

### Powerful sanctions work

The second limit to gradualist coercion is the position taken by other states. If sanctions are to have instrumental effects, then it is necessary to gather appropriate support. The notion that economic sanctions do not "work" is pervasive, but entirely unwarranted. South Africans themselves understand only too well how economic tools of statecraft can be used to bend others to your will — the present government in Lesotho is testament to the "effectiveness" of economic sanctions. Likewise, the impoverished condition of Vietnam at the end of the 1980s, and Hanoi's evident eagerness to end those sanctions, demonstrates nicely how sanctions can "work." What is needed for "successful" sanctions is power, and in the case of South Africa, it is commonly thought that if only those states with substantial economic stakes in South Africa were on side, the power to bend Pretoria to the outside world's will would be there. Thus, the Canadian government has moved to gather that power by seeking the support of Britain in the context of the Commonwealth, and the United States, Japan, Germany, France and Britain in the context of the Economic Summit. This aspect of Canadian policy has not been successful, though certainly not for lack of trying: the economic great powers have proved singularly unreceptive to Canadian entreaties, and Mulroney himself has now been rebuffed twice at the Commonwealth and most recently at the Toronto Summit in June 1988. The other leaders remain adamant: sanctions do not work, or sanctions hurt the blacks, or sanctions would be inappropriate in the circumstances. From this general line, the leaders of the great powers have not moved since Mulroney's first summits in 1985. (Indeed, judging from her demeanor at press conferences, Margaret Thatcher takes great personal delight in being able to brush off the importunities of others for stiffer British sanctions.)

### "What do I do after I do...?"

Graduated coercion is thus increasingly blunted as time passes. With each new measure there are increasing costs to any government which imposes them. A ban on the sale of Krugerrands, for example, is easy to impose, with few external or domestic costs; the same could not be said of a complete travel ban, a surtax on South African-tainted dividends, or a disruption of mail and telecommunications. Each of these measures could be expected to generate significant opposition, both within Canada and in the international community. More importantly, however, with each partial measure, Ottawa creeps closer and closer to the penultimate policy dictated by this logic of coercion — the "grand gestures" of a "total break" in diplomatic and economic relations. And once those are embraced, and produce no result, the logic of coercion suggests that the only other option left is to threaten to use the ultimate weapon — armed force. And while Mulroney and Clark have taken a line completely unlike all their predecessors on the use of force as a means of ending apartheid in general, they are extremely unlikely to embrace it as a realistic option for Canadian statecraft against South Africa — at least not under present circumstances. In short, it appears that as the number of non-violent options dwindles, Ottawa's enthusiasm for proceeding at full steam diminishes correspondingly.

### Alone and impotent

But the second limitation — the attitudes of other states in the international community — also causes a loss of ardor. Mulroney's activism, and his government's willingness to embrace concrete sanctions, have been well received by all Common-

wealth countries but one (Britain), and by black African states generally. But in other circles, notably among the other members of the Economic Summit, Canadian activism on the South African issue is less well regarded, and puts the maintenance of Mulroney's influence in summit circles in some jeopardy. First, there is the general problem of keeping the South African issue alive at the Summit year after year. Only very small children delight in playing the same song again and again....and yet again. Most others grow tired of repetition, particularly when they do not like the song in the first place. As the cases of Korea, Vietnam and Central America demonstrate, Canadian governments have tended to recognize that a small power's general influence diminishes in direct proportion to the number of times it expresses a specific objection to a greater power's policy, and that there is wisdom in not playing an unpalatable tune *ad nauseam*.

At the economic summit, Canada's position on South Africa is well known, and has been basically rejected by the other members. There is thus little mileage for Mulroney, who has other concerns to press at these meetings, to sermonize and push Canada's position on South Africa on the other members. Second, there is the related problem of what impact Canada's policies on South Africa have on others' perceptions of Canadian "dependability" and "soundness." According to some officials, Mulroney's willingness in 1985 to espouse a total break with South Africa as a means of leveraging Pretoria into accelerating the abandonment of apartheid created the impression among other leaders that Mulroney was diplomatically immature and unrealistic. If indeed Canada unilaterally embraced a total ban, it is argued, Mulroney would merely confirm that suspicion, with the result that at future summits he would be dismissed more readily as a lightweight, and lose the capacity for exercising influence in other areas of concern. According to these officials, it is this concern, more than any other, that has deterred the Mulroney government from making the "grand gesture" and carrying through on the threat to break all relations with South Africa.

### Losing ardor

Viewed in this way, it can be argued that what we have seen since the Vancouver meetings has not been a loss of steam but rather a slowing in the pace of Canada's sanctionist policies. Such a slowing is the result neither of "sanctions weariness," as some have suggested, nor of a change of heart by either Mulroney or Clark about the appropriateness of the coercive approach. Indeed, there is little evidence that the prime minister and his external affairs minister are any less committed to sanctions as a means of bringing apartheid to an end, or any less visceral in their attitudes towards South Africa, than they were in the summer of 1985 when they launched themselves into this issue. Rather, I have argued here that such a slowing is the result of the original set of instrumental assumptions that appear to have been employed at the outset, and the dwindling ardor that will set in as one's potential instruments are increasingly narrowed to exceedingly costly — and eventually bloody — techniques of statecraft. Such a slowing, I have argued, is also the result of the attitudes of others, and the importance that any Canadian prime minister must attach to how he is regarded by others. In sum, given the negative effects that "ratcheting up" Canadian sanctions would have on Mulroney's influence in summit circles, and given the increasing costs of the dwindling number of coercive measures available to the government, it is little surprise that Ottawa has sought to ease the pace of sanctions at this point. □