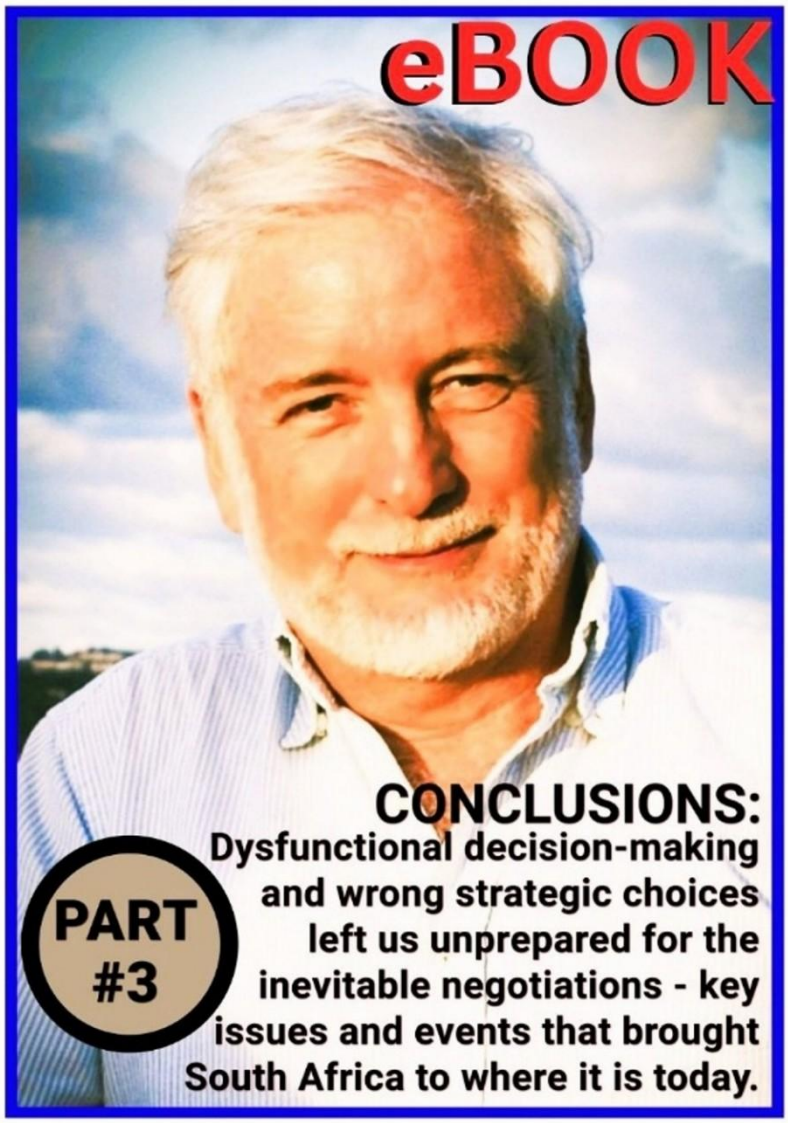
# NONGQAI

S.A.MAGTE GESKIEDENIS-TYDSKRIF
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**SPESIALE REEKS: OOGGETUIES VERTEL**
**SPECIAL SERIES: EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS**




*Dr Willem Steenkamp*

## Understanding the infighting over strategy and for power that marked the last three decades of white rule, and how it shaped the negotiations

# *"THERE WAS NO PLAN"*

The revealing anecdote related below was shared with the author by a very senior member of the intelligence community attached to the State Security Council (SSC) apparatus during the latter years of the **PW Botha** presidency with responsibility for briefing the president and senior members of government on a continuous basis about the evolving intelligence picture. This is what he wrote to me:

*"Around 1987/88 a newly appointed cabinet minister had contacted me, requesting me to come to his office. I had found his request somewhat strange, because he was not a member of the SSC (State Security Council). I had therefore wondered what it was that he wanted to talk about.*

