

Strategies of White resilience: From Apartheid to installing democracy

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“Botha does not really want negotiation...the end is not in sight. We have said release Nelson Mandela...and be part of a process that could, quite conceivably, lead to negotiation...all we can say is that perhaps at some point he will be convinced that it is in his own interest to talk and talk about a new system in South Africa”

*Oliver Reginald Tambo*¹

“The ‘politics of freedom’ and the ‘politics of stability’ will feed off and oppose one another. The demand for ‘stability’ will be seen as a threat to ‘freedom’, and the demand for ‘freedom’ a threat to stability”

*Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert*²

“Mandela and those who worked with him hoped for...a society in which the old barriers would break down, not one in which they remain, although on new foundations. What they hoped for has not been achieved partly because they failed to find a strategy for addressing the ills apartheid created. But the new society for which they hoped will not be created unless the values which they championed at the time are revived”

*Steven Friedman*³

This paper addresses the final strategies of the Apartheid regime in order to deepen the historical discernment of the South African State. It aims to contribute towards the discussion on the national condition and the establishment of an expedient State strategy.

The South African regime under the leadership of PW Botha and FW de Klerk presents two distinct strategies for maintaining power and political stability; avoiding what was a revolution to them, but liberation to the greater South African population. This paper presents and analyses the strategic foundations, the means and approaches that the government utilised to ensure its political solution. Furthermore, it exposes the historical situation, its theoretical underpinnings and consequential developments, complemented by strategic communication analysis of the most significant political speech of each administration. These rhetorical performances present the political arrangement and direction of each policy, as well as the speaker’s ethos. While both

¹ Oliver Reginald Tambo, *Oliver Tambo Speaks*, Cape Town, Kwela Books, 2014.

² Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert, *The last white parliament*, Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 1986, p. 198

³ Steven Friedman, “Why it’s wrong to blame South Africa’s woes on Mandela’s compromises”, *The Conversation*, 8 May 2018. Retrieved from: <https://theconversation.com/why-its-wrong-to-blame-south-africas-woes-on-mandelas-compromises-96062>. [Accessed 12 May 2018]

leaders sought to maintain power through stability, separation (Apartheid) became supplanted as strategy by the installation of democracy and the establishment of national accord.

Upon his election as Prime Minister⁴ in 1978 PW Botha, the pragmatic, long-serving Minister of Defence, oversaw the shift from the Verwoerdian Grand Apartheid⁵ to Total Strategy. South Africa's Total Strategy aligned to the counterinsurgent theory of French General André Beaufre, informed by his campaign against the Algerian liberation movement. His work was held in high regard by Botha; he lectured at the South African Defence Force War College in 1974. Beaufre, who defines strategy as "the art of applying force so that it makes the most effective contribution towards achieving the ends set by political policy"⁶, advised that a pure military solution would not be sufficient. Instead the political outcome required a broad strategy of varied means. This was first captured in the 1975 White Paper on Defence⁷: "all countries must, more than ever, muster all their activities – political, economic, diplomatic and military – for their defence"⁸. Two years later the subsequent White Paper officially called for a "total national strategy", a "comprehensive plan to utilise all the means available to a state according to an integrated pattern in order to achieve the national aims within the framework of the specific policies. A total national strategy is, therefore, not confined to a particular sphere, but is applicable at all levels and to all functions of the state structure"⁹.

This Total Strategy required a direct antagonist or what the White Paper defined as "Total Onslaught". At its 1969 Morogoro Conference of the African National Congress (ANC) president, OR Tambo reiterated its belligerency by instructing: "Close ranks! This is the order to our people; our youth; the army; to each Umkhonto we Sizwe militant; to all our supporters the world over. This is the order to our leaders; to all of us. The order that comes from this conference is: close ranks and intensify the armed struggle!"¹⁰. This aggression served the State's defensive pretext for violence. In its Report on the Strategy and Tactics the ANC advanced its "move to armed struggle" towards the "transition to the Socialist system"¹¹. The ANC's identification with the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War provided the State with an internal and external (total) adversary, lending to its justification for strategic counterinsurgency. It further contributed to the State's alignment to the Western Bloc and its pursuit for proxy support.

