decade. Nor are sanctions a substitution of negotiation for war - they are one means to bring the existing war to a negotiated end sooner. (Even in its most pessimistic moments the ANC does not envisage fighting step by step to Table Mountain as opposed to negotiating a takeover of power at an earlier stage, the questions are how soon and what is negotiable.)

Sanctions can save lives by shortening the period of violence before a negotiated end to the war. They can give a liberated South Africa a better starting point - less physical damage, less bitterness (by all concerned) from lost lives (of the dead and of the living), more interim or permanent availability of white community skills and experience, more readiness (by all parties) to compromise on secondary issues including the pace of economic restructuring.

These facts should be posed more fully and frankly than Northern sanctions advocates usually do. The ANC, SWAPO and the FLS are quite clear - apartheid uses violence at home and abroad and is impervious to reason and protest.

Therefore, force - including armed struggle as well as sanctions - must be used to bring it to an end. Why should their supporters be less frank?

The argument that violence is hard to sell seems rather lame - even if it has an element of truth in it. The FLN in Algeria, Frelimo in Mozambique, MPLA in Angola, the Patriotic Front in Zimbabwe mobilised external support and their use of violence to force negotiations for handing over power (independence) was accepted. Why are the ANC and SWAPO different?

In any case a selling of sanctions as non-violent is dangerous as well as disingenuous. Because sanctions do grind down the economy they increase the potential effectiveness of armed struggle and are thus logically paralleled by its selective intensification. A key example is half presented by Moorsom (The Scope for Sanctions: Economic Measures Against South Africa). Discussing petroleum sanctions he cites unpublished estimates by the present author that with inconvenience plus the cost of completing additional gas and sugar based synfuel capacity South Africa could - just - live with petroleum sanctions. He does not give equal stress to the author's other point: in that context of just getting by strikes by workers at or by the ANC on refineries, SASOLS, methanol units, storage tanks and pipelines could rapidly bring economic chaos or seriously decrease the mobility of South Africa's very petroleum intensive armed forces. Sanctions in this case are a means to enhancing the effectiveness of, not substituting for, non-violent internal struggle and armed struggle (targeted sabotage).

The basic case that sanctions can save lives and reduce deaths, shorten the war and lessen destruction remains valid. It is unwise to obfuscate it by a romantic or disingenuous implication that sanctions are an alternative to armed struggle in the context of an ongoing bloody war.

In Summation

In conclusion will hardly do - neither the struggle to entrench Southern African and achieve Namibian and South African liberation nor the rising role of sanctions in that struggle are concluded. This volume is a weapon in those struggles - no less serviceable because it is an intellectual one. Hanlon and Omond are to be commended for their work.

The two main limitations noted - posing the Southern African front fully enough and the sanctions/armed struggle interaction squarely and lucidly - are real. But for present purposes of sanctions promotion in the North they are secondary. They do represent an unfinished agenda for explication and promulgation - first by SADCC, the FLS, SWAPO and the ANC and then by Northern Support Groups and individuals. (After all what is a Support Group for if it does not support and publicise the priorities and understandings of those it is created to support?) That work can complement this volume, but does not detract from the fact that in The Sanctions Handbook Hanlon and Omond have done the best job to date of publicising why and by what means sanctions should be imposed against, and to contribute to ending, apartheid.

- a luta continua
vittoria e certe

Author Note

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