

Doomsday Preppers on a national scale: The National Party's preparations for self-sufficiency during apartheid

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Abstract

As individual preppers prepare for emergencies by stockpiling food, weapons and water, the National Party (NP) government of South Africa started preparing for extensive isolation in the 1960s because of its racial policies. This article examines the measures taken by the NP government to mitigate the effects of sanctions, embargoes and boycotts, and shows how the South African government not only established a vibrant arms industry to counter the mandatory international arms embargo of 1977, but also created infrastructure and private enterprises, such as Sasol, to provide in the country's energy needs. In addition, South Africa stockpiled large oil supplies in anticipation of the oil boycott that eventually came in 1979, and built dams to help make the country self-sufficient in terms of food supplies. Overall, the country's emphasis on self-sufficiency as well as its ability to circumvent sanctions and embargoes allowed it to blunt the effects of international attempts to isolate the country when these became extensive in the late 1980s.

Introduction

While individual prepping in the run up to the 1994 election is studied elsewhere (Senekal 2014), the preparations made by the National Party (NP) government for its form of an emergency – debilitating sanctions – have not been studied comprehensively. Since the 1960s, the NP was well aware that its racial policies would continue to isolate the country, and numerous steps were taken to mitigate the effects of sanctions, boycotts, and embargoes. Like the individual Doomsday Preppers on National Geographic Channel who stockpile weapons, food, water and energy sources, the NP established a local weapons industry and stockpiled reserves, they developed ways of manufacturing and stockpiling oil for energy, invested in agriculture to become self-sufficient in terms of food, etc. It is with these preparations that this article deals. Initiatives are described that aimed at mitigating the effects of international efforts to isolate South Africa, and the effectiveness of both sanctions, boycotts, and embargoes on the one hand, and preparations on the other, are investigated. As such, this article investigates how an entire government chose to prepare itself for a long-term and major disaster. While various sources were used in this article, the CIA archives were of special importance, since they provide an outsider's and objective account of the effectiveness of the NP's measures, and their reports often refer to South Africa's attempts to attain self-sufficiency in the face of international isolation.

Sanctions, embargoes, and boycotts

The arms embargoes

The early 1960s saw a renewed resistance to the NP government from black opposition groups. In March 1960, police fired on protestors belonging to the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) in what would become

known as the Sharpeville massacre. Subsequently, the African National Congress (ANC) staged various violent protests, and declared war against the NP. In 1962, Nelson Mandela and the leaders of the ANC's military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), were arrested, and subsequently convicted of high treason. International condemnation of the NP's racial policies and harsh repressive measures soon followed. In August 1963, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 181, which called on all states to cease "the sale and shipment of arms, ammunition of all types, and military vehicles to South Africa" (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 2012). In December 1963, UN Security Council Resolution 182 extended the voluntary arms embargo to include "equipment and materials for the manufacture and maintenance of arms and ammunition in South Africa". In July 1970, UN Security Council Resolution 282 called for the unconditional implementation of the embargo, but it remained a voluntary arms embargo, and trade continued (albeit in a slightly limited capacity). In November 1977, following the Soweto riots of 1976, UN Security Council Resolution 418 imposed a mandatory arms embargo against South Africa, which stated that all states shall,

... cease forthwith any provision to South Africa of arms and related materiel of all types, including the sale or transfer of weapons and ammunition, military vehicles and equipment, paramilitary police equipment, and spare parts for the aforementioned, and shall cease as well the provision of all types of equipment and supplies and granted of licensing arrangement for the manufacture or maintenance of the aforementioned (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 2012).

In 1982, Armscor participated in an armaments exhibition in Greece "that marked South Africa's entry into the export arena" (Botha 2003:2). In response to this event, UN Security Council Resolution 558 extended Resolution 418 in December 1984 by requesting states to also cease any imports of arms, ammunition and military vehicles from South Africa, though this was not mandatory (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 2012). In November 1986, following large-scale political violence and subsequent states of emergency in South Africa, UN Security Council Resolution 591 extended the embargoes and included in its scope the sale of spare parts and components, directly or through third parties, and certain dual use items such as four-wheel drive vehicles (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 2012). These arms embargoes were of course implemented in conjunction with other economic sanctions and boycotts (see below), and as Alsheh (2013:36) writes, "by the late 1980s South Africa had become the single most ostracized, sanctioned and universally condemned regime in the history of the international community, and the paradigmatic pariah state" (see also Wessels and Marx 2008:71-72).