⁴ Between 1910 and 1984 the head of government in South Africa was the Prime Minister. In 1984 the position was abolished, merging the positions of head of state and government into an executive State President

⁵ Grand Apartheid involved the comprehensive structural segregation of peoples based on race. It placed strict limitations on access to political and land rights

⁶ André Beaufre in Michael Hough, *National Security in the RSA: The Strategic Importance of South and Southern Africa: The Pretoria View*, Pretoria, Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981, p. 1

⁷ The 1975 White Paper on Defence produced government's first authoritative set of proposals towards what would later become its comprehensive strategic security plan

⁸ Barry van Wyk, *The Balance of Power and the Transition to Democracy in South Africa*, Pretoria, University of Pretoria Master Dissertation, 2005, p. 63

⁹ *Ibid.* 63

¹⁰ Oliver Reginald Tambo, "First National Consultative Conference – Morogoro", *African National Congress*, 1969. Retrieved from: <http://www.anc.org.za/content/first-national-consultative-conference-morogoro-> [Accessed 1 May 2018]

¹¹ African National Congress, "Report on the Strategy and Tactics of the African National Congress", *African National Congress*, 1969. Retrieved from: <http://www.anc.org.za/content/first-national-consultative-conference-report-strategy-and-tactics-african-national-congress.> [Accessed 1 May 2018]

The adoption of Total Strategy led to the construction of a formidable national security apparatus. Power shifted into the newly formed National Security Management System. South Africa became a securocratic State, centralised under Botha, to whom Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert, leader of the official Parliamentary opposition, the Progressive Federal Party, was “essentially a crisis manager”. PW could spot a crisis and deal with it, but “his lack of analytical ability on constitutional and economic affairs”¹² translated to the domination of certain terrains, without the appreciation of the greater strategic reality. The entire population systematically became militarised into two clear encampments. Defence Minister Magnus Malan declared that Total Onslaught meant the “unconditional imposition of the aggressor’s will on the target state. The aim is therefore total...South Africa is today...involved in total war...Everyone is involved and has a role to play”¹³.

To Beaufre liberation struggles were “fundamentally battles of will, or psychological battles – the first side to psychologically surrender lost the war”¹⁴. Ensuring the opposition’s psychological impotence was strategically imperative. The insurgent had to be persuaded to give up the fight; this formed the ideal outcome in the *battle for hearts and minds*. To “force the enemy to accept the terms we wish to impose on him. In this dialectic of wills, a decision is achieved when a certain psychological effect has been produced on the enemy: when he becomes convinced that it is useless to start or alternatively to continue the struggle”¹⁵. For this a two-pronged strategy of control and reform was needed: “we must first maintain and increase our prestige, not merely by showing we have adequate forces available but also by showing the future we hold out has possibilities; secondly by thoroughgoing reforms we must cut the ground from under the feet of the malcontents”¹⁶. In alignment with Beaufre, the 1977 White Paper on Defence urged the implementation of ameliorating reform. It stated that the “full and worthy opportunities in the economic, social, and political spheres for all population groups in the RSA must be our aim; this can be achieved only by peaceful and evolutionary processes and without outside interference”¹⁷.

American political scientist Samuel Huntington who advised the South African State on strategic implementation, suggested a similarly synergistic reform from strength; pushing repression to effect reform. The government would need to play an adept political game of “duplicity, deceit and faulty assumptions and purposeful blindness” to protect against the upsurge from within and outside¹⁸. For this the government required excellent strategic communication; Botha’s 1985 Rubicon speech proved to be its antithesis. It was a disaster. Instead of establishing and directing power and influence, his communication broke it down. FW de Klerk’s Communication Director Dave Steward would later refer to the speech as “the worst political communication by any country at any time. President Botha and his advisers did everything wrong”¹⁹.

¹² Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert in Van Wyk, *The Balance of Power and the Transition to Democracy in South Africa*, p. 65

¹³ Magnus Malan in Kenneth Grundy, *The Militarization of South African Politics*, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1986, p. 11.

