

**The Domestic, Institutional, and International Factors of U.S.
Congressional Foreign Policy: The 1986 Anti-Apartheid Act**

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Master's programme in
MSc US Politics & Contemporary History

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15 September 2008

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The Domestic, Institutional, and International Factors of U.S. Congressional Foreign Policy: The 1986 Anti-Apartheid Act

The United States Congress plays a large role in the foreign policy process, yet this is frequently overlooked. The President of the United States is often believed to have a greater amount of control over foreign policy than over domestic policy. This belief was especially strong during the Cold War era of 1945 to 1989. On a few occasions (for example the congressional override of President Nixon's veto for the 1973 War Powers Act) the Congress has challenged the presidential foreign policy agenda. But in order for the Congress to challenge a president, public support of the American people is required to provide the rationale for doing so. This was the case in 1986 when Congress overrode President Ronald Reagan's veto for limited economic sanctions against South Africa. A cursory examination of these events leads one to conclude that the people's will can prompt Congress to act, confronting the president when he is perceived to be out of touch with issues. However, the seemingly simple act of Congress responding to public demand is not the entire story, as a deeper analysis reveals the process to be more complex.

Politics in general and congressional politics in particular is a game of chance and opportunity. In regard to the economic sanctions against South Africa, the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) played a major role in the surprising passage of the 1986 Anti-Apartheid Act. Without their consistent dedication to economic sanctions against South Africa since 1971 the 1986 Anti-Apartheid Act may have never occurred. Even after fifteen years of attempting sanctions the CBC still needed a lot of assistance to make their cause a leading issue for the United States Congress to address. The Congressional Black Caucus not only depended on public opinion, they used the media to help convince other members of Congress that economic

sanctions were a leading issue for the American public. Both houses of Congress then took action to meet the public demand for economic sanctions. This was the only way that a mere twenty out of a total of five hundred and thirty five congressional members (100 Senators and 435 Representatives) could set forth motions to impose what has been believed by many people to be a major piece of congressional legislation.¹ This legislation led the rest of the world to reconsider how to deal with the racial injustice that took place in South Africa.

The CBC's appeal to the media caused the rest of Congress, Democrats and Republicans alike, to respond to their lead. If not they would have forfeited any opportunity that the media presented to enhance their public image. In general, Congressional members do not like to pass up media opportunities to increase their power in governmental matters. For some, such opportunities are a way to make a name for themselves with the general public and for others it is a chance to flaunt their already established congressional influence. This is not to say that in this case all congressional members treated the issue with cynicism; for some it was a just cause. However, the single most important goal for any congressional member is re-election.

There were three responses that were available to Congressional members. The only viable option for any Democrat was to support the CBC and push for economic sanctions. African Americans are an important group for the Democratic Party. The CBC could use this reality as leverage to sway other Democrats to support their cause. For Republicans there were two options to choose from: side with the Democrats, or support President Reagan. Republicans that chose to support the Democrats did so in an attempt either to gain more African American votes, or to avoid being viewed as ignoring popular sentiment for sanctions against South Africa. The Republicans that elected to support the president's foreign policy initiative focused on how

¹Nadine Cohodas, "Black House Members Striving for Influence," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* 43, no. 15 (13 April 1985): 675.

the apartheid government was both a stable regime as well as a reliable ally in southern Africa against the Soviet Union.

The key political concern for Democrats in the 99th Congress (1985 and 1986) was to re-establish themselves with the American public. The Democratic Party was the minority of the two parties with control of only the House of Representatives, whereas the Republicans controlled the presidency and the Senate. Any congressional legislation that was considered to be a Democratic initiative would need to have Republican support to pass through the Senate. The anti-apartheid legislation posed a dilemma for Democrats, and especially for CBC members. To push for harsh economic sanctions would have caused Republican Senate support to dwindle. Yet by allowing Senate Republicans to play a major role in the crafting of the legislation, the original goal of the Democrats was diluted from harsh economic sanctions, to far less severe economic consequences for South Africa. Either way the Democrats had to compromise, but by deciding to pursue a bipartisan compromise, the Congress was able to claim its action caused a major policy change towards the South African apartheid government.

The reason for Republican support of sanctions was not to gain the upper hand against the Democrats. In the House, the Democrats held a sizeable majority, so House Republicans had to take this into consideration when deciding whether to support economic sanctions against South Africa. Republican House members may not have agreed with the House Democratic initiative, but as they were greatly outnumbered, many House Republicans decided to vote in favour of the House legislation. The Senate Republicans held a slim majority, but were in a very powerful position to help establish legislation for South African sanctions.

The media also played a significant role in regard to South African economic sanctions. This is not to say that the media had a set agenda in favour of economic sanctions. Rather, they

favoured stories that would garner a great deal of interest: first, the sit-ins led by Randall Robinson of TransAfrica in response to the apartheid government of South Africa; second, the domestic bloodshed in South Africa that was being shown on a daily basis; third, the domestic marches in the United States against apartheid (after the sit-in success); fourth, the power struggles within Congress; and fifth, the positioning of foreign policy towards South Africa between Congress and the President Reagan. With these five scenarios, each of which involved South Africa, the media was able to maintain coverage on the public debate on American foreign policy towards the South African government. This continuous coverage lasted from November 1984 until the passage of the Anti-Apartheid Act in October 1986.

TransAfrica and the Congressional Black Caucus had together devised a political tactic to use public opinion, through the use of the news media, as the driving force that would realize the CBC's aims of economic sanctions against the apartheid government of South Africa.

TransAfrica was the main foreign policy lobby in the U.S. against the apartheid government in South Africa. The CBC members with House seniority were aware that through their status on committee and sub-committee chairs they could dictate the proceedings in the House of Representatives. The CBC was determined to use the sit-in success as a means to challenge the status quo on an issue they knew was secondary to President Reagan, but one that he would still attempt to uphold. They were prepared for the challenge, for they felt confident that they could gain some concessions from the president's stated position of 'constructive engagement' towards South Africa. With the public on their side, the CBC was certain that this would gain bi-partisan support.

With all the events that took place, the Congressional Black Caucus was able to start a firestorm in the domestic, institutional, and international affairs of the U.S. government. The

result was one that saw a minority view in Congress gain enough momentum, with the use of political pluralism, to challenge an elitist foreign policy of the president. The Congress was perceived to have the support of the people whereas the president did not, and the Congress used the will of the people to attack the position of President Reagan. In perspective, one could say that the congressional realism of the U.S. Congress won a political battle over the political realism of Ronald Reagan's foreign policy toward South Africa. Congressional realism varied within the House and Senate as well as among Democrats and Republicans. Congressional realism used domestic politics as a wedge to influence foreign policy. Reagan's political realism wanted to keep the domestic aspect separate from U.S. foreign policy. In this instance it was conclusive that Congress was successful and the president was not. Yet if this act was such a monumental change in foreign policy towards South Africa, why was a Democratic Congress not able to pass harsher economic sanctions in 1987 or 1988 that would have met the measures approved by the House of Representatives in 1986?