*When I arrived, he received me kindly. We proceeded to talk in general terms about national security issues. However, I could sense that there was something weighty on his mind that had not yet been raised.*

*Soon enough his voice dropped in pitch as he confided: "Ou broer", I want to tell you something. When I was little, I heard about all the things that were going wrong in the country, so I asked my father: what is going to happen to the country?*

*Never mind, he replied, the people up there know what they are doing. We just have to trust them.*

*Later, when things started to get worse, I asked my father again, and he said: John Vorster and the cabinet are smart people, they know what they are doing.*

*I was reassured.*

*When my children grew up, they started asking the same questions. I became a member of the Volksraad (national assembly in parliament) and I gave them the same answer that I got from my father.*

*And then I myself ended up in the cabinet. With great anticipation I looked forward to hearing at last about the big plan for the future.*

*And you know what, "ou broer"? As I sat there in the cabinet and looked around me – you know what I saw?*

*Broken reeds.*

*Not one of them had any idea where we were going..."*

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# *"In the real world there are no solutions – just trade-offs"*

## THOMAS SOWELL

Conservative Black American economist and social theorist, emphasising that many social, economic, and policy issues involve inherent costs and compromises and are therefore incapable of perfect, one-sided, "ideal solutions."

*OBSERVING CRITICAL TIMES CLOSE-UP*

# SOUTH AFRICA'S TRANSITION: WHAT REALLY HAPPENED, AND WHY


PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS, RESEARCH, AND OPINIONS OF

**DR WILLEM STEENKAMP**

AMBASSADOR, INTELLIGENCE ANALYST, LAWYER, POLITICAL SCIENTIST, ENTREPRENEUR AND NONGQAI CO-EDITOR


*THIS IS THE THIRD AND FINAL PART IN WILLEM STEENKAMP'S CONTRIBUTION TO **NONGQAI**'s SERIES "**THE MEN SPEAK**", WHICH HE HAS SUB-TITLED:*

## UNDERSTANDING THE INFIGHTING OVER STRATEGY AND POWER THAT HAD MARKED THE LAST THREE DECADES OF WHITE RULE AND HOW THAT DYSFUNCTIONAL DECISION-MAKING HAD SHAPED THE NEGOTIATIONS AND THEIR OUTCOME


## PUBLISHER

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# BACK COVER EDITORS' NOTES: AI REVIEWS

## *WHAT THIS BOOK IS ALL ABOUT*

### CHATGPT:

*South Africa's negotiated transition was shaped far less by weakness or betrayal than by the cumulative consequences of decades of flawed strategic decision-making. The decisive failures occurred long before the constitutional negotiations themselves. Successive National Party governments relied too heavily on intuition, political instinct and internal power struggles rather than disciplined strategic analysis grounded in sound theory, intelligence assessment, and realistic scenario planning.*

*This produced a costly process of learning by trial and error: first the "lost decade" under PW Botha before accepting that negotiation was unavoidable, then a further period under FW de Klerk before recognising that meaningful progress required confidential, bilateral and cooperative negotiations with the ANC. Throughout much of this period, experienced intelligence professionals had already identified the essential realities—that military force could not resolve a fundamentally political conflict, that racial domination was unsustainable, and that negotiations needed to be strategically prepared and privately conducted.*

*By the time political leaders reached the same conclusions through painful experience, valuable time, leverage and bargaining power had already been lost. Majority rule was probably unavoidable, but better strategic preparation from the outset might have produced a more balanced constitutional settlement, particularly through stronger devolution of power, clearer separation of powers and institutional arrangements better suited to coalition governance.*

*The enduring lesson extends far beyond South Africa's transition: complex political problems cannot be solved reliably by instinct alone. Effective governance requires institutionalised strategic thinking, informed by sound theory, rigorous analysis and systematic planning before events force learning through costly failure.*