¹⁴ Eric Louw, *The Rise, Fall, and Legacy of Apartheid*, London, Praeger, 2004, p. 91

¹⁵ André Beaufre, *An Introduction to Strategy*, London, Faber and Faber, 1965, p. 23

¹⁶ André Beaufre in Louw, *The Rise, Fall, and Legacy of Apartheid*, p. 92

¹⁷ Van Wyk, *The Balance of Power and the Transition to Democracy in South Africa*, p. 64

¹⁸ Samuel Huntington in Louw, *The Rise, Fall, and Legacy of Apartheid*, p. 96

¹⁹ Dave Steward, “From the Rubicon to February 2nd 1990”, *Politicsweb*, 2010. Retrieved from: <http://www.politicsweb.co.za/news-and-analysis/from-the-rubicon-to-february-2nd-1990>. [Accessed January 10 2018]

Botha's rhetorical *inventio* completely missed its targets. It failed each audience group. The ongoing State of Emergency and international influence propelled Botha to make a rhetorical gesture and display leadership. The speech would be an opportunity to steer the narrative; he had the world's attention. It emerged from within that government would undertake a major shift. Minister of Foreign Relations Pik Botha travelled to Europe to reveal his leader would be "crossing the Rubicon"²⁰. The hype created expectation and pressure. In the days before the speech, Botha allegedly swapped the contents, tossing out a rumoured progressive speech. De Klerk later remarked that the State President scolded his Cabinet: "I will not make that speech. I shall make my own speech"²¹. The result was a gutted hodgepodge. The significant policy changes that the speech did introduce were muffled by Botha's chaotic style. When he declared: "we are today crossing the Rubicon. There can be no turning back"²² his actual policy statement, of abandoning forced Homelands, was not perceived as intentioned, as conciliatory reform. Rather it seemed to correlate to the original message of Julius Caesar's casting of the die and crossing the Rubicon River, entering into and declaring war on Rome; proclaiming a fight till the very end.

Botha's rhetoric was not adjusted to fit the globally televised event it had become; the audience irrevocably altered the speech. Instead of orchestrating and styling a compact, guiding and comprehensible oration, he delivered a campaign-like message, as Party, not national, leader. Rather than complying with the expectation of redress Botha's assertive style suited the crowd present, the Durban provincial congress of the National Party. He lambasted his detractors, commencing the speech with derision for the media. His finger-in-the-air antagonism primed the media and international audience for disappointment while delighting his seated audience. His bellicosity drowned out his central announcements. The greater audience expected a movement towards transformation, yet Botha refused "to make a statement of intent", saying "I am not prepared to make it, not now and not tomorrow"²³.

Instead of inventing and arranging his own argument, Botha lost his temper, as well as control of the narrative. His dismissive rhetoric dwelled on recalling and refuting external claims: "even if an announcement is made, it is almost impossible to fulfil the propagated expectations"²⁴. His confounding of style and content created dual defeat. The right-wing heard the reformist content, from his customary style. They thought he gave too much away. Those in the opposition, the rest of the country and the international audience, heard the style from the content. They did not recognise his commitment to change policy. All groups felt they had lost.

The central policy change articulated in the speech stated that "independence cannot be forced upon any community. Should any of the Black National States therefore prefer not to accept independence, such states or communities will remain a part of the South African nation, are South African citizens and should be accommodated within political institutions within the boundaries of the Republic of

²⁰ Hermann Giliomee, "Great expectations: Pres. PW Botha's Rubicon speech of 1985", *New Contree*, 55, May 2008, p. 28.

²¹ PW Botha in *Ibid*, 34

²² PW Botha, "Address by State President P.W. Botha, August 15, 1985", *O'Malley*. Retrieved from: <https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv01538/04lv01600/05lv01638/06lv01639.htm>. [Accessed 10 January 2018]

²³ *Ibid*

²⁴ *Ibid*

South Africa"²⁵. This discontinuation of structural Grand Apartheid entailed the fundamental transformation of geopolitical South Africa, advancing the government's slow, limited reform. The coercion of Black groups into self-enclosed Homelands and then recognising them as independent states outside the South African State was abolished. Instead of dominating self-imposed diplomatic relations with the leaderships of the Homelands, Botha tactically shifted the line of attack to broader engagements, seeking out urban power arrangements. Stressing that "a solution will have to be found for their legitimate rights"²⁶, Botha sought to open up and dominate lines of communication with the authoritative local leaderships.

The speech was clearly an appeal to Black leaders, whom he first praised and then legitimised:

"I am encouraged by the growing number of Black leaders who are coming forward to denounce violence. Any reduction of violence will be matched by action on the part of the Government to lift the State of Emergency and restore normality in the areas concerned"²⁷.

"letting people speak through their leaders" ... "I am in no doubt that working together, we shall succeed in finding the way which will satisfy the reasonable social and political aspirations of the majority of us"²⁸.