The 1986 passage of economic sanctions toward South Africa was a perfect storm that comes around once or twice in a political lifetime. Without the elements of media coverage and public opinion to create the political will for Congress the 1986 sanctions would likely never have occurred.

My intent is not to judge between President Reagan's policy of 'constructive engagement' or the 1986 Anti-Apartheid Act and determine which one was better. Rather, my objective is to analyse the events that lead to the 1986 economic sanctions as the foreign policy to move along the end of apartheid in South Africa. Personally, I feel the 1986 proposed House sanctions were the best of all scenarios over both the president's foreign policy and the 1986 congressional sanctions. Yet I believe that President Reagan's policy was more polished as a

finished product than the legislative policy passed by Congress. The bi-partisan commitment of 1986 weakened the economic bite of the original intent of the House, and especially the CBC. The Senate Republicans weakened the House version, which resulted in a hindrance to the South African economy but not one that led to its undoing. But it did make President Reagan change his approach toward South Africa. Reagan's foreign policy attempted to bring about a change in South Africa in a manner consistent with his overall Cold War foreign policy. The irony was that Reagan seemed more afraid of losing to the congressional demands than he ever was about his South African foreign policy. South Africa was a secondary matter to most, but to the Congressional Black Caucus it was a prominent item on their foreign policy agenda.

INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS

Between the two legislative houses of Congress, the House of Representatives had consistently pushed for harsher economic sanctions due to its large Democrat advantage. This created the popular belief that the House led the drive for sanctions while the Senate was forced to react to the House initiative. However, even though the House may have dictated the act of sanctions, the Senate's forced response did not necessarily mean the House led the way. The Republican Senate was forced to make some concessions, but in no way were they forced by the House to follow its lead, due to the Republicans having control of the Senate.

The House of Representatives

In the House, the Democrats held a decisive majority advantage to control voting (253 Democrats versus 182 Republicans).² Virtually any Republican support would have made for enough votes to overturn any presidential veto. The House Democrat support could be counted on due to the party supporting a CBC initiative. House Republicans kept this substantial

²Alan Ehrenhalt, "Failed Campaign Cost Republicans the Senate," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* 44, no. 45 (8 November 1986): 2803.

numerical disadvantage in mind when voting for sanctions. Though a number of Republicans voted with the Democrats, they did so out of the political reality of the situation. A close examination of the House voting records revealed that a majority of House Republicans actually voted against the 1985 House Bill before voting for the bill in 1986.³ One example of this House Republican voting behaviour was that of Representative Newt Gingrich (R-GA).

Congressman Gingrich was believed to have been consistent in his support for economic sanctions against South Africa. Yet this belief could be considered odd since he had also been consistent in his rhetoric for opposing communism in other parts of the globe. Buttressing this concern was the belief that punishing the apartheid government would weaken a non-communist ally. This claim was very common among congressional Republicans who were against South African sanctions.

Some such as Michael Clough believe that Rep. Gingrich voted for sanctions as an attempt to gain more African American support for the Republican Party.⁴ The belief raised by Clough is a valid point but he attributed this act of support by Gingrich as done from a position of compromise.⁵ However, Clough did not consider the alternative reason of Gingrich voting with the stronger House position due to the amount of Democrat support for sanctions. This position (chosen by a minority of House Republicans with a total of fifty-six votes in 1985, but in 1986 with a numerical majority of ninety House Republican votes) reveals that Republicans finally decided to side with the majority and chose to be seen as winning the political battle.⁶ Yet the overall voting record indicated that this was done by a large number of House

³"CQ House Votes 129-134," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* 43, no. 23 (8 June 1985): 1130; "CQ House Votes 351-357," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* 44, no. 38 (20 September 1986): 2236.

⁴Michael Clough, "Beyond Constructive Engagement," *Foreign Policy* no. 61 (Winter, 1985-1986): 16-17.

⁵*Ibid.*, 16.

⁶"House Votes," (8 June 1985):1130; "House Votes," (20 Sept. 1986): 2236.

Republicans only after the political reality of sanctions was clearly evident (with Gingrich as the prime example). Even more surprising when taking into consideration Clough's view is that it seemed he overlooked that Rep. Gingrich actually voted against the 1985 version of the House bill H.R. 1460, the Anti-Apartheid Act.⁷ Clough's article was published before the 1986 sanctions debate started. Therefore, any perspective informed by Clough's argument, given the recorded voting records, must consider that the House Republican compromise of "limited sanctions" must have followed the Senate Republican agenda/strategy very closely.⁸

The passage of the Senate version in October 1986 could illuminate that the House was not controlled but was only dictated by the political design of the House Democrats, led by the CBC. Thus, what finally convinced a number of Republicans to vote for the bill was that the House had accepted the Senate version over their own. And with the House accepting the Senate version over their own, how much control could House Democrats have over the proceedings?

House Democrats were believed to have led the charge for economic sanctions against South Africa. With regards to a sanction agenda, Rep. Julian Dixon (D-Calif.) said, "We (the CBC) have collaborated with ... TransAfrica...to seek congressional support for stronger policies against apartheid."⁹ This statement by Congressman Dixon had been an official CBC position since the start of the Reagan administration in 1981.¹⁰ Given the context of the South African sanctions debate that took place during 1985 and 1986, it seems evident that the House Democrats were determined to use their numerical advantage against their fellow House Republicans. Dixon's statement indicates that TransAfrica would help in this effort by lobbying for (mainly public) support to first get full congressional Democrat support; and then to use both

⁷*Congressional Record* 131, no. 73 (5 June 1985): H 3854.

⁸Clough, 17.

⁹Julian Dixon, "The Congressional Black Caucus and U.S. Policy in Southern Africa," *Africa Report* 29, no. 3 (May-June 1984): 13.

¹⁰*ibid.*

the public support and the Democrat support to force the congressional Republicans' hand.

What Congressman Dixon didn't account for was that the CBC effort to force a change in foreign policy towards South Africa would cost as much as it did. Wanting to force a change did not mean that how much was changed would be under the control of the CBC or its fellow House Democrats.

For House Democrats to have a legislative agenda against South African apartheid pass through the House would have certainly required wide support from outside the Congressional Black Caucus. One example of this support from outside the CBC among House Democrats was that of Rep. Howard Wolpe (D-Mich.). Congressman Wolpe was the established "floor manager" of the (1985 House) bill, one which John Felton stated "rejected motions" of extremely harsh sanctions that the Senate would reject.¹¹ One of the rejected motions was from CBC member Ronald V. Dellums (D-Calif.), whose proposal could only muster seventy seven votes of approval.¹² Felton had described that a new foreign policy was established, but what he did not say was that it was only a bargaining chip. This was very evident with Rep. Wolpe's lack of support for Rep. Dellums proposal, which demonstrated that non CBC House Democrats had already started to alter the original intent of the CBC. Felton may have claimed the House led for 'tough trade restrictions' but in 1985 they could only have been 'tough' in respect to doing virtually nothing.