Sanctions

Sanctions were imposed by the international community in parallel with the arms embargoes. Already on 15 March 1961, Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd removed South Africa from the Commonwealth out of protest against criticism of apartheid. Scher (2012:339) remarks, "n Nuwe, maar eensame pad het vir die republiek voorgelê" [a new but lonely path lay ahead for the Republic]. In 1977, following the Soweto riots and the death in detention of Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko, the international call for sanctions against South Africa intensified. Verhoef (2012:362) writes,

The boycotts increased against South Africa, and the country was suspended from international bodies. Although full-scale disinvestment did not start yet, the banks and corporate investors stopped new loans to and investments in apartheid institutions. Previously friendly governments, companies and organizations abandoned silent cooperation with South Africa. The negative effect of this isolation in political, economic, and social spheres in South Africa became palpable. ¹

In the mid-1980s, international pressure against South Africa intensified against the background of violent protest, and the United States, as well as the European Community, Scandinavian countries, Japan, and

the Commonwealth nations imposed sanctions on South Africa in 1986 (Central Intelligence Agency 1989:37). In 1988, the editor of Die Volksblad, Hennie van Deventer, remarked, "Daar is pogings om die land op elke terrein te isoleer en sy ekonomie met sanksies te knak" [there are attempts to isolate the country on every terrain and to break the country's economy with sanctions] (Van Deventer 1988:62). As sanctions intensified, it also became apparent that they were difficult to enforce in practice. The Central Intelligence Agency (1989:38) wrote,

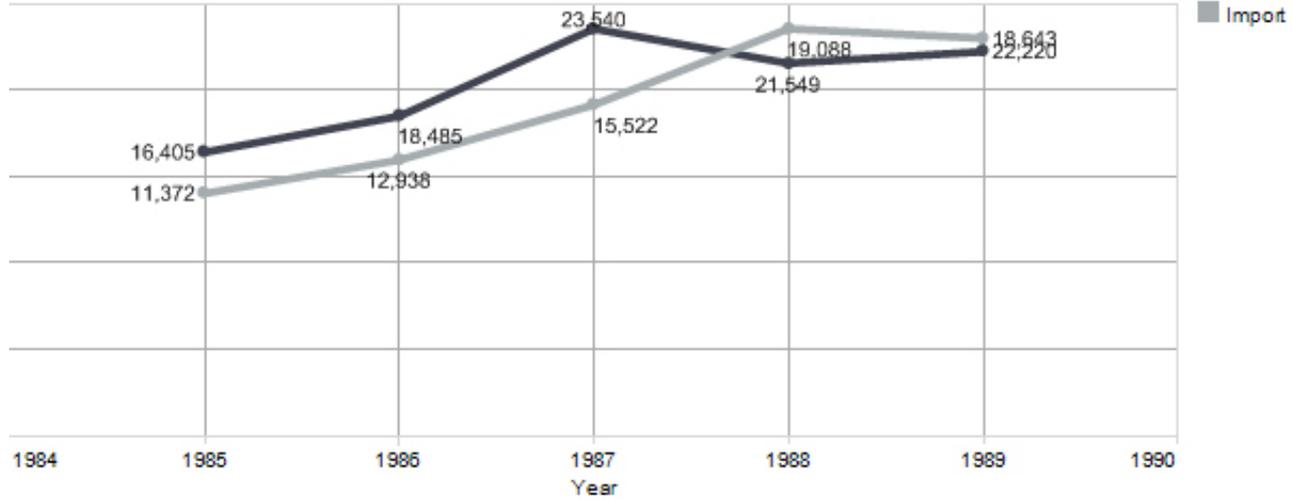
Although a growing consensus in the international community led to the formal adoption of sanctions against South Africa in 1986-87, international support for specific measures often was mixed. The United States adopted and enforced a range of sanctions, but most other countries imposed less restrictive measures, issuing bans on only selected items or accepting only voluntary bans.

These sanctions and their implementation are summed up by the Central Intelligence Agency (1989:38):