*The sentence that stayed with me wasn't actually about the negotiations. It was the anecdote at the beginning, where the cabinet minister confides that, after finally reaching Cabinet, he discovered "there was no plan." To me, that anecdote functions as the book's governing metaphor. Everything else flows from it. It encapsulates Dr Steenkamp's central contention, namely that the greatest strategic failure was not choosing the wrong plan, but failing to have a disciplined process for developing one…*

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### META AI:

*South Africa's transition was not derailed by lack of intelligence, but by lack of a system to use intelligence.*

*From the mid-1970s, the National Intelligence Service correctly assessed that apartheid could not be sustained by force, that international and internal pressure would become unbearable, and that only a negotiated, inclusive settlement could secure Afrikaner interests in a non-racial democracy. That assessment was first made by Hendrik van den Bergh under Vorster and then systematically by Niël Barnard under PW Botha.*

*Successive NP governments had no functional strategic decision-making subsystem – no place where SWOT analysis, scenario gaming, and negotiation theory were applied coldly and continuously. In its place was gut-feel politics, enforced groupthink, and brutal inter-service rivalry between BfSS/NIS and the SADF.*

*In such a system, learning can only happen by trial and error – by running head-first into a wall. The ten years under PW Botha were lost learning that Total Onslaught and the "shoot" option would fail. The thirty months after February 1990 were lost learning that you cannot negotiate a new constitution through a public, multilateral, adversarial CODESA-style process; you must first negotiate, bilaterally and confidentially via a trusted channel, the framework for how to negotiate, with the only other actor that matters - the ANC.*

*De Klerk's "Big Bang" – unbanning and releasing Mandela, and going straight to CODESA without a prior bilateral understanding – violated every principle of effective negotiation that Barnard had warned about. It placed the NP, which desperately needed peace, at a structural disadvantage against an ANC that could threaten a return to war.*
*Dr Steenkamp acknowledges that, even if the NP had done it right – cooperatively, bilaterally, confidentially, from the start – South Africa would still have become a unitary state with majority rule. The power realities after the Soweto generation, demographic change, and the Cold War's end made that inevitable. But a better process could have produced a marginally better constitution – more genuine devolution, real separation of powers, and institutional safeguards against corruption – which in retrospect would have been enormously valuable, for example in preventing the Zuma state capture era.*
*The lesson for the future is stark: South Africa is entering an era of permanent coalition governance at all levels. That requires exactly what was missing from 1975-1994 – a professional, non-partisan capacity for strategic decision-making, grounded in theory and experience, able to distinguish between being principled and being effective, and to calibrate compromise toward the single overriding strategic objective: to make the country work.*

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## PERPLEXITY AI:

*Editor's note — **The cost of muddling versus the value of strategic process***

*South Africa's negotiated transition is more than a sequence of dramatic moments; it is a cautionary case about what happens when political decision-making relies on intuition, factional bargaining and ad hoc responses rather than a persistent, analytic strategic subsystem. The National Party and its security/intelligence advisers engaged at points in confidential channels and secret contacts (notably the early Barnard-mediated exchanges that prepared the ground for formal talks) yet, for long stretches, leadership choices were shaped by muddling-through, episodic crisis management and trial-and-error — a pattern that produced both the "lost decade" under P.W. Botha and the costly early months of transition under F.W. de Klerk.*

*That pattern mattered. Where strategic capabilities were weak or institutionally absent — formal scenario-gaming, structured SWOT-like analysis, red-teaming, and clear channels that translate intelligence and negotiation theory into policy options — parties learned by running head-first into obstacles rather than by anticipating them. Intelligence warnings and quiet advice (for example about the limits of coercion and the need for confidential bilateral engagement) were available but their procedural uptake into coherent strategy was limited; the result was delayed settlement, erosion of bargaining leverage, and avoidable loss of reform time that narrowed options for better institutional design.*