These appeals concurred with government's development of preferential relations. It tactically improved labour conditions and conducted an extensive *battle for hearts and minds*. The Civil Action Programme saw military troops taking on roles as doctors, teachers etc., "assisting the black man in various fields...whilst his rifle is standing in the corner of the classroom"²⁹. These actions sought Beaufre's persuasion of psychological surrender, upon which a new, reformed reality would be built. This goal required the formation of "a (conservative) black middle class that could be co-opted into 'managing' urban black townships within the envisaged consociational model"³⁰.

This co-option of a credible, yet pliable opposition leadership was not a new tactic for the National Party government. The induction of the Tricameral Parliament gave titular representation to Coloured and Indian people in 1983. The abolition of the Homelands policy sought to systematically introduce its leaders into the sustained national reality of *separateness*. Yet, within its Apartheid context, the State obstructed its own ends. While government motioned to legitimate representation, achieving a new political normalcy was prevented by its own mechanisms, which denied authoritative Black input and therefore real negotiation.

In the conclusion of his speech, Botha claimed that "the implementation of the principles I have stated today" would shape the "manifesto for the future of our country"³¹. However, under fundamental *otherness* the State could not steer towards a

²⁵ *Ibid*

²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷ *Ibid*

²⁸ *Ibid*

²⁹ Major-General Lloyd in Jacklyn Cock and Laurie Nathan, *War and Society: The Militarization of South Africa*, Cape Town, David Philip, 1989, p. 180

³⁰ Louw, *The Rise, Fall, and Legacy of Apartheid*, p. 94

³¹ Botha, *Address by State President P.W. Botha, August 15, 1985*

new order as any such emerging arrangement would maintain repression under a state of domination; under Apartheid it would not be able to achieve and sustain stable order.

Botha's rhetoric encumbered his political pursuit. While he did take the advice, saying that "a process of negotiation is not weakness...it is our strength"³², his efforts were contrary to Huntington's recommendation of reform from strength. It became clear that Botha either could not or did not choose to follow Huntington's broader advice: that "the politics of reform is basically a tripartite process with the reform leader fighting a two front war against both standpatters and revolutionaries while at the same time attempting to divide and confuse his enemies"³³. Botha was unable to manage his policies and lead South African politics. Circumscribed reform led to provocation. Right-wing insurrection saw the rise to the Conservative Party and Black hostility increasingly became revolt, actively pursuing liberation. The reform efforts did not support but damaged government's attempt to assemble a pliable Black authority. The second half of the 1980's saw a period of heightened control. Senior generals reportedly advised Botha to replace Beaufre's counter-insurgency with McCuen's counter-revolutionary design³⁴. McCuen's *psycho-politico military strategy* reversed the Maoist staged advance, advocating control and repression³⁵. The military advance under permanent State of Emergency saw Botha's reign of terror pursuing General Wandrag's directive: "first we neutralize the enemy, then we win over the people so they will reject the ANC"³⁶.

Increased insurgency, funded and facilitated under the Cold War dynamic, provided the grounds for continued repression. The State became increasingly desperate for a legitimate Black leadership to co-opt into compliant elite. The strategic trouble for the militarised State was not the belligerent, yet under-capacitated Umkhonto we Sizwe armed wing of the ANC. Though the economy was in decline, it could dominate the military battles. It could however not use the military to win the war within. The real struggle was internal, the battle for persuasion, for control of the narrative. This took place on the streets, in the shops and on the shop floors. Public spaces became increasingly politicised and fractious. The United Democratic Front turned the latent Charterist base "into an active, mobilised, and organised political force"³⁷. Government failed to persuade that it could centrally reform into one, a system which under Apartheid was distinctly two. This irreconcilable strategy could not be reformed from within to permanently include a majority it considered as *other*.

A significant memorandum of the Afrikaner Broederbond, the secret fraternal society which exercised enormous influence over government, was circulated among its branches, possibly in 1986. The *Basic Values for the Survival of the Afrikaner*³⁸ presented a response to the national crisis. It sought to transcend Apartheid idealist strategy with "healthy well-balanced realism", setting out the "prerequisites for further political conditions, and are therefore also the conditions for the survival of the Afrikaner"³⁹. This

³² *Ibid*

³³ Samuel Huntington in Jan Stemmet, "The Storms of Reforms: South Africa's Reform-Strategy, c. 1980-1989", *Journal for Contemporary History*, 38(2), 2013, p. 123.