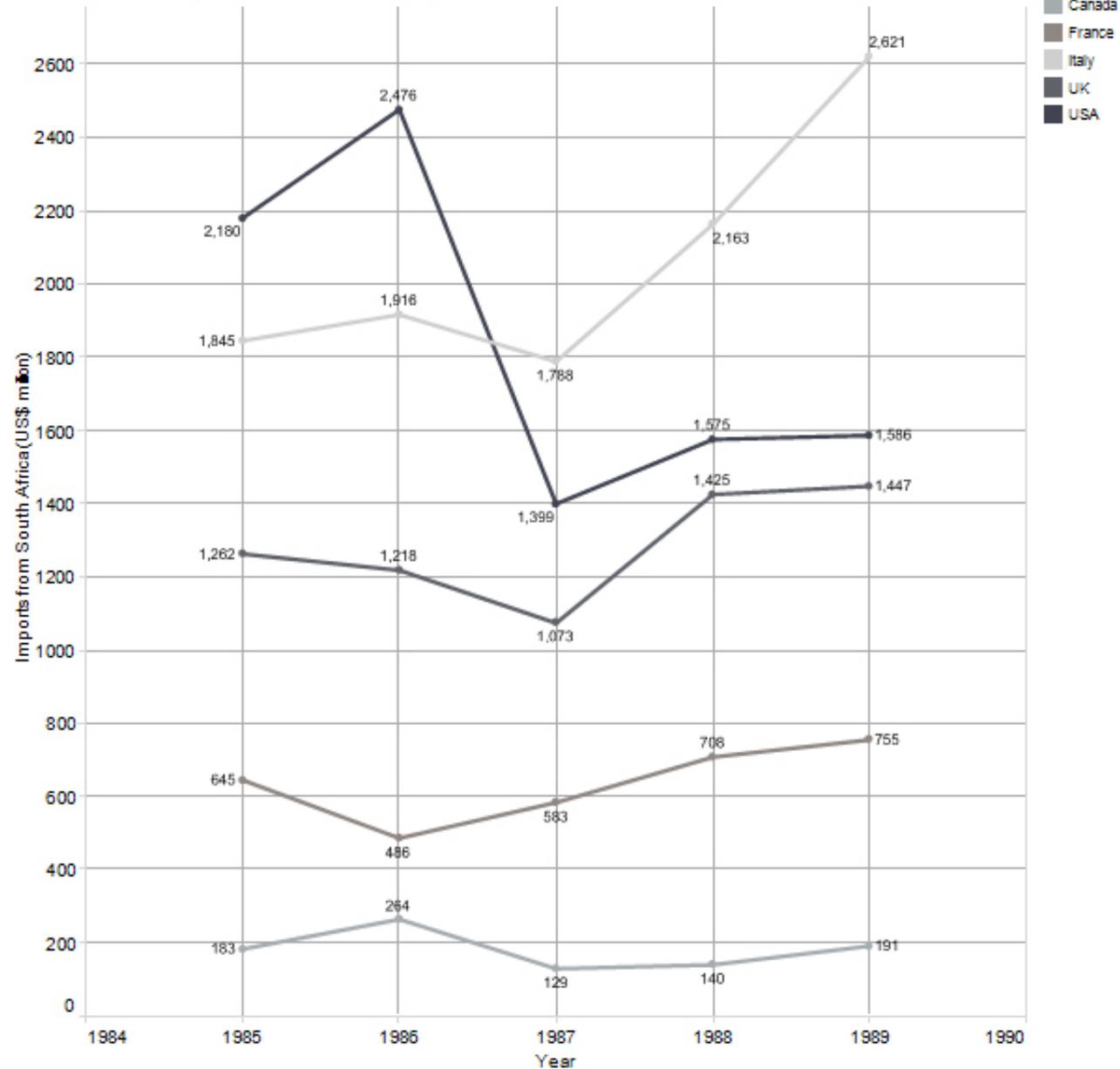
- The United States adopted the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 (CAAA), which imposed restrictions on economic relations with South Africa. Some of these restrictions included: bans on the import of specified South African products such as coal, textiles, iron, steel, agricultural products, and gold coins, bans on most new investment in South Africa, restrictions on loans to the South African Government, and bans on the export of nuclear technology and materials.
- The European Community adopted a less stringent package of sanctions that included bans on the import of South African iron, steel, and gold coins. The European Community also asked member countries voluntarily to end new investments in South Africa.
- At the Commonwealth mini-summit in 1986, six countries (Australia, the Bahamas, Canada, India, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) adopted a package of sanctions that prohibited most new investments in South Africa, imports of South African agricultural products, and air links to South Africa. The United Kingdom, while implementing the weaker EC sanctions, has not accepted the Commonwealth sanctions.
- Denmark banned practically all trade in goods and services with South Africa in 1986.
- Sweden and Norway adopted similar restrictions in trade in 1987.
- Japan prohibited the import of gold coins and the sale of computers to the South African police and military in 1986. In 1987, Japan implemented additional sanctions, including bans on the import of South African pig iron and certain types of finished steel. Despite its sanctions, Japan has become South Africa's leading trading partner. Tokyo's trade ministry has eased pressure on businesses to refrain from trading with South Africa. As a result, in 1988 Japan's trade with Pretoria increased 13 percent over the previous year's level.
- Third World countries – particularly African states – have generally not addressed the issue of sanctions. In 1986, Presidents Kaunda of Zambia and Mugabe of Zimbabwe backed down on highly publicized commitments to impose sanctions. A principal determinant of the policies of neighboring states toward South Africa is their ties to its economy. Except for Zambia and Angola, most of South Africa's neighbors have failed to reduce significantly their dependence on it for trade and transportation.

Although condemnation of apartheid and violence in South Africa was therefore universal, practical considerations limited the effects of sanctions. With data provided by Barbieri and Keshk (2014) and reported in Barbieri, Keshk, and Pollins (2009), the following graph illustrates the limited impact of sanctions on South Africa from 1985-1989 by showing exports from South Africa to some of the abovementioned countries, as well as South Africa's total imports and exports (in current US\$ million):

RSA imports and exports 1985-1989



French, Canadian, UK, US and Italian imports from the RSA 1985-1989



While most of these countries' imports from South Africa reached a noticeable low point in 1987, their imports increased again in the following years. In addition, South Africa's overall imports increased between 1985 and 1988, while South Africa's overall exports declined only slightly after 1987. This figure in particular shows that the effect of trade sanctions was limited, although noticeable in terms of some countries.