*This is not to overstate the counterfactual. Even had the NP embraced disciplined strategic tools from the outset, improvements in the settlement might reasonably have been marginal in scope; yet marginal gains here are meaningful. More deliberate scenario work and private bilateral problem-solving done earlier, could plausibly have preserved negotiating leverage and shaped institutional trade-offs (devolution, separation of powers, stronger checks) in ways that might have reduced later pathologies such as capture and weak accountability. In short: an analytic decision-making subsystem does not guarantee a radically different political outcome, but it does reduce unnecessary costs and increases the chance of more resilient institutions.*

*For contemporary and future coalitions and negotiated settlements the practical lesson is direct: treat negotiation as a strategic process, not an episodic tactic. Build and institutionalize simple, repeatable tools — confidential bilateral channels for early trust-building, scenario gaming to expose hidden risks, and a small strategic secretariat that converts intelligence and negotiation theory into concrete bargaining options. That investment transforms learning-by-trial-and-error into learning-by-design, preserving time, leverage and the political space needed to secure stronger long-term arrangements.*

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# Google Gemini AI:

*In his extensive work, Observing Critical Times Close-Up: South Africa's Transition: What Really Happened, and Why, Dr. Willem Steenkamp presents a detailed analysis of the decline of white minority rule and the birth of a non-racial democracy.*

*The eBook's core message highlights the severe national cost of political leaders operating on "gut-feel," personal ambition, and ideological improvisation, while lacking a functional strategic decision-making subsystem, a firm grasp of negotiation theory, or relevant practical experience.*

*Because the National Party (NP) leadership lacked a structured, analytically sound framework for national security strategy, progress was achieved through painful, inefficient trial and error. Major political pivots occurred only after head-on encounters with reality.*

- ***PW Botha's "Lost Decade" (1978–1989):*** *After a "quiet coup" brought PW Botha to power in 1978, his administration abandoned John Vorster's earlier attempts to "settle". Driven by the military establishment's "total onslaught" paradigm, Botha prioritized preparing to "shoot" over preparing to negotiate. His administration attempted top-down, cosmetic reforms (such as the Tricameral Parliament) while refusing open-ended negotiations. This decade produced severe "own goals" (e.g., the 1985 Rubicon speech and the sabotage of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group initiative), which eroded state credibility, squandered leverage, and severely isolated the country.*
- ***De Klerk's "Lost 30 Months" (1990–1992):*** *When FW de Klerk unbanned liberation movements in February 1990, the strategy moved back to "settling". However, the NP entered this phase without adequate strategic preparation, clear fall-back positions, or an understanding of power-politics theory. For nearly two and a half years, the NP maintained an adversarial posture focused on "group rights" and public multi-party forums (CODESA). Only after deadlocks, escalating violence, and the crises of 1992 (Boipatong and Bisho) did the government realize that a confidential, cooperative bilateral understanding had to be negotiated directly with the ANC through "The Channel" (Meyer, Ramaphosa, Maharaj, and Van der Merwe).*

*This extended period of trial and error was not due to a lack of accurate internal warnings. Professional intelligence analysts and civilian diplomats consistently foresaw the failure of military-first and race-based policies:*

- ***Gen. Hendrik van den Bergh (Bureau for State Security / Early NIS):*** *Van den Bergh warned early on that enforcing race-based policies was tantamount to "white suicide" and that military force could never resolve an inherently political contest. He advocated for a negotiated settlement based on voluntary association rather than legalistic racial classifications.*
- ***Dr. Niël Barnard (National Intelligence Service):*** *Barnard recognized that to achieve a viable settlement, the state had to initiate confidential, cooperative, bilateral negotiations directly with the primary political antagonist—the ANC. Under his leadership, the NIS quietly laid the groundwork by conducting confidential talks with Nelson Mandela in prison and executing covert outreach to the external ANC leadership (e.g., "Project Flair") long before the political executive acted.*