³⁴ Louw, *The Rise, Fall, and Legacy of Apartheid*, p. 100

³⁵ John McCuen, *The Art of Counter-revolutionary War: A Psycho-politico Military Strategy of Counter-insurgency*, London, Faber and Faber, 1966.

³⁶ General Wandrag in Louw, *The Rise, Fall, and Legacy of Apartheid*, p. 101

³⁷ *Ibid*. p. 99

³⁸ From the original Afrikaans *Basiese Staatskundige Voorwaardes vir die Voortbestaan van die Afrikaner*. An alternative translation would be Basic State Policy Conditions for the Survival of the Afrikaner

³⁹ Afrikaner Broederbond, *The Basic Values for the Survival of the Afrikaner*, Confidential Memorandum, 1988.

systematic presentation of expedient conditions established the course from which and towards which the new strategic path or political model of the State should lead. Among these conditions were private ownership, freedom of speech, recognition and protection of culture and freedom of religion. Listed foremost was the prerequisite “to maintain the independence of the Judiciary and equality before the law; to maintain law and order”⁴⁰. The significance of maintaining judicial independence within a political arrangement of conserved order would be of primary consequence. This would form the strategic alpha and omega.

Tactics and models which directly contradicted established national policy were incorporated and promoted to serve its end. “Such a system, or process which can realise such a system, should be generally acceptable...The abolition of statutory discrimination measures must not be seen as concessions but as a prerequisite for survival”⁴¹. The new political design would have to “comply with the demand of justice” for all; instead of systematised separateness, a singular, unified model would be imperative: “the exclusion of effective Black sharing in political processes at the highest level, is a threat to the survival of the white man, which cannot be countered by maintaining the status quo or by a further consolidation of power in white hands”. The broader political outcome may not permit “that one group dominates the others”⁴².

The document further eclipsed Apartheid policy by favourably recognising an end scenario where the “majority of the government members will indeed be black”, including the head of government⁴³. Such a system would ensure political legitimacy, effectively achieving the government’s strategic aim of integrated political partnership with authoritative Black leadership. Upon their participation would rest “one of the most important political prerequisites...the effective participation of all”⁴⁴. Government required comprehensive involvement to ensure comprehensive legitimacy. The document concludes by charging the political leadership to hold as negotiating baseline that “various power groups participate in the formation of a new constitution. An attempt must be made to convince as wide a variety of groups as possible to participate”⁴⁵. The negotiated political model required the trust of the people and could not be derailed by one group or another; liberation could not permit revolution. Stability remained the ultimate goal, which translated to effective reform from strength.

The strategic change required new leadership. FW de Klerk replaced Botha as leader of the National Party and State President, in February and September 1989. The change of leadership provided dynamism and direction. Shortly after his election De Klerk revealed a planned change in policy: “all the people of South Africa, whether they be black, white, Indian or coloured, must have a vote, must elect their leaders, and must, through their leaders, become part of all decisions affecting their lives. They must therefore become involved at all levels of government in such a way that no one group will be able to dominate the other”⁴⁶. This message was furthered in De Klerk’s first speech to Parliament as Party leader. Herein he set the course towards a new political system, an argument remarkably similar to that of the Afrikaner Broederbond. De Klerk

⁴⁰ *Ibid*

⁴¹ *Ibid*

⁴² *Ibid*

⁴³ *Ibid*

⁴⁴ *Ibid*

⁴⁵ *Ibid*

⁴⁶ FW de Klerk in Van Wyk, *The Balance of Power and the Transition to Democracy in South Africa*, p. 97

advanced a fundamentally new Constitution based on freedom and non-discrimination, brought about through negotiation. Participation of all South Africans had to be guaranteed; as were group rights and the insurance that one group shall not dominate any other⁴⁷.

In an interview before this speech De Klerk described himself as a “practical idealist”⁴⁸. This concept does not invoke the implementation of ideals for their inherent virtue, but instead the use of ideals for their expediency. De Klerk’s assumed personal responsibility for government’s about-turn on policy is clarified as a Damascus road conversion: “I underwent a spiritual leap, in which I accepted the moral untenability of Apartheid”⁴⁹. Of central importance is not his tactical embodiment of government’s sins as his own, to be Biblically absolved. Instead, his was a realist ‘leap’ to bring about a unified, democratic South Africa. Eclipsing his recognition of Apartheid’s ‘untenability’ was the government’s strategic implementation to realise these goals. De Klerk understood that the strategic political ends required appropriate political means and ways.