However, with South Africa once again on the political agenda in 1986, Rep. Dellums' version was finally approved. Could this have meant that the public demand for sanctions moved the House to consider harsh economic sanctions toward South Africa? Steven Pressman

¹¹John Felton, "Rebuff to Reagan on South Africa: In the House, Tough New Trade Restrictions," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* 43, no. 23 (8 June 1985): 1087.

¹²*Ibid.*

felt the Dellums bill had “little chance of passing (in) the Senate.”¹³ Based on Pressman’s belief, it was still possible that the tone of public perception toward South Africa enabled the Congressional Black Caucus to pressure House Democrats to change their mind and vote for harsher sanctions. This was certainly very likely, as evidenced by Congressman Wolpe having switched his vote for the harsher sanctions from the previous year. This occurred even though Pressman in 1986 felt, much the same as Rep. Wolpe did in 1985, that the Senate was likely to reject such a proposal for South African sanctions. Thus it was plausible that the CBC did put some pressure on House Democrats using public sentiment as their mechanism for encouragement. But as Pressman and Rep. Wolpe both believed, this legislation would not likely pass in the Senate. This was why only a voice vote was required to pass the legislation.¹⁴

Due to the low expectation of passage in the Senate, the House felt no recorded vote for record was necessary. This legislation altered the middle ground proposal in the House and turned it into a much more radical solution. This action by the House must have then been done either as an act of unity; or when considering the previous statements of Pressman in 1986 and Wolpe in 1985, was done purely to pander to the American public. The belief that the House of Representatives led the charge for sanctions was correct, but how much they were able to change was up to the mercy of the Senate.

The Senate

The Senate, unlike the House, was under nominal Republican control, with a margin of difference of 53-47.¹⁵ With a Senate almost evenly divided, it would seem that for major legislation to pass would have required a bipartisanship compromise between the two parties.

¹³Steven Pressman, “Stunner in House: Tough Anti-Apartheid Bill,” *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* 44, no. 25 (21 June 1986): 1384.

¹⁴Ronald Dellums, “House Amendment 924 for H.R. 4868,” Library of Congress, available from <http://thomas.loc.gov>; Internet, accessed on 19 June 2008.

¹⁵Ehrenhalt, 2803.

Thus any initiatives from the Democratic House would have required modifications to the initiatives in order for the Senate to reach a compromise. However, within the Senate there was another party battle to sort out before having to consider the House initiative of economic sanctions against South Africa.

During the 99th session of Congress (1985 & 1986) the Senate was put into a position of having to either defend its party leader, President Reagan, or attack his foreign policy position towards South Africa. The work by John Rielly concluded that the American public and the American leadership had different perspectives on South Africa.¹⁶ With Reilly's perspective it would have been left up to the Senate to figure out how to find an acceptable position (if any) of change, which was demanded by the House in response to the public interest towards South Africa. This resulted in the Senate's response being divided among three different positions. Each one felt they knew how to best cope with the substantial public interest in South Africa. Rielly's work did not state how best to resolve the dilemma, only that three percent of the sample found U.S. foreign policy toward South Africa as a major concern.¹⁷ There was no obvious answer to this problem. Only through deliberation could the Senate come to a conclusion as to how best to meet the people's needs, as an answer to a problem that was wrapped up in a domestic cause that needed a foreign policy solution. Without any guide for political reference the three different factions in the Senate fought to gain influence over the other two.

The three Senate factions that were fighting for influence were Democrats, moderate Republicans, and conservative Republicans; however, the real struggle for influence was between the Republican factions. With the Senate Democrats as the party minority they were united in agreement to challenge the president's South African foreign policy. On the other

¹⁶John Rielly, "America's State of Mind," *Foreign Policy* no. 66 (Spring, 1987): 40, 47.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 42.

hand, Senate Republicans had to take into consideration both President Reagan's policy agenda of 'constructive engagement', and be perceived as being receptive to the public's demands. The conservative Republicans were cast as having decided to stick with the president's foreign policy agenda. The moderate Republicans were sitting on the fence and weighing their options before deciding what to do. Thus the Senate Democrats and the conservative Senate Republicans each wanted to influence as many moderate Senate Republicans as possible. Yet by Rielly's perspective it would seem that the Senate Democrats wanted to use the public interest as their leverage of power, whereas the conservative Senate Republicans wanted to focus on how a large percentage of the public felt this was not a major concern in foreign policy.¹⁸

Senate Democrats needed to use the media as a means to gain influence over moderate Republicans. One prominent Democrat that attempted this was Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA). Sen. Kennedy had spoken to newspapers, written opinion pieces, and even released his congressional comments to match with the public sentiment of taking action against the apartheid government of South Africa.¹⁹ Sen. Kennedy had hoped to use his status as a well known congressional member, along with his famous family name, to help steer moderate Senate Republicans into an alliance with the Senate Democrats.

Sen. Kennedy's actions were considered by some to be "merely a sideshow."²⁰ Charles Krauthammer considered the actions of senators like Kennedy to be "not much more than a gesture ... (for) contact and leverage."²¹ However, Krauthammer was clearly against economic sanctions towards South Africa. Further, he did not address how the Senate needed to drum up

¹⁸Ibid., 42,47.

¹⁹Karlyn Barker, "Kennedy Says S. Africa Policy a Failure, Calls for Sanctions," *Washington Post*, 17 January 1985, 20 (A); Edward Kennedy, "A Call for Justice," *Africa Report* 30, no. 3 (May-June, 1985): 10-13; Edward Kennedy, "The Sanctions Debate," *Africa Report* 31, no. 5 (September-October, 1986): 37-39.

²⁰Charles Krauthammer, "Sanctions Merely a Sideshow in South Africa," *Chicago Sun-Times*, 11 August 1986, 23.

²¹Ibid.

enough support to thwart the current South African policy that had been under attack by the media and the American public. Instead, he focused on the importance of Cold War foreign policy over public sentiment; much like what Rielly said he believed was a major dilemma for Congress to have to address. But since Krauthammer was only promoting his opinion, there was no intent to address the public concern in a foreign policy debate. His dislike for this Democratic Party issue clouded his judgment of how the sanctions dilemma was a combination of domestic and foreign policy politics. Much like Krauthammer, conservative Senate Republicans also wanted to keep the domestic issues out of foreign policy politics.

Conservative Senate Republicans used the Cold War perspective as the reason to avoid South African economic sanctions. Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC) was one of these conservatives that wanted to thwart the Senate Democrat ambitions for sanctions. Unlike Sen. Kennedy, who counted on substantial amounts of help from outside sources to influence the Senate, Sen. Helms depended largely on legislative tactics to help realize his intent. Steve Blakely termed the tactics used by conservatives like Sen. Helms as “professional” politics.²² The tactics described by Blakely were used by Sen. Helms in 1985 and 1986. Blakely highlighted how Sen. Helms was a skilled politician, always trying to protect and promote his political viewpoints. However, Blakely did not discuss how Sen. Helms elected to disregard the sentiment of the American people in ensuring his political foreign policy concerns were addressed.