***The Cabinet "Broken Reeds":*** *A telling incident recounted in the eBook involves a newly appointed cabinet minister in the late 1980s who confided that he had grown up believing "the people up there know what they are doing." Upon joining PW Botha's cabinet, he realized with shock that he was sitting among "broken reeds"—not one of whom had a strategic plan or any real idea of where the country was going.*

*Dr. Steenkamp points out that within the flawed, real-world context of the time, it was perhaps default-necessary for the political actors to go through these cathartic encounters with reality to abandon impossible "fever dreams".*

*However, had the governing party employed a theoretically sound* ***SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) coupled with rigorous scenario gaming*** *from the outset, this reliance on trial-and-error learning could have been avoided:*

- ***Strategic Foresight over Head-First Collisions:*** *A structured decision-making subsystem would have analytically identified the obvious power realities beforehand—such as the collapse of Soviet support for armed struggle, the absolute necessity of a bilateral agreement with the ANC, and the unsustainability of "group rights" in an international and domestic context—without needing to run head-first into a wall to discover them.*

- ***Preservation of Leverage and Time:*** *By waiting for crisis after crisis to force their hand, the NP continuously negotiated from a position of declining leverage and ticking electoral clocks, eventually leaving them with few bargaining chips.*

*Could a better strategic approach from the outset have fundamentally altered the final outcome? Dr. Steenkamp concludes that* ***majority rule in a non-racial unitary state was ultimately unavoidable*** *due to demographic realities, economic integration, and global geopolitical shifts.*

*However, if the NP had adopted a theoretically sound, cooperative, bilateral, and confidential approach to negotiating a transition framework from the very beginning, the end product could still have been significantly better.*

*The core lesson of South Africa's transition is a stark warning against political amateurism. While the ultimate miracle of peace, image rehabilitation, and basic constitutional protections was achieved—for which the negotiators deserve credit – the path taken was far more costly, dangerous, and structurally flawed than it needed to be.*

*By substituting analytical strategy, negotiation theory, and expert intelligence with ideological "gut-feel," political leaders lost critical time and leverage. In doing so, they left the nation with a highly centralized constitutional dispensation that ultimately failed to protect the state from future systemic abuse.*

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## Grok AI:

*Dr. Willem Steenkamp's book on South Africa's negotiated transition contributes meaningfully to understanding South Africa's transition, particularly by offering a multi-layered insider perspective that complements more formal academic or partisan accounts. Dr. Steenkamp draws on rare vantage points—intelligence analysis (NIS), diplomacy, family ties to Security Branch leadership, legal training, academia (Political Science doctorate), and later NONGQAI editorial access to eyewitnesses. This breadth allows him to illuminate internal dysfunction, siloed thinking, and the "deep state" fractures within the securocracy that public narratives often flatten into a monolithic "apartheid regime."*

***Strengths as Contribution:***

- *Debunking myths and adding granularity: The detailed timelines (e.g., pre-1990 secret contacts via NIS/"Project Flair," the "Channel" bilateral process post-1992, parallels with Namibia) and revelations (e.g., multiple Switzerland meetings beyond the publicized Mells Park/Esterhuyse track; civilian departments' "Skrik vir Niks" proposal) fill gaps. It clarifies that real leverage battles occurred bilaterally between NP and ANC/SACP, not primarily in the public CODESA/MPNF spectacles.*
- *"Lost decade" under PW Botha: This is persuasively framed as a period of strategic misprioritisation ("shoot" vs. "settle"), own goals (Rubicon speech, EPG sabotage, tricameral parliament), and groupthink that eroded bargaining power, credibility, and legitimacy. It aligns with known historical outcomes: military successes in the field but political defeat.*
- *Lessons for coalition governance: Highly relevant today. Emphasis on process (inclusive, confidential bilateral pre-negotiation to build trust and frameworks) over rushed content; cooperative vs. adversarial postures; the primacy of legitimacy for stability; risks of over-centralized Westminster-style systems in plural societies (state capture under Zuma as exhibit A); value of devolution, separation of powers, and direct executive election. In an era of fragmented politics and GNU-style coalitions, these warn against gut-feel muddling, propaganda dominance, and failing to prepare BATNAs or counter the "people's war"/rolling mass action dynamics. The Franschhoek "Inc." example and Central America observations usefully ground abstract theory in practical multi-racial cooperation.*