International boycotts

On 13 November 1963, the UN General Assembly urged all States to refrain from supplying petroleum to South Africa in Resolution 1899 (XVIII) (Reddy 2013), but this resolution was not mandatory. On 28 November 1973, however, the Arab members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) imposed an oil embargo against South Africa (Central Intelligence Agency 1989:37). Iran did not take part in the embargo, and became South Africa's main supplier of oil (Du Pisani 2012:363). The Shah was however deposed in 1979, which led to a global oil crisis as well as increased difficulty for South Africa, which now had to purchase large amounts of oil on the black market and through third parties. On 20 November 1987, the United Nations General Assembly instituted a general but voluntary oil embargo against South Africa, which, like other voluntary sanctions and embargoes, made the acquisition of oil more difficult rather than impossible.

The oil boycott was however only part of the measures taken by the international community to isolate South Africa, as the Central Intelligence Agency (1989:37) writes,

In addition to formal economic sanctions, the 1985-87 period was characterized by an intensification of de facto sanctions, such as consumer boycotts of South African products. Most important among the informal sanctions was the withdrawal of many foreign commercial credit lines from South Africa (the so-called 'financial sanctions') that culminated in a unilateral moratorium by Pretoria in 1985 on most foreign debt principal repayments and subsequent agreements in 1986 and 1987 with major foreign commercial creditors to reschedule the repayments.

On 2 December 1968, the UN General Assembly requested all States and organisations "to suspend cultural, educational, sporting and other exchanges with the racist regime and with organisations or institutions in South Africa which practice apartheid" (Reddy 2013). South Africa was soon barred from international sporting events, and the cultural boycott was instated that prevented international artists from performing or distributing products in South Africa, as well as severely limiting South Africans' opportunities abroad.

As the above-mentioned CIA report stated and the figure illustrated, implementing sanctions, boycotts and embargoes was however more difficult in practice. DeKieffer (1988:17) for instance writes about the possible effects of extending boycotts,

If this happens, US computer equipment could for example be reproduced and sold at a fraction of the current cost in South Africa. The 'books boycott' can easily be bypassed by South African publishers by simply allowing American texts to be copied and refusing to pay copyright to American authors. Efforts to deny technology to South Africa can be overcome simply by allowing South African companies to manufacture the products and to challenge the U.S. patent holder to file a claim.²

Given South Africa's propensity to obtain technology through covert means and to adapt it for domestic purposes (in particular in the arms industry), DeKieffer's remarks underscore the difficulty of enforcing efforts to isolate South Africa completely.

Another problem with imposing sanctions is that the West relied on South African exports. In 1987, the CIA (1987:22) wrote,

Over 70 percent of South Africa's annual export revenue comes from gold, diamonds, and

strategic minerals, such as platinum, palladium, rhodium, and chromium. The high value-to-weight ratio of these commodities, their generic physical characteristics, and their use in sophisticated metal alloys found in many Western defense systems make them nearly impossible to embargo.

One of the core issues that was debated in the international community at the time, is whether sanctions and boycotts would have an effect on the white or black population, as well as whether it would have a definite effect on South Africa at all. The following section deals with the preparations made by the NP to mitigate the effects of these sanctions, embargoes, and boycotts.

Preparing for pariah status

In light of the first arms embargo of 1963, South Africa began making preparations for a sweeping and mandatory arms embargo. At the time, civil wars were developing in South Africa's neighbour states (Mozambique, Namibia, Rhodesia and Angola), and as the Soviet Union provided arms for insurgents, the South African government came to the conclusion that defence would be an important aspect of its continued survival. In 1965, the Central Intelligence Agency (1965:7) reported,

As part of its effort to reduce the effectiveness of international arms embargoes, the Verwoerd government may have taken the first step toward developing a domestic aircraft industry. According to the South African press, the Italian aircraft firm Macchi has authorized South Africa to 'manufacture and assemble' a Macchi aircraft – probably the MB-326 jet basic trainer. Production is scheduled to begin late next year at a \$56-million plant to be constructed near Johannesburg.

The following year, the CIA (1966:2) reported on improvements that have been made to mitigate the effects of future sanctions,

South Africa has made a phenomenal recovery in almost every important respect from the nadir that followed the 1960 Sharpeville shootings. The security forces have become more efficient and, aided by draconian legislation, have harried the organized non-white opposition virtually out of existence. The economic boom continues, nourished to an ever-increasing extent by capital from inside the country. The few remaining areas in which South Africa might be even slightly vulnerable to economic sanctions are being whittled away. While maintaining its close economic ties with Britain, Pretoria is broadening its suppliers and markets to include France, Japan, and West Germany, among others. The government has modernized and greatly enlarged its military establishment, turning to France and Italy in the face of arms embargoes imposed by the US and (less fully) by Britain, and has steadily increased the domestic production of military weapons.