The actions of Sen. Helms imply that it was likely that he kept domestic and foreign policy issues separate in his mind as he made his policy and voting decisions. One could also infer that the Senate Democrats and the moderate Senate Republicans that did not side with the conservative Senate conservatives were unable to separate domestic concerns from this largely

²²Steve Blakely, “Helms’ Tactics Score Foreign Policy Victories,” *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* 43, no. 28 (13 July 1985): 1365.

foreign policy matter. The conservative Senate Republicans hoped that, by using the Cold War as the reason for wanting to deny sanctions, their disregard of public sentiment would not harm their upcoming re-election campaigns. This concern for re-election was also very much on the mind of moderate Senate Republicans.

Moderate Senate Republicans seemed to be more concerned with how their political support for foreign policy change would be viewed by both the president and also by the public. The approach to balancing party allegiance with political opportunity determined how moderate Senators decided to act. In 1985 President Reagan did just enough to keep the support of most moderate Senate Republicans but in 1986 a majority decided to split over the difference in foreign policy between the public and the president. Sen. Lowell Weicker Jr. (R-Conn.) decided very early in 1985 to side with appealing to the public, over party unity with President Reagan, by being the first senator arrested for protesting at the South African Embassy.²³

The action taken by Sen. Weicker was a calculated move to appease the public and by being the first senator to be arrested he gained influence among Senate Democrats. Since Sen. Weicker was often termed as a liberal Republican it would be difficult to define him as a moderate in this instance.²⁴ More appropriate examples of moderate Republican behaviours would be senators Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) and Robert Dole (R-Kan.).

Senators Lugar and Dole were classic examples of political tightrope walkers. Sen. Lugar as chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, and Sen. Dole as Senate majority leader were two Republicans that played important roles in the final outcome of South African sanctions. Both Senators Lugar and Dole had sided with President Reagan in 1985 and had voted for sanctions in 1986. According to Felton, President Reagan's 1985 executive order had

²³Karlyn Barker, "Sen. Weicker Is Arrested At Embassy," *Washington Post*, 15 January 1985, 1(B).

²⁴Blakely, 1365; Barker, "Sen. Weicker," 1(B).

just “merely ratified actions he and previous presidents had taken.”²⁵ Felton’s statement lends support to the claim that in 1985 Sen. Lugar and Sen. Dole placed Reagan’s foreign policy agenda over domestic public opinion. What Felton’s examination overlooked was the party politics that were used to thwart, temporarily, a mainly Democratic initiative. Felton should have remarked how the action by Sen. Lugar and Sen. Dole was a tactical move to give the president more time in the hope that the call for sanctions would dwindle enough for them to be put aside for as long as possible. Felton later claimed that in 1985 President Reagan budged enough to avoid sanctions but in 1986 he did not budge at all.²⁶ By this latest statement Sen. Lugar and Sen. Dole were then justified in their voting patterns. Felton’s remark also indicated that he held a more favourable view of sanctions in 1986 than he did in 1985 since he labelled the president’s actions in a much more positive manner in 1986 than he did in 1985. It could be claimed that Felton was caught up in the moment, since he ignored how Sen. Lugar and Sen. Dole stopped the 1985 congressional debate when Lugar hid the legislation towards South Africa literally under lock and key, and thus ended any Senate debate.²⁷ Sen. Dole described that the action was done to supposedly help maintain working order in the Senate.²⁸ So it would seem the praise described by Jacob Lamar toward “the bipartisan respect Lugar commands” would thus dictate that deciding the proper time when the Senate Republican leadership felt it was appropriate to debate economic sanctions towards South Africa was a common political manoeuvre.²⁹

²⁵ John Felton, “Reagan Averts a Confrontation on South Africa,” *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* 43, no. 37 (14 September 1985): 1801.

²⁶ John Felton, “Hill Overrides Veto of South Africa Sanctions,” *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* 44, no. 44 (4 October 1986): 2339.

²⁷ *Congressional Record* 131, part 17 (12 September 1985):23583-23584.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 23583.

²⁹ Jacob V. Lamar Jr., “In the Eye of the Storm,” *Time* (4 August 1986): 8.

As a result it could be said that Lamar and Felton did not take into consideration the Senate political manoeuvres that were used to fight for influence and political power by every member of Congress. Just as in a game of chess in which you set up the pieces and wait for the right moment to strike, Congress was calculating what their individual actions would mean for themselves before deciding to act.

Reflection

In the end it seemed the moderate Senate Republicans carried the day. Though the official legislation (H.R. 4858) may have given credit in name to CBC member Rep. William Gray III (D-PA), after the congressional compromise initiated by Sen. Lugar only the bill title and its description came from the House. Sen. Lugar had the Senate version of his bill inserted over the House version as the official text.³⁰ In rhetoric the moderate Senate Republicans sounded more like they sided with the Democrats, but in reality they did just enough to politically satisfy the domestic issue of South Africa without totally jeopardizing the current foreign policy towards it.

In viewing the Congress as a whole of the House and the Senate, the fight for power and influence through the battleground of South African foreign policy is very evident. With many House Republicans supporting the House sanctions one must consider if they possessed ulterior motives. Could the House Republicans not have put up a fight with the House Democrats because they knew that the Senate Republicans would lessen the impact of economic sanctions? This point deserves consideration given that the House Republicans had to have been aware of at least some aspects of Senate Republican plans with regards to South African economic sanctions.

There was a common perception that the Anti-Apartheid legislation that was passed in 1986 was that of a compromise between the House and the Senate. What has not been given

³⁰"H.R. 4868," Library of Congress; *Congressional Record* 132, part 15 (15 August 1986): 21869.

consideration was how much the influence of party politics in Congress were at work the entire time in 1985 & 1986 for the South African economic sanctions legislation. When considering the actions of Congress in the *Congressional Record* this influence becomes evidently clear.

DOMESTIC FACTORS

Domestic factors were believed to have made the economic sanctions toward South Africa conceivable. The combination of media coverage, the lobbying work of TransAfrica, and the ensuing public opinion of outrage against the South African apartheid government was believed by many to have allowed the Congress to challenge President Reagan's South African foreign policy.

The Media

The American media seemed to have grabbed onto the appealing story that South Africa made toward the end of 1984, and continued for large parts of the next two years. And as long as any aspect of South Africa, from its own internal struggles to South African related domestic and political events in the U.S., would make for a great story, it would remain a covered topic. The continuous coverage occurred in both print (newspapers, magazines, and journals) and broadcast (principally television) news media channels.

To the media, South Africa was a journalistic gold mine for a broad range of stories that could be mined to draw the interests of readers and viewers, and help keep the public interested in South Africa. Close to one thousand television reports for 1985 and 1986 indicates that the television media was determined not to let South Africa slip away from view in people's daily lives.³¹

³¹Donald Culverson, "The Politics of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in the United States, 1969-1986," *Political Science Quarterly* 111, no. 1 (1996): 144.