***Summation:***

*South Africa's negotiated transition succeeded in delivering peace and a functional (if imperfect) democracy against expectations of race war, but at significant unnecessary cost due to elite failures in strategic decision-making. Successive NP governments muddled through on gut-feel, groupthink, and personal ambitions rather than a functional national security/intelligence subsystem informed by sound theory (negotiation principles, behavioral power politics, propaganda realities) and rigorous tools like SWOT analysis and scenario gaming.*

*Under Vorster, early détente and "settle" instincts were derailed by the 1975 Operation Savannah own goal and internal scandals. PW Botha's "lost decade" (1978–1989) entrenched a militarized "shoot"/total onslaught paradigm and top-down cosmetic reforms, despite repeated warnings from NIS, DFA, and others (Van den Bergh: racism = suicide; civilian departments: "Skrik vir Niks"). This produced damaging own goals (Rubicon speech, tricameral parliament), lost legitimacy/credibility, resulting in international isolation, and a severely weakened hand by 1989—necessitating De Klerk's pivot – but from a position of disadvantage.*

*De Klerk's team made progress via bold 2 Feb 1990 moves and NIS facilitation but wasted ~30 months on adversarial/group-rights posturing before reverting to confidential bilateral "Channel" cooperation with the ANC/SACP. Intelligence professionals had long urged the right path: political contest requiring legitimacy via inclusive process, not force; bilateral pre-negotiation for frameworks; prioritizing peace/rehabilitation/property rights over unrealistic power-sharing. Trial-and-error "learning" eventually worked by default but squandered leverage, time, and potential for better outcomes (e.g., more devolution, separation of powers to constrain future radicals and prevent Zuma-style capture).*

***Core lesson**: In complex, high-stakes transitions or coalitions, politicians ignoring expert analysis, theory, and preparation court avoidable setbacks. Legitimacy flows more from process (trust-building, sufficient consensus) than constitutional fine print. Cooperative realism with ANC moderates beats adversarial grandstanding. For today's fragmented South Africa, this underscores preparing coalitions with clear strategy, counter-propaganda, devolved power, and focus on shared stability—lest history's costly forks repeat. The transition's "miracle" and Afrikaner contributions deserve pride, but unsparing analysis of dysfunction is essential for future resilience.*

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# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**:

In this, the third and final part of his contribution to ***NONGQAI***'s "fireside chat" series ***"The Men Speak***, our co-editor Dr Willem Steenkamp shares his insights about the years prior to, during, and following on South Africa's transition to a non-racial democracy. More specifically, how those events came to pass and then determined where the country finds itself today, with emphasis on not only WHAT actually happened, but WHY.

Today many conspiracy theories circulate, with both Left and Right alleging that their side had been "sold out" by "traitors to the cause". Dr Steenkamp shows convincingly that the eventual outcome of the negotiated transition (majority rule in a non-racial New South Africa based on universal suffrage) was historically inevitable, in terms of the demographic, economic, and international mega-trends that served as the true determinants of the power balance during the negotiations – not supposed traitorous inclinations or lack of testicular fortitude on the part of the NP Government negotiation team.

Recognising this historical inevitability does not mean that Dr Steenkamp suggests that the process had been perfectly conducted, without possibility having existed for the basic result to have been improved around the edges in potentially significant ways. That this did not happen, was due in most part to the lack of a functional strategy formulation capacity that handicapped successive NP Governments. This led them to only arrive at realistic situational awareness and workable strategies by means of trial and error. Meaning that wishful thinking had needed to pass through the crucible of cathartic encounters with reality, head-on, to thereby expose flaws that had in truth been predictable (i.e., if only there had been such a functional strategy formulation capacity in place, capable of taking the sound intelligence that had indeed existed and crafting from it, strategy options cognisant of basic theory on negotiation and the real-world behavioural dimension of power politics).