Upon incumbency, De Klerk set out to break down the powerful seurocratic State. As he scaled back government’s militarised approach the ANC saw its opportunity to advance theirs. This is evidenced by Thabo Mbeki’s directive that: “The time has come to challenge the state of emergency more forcefully”⁵⁰. De Klerk’s de-escalation sought to weaken the ANC by delegitimising its phased armed struggle. It further set out to disarm and disempower the right-wing, countering the threat of a military takeover.

The President assumed a central leading position towards democratic transition, the maintenance of the State greatly rested on his projection of authoritative guidance. His display of discerning leadership sought to build trust and support; tactical, while hubristic, in the light of the continued exclusion and incarceration of legitimate Black leadership. His strategic communication insisted upon rapprochement, motioning that “there is no alternative for South Africa but the road of reconciliation”⁵¹. De Klerk had to ensure de-escalation of tensions in order to control the avenue towards political liberation. In the week after the chaotic and violently quelled September 2nd *Purple Rain Protest* in Cape Town De Klerk became President. One of his first acts in executive power saw him permitting the *Cape Town Peace March*, the “biggest anti-apartheid protest march in South Africa” led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu⁵². While previous protests were aggressively opposed by the government, this active concession signalled peaceful intent. The event brought together a broad cross-section of society. It was regarded as a

⁴⁷ Jacobus Marthinus Aucamp, *Die Nasionale Party van Suid-Afrika se Laaste Dekade as Regerende Party, 1984-1994*, Bloemfontein, Free State University Doctoral Dissertation, 2010, p. 192

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 193

⁴⁹ FW de Klerk in Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert, *The Other Side of History: An Anecdotal Reflection on Political Transformation in South Africa*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2006, p. 28

⁵⁰ Thabo Mbeki in William Claiborne, “ANC urges civil disobedience in South Africa, says it fears assassinations”, *The Washington Post*, May 10 1989. Retrieved from: https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1989/05/10/anc-urges-civil-disobedience-in-south-africa-says-it-fears-assassinations/d8409bb5-f3d7-405d-9ca5-23385cd531c4/?utm_term=.090bf9f6b33c. [Accessed December 14 2017]

⁵¹ FW de Klerk in William Raspberry, “Toward ending Apartheid”, *The Washington Post*, November 18 1989. Retrieved from: https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1989/11/18/toward-ending-apartheid/16235de2-c76c-4af6-8203-ce985d7a62eb/?utm_term=.f5793ee73948. [Accessed December 14 2017]

⁵² SAHistory, “Tutu leads biggest anti-apartheid protest march in South Africa”, *SAHistory*, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/tutu-leads-biggest-anti-apartheid-protest-march-south-africa>. [December 7 2017]

great success in the fight against Apartheid; advancing Tutu's espoused values of harmony and reconciliation, and led to further such marches in Johannesburg and Durban. The march signalled the powerful will of the people, towards the ending of Apartheid and the peaceful transition to democracy. This defining moment in the people's struggle for freedom antithetically advanced government's new strategy, which sought the same outcome. Government's pursuit for reconciliation and transition was to appease and persuade those of central concern in a democracy, the people.

De Klerk had a strong appreciation for *kairos*. The new President presented his election as a moment of transcendence over historical limitations. International events also played into his hands, the end of the Cold War removed any last justification of belligerence on ideological or proxy grounds. It provided a golden opportunity of which De Klerk would later say: "I would have been a fool not to take a gap that the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of communism gave me"⁵³. The international developments, at least for its financial and ideological implications, disempowered the ANC and boosted the Apartheid State. Its shift from defending against counter-insurgency and counter-revolution towards advancing a contest for legitimacy forced the ANC into the new, unfamiliar domain of conventional political adversary.

These changes increasingly made the South African political contest a rhetorical one. The entire State apparatus was channelled toward ensuring the successful completion of the negotiation process, a battle for steering the narrative. De Klerk knew he had to move quickly. In time the government's hand would weaken. He had to act from a position of strength in order to succeed in the political negotiation while appeasing his detractors, the business community and moderates. He had to project control over the liberation, commanding and constructing the national narrative. His February 2nd 1990 "Quantum Leap" speech to open Parliament did exactly that, motioning strength and direction. This speech provided meaning to form. It was calculated, unexpected and appropriately located strategic communication. It defined the new national political order, giving his audience not only the substance but also the tools to shape their opinions. De Klerk must have understood that he who defines the argument usually wins the argument.