Donald Culverson was one that believed this coverage was largely due to the “anti-apartheid protest activities.”³² However, the perspective Culverson took had ignored, either accidentally or intentionally, that the media was looking for a story, not trying to follow history. This was not to say that the media, which had a label of being liberal and thus biased more toward the viewpoint of the Democrats in Congress, did not sympathize with the outcry for change towards South Africa. If anything Culverson might well have focused on how TransAfrica had started the protest movement as a public ploy to gain political influence. This was much more likely than Culverson’s belief that the American public had spoken out against the Reagan Administration’s South African policy of ‘constructive engagement’³³. The media did not cover this story from the historical angle of opposition against South African foreign policy, for if it was following a historical trend then it would have also covered the foreign policies of other presidents from President Truman to Reagan.

Viewed in this context it becomes evident that the television news media was simply after a story that would draw viewers, and not a rebuke against one particular choice of foreign policy. This is also evidence in support of the reason for which the media covered certain stories such as TransAfrica and Democratic Congressmen who supported sanctions from the very beginning. Later they covered some Republican Congressmen, once the media began depicting the perception of a new public policy. The overall coverage was largely done to enhance the influence of those wanting change, and then as a consequence to decrease the influence of those who did not want this particular change in South African foreign policy. Thus it was plausible that the majority of television news media were only concerned with the story as a media event,

³²ibid., 143.

³³ibid., 144.

and not concerned with in depth research on what they covered actually meant in relation to the story.

The media interest in South Africa could also have been influenced by the crackdown on the media within South Africa. The attempt to stop the media from covering the news in South Africa only made them more determined to keep more focus on the news events concerning South Africa. Many press stories such as the ones that were written by William Smith used the press restrictions as an opportunity to overtly link it with U.S. foreign policy towards South Africa.³⁴ In consequence, Smith had used the action of South Africa toward the media as a link to make the news media, in this instance himself and *Time* magazine, a major source of influence in the United States.

The type of influence the print media has typically pursued was influence within its own sphere, which is achieved by garnering more readers than its competition. The media's coverage over South African was no different. A study by Eleanor Singer and Jacob Ludwig concluded that the press restrictions did not hamper the coverage on South Africa.³⁵ With the findings of Singer and Ludwig it becomes plausible to consider that any drop in media coverage would then have been due to a belief by the media that South Africa was no longer an issue worth covering. Consequently, over time the amount of coverage would have naturally dwindled. The passage of the anti-apartheid act in 1986 could have been a defining moment when the story of South Africa lost its appeal as a great news story. However, some people believe that this was not the case.

³⁴William Smith, "South Africa: See No Evil, Hear No Evil," *Time*, 30 June 1986, 6-9; William Smith, "South Africa: Moving to Muzzle the Messenger," *Time*, 22 December 1985, 22.

³⁵Eleanor Singer and Jacob Ludwig, "South Africa's Press Restrictions: Effects on Press Coverage and Public Opinion Toward South Africa," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (Autumn, 1987): 315.

Danny Schechter believed that it was the press restriction that had lessened the amount of stories on South Africa.³⁶ Yet Schechter did not regard South Africa as a story of importance to meet the viewer/reader demand, but believed that it was a story inherently worth reporting.³⁷ He did not want to consider that when Congress overturned President Reagan's veto the allure of South Africa would start to fade. Schechter did not consider that any story concerning South Africa was linked in some way to its foreign policy with the U.S., because for him any story was used in some form as an excuse to demand change in how U.S. foreign policy dealt with South African apartheid. Once economic sanctions were announced on various media outlets what more could be done to influence the viewing public? Supposedly this would meet the demand for change, and it would become hard to maintain South Africa as a story about demands for change.

Not all of the media used South African domestic affairs to enhance their coverage of congressional politics. Some media outlets, such as the *Chicago Sun-Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, were more consistent in separating Congressional political battles from South African domestic issues and the anti-apartheid sentiment that was popular among the American public. The media that followed this type of coverage was often labelled as more conservative in its views than others like the *New York Times* or the *Time* magazine in their coverage regarding South Africa and corresponding events centred on congressional politics around U.S. foreign policy. The more conservative media was more likely to believe in President's Reagan's South African foreign policy approach. Thus it was quite likely that the labelled "liberal" and "conservative" media outlets had sided with their respective liberal and conservative approaches on how the U.S. should conduct its foreign policy toward South African apartheid.

³⁶Danny Schechter, "South Africa: Where Did the Story Go?" *Africa Report* 33, no. 2 (March-April, 1988): 27.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 28.

Consequently their coverage would become biased toward only supporting their point of view. However, media outlets with a more conservative mentality were in the minority with respect to coverage of U.S. domestic issues, South African domestic issues, and politics around U.S. foreign policy. It then becomes possible to believe that the media had a set agenda it wanted to push to shape the debate over South Africa. President Reagan believed this was what the media wanted to accomplish.³⁸

However, the media was not interested in pushing a set political agenda. The media indeed did have their own opinion regarding U.S. foreign policy toward South Africa, which varied according to the views of the particular news station or print media staff; but at the end of the day the media was only concerned with selling a product. This focus on product was due to the media's concerns over its ratings or amount of copies sold, and that would subsequently determine each outlet's influence over what people would see or read regarding the U.S. domestic atmosphere, in conjunction with U.S. foreign policy toward South Africa. Each outlet strived to have a larger viewership or readership than its competitors, in order to extend their influence, and as a result to become more powerful in the media business than the competition.

The move for influence by the media to draw interest from the public was linked with how TransAfrica had launched its campaign as a cause for change of U.S. foreign policy towards Africa. Congress had responded as a whole to the call for change, and the media was used to facilitate the interaction between Congress, TransAfrica, and public opinion. When this partnership ended, the media lost its appetite for the story to continue. But during this partnership, the media was largely the voice through which TransAfrica was able to lobby to enhance its own standing with the Congress. In particular, TransAfrica used the media to help

³⁸Kironk Skinner, Annelise Anderson, and Martin Anderson, eds., *Reagan: A Life in Letters* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 524.

leverage its influence in lobbying the Congress for a change in U.S. foreign policy towards South Africa.

TransAfrica

TransAfrica was the African American foreign policy lobby that was very influential in helping to make economic sanctions towards South Africa into a domestic political factor during the 99th session of Congress (1985 & 1986). This organization wanted to enhance its lobbying power beyond its main sympathizers in the CBC in order to gain influence among the government to help dictate how the U.S. would implement its foreign policy in areas in which they had an interest. A principal lobbying goal of TransAfrica was to help dictate U.S. foreign policy towards South Africa.