In 1968, Armscor was established as a statutory corporation in terms of the Armaments Development and Production Act number 57 of 1968, which defined the role and tasks of Armscor as "promoting and co-ordinating the development, manufacture, standardization, maintenance, acquisition, or supply of armaments... utilizing the services of any person, body or institution or any department of the state" (Botha 2003:1). In 1971, the CIA (1971:9) reported on progress made in the South African arms industry,

The recently announced agreement for the licensed production of French Mirage aircraft in South Africa is a significant advance in Pretoria's efforts towards a self-sufficient arms capability. Under the agreement signed by the South African defense minister during his recent visit to the Paris air show, South Africa will produce basic elements of Mirage III fighters and Mirage F-1 interceptors. Aircraft engines and various sophisticated components, however, will have to be imported from France for several years. The French reportedly also will send technical advisers to South Africa

and provide training in France for a 'large number' of South African technicians. In addition, a French Defense Ministry official recently stated that France will sell a 'complement' of Mirages to South Africa. Initial South African production of the Mirage IIIs is not expected until 1973 and F-1 production presumably will not take place until the mid-70s. The F-1 is scheduled to enter production for the French Air Force later this year. South Africa has long striven for self-sufficiency in arms production, particularly since the United Nations ordered an arms embargo of South Africa in 1963. The country has since produced small arms, light infantry weapons, French-designed armored cars, and Italian-designed jet trainers. South Africa also will participate in the production of a surface-to-air missile system developed by France. The facilities and experience involved in the jet trainer program will provide the South Africans with the technical foundation for Mirage production.

Importantly, this report therefore states that South Africa did not only purchase weapons systems for the short term, but included in the sale training with a view to the future manufacture of more sophisticated parts. In the coming years, the South African arms industry developed new products as well as adapted existing weapons systems, primarily for the war in Angola. One of the flagship productions was the Ratel Infantry Fighting Vehicle (IFV), "the Rolls-Royce of infantry vehicles" (Wessels and Marx 2008:79), which came in a variety of different modifications offering anti-tank, command, and logistics support. The vehicle was introduced in 1978 and soon became one of the icons of the war. Other projects included adapting the Soviet BM-21 Katyusha multiple rocket launcher to become the South African Valkiri, and adapting the British Centurion main battle tank (and its Israeli upgrade) to become the Olifant (Liebenberg and Barnard 2006:103-104). South Africa also adapted the French Mirage MkIII (and Israeli Kfir that was based on the Mirage) to become the South African Cheetah, which Ackerman (1987:30) called "n dwarsklap vir die tien jaar oue wapenverbod teen die RSA," [a slap in the face of the ten-year old arms embargo against the RSA], i.e. a successful development despite the mandatory arms embargo. Armscor further developed the G-5 155mm long range howitzer and its self-propelled version, the G-6.

In addition, South Africa's Chemical and Biological weapons project, Project Coast (established in May 1981), was according to some commentators the second most advanced chemical and biological weapons project in the world at the time (after the Soviet Union) (Purkitt and Burgess 2002:245). The project was initially developed separate from Armscor, and the latter only became involved during the weaponization phase (Purkitt and Burgess 2002:240). As the project progressed, it acquired anthrax, Plague, cholera, Escherichia coli, staph, necrotising fasciitis, ricin, botulinum, gas gangrene, anti-matter bacteria, and the Ebola, Marburg, and Rift Valley viruses. Purkitt and Burgess (2002:242) note,

Eventually, according to a number of sources in the US and South Africa, Project Coast developed pathogens that had never before been seen. Project Coast managed to obtain the Soviet-developed flesh-eating bacteria, necrotising fasciitis, as well as the antidote. In 1994, the South Africans surprised the Americans by revealing that they had the bacteria and then gave it to the USA.

This project also developed non-lethal weapons such as the so-called New Generation Tear (NGT) Gas, which was designed to be more powerful than conventional CS tear gas and to incapacitate without lethality or excessive irritation (Purkitt and Burgess 2002:242).

Another notable achievement of the local arms industry was the development of nuclear weapons. On 22 September 1979, South Africa conducted its first nuclear test, and subsequently built six more weapons with the aid of mainly Israel (Stemmet 2002:25).

In 1979, South Africa expelled three members of the US defence attaché's office in Pretoria for alleged espionage. The CIA reported at the time on the confidence the South African government had gained in becoming more self-sufficient, "South African officials feel increasingly that because of their successful

management of the current oil crisis and their evasion of the arms embargo, international economic sanctions are no longer as dreaded as before" (Central Intelligence Agency 1979:6). The domestic arms industry gained increasing prominence: Wessels and Marx (2008:81) write that, during Operation Protea (1981), "94% of the armaments used by the SADF were produced in South Africa, and by 1985, almost 100% of the Army's equipment was locally developed." As Alsheh (2013:27) also writes, South Africa turned its arms industry around from the 1960s to the 1980s,

From spending no more than R30 million on (mostly imported) arms in 1966, by 1980 South Africa was spending R600 million on arms, most of which was locally produced. By 1988 South Africa was exporting R1,8 billion worth of arms, becoming one of the top ten arms exporters in the world.