The opening of Parliament provided a clean slate to commit both the newly elected executive and legislature on a new course. The coverage and audience were comprehensive, so too was the message. He addressed the house and through a large number of journalists the broader South African population and the world at large. While word had spread of "some important statements"⁵⁴, strategic surprise was paramount; Cabinet was sworn to secrecy. De Klerk utilised surprise to dramatically and unilaterally shift the national condition. The speech exceeded all expectations, as captured by the journalist Alastair Sparks, who famously proclaimed: "My God! They have done it all!"⁵⁵. Unlike Botha, De Klerk understood and exploited political spin. The oratorical appeal served his interest of being perceived as benign and progressive. He later said: "I knew the world's press was there, not because they wanted to hear me speak, but because they wanted to witness the release of Nelson Mandela. But I wanted them to focus on the fundamental decisions we had taken and to judge them on their

⁵³ De Klerk in Van Zyl Slabbert, *The Other Side of History: An Anecdotal Reflection on Political Transformation in South Africa*, p. 28

⁵⁴ Steward, "From the Rubicon to February 2nd 1990"

⁵⁵ Alastair Sparks in Steward, "From the Rubicon to February 2nd 1990"

merits, and not have the whole package overshadowed”⁵⁶.

With precision and in his stoic style, De Klerk clearly articulated his message in digestible short sentences. His speech laid down government’s *sine qua non* foundations for political order, thereby playing an expeditious move towards official negotiations. The speech sought to remove all feasible constraints, ensuring that political opponents respond to the matters addressed here, instead of previous realities constructed by Apartheid policies. Though the event is remembered positively for freeing Mandela, it propitiously served the governments interests. De Klerk’s creation of symbolic reality, of guiding the audience to imagine a “totally new and just constitutional dispensation”, aided government to transcend its past and shape a future political reality.

Before addressing his political opposition De Klerk moved to assure support from all constituencies. Of particular significance is his policy alignment and therefore persuasive appeal to two powerful interest groups. He first commits to and elicits support from the ascendant liberal West:

“The Government accepts the principle of the recognition and protection of the fundamental individual rights which form the constitutional basis of most Western democracies. We acknowledge, too, that the most practical way of protecting those rights is vested in a declaration of rights justiciable by an independent judiciary”⁵⁷.

This is followed by pledging structural change to economic policy, shifting from government centrality to pro-business:

“The Government's basic point of departure is to reduce the role of the public sector in the economy and to give the private sector maximum opportunity for optimal performance”⁵⁸.

These intertwined interest groups formed a significant audience of his oratory. Through his speech, De Klerk largely pledged the South African government to the Capitalist realm, fortified by Western-led international institutions. As a metaphorical mined resource the regime extracted power from its origin and relocated it beyond direct political control. The active reorganisation of power, prior to any formal negotiations, strategically cut back the instrumentality of the State, preparing the regime for political defeat. Were Whites to lose State power, they would maintain, depend on and increasingly leverage economic power; achieved and preserved by hegemonic liberal Capitalism. This can be seen in White political support (and power) shifting from a nationalist (National Party) towards a liberal (Democratic Party, now Democratic Alliance) project.

De Klerk’s eventual announcements, among which were the unbanning of prohibited parties, the rescinding of restrictions upon political organisations and the release of political prisoners, expeditiously shifted the negotiating terms, forming a

⁵⁶ FW de Klerk in Simon Osborne, “FW de Klerk: The day I ended apartheid”, *Independent*, 2 February 2010. Retrieved from: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/fw-de-klerk-the-day-i-ended-apartheid-1886128.html>. [Accessed December 19 2017]

⁵⁷ FW de Klerk, “Address by the State President, 2 February 1990”, *FW de Klerk Foundation*. Retrieved from: <http://www.fwdeklerk.org/index.php/en/historically-significant-speeches>. [Accessed November 18 2017]

⁵⁸ *Ibid*

bid “to normalise the political process in South Africa without jeopardising the maintenance of good order”⁵⁹. The central tactic was to rhetorically disarm and discredit; this was a strategic offence, not defence or concession. The announcement of major policy changes sought to rebuff any attempt to command or steer negotiations.