Dr Steenkamp freely acknowledges that hindsight makes it far easier today to identify scope for improvement that had potentially existed at the time. Obviously far easier now than it had been for the actual participants at the time, who in reality had succeeded – amidst intense pressure and under highly fraught and complex circumstances – to hammer out what was rightly hailed as a "miracle", when most observers had expected a bloodbath. Dr Steenkamp's focus with this eBook is therefore not on allocating blame or trying to be wise after the fact. His approach is forward-looking, seeking to **draw lessons** from the transition experience to help the present and future generations to optimally handle the emerging reality that South Africa is likely to see coalition governments at all levels – necessitating, once again, negotiation and cooperation where before conflict had existed.

In applying the "what if" tools of behavioural science and therewith illustrating that, at moments in time, the choice of alternative goals and procedures could have resulted in more optimal outcomes (if theoretically more sound strategies had been followed), Dr Steenkamp's purpose is to enhance understanding of the underlying theory regarding negotiation as means of conflict resolution. What he thereby illustrates is the necessity for decisions of lasting strategic importance to be underpinned by a fully functional, theoretically sound and situationally aware process of strategy formulation based on expert SWOT-style analysis and comprehensive scenario-gaming. Dr Steenkamp points out that the "errors" that had resulted from the serious dysfunctionality in strategy formulation that had marked the last decades of white rule had by default resulted in "trail-and-error" learning experiences. Because sound strategy formulation had not been followed, the drastic changes in government policies that circumstances had obligated, of necessity only came about thanks to those harsh encounters with reality – so that, ironically, those errors did in fact serve a purpose in terms of informing necessary course corrections. One such example is PW Botha's stubborn adherence to the "total onslaught" strategy, which eventually in practice served to conclusively prove for all to see that there can be no military solution to what was at heart a political challenge. That "settle" had to replace "shoot" as strategy. Another example is the failed first thirty months of FW De Klerk's attempt to negotiate a New South Africa into existence through multilateral public forums such as CODESA (instead of reaching first a framework agreement with the ANC as the other key party, negotiated bilaterally and confidentially – as was subsequently done from mid-1992 on).

Because of the lack of functional strategy formulation capacity (despite sound intelligence having been available) these head-first encounters with the hard wall of reality were therefore vitally necessary learning experiences for the politicians entrusted with decision-making, forcing them into the about-turns on policy and strategy that in the end made possible the more-or-less good outcome that was achieved – but **at huge cost** in terms of critical time wasted, as well as lives, international standing, scarce funds and resources directed to wrong priorities, rapidly shrinking leverage, and consequently of opportunities that had slipped by, un-exploited.

Dr Steenkamp analyses and explains the "what" and "why" of the transition, with focus on the last three decades of white rule, doing so from the uniquely varied professional, academic, and business vantage points from which he happened to have had the opportunity to observe the negotiated transition.

These multiple angles of observation included having been a well-placed intelligence analyst in positions allowing him high-level insights into the workings of national intelligence during the late BJ Vorster and early PW Botha years. This was supplemented by his analytical academic training (a doctorate in Political Science plus his legal training and experience as attorney of the High Court). From very young, he furthermore had been exposed to practical national security reality through his close relationship with his late father (Maj Gen Frans Steenkamp, who had been commanding general at national level of the SA Police Security Branch during the early eighties, before he took early retirement due to not agreeing with PW Botha's approach).

In addition, Dr Steenkamp writes with the international experience he had gained as diplomat in key postings such as Paris, as well as having headed what is today called the Diplomatic Academy and then having served as the New South Africa's first ambassador to previously hostile Black Africa. His broad insight is also due to his private sector business experience in the Western Cape and overseas, and – last but not least – to what he had learnt as co-editor of ***NONGQAI*** (the SA Forces History Magazine). In the latter context, significant facts that had hitherto been hidden about that era have been confided to him and his fellow editors by actual eyewitnesses.