Randall Robinson was the leader of TransAfrica. In regards to South Africa he wanted the U.S. government to help implement severe economic sanctions to speed the transition from the apartheid government in South Africa to one that had a majority rule led by black South Africans.³⁹ This goal indicated that Robinson was concerned with increasing the lobbying power of TransAfrica. Yet at the time of this article, during the Jimmy Carter era as president, he was struggling to get his message to be considered outside of the CBC and a few other congressional Democrats. Robinson also stated the importance of using the image of the civil rights movements in the U.S. as the best way to implement his plan.⁴⁰ These two items suggest that Robinson was looking for the right moment to use some mechanism that could help him swing the public sentiment towards his side. Then, and only then, would Robinson have gained sufficient lobbying influence among Congressional members to press President Reagan towards

³⁹Randall Robinson, "TransAfrica's Vision," *AEI Foreign Policy and Defense Review* 1, no.1 (1979): 20-21.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 22.

South African economic sanctions. Without public sentiment to back his cause, TransAfrica struggled even to gain a strong position of influence among Democrats outside of the CBC.

Helen Kitchen paraphrased the work of TransAfrica and Robinson in 1985 as one of a “daring gamble” to force a change of U.S. foreign policy toward Africa.⁴¹ Kitchen felt that Robinson had gambled correctly in harnessing the public interest in a bid to increase his lobbying influence. Considering the remark by Kitchen along with the previous comments above concerning Robinson, it becomes evident that there was a missing piece of what TransAfrica needed to enhance its lobbying power, namely a Republican president. Without a Republican led administration this gamble by Robinson would have failed. Kitchen seems to have taken for granted the domestic “anti-apartheid leverage” generated with the domestic sphere of political influence.⁴² If President Reagan had lost his re-election bid for president there would have been a lack of demonstrated Democratic support within Congress against South African apartheid. Furthermore, it would have been very difficult for Robinson to persuade Democrats outside of the CBC to work against a Democratic president upholding long standing foreign policy. It would have been unreasonable to even expect much CBC support in his cause. Robinson had wanted the Carter administration to implement economic sanctions against South Africa but his lack of attempts to upstage President Carter showed he knew that he would have been fighting a losing battle for influence.⁴³

John de St. Jorre believed that TransAfrica used Reagan’s re-election as a means to capitalize on “an issue as clear cut as apartheid” to rally the “domestic political climate.”⁴⁴ Jorre was correct in his view of the value of domestic politics in causing Congress to consider the

⁴¹Helen Kitchen, “Africa: Year of Ironies,” *Foreign Affairs* 64, no. 3 (1985): 562.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 572, 582.

⁴³Robinson, 21.

⁴⁴John de St. Jorre, “South Africa Embattled,” *Foreign Affairs* 65, no. 3 (1986): 556.

political importance of TransAfrica and its public lobbying efforts to influence U.S. foreign policy toward South Africa. However, Jorre did not consider the political ramifications inside of Congress. Members of Congress stated that the system of apartheid was evil in a political ploy to try and gain the power necessary to dictate the legislative terms. TransAfrica was happy to have Republican support but it needed to have Democrat support first before it pressured Republicans through the media and domestic politics to support their cause. TransAfrica craved the domestic spotlight to enhance its power with the political circles in Washington.

Kenneth Longmyer believed that TransAfrica was an African American ethnic lobby that wanted to unite the black American population for political influence towards South Africa.⁴⁵ Yet TransAfrica's effectiveness was not due to the domestic black support but by the greater numbers in domestic white support. Of course, African American domestic support helped legitimize the cause, but as a racial majority the white support was what made TransAfrica an effective lobbying force for economic sanctions toward South Africa. This was why Robinson wanted to have political support from outside the CBC and the Democratic Party.⁴⁶ To have Republican support depended upon white American support due to the reason that the majority of Republican political support came from whites, not blacks. In contrast with this, Longmyer seemed to simply conclude that white support was an added domestic political bonus and not a necessity.⁴⁷

Sanford Ungar noted that South Africa domination of the domestic headlines had "created an enormous public relations problem for South Africa in the United States."⁴⁸ By Ungar's claim then it was evident that, before TransAfrica was able to grab the public spotlight,

⁴⁵Kenneth Longmyer, "Black American Demands," *Foreign Policy*, no. 60 (Autumn, 1985): 10.

⁴⁶Diane Weathers, "Interview: Randall Robinson," *Newsweek*, 1 April 1985, 52.

⁴⁷Longmyer, 10 -11.

⁴⁸Sanford Ungar, "South Africa's Lobbyists," *New York Times*, 13 October 1985, 1.

foreign policy lobbying regarding South Africa was largely on the side of apartheid. With a number of former congressmen that had lobbied on South Africa's behalf it was no surprise that TransAfrica needed to gain public sentiment to combat the more affluent (and therefore influential) lobbyists regarding South Africa.⁴⁹ It was likely that the former congressmen turned lobbyists had used their knowledge and previous contacts in Congress to thwart the efforts of TransAfrica. Since the former congressman turned lobbyists had come from both parties it seemed like TransAfrica needed to win over Democrat as well as Republican support.⁵⁰

By having made South Africa a popular domestic issue, TransAfrica was able to increase their lobbying influence among the political parties. Further, the public lobbying done by TransAfrica took the ability to lobby for South African foreign policy away from the South African government and its representatives in the U.S. As the result, TransAfrica became the leading lobbying group with influence in U.S. foreign policy towards South Africa during 1985 & 1986. There were attempts by the South African lobbyists to combat the effectiveness of TransAfrica and its newfound power in foreign policy lobbying. However, after TransAfrica was able to gain domestic support these attempts were largely rendered futile within Congress.

Without any effective means of gaining influence the opponents of TransAfrica resorted to the rhetoric of the simplistic Cold War strategy and attempted to label them as a communist inspired group.⁵¹ However, this attempt fell on deaf ears due to the lack of credible evidence. For if there was any truth to this farfetched claim then the other lobbyists would have surely tried to have presented this information to both Congress and the media, in order to stem the tide of anti-apartheid momentum that had built up over South Africa. Yet it still could have been

⁴⁹Ibid., 2; Kathryn Johnson, "How Foreign Powers Play for Status in Washington," *U.S. News & World Report*, 17 June 1985, 40.

⁵⁰Ungar, 1; Johnson, 40.

⁵¹Allan Brownfeld and J. Michael Walker, *The Revolution Lobby* (Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Security Educational Institute, 1986), 41.

possible for the media and the Congress to disregard this belief anyway, with TransAfrica having asserted itself as a credible source of power and influence that had gained the public's support. However, the likelihood of TransAfrica supporting America's Cold War adversaries was more likely a show of desperation.

With the tide of lobbyist influence having been turned some people, such as Allan Brownfeld and J. Michael Walker, wanted to try and discredit what they considered a liberal betrayal of America's (and specifically President Reagan's) cold war foreign policy.⁵² Yet Brownfeld and Walker failed to realize that TransAfrica's actions were based on human values, and not on ideological principles, which was why a number of their fellow conservatives did not agree with their farfetched assessment. Randall Robinson and TransAfrica surely had ideological beliefs, but the act of catalysing public support was a means to shape the foreign policy debate they had helped start; and was done in order to gain power in the Washington lobbyist sphere to influence both parties in Congress, and in this effort they were very successful. U.S. public opinion was essential to TransAfrica in their efforts to lobby Congress for a change in American foreign policy toward South Africa.