When the South African defence industry could not design and manufacture equipment domestically, it exploited loopholes in the arms embargoes, or acquired components in covert ways (Lamb 2007). In 1985, General Magnus Malan for instance "openly admitted that any country at the mercy of an international arms embargo would have to resort to 'unconventional' buying methods from time to time" (Wessels and Marx 2008:75). The Helderberg disaster in 1987, where a commercial jet liner of the South African Airways crashed into the Indian ocean with 159 passengers on board, is rumoured to be one of the covert acquisitions that went wrong (Brynard 2005:25), although no proof has been found. Preparations made since the 1960s were of course not only linked to arms production and procurement, and Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd announced the Orange River water project in 1962 to help create a sense of hope for South Africa's future, as Van Heerden (1991:19) writes,

It was a period of unrest. Sharpeville and Rivonia, Poqo and a bomb at the Johannesburg station. The new republic was barely two years old and the clouds of international isolation were on the horizon. Dr. Verwoerd was looking for something to capture the imagination of the (white) public and to stem the flight of foreign capital by demonstrating the Government's confidence in the country's future. ³

The plans for the H.F. Verwoerd Dam (on which construction started in 1965) and the P.K. le Roux Dam (on which construction began in 1973) were part of Verwoerd's (and subsequently Vorster's) attempts to improve South Africa's water supply, but also served to provide hope for improving South Africa's ability to produce food by supplying water to an arid region through a series of canals. The rationale behind such developments was their "'strategiese belangrikheid' en die feit dat 'n beleerde Suid-Afrika na sy eie langtermyn-behoeftes moet omsien" ["'Strategic importance' and the fact that a besieged South Africa had to take care of its own long-term needs] (Van Heerden 1991:20). In 1967, the CIA reported on various other projects aimed at attaining self-sufficiency,

Despite an already high degree of self-sufficiency, South Africa's policies aim at a greater degree of autarky, has grown as a consequence of recurrent threats of sanctions in the UN, and because the government is determined that, whatever the price, it will not be caught short should economic sanctions ever be applied against it. Largely to expand domestic military production, defense spending this year will total over \$350 million. And the administration is currently engaged in numerous programs both to encourage exploration for petroleum at home and to insure continued access to supplies abroad. Burgeoning expenditures to achieve self-sufficiency have been a major source of troubling inflationary pressures during the last few years (Central Intelligence Agency 1967:11)

This report also singles out the issue of food production,

... even though only about 12 percent of South Africa is arable and water supplies are becoming increasingly tight, post-World War II growth in agriculture has made the country virtually self-sufficient in foodstuffs; South Africa now exports about a third of its agricultural and fishery products (Central Intelligence Agency 1967:11).

During the Presidency of B.J. Vorster, South Africa further attempted to create infrastructure. This included the completion of the H.F. Verwoerd and P.K. Le Roux Dams, a uranium enrichment facility at Pelindaba, the Koeberg nuclear power plant (with the help of France in exchange for uranium, on which construction began in 1976), the Atlas aeroplane corporation, a third Yskor plant, the Natref refinery, the Saldana steel plant, and many more projects (Du Pisani 2012:350). While some of these projects have been criticized for not delivering much benefit (see Van Heerden 1991), there can be no doubt that the Orange River water project, and Koeberg, delivered much-needed electricity and water supplies.

A major problem for South Africa was however petroleum. In 1967, the CIA reported, "The only important resource deficiency is petroleum; no petroleum has been found though about 7 percent of domestic requirements are met by synthetic production in 1968" (Central Intelligence Agency 1967:11). The following year, the CIA reported,

The South African minister of mines announced to a cheering parliament this week that after years of intensive exploration South Africa has made its first substantial petroleum discovery in a section of the southeastern continental shelf. Initial reports indicate that the flow from the well is 35 million cubic feet of gas and 100 barrels of oil per day. This is not a large quantity but it will give the South Africans hope that they may yet achieve self-sufficiency in the one major resource they have lacked, thus easing still further the threat of foreign economic sanctions (Central Intelligence Agency 1969:10).