Unlike most former members of the Security Forces (who of necessity had career-wise, lived and viewed events from within one main institutional silo only), Dr Steenkamp offers insights from a much more broad-based, multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional perspective, assessing the key events in the run-up to and during the transition in their broader historical, political, and national security context. He does so not only from an institutional viewpoint, but also with the conceptual theoretical background derived from his academic formation, plus his training and practical experience as intelligence analyst, lawyer, and diplomat.

Dr Steenkamp argues that the many misperceptions, myths, and conspiracy theories nowadays circulating about the negotiated transition are mostly due to the fact that the true determinants that actually had shaped those negotiations and determined their outcome have not yet been laid bare, warts and all. Principal among these, the **debilitating dysfunctionality in strategic national security decision-making** during the course of successive NP Governments.

One myth that he debunks is that the transition's outcome (about which many now have "buyer's remorse", on both the Right and the Left) was due to weakness or a supposed willingness to "sell-out" on the part of the respective negotiation teams. Dr Steenkamp illustrates that what "weakness" there was on the government side, was that inherent to the weak "hand of cards" that the negotiators had to play (as historical legacy left them by their predecessors), rather than them being personally "weak". What leverage they had, was further weakened by the fact that the Government side had embarked upon negotiations without a sufficient understanding of the theory underlying that art, nor of the theory of power politics, and without adequate strategic preparation or planning. There was no prepared fall-back position in place, the functions of governing and negotiation were not sufficiently differentiated, and neither was a distinction made between negotiating a peace accord (i.e., between the State and the non-state belligerents) and the inclusive politico-legal process of the crafting of a new constitution.

Another popular misconception which Dr Steenkamp debunks is that the negotiations were openly and inclusively conducted in Kempton Park, whereas in reality the negotiations of real relevance were held bilaterally, between the NP Government and the ANC/SACP, conducted discreetly through what became known as "The Channel" and in which (from the government side) National Intelligence and the Departments of Justice and of Constitutional Development and Planning were closely involved.

Another key observation is about the actual nature of the negotiations as such. Dr Steenkamp points out that, after the war years of the "total onslaught" era under PW Botha, the government negotiators sensed that what they were in essence negotiating was a **peace accord**. Accordingly, the constitution that would be required to give life to this had needed to be seen as a consequence of the process rather than its primary objective – meaning that, especially from the NP Government side, achieving **peace** and **image rehabilitation** (and the inevitable compromises necessary for that) became the principal determinant of what they were willing to agree to as regards the eventual shape and content of the constitution.

Particularly from 1992 onwards, the NP Government's approach to and goals for the negotiations were no longer focused on philosophical preferences such as basing the constitution on a "group rights" approach, but on the core strategic needs of achieving PEACE, and through it, rehabilitation of the image of the Afrikaner plus protection of individual and property rights through a dispensation that would be a "*regstaat*" (state of laws) within a Western-style free-market democracy (and – of not negligible concern – that the erstwhile top leadership not end up being "Nürnberged").

For its part, the ANC/SACP under the leadership of Nelson Mandela had abandoned (for the moment) its long-standing aspiration of establishing a Marxist "people's republic" supposedly to be achieved through revolutionary armed struggle, and also focussed on a peaceful transition and the compromise it required, because they had come to realise that there was no way in which they were in the foreseeable future going to be able to oust the powerful white state by force of arms, and that – if they were to fulfil their overriding desire of **acquiring political power** – that goal could only be rapidly achieved through a peacefully negotiated compromise accepting a Western-style constitutional model (although many in the ANC/SACP were then still – and to this day remain – intent on a second revolution, namely their NDR: National Democratic Revolution) that would herald a socialist utopia of "Radical Economic