Domestic Public Opinion

American public opinion was believed to have been the rallying cry that led the drive for Congress to enact economic sanctions against South Africa. This was the assertion of TransAfrica and congressional members that backed sanctions, along with some members of the media. Yet this perspective could make it seem that the American public was at one time in favour of the apartheid government, or that they were unaware of what was happening in South Africa. In point of fact, the public wanted action but they gave no indication of how to go about making the change. With this viewpoint in mind, one could suspect that the public opinion was

⁵²Ibid., 40-42.

merely a cloak and dagger disguise used in the battle for power, in shaping a new U.S. foreign policy toward South Africa.

Congress had implied that the demands of the American public had caused them to reconsider U.S. foreign policy toward South Africa. Rep. Howard Wolpe (D-Mich.) gave the credit to the “individual citizens” that demanded action to end apartheid in South Africa.⁵³ However, Rep. Wolpe’s comment regarding the public only referred to the broader story. His statement did not indicate how the public demand helped to make the congressional legislation toward South Africa different from President Reagan’s ‘constructive engagement’ policy. This was because what the public did was to provide Rep. Wolpe, along with the other congressional members that voted for sanctions, with an opportunity to use politics to increase their influence on a foreign policy issue. This was an issue that saw both parties use the American public for their own political gain. It would be hard to justify Rep. Wolpe’s claim that the public action showed the “enormous power” of American public opinion.⁵⁴ Rep. Wolpe’s view would indicate that the public sentiment favoured the congressional Republicans most of all. But this was unlikely the case with TransAfrica and many congressional Democrats, who had preferred harsher sanctions than what the Senate Republicans wanted to implement. Rep. Wolpe was correct in his belief that “the political environment” had changed due to the public opinion.⁵⁵ Yet with public opinion unable to dictate congressional politics, it left the use of this domestic opportunity up to foreign policy political conditions.

⁵³Margaret Novicki, “Interview with Howard Wolpe,” *Africa Report* 33, no. 2 (March-April, 1988): 39.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) was one Congressman who believed that public opinion could be used to help dictate U.S. foreign policy with South Africa.⁵⁶ However, it seemed that he was just as concerned with how to enhance his own political power. Sen. Lugar used his leadership on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as a means to ensure that domestic support was consistent with his interpretation of it. Lugar stated that his committee (Sen. Foreign Relations) was “the stage for the debate on South Africa” and that “economic sanctions may not force a change...but it would show the moral outrage of the American people.”⁵⁷ His comment revealed that he wanted to influence how the change in foreign policy would happen. Unlike Rep. Wolpe, Sen. Lugar did not give the public credit for the change, and thus implied his leadership deserved the credit for having heard the domestic complaints. Sen. Lugar was concerned about the economic decline in South Africa and stated that the new U.S. foreign policy could not “force (a) one man one vote government in South Africa.”⁵⁸ The legislation that was passed was against public demand and though Sen. Lugar was correct in his belief it was clearly not influenced by the public.

The domestic concerns that were expressed were for the U.S. Congress to take action to make South Africa move away from its apartheid government.⁵⁹ An article by Barry Sussman highlighted that the public opinion was in favour of the Congress taking action, but there was no clear consensus among the public as to whether the congressional challenge was more popular than the policy of President Reagan.⁶⁰ According to Sussman, the domestic appeal was to help the majority population in South Africa gain the right to vote and for equal rights in their own

⁵⁶Richard Lugar, “Making Foreign Policy: the Congress and Apartheid,” *Africa Report* 31, no. 5 (September-October, 1986): 33-36.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 35.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 36.

⁵⁹Barry Sussman, “Activists Stimulate S. African Sanctions,” *Washington Post*, 24 July 1985, 25(A).

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

country. Yet as Sussman noted, Randall Robinson and TransAfrica organized a great number of domestic public events.⁶¹ Thus it was plausible that the media-covered events were attended by people who supported the TransAfrica and CBC goal of harsh economic sanctions to force change in South Africa. This contrasted with the greater number of Americans that did not demonstrate, who were unsure of how to force change but believed change should happen. With this in mind then the Congress only had to acknowledge that the people wanted economic sanctions as a moral way for the U.S. to show their support.

The use of economic sanctions was well known due to the being raised in domestic public opinion debates. Yet the use of sanctions was raised by TransAfrica, CBC members, and Congress members far more than among the American public itself. As a result, the term ‘economic sanction’ became used as a catch phrase to indicate the debate over economic sanctions, a debate that went on in Congress. TransAfrica also frequently mentioned sanctions as they lobbied in public settings. With economic sanctions mentioned so frequently it could have seemed that the public was demanding it, but this was clearly not the case.

Steven Roberts, much like Sussman, had also expressed that public opinion was involved in the congressional decision to press for economic sanctions against South Africa.⁶² The news coverage by Sussman in 1985 and Roberts in 1986 revealed how public opinion was used, but their coverage did not follow how the domestic factor dictated economic sanctions, just that Congress had responded to the public demand. The actions taken by Congress could thus have been not for public consent, but rather because of it. John de St. Jorre concluded that Congress should take economic sanctions to “assume the moral high ground...politically.”⁶³ His view was

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Steven Roberts, “Congress; Morals, Politics, South Africa,” *New York Times*, 29 July 1986.

⁶³Jorre, 563.

that the public opinion had very little regard among Congress apart from allowing for a criticism of President Reagan's policy.⁶⁴

What should be considered as a problem for Congress was that there was no general consensus among the American public for them to follow. The best way to dismantle the apartheid government was to use economic sanctions to force the change. The public opinion preferred this general course of action but never became involved in what steps they wanted Congress to take. As a result, any action taken by Congress could be justified with the claim that they responded to the will of the people. This was true in the sense of the action to be taken, but not by the harshness of economic sanctions dictated in the legislation. Anything different from President Reagan's 'constructive engagement' was a change; however, the amount of change was not measured to see if it had met the public's approval. This was not a major concern for Congress. Congress simply used domestic opinion to help increase their influence in U.S. foreign policy with South Africa along with the power to make sure their legislation could overcome Reagan's presidential veto. Thus for Congress public opinion was just a tool at their disposal to use.

Reflection

Domestic factors helped Congress alter U.S. foreign policy with the apartheid government of South Africa. The media, TransAfrica, and public opinion were merely tools to assist Congress in its quest for more influence and power in the foreign affairs arena. Although it was assumed this gave Democrats an upper hand in pushing for economic sanctions, the Republicans had as much of an effect using public opinion to insert their version into law, over one the Democrats preferred. The futile efforts of a Democrat majority Congress in 1987 and 1988 to force President Reagan into harsher economic sanctions offer validity to the belief that

⁶⁴Ibid., 561.

public opinion allowed Congress to act and it was the Republicans in Congress that won the political war even though it meant President Reagan lost the foreign policy battle.