The hope for the domestic petroleum industry was however not the discovery of small oil fields, but rather the Suid-Afrikaanse Steenkool-, Olie- en Gaskorporasie (Sasol), which was founded in 1950 and to which the abovementioned "synthetic production" in the CIA report of 1967 refers. Sasol started production in 1955, and "het uiteindelik die wêreldleier in die vervaardiging van brandstof uit steenkool geword" [eventually became the world leader in producing fuel from coal] (Verhoef 2012:462-463). A second plant was opened in 1983 and a third in 1985 in Secunda, and its turnover increased from R1,4 million in 1960 to R5 billion in 1985 (Verhoef 2012:475). Eventually Sasol produced 25% of local fuel (Verhoef 2012:475). As mentioned above, the Arab oil boycott was instituted in 1973, effectively testing South African preparations that had been made since the 1960s. The CIA reported on the South African response to the boycott,

Pretoria's restrained reaction to the Arab oil boycott suggests that it is confident it can withstand a long siege. Prime Minister Vorster's first radio address concerning the boycott announced no emergency measures except further tightening of moderate gasoline conservation measures adopted in mid-November. His low-key statement implied that South Africa would be able to avert serious economic dislocations because of its long-time efforts to achieve self-sufficiency as a precaution against possible UN sanctions. The government, however, is preparing to implement such measures as gas rationing if necessary. [...] South Africa has no domestic source of petroleum, and an effective boycott by Arab states, including Iraq, could stop roughly 50 percent of normal petroleum imports. Nevertheless, South Africa's abundant coal reserves meet at least 75 percent of the country's normal energy needs. Domestic petroleum refinery capacity is well above normal domestic consumption requirements. The net impact of a boycott could compel South Africa to reduce normal energy use by as much as 10 percent, but this could be offset by drawing on ample petroleum stockpiles that the government has hoarded for emergency use (Central Intelligence Agency 1973:16).

Note the CIA's statement of petroleum stockpiles: Already by 1966, the CIA estimated the South African petroleum stockpiles to provide sufficient fuel for 12 months under normal consumption and 18 months under rationing, and they noted that plans were under way to provide three years' supply under rationing (Central Intelligence Agency 1966:3). This is in sharp contrast to Japan's stockpiling of oil for 100 days in 1978, and the US's program to stockpile oil for 60 days (500 million barrels) by 1980 and eventually to build a stockpile that would be sufficient for about 180 days (Central Intelligence Agency 1978:1). Of course, Japan and the US were not in danger of losing their oil supply permanently, but plans to stockpile over 1000 days' worth of oil stands in sharp contrast to these countries' stockpiles.

During the first years of the OPEC oil boycott, South Africa relied on Iran for 80% of its oil imports (Central Intelligence Agency 1978:14). As Iran neared its turbulent takeover by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979, the CIA assessed the impact of the loss of Iran as an oil supplier to South Africa, and noted that,

Pretoria has strategic oil stockpiles equal to at least two years' supply at current consumption levels (estimated at 350,000 barrels per day or more). These stockpiles have been built up in the past 10 to 15 years as a precautionary measure against the threat of economic sanctions. Pretoria could also take several measures to stretch out its oil supplies, including rationing and reducing exports of refined products to neighboring countries (Central Intelligence Agency 1978:14-15).

The plans noted in 1966 were thus realised: South Africa had extended its petroleum stockpiles significantly and – in comparison with Japan and the US – for a much longer period. In total, by 1978, the CIA claimed that South Africa “has been preparing for them [sanctions] for more than a decade and, except for petroleum products, is now about 80-percent self-sufficient” (Central Intelligence Agency 1978:4).

The impact of sanctions, embargoes, and boycotts

Already in 1963, in an interview with the CIA's Deputy Chief, Africa Division, the latter expressed his doubts whether sanctions would have much of an effect on South Africa's racial policies,

He believes the present form of government in the Republic of South Africa can and will survive another 25 years unless the United States or Russia takes drastic action to upset Republic chances. Noting that South Africa has 80 per cent of the industrial capacity of the African continent, he feels the Republic can survive any combination of pressures, sanctions, or boycotts imposed by the rest of Africa (Central Intelligence Agency 1963:1).

The measures discussed in the previous section were at this time only in the beginning phases, and continued developments under Vorster and Botha significantly increased South Africa's ability to withstand sanctions. By the late 1980s, DeKieffer (1988:17) remarks,

“Ongelukkig vir die Amerikaanse Kongres het die Botha-regering nie gedienstig die gees gegee nie. Die Suid-Afrikaanse ekonomie is ontstellend lewenskragtig” [Unfortunately for the US Congress, the Botha government did not roll over. The South African economy is disturbingly resilient]. In 1989, shortly before Botha retired and was replaced by De Klerk, the CIA stated in a special report that confirms DeKieffer's argument, “South African industries have been able to blunt roughly half of the theoretical financial impact of sanctions on export sales” (Central Intelligence Agency 1989:37).

When not able to become completely self-sufficient, the South African government found ways to circumvent sanctions and embargoes. In 1987, following the UN's calls for widespread sanctions, the CIA

- South Africa has responded to the current round of sanctions by implementing several measures designed to ensure the continued sale of products officially embargoed. These measures will most likely succeed in blunting the impact of the current round of sanctions. To date, South Africa has:
- Created a Secretariat for Unconventional Trade within the government to coordinate sanctions evasion activity.
- Stockpiled coal at free ports in the Netherlands and Belgium for re-export. Established front companies in Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and Hong Kong. Transshipped goods through third countries and used false labels, such as “Made in Swaziland.”