Kairos proves to be central in De Klerk’s rhetorical strategy. Before concluding he announced: “The time for talking has arrived and whoever still makes excuses does not really wish to talk”. His “firm decision to release Mister Mandela unconditionally...without delay” tactically expedited the process. This was keenly developed, as illustrated by Afrikaner anti-Apartheid activist and member of the ANC negotiation delegation, Beyers Naudé’s, concession: the ANC were “caught completely off guard. They were nowhere near ready for such an event”⁶⁰. The timing was crucial, said Dave Steward, “had he been released on 1 February there would have been hardly a word written about FW de Klerk’s speech. Had the release been delayed for a month - the assembled media would have flown off in disappointment and in anger. His release on 11 February was just right for the South African government’s needs”⁶¹.

The prevailing political dynamics in the country, combined with government’s power of incumbency afforded it significant agency to determine its negotiation partners. For it to relinquish political power in a democratic transition it demanded its terms be met by the contending authorities. In order to achieve its end of stable, non-revolutionary governmental transfer it required the opposition to renounce any armed struggle. De Klerk’s acclaim of “those political leaders who have always resisted violence”, singling out Mangosuthu Buthelezi and Homeland leaders, was rather an indirect assault on the ANC, the only broadly legitimate party it could negotiate with. De Klerk’s speech sought to address and remove any obstacle or justification not to negotiate:

“Today’s announcements, in particular, go to the heart of what Black leaders, also Mr Mandela, have been advancing over the years as their reason for having resorted to violence. The allegation has been that the Government did not wish to talk to them and that they were deprived of their right to normal political activity by the prohibition of their organizations”⁶².

Government’s symbolic commitment to end the death penalty and to terminate the State of Emergency⁶³, further pressured concession from the ANC, whose terms stated: “the renunciation of violence...should not be a pre-condition to, but a result of, negotiation”⁶⁴. The pledges made throughout the speech and implemented thereafter, including Mandela’s swift release, were designed to delegitimise violence and ensure a peaceful transition. The ANC complied and abandoned the armed struggle in 1990.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*

⁶⁰ Van Zyl Slabbert, *The Other Side of History: An Anecdotal Reflection on Political Transformation in South Africa*, p. 31

⁶¹ Steward, “From the Rubicon to February 2nd 1990”

⁶² *Ibid*

⁶³ In June 1990 the State of Emergency was lifted in all provinces but Natal. It was lifted in Natal four months later.

⁶⁴ Nelson Mandela in Mac Maharaj, “The ANC and South Africa’s Negotiated Transition to Democracy and Peace”. *Berghof Transitions Series*, 2008. Retrieved from: http://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Papers/Transitions_Series/transitions_anc.pdf. [Accessed 17 December 2017, 18].

The strategies under Botha and De Klerk can be distinguished by the two individuals' proclivity for management and leadership, respectively. While De Klerk thought "Botha was a good administrator", he critiqued "the negative aspects of P.W. Botha's managerial style", vowing to himself to "change all this if I ever became president"⁶⁵. De Klerk did. He guided strategy and directed the rhetorical charge. His persuasion to lead the political rejuvenation of a *new South African nation* is based upon the *pseudos* of an *old South African nation*⁶⁶. It exposes his faction's play for apportioned power. The *pseudos* of a *new South Africa*, where those separated by Apartheid are unified, through conciliation, required transcending the historical enforcement of structural difference. These two worlds in one created the national reality, a reality which had to be circumvented in speech or engaged in deed, in order to facilitate the transition to democracy. As such the assayed structural absolution of the past under national reconciliation created a rhetorically *new South Africa*. This was integral to the last White government's strategic goal of a guided transition; liberation without revolution.

De Klerk's rhetorical performance on that fateful day not only assured him the Nobel Peace Prize. It served his constituency's interests to such a degree that he arrested his opponents into a strategic stalemate. This situation arguably prevails to this very day.

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⁶⁵ De Klerk in van Wyk, *The Balance of Power and the Transition to Democracy in South Africa*, p. 67

⁶⁶ Philippe-Joseph Salazar, *An African Athens: Rhetoric and the Shaping of Democracy in South Africa*, London, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002, p. 26.