CONCLUSION

The Congressional pursuit of economic sanctions against South Africa called for a great deal of fortitude and patience. Challenging the status quo of President Reagan also required a significant amount of political action in the Congress. Yet without the vehicle of American public opinion, Congress would not have been able to override the president's veto or even reach a bi-partisan agreement.

My original belief was that the Congress was simply engaged in a battle between the Democrat dominated House and the Republican dominated Senate over the severity of economic sanctions. This was correct insofar as each had majority control to dictate the legislation in their respective houses of Congress. However, a clearer view can be gained by examining all events concerned with changing the system of apartheid in South Africa. The domestic concerns that motivated Congress to challenge President Reagan's policy of 'constructive engagement' allowed Democrats to initiate action but, given that this was a foreign policy political issue, also allowed Republicans to dictate the terms of the foreign policy legislation. The Democrats, largely pushed by the CBC, stirred up public sentiment against South Africa. The foreign policy lobby group TransAfrica, the media, and public opinion all assisted the Democrats in politically forcing the congressional Republicans to act. The CBC and TransAfrica had specific measures that they wanted taken against South African apartheid, but the media and the public did not display any preferences. The original House sanctions of 1986 were built upon the momentum gained from the previous 1985 and 1986 media coverage. The media was driven by its desire to

sell a product to the public. Moreover, public opinion in relation to congressional politics was not a primary concern of the media.

This lack of a unified domestic front allowed congressional Republicans to steal control of the political manoeuvring away from the Democrats in Congress. The congressional Democrats were able to gain some influence, but the power over change in U.S. foreign policy toward South Africa remained in Republican hands. As a result, congressional Republicans took the power away from their party leader, President Reagan. Given that President Reagan considered South Africa a secondary foreign policy concern behind his larger Cold War foreign policy, it could be suggested that although he was not happy to lose his ‘constructive engagement’ approach of quiet diplomacy, he much preferred the moderate economic sanctions that came from the Republican controlled Senate. This change in foreign policy allowed the congressional Democrats to claim a political victory but they would not have been happy with the legislation. In the end, it was the reliance on domestic support that forced the congressional Democrats into this situation.

Domestic support for economic sanctions against South Africa had a limited window of opportunity. According to Jacqueline Calmes, the 1985 congressional action for South African Sanctions was the third most important decision made in the House that year; while Janet Hook believed that the congressional legislation for economic sanctions in 1986 rated as only the fourteenth most important action in the Senate and the fifteenth in the House.⁶⁵ Given that the Senate only made South Africa an important issue in 1986, while it was an issue in the House for both 1985 and 1986, could make it seem as though the House forced the issue on the Senate. This could have been the case but, as a result of my examination of the events, I believe that it

⁶⁵Jacqueline Calmes, “Compromise Tempered Key 1985 Decisions,” *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* 44, no. 1 (4 January 1986): 37; Janet Hook, “Hard Fought Battles Mark Key Votes in 1986,” *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* 44, no. 44 (1 November 1986): 2760, 2765.

demonstrated the strength of the Senate and not the House. The declining of importance in the House regarding South African sanctions in 1985 and 1986 also illustrates the desperation of congressional Democrats, and especially the House CBC members, given the shrinking window of opportunity, to have some sort of economic sanctions passed into law. The fact that no other sanctions against South Africa were passed in a Democrat controlled Congress in 1987 and 1988 would add support to this belief.

The Republicans in Congress thus could have realized that the limited effect of domestic pressure calling for sanctions would force congressional Democrats to compromise with them. Given that the increase in House Republican support for sanctions came after the House was willing to accept the Senate Republican led legislation would likely point to the possibility of a plan set up by congressional Republicans to dictate the implementation of sanctions. This would have allowed the Republicans in Congress to claim that they listened to the public sentiment while at the same time thwarting the desire of Democrats for stronger economic sanctions against South Africa. Public opinion may have forced a majority of congressional Republicans to publicly denounce President Reagan's South African policy but they were able to stop the Democrats from achieving their political goals of severe economic sanctions against the apartheid South African government. Democrats may have been able to call this a defeat for the president, and in some aspects it was, but they were also defeated by the congressional Republicans.

In retrospect, it is evident that issues surrounding the economic sanctions against South Africa were rife with ulterior motives. CBC members were determined to use the success of Randall Robinson and TransAfrica to turn their foremost foreign policy desire into reality. Under Robinson's leadership, TransAfrica was able to gain an increase in political influence by

allying the media with public opinion. This allowed the common goal of the CBC and Robinson, that of pushing economic sanctions to the forefront of the congressional agenda, to be achieved. The public issue over apartheid gave power and influence to the CBC in Congress, forcing fellow Democrats to offer political support to their fellow party members. Democratic control of the House enabled the CBC to ultimately get its way in imposing harsh economic sanctions in 1986.

However, the House legislation was held under political deadlock in the Senate. The Republican Senate majority was looking for an opportunity to turn the influence of the Democrats into their own political gain. They were able to do so because the CBC was aware that South Africa would not always maintain its currently high level of media coverage and domestic interest. The knowledge that the Congress would be under a reshuffle due to congressional elections could also be considered as a factor for the CBC and the rest of its party leadership to have opted for some foreign policy change. They feared the possibility of pushing for too much would result in no gain at all. In the end, the over reliance on domestic influences to move the Congress to opt for a new South African foreign policy proved to be too much for Democrats to control. In contrast, the Republicans in Congress did not have to rely on domestic support to enhance their political power. It is also possible to draw the conclusion that the rare chances for domestic issues to alter foreign policy require quick action to ensure success. The ability to rely on domestic support for a given issue, given its temporal nature, would only have a limited time frame of effectiveness. This limited time frame was evident when considering all of the events that took place for Congress to enact legislation over President Reagan's veto of the act itself.

It is quite plausible to suggest that harsher sanctions could have been passed if the CBC had had more party support from within the House, especially, and the Senate in 1985. Yet since there was not a great deal of support the Senate Republican leadership was able to block harsh economic sanctions from becoming a political reality. As the 99th Congress was concluding its second session in 1986, the frequent references to 'bi-partisan support' from both political parties provided an opportunity for Republicans to take control of the political debate. Republicans were willing to compromise for sanctions, with the knowledge that in doing so the initial goal of the CBC would not be realized. The Democrats may have believed that gaining control of Congress due to congressional gains in upcoming elections would allow them to increase the sanctions in 1987 or 1988. Yet, if this was the case, the CBC overlooked the initial role of the domestic support, as it was hard to drum up support for a cause that was supposedly already addressed by Congress. It could also be stated that the CBC struggled to maintain unity with the rest of the Democratic Party, due to their control of Congress in 1987 and 1988, and once the domestic element in the unusual foreign policy issue was taken out of the political equation. Without the outside factors involved, foreign policy with South Africa was a secondary concern to not only President Reagan, but also became a secondary concern with many congressional members outside of the CBC. The push for power was expended and the political desire to attempt another change of control in U.S. foreign policy towards South Africa did not have the necessary elements to once again force such a debate.

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