Two years later, the CIA reported that these measures were highly effective, Pretoria had honed mechanisms for subterfuge trade through years of grappling with embargoes on its purchases of crude oil and arms, and was well equipped to circumvent those few embargoes placed on sales to South Africa. For example, press reports indicate that South Africa has used Malawi as a front to evade Denmark’s total trade embargo. These reports claim that Danish exports of technical instruments to Malawi increased to more than 40 times their previous level following the trade ban. Sweden’s total trade embargo also has been circumvented. Swedish firms have continued to do business with South Africa through foreign subsidiaries (Central Intelligence Agency 1989:37-38).

By circumventing sanctions and embargoes, as well as by managing the local economy and emphasizing self-sufficiency, the real economic impact of sanctions was limited. Giliomee (2012:409) writes that the impact of sanctions was mixed,

Sanctions could not bring the South African state to a fall, and it did not actually hurt the middle class financially. Often foreign companies that withdrew sold their local interests cheaply to a South African company. Trade ties with the West did weaken as a result of sanctions, but at the same time ties with Asia improved. The total foreign trade grew. By the end of 1986, the country had a trade surplus of R15 billion. The ban on new foreign loans and investments severely damaged business confidence, however. South Africa’s economic growth rate dropped increasingly lower, which brought increased unemployment. ⁴(see also CIA 1987:22).

The CIA reported in 1989 that sanctions had “trimmed about 1 percentage point from South Africa’s real annual GDP growth potential through the early 1990s” (Central Intelligence Agency 1989:39). However, the limited effect of sanctions on the country’s Gross Domestic Product belie the effects it had on specific industries,

Nonetheless, despite their modest overall impact, trade sanctions have hurt some industries significantly. For example, export revenues for the South African coal industry have declined 21 percent during the last two years, in part because of sanctions, while textile exports fell by more than 4 percent and steel, iron, and aluminum exports declined only slightly (Central Intelligence Agency 1989:39).

One of the most damaging effects of the arms embargo was that it prevented the South African Air Force (SAAF) from attaining sophisticated modern aircraft to counter the Cuban threat in Angola. The CIA

reported, "The international arms embargo operationally handicapped the South African Air Force by hampering its ability to replace lost aircraft or procure sophisticated anti-aircraft defense systems" (Central Intelligence Agency 1989:51, see also Wessels and Marx 2008:82).

Despite these issues, the CIA was as sceptical about the overall effects of sanctions in 1989 as they were in 1963,

We doubt that even comprehensive Western economic sanctions would impose enough economic and political costs on South Africa to force Pretoria to alter its racial policies rapidly and fundamentally. Existing sanctions have had only a modest impact on the economy and a negligible effect on Pretoria's policies. South African exporters have managed to keep non-gold sales from falling by tapping new markets for their goods, using innovative trading practices, and employing subterfuge to continue trading in prohibited markets. Indeed, largely as a result of higher gold prices and more domestic spending, the South African economy has experienced a moderate recovery in 1987 and 1988. [...] In our view, sanctions alone are unlikely to force President Botha to undertake modifications of the country's racial policies that he would not otherwise make. South Africa's extensive and costly preparations for sanctions make it improbable that Pretoria would cave in to foreign economic pressure without first testing its ability to withstand comprehensive measures (Central Intelligence Agency 1989:36, 39).

The preparations made by the NP government since Verwoerd thus allowed the South African economy to function even as international attempts at isolation reached their peak. The CIA however does not mention the psychological effects of isolation, which Giliomee (2004:596) believes had a greater impact. He writes that Western countries' later refusal to allow Afrikaner diplomats to travel, was "perhaps more effective than economic sanctions."

Conclusion

The National Party government under Verwoerd was under no illusion that its racial policies would ever be accepted by the international community. Hence, the government started making preparations for widespread sanctions, boycotts, and arms embargoes. These preparations included establishing a domestic and, to a large extent, self-reliant arms industry to serve the country's security needs, establishing infrastructure such as large dams to help provide in the country's food and water needs, and establishing oil stockpiles and an alternative in the form of Sasol, as well as by establishing alternative energy-generating plants such as Koeberg, to provide in South Africa's energy needs. In addition, the South African government became adept at using third parties and the black market to circumvent sanctions and boycotts in order to supply what it could not generate domestically. These and other measures allowed the South African government to mitigate the effects of international efforts to isolate South Africa, and while sanctions and embargoes did have a tangible effect on the South African economy, and notably on the country's ability to fight a conventional war in Angola, international efforts to isolate South Africa were never debilitating. The NP's preparations for its foreseen disaster – and it is important to recognise that they did foresee increased international isolation – were thus largely effective.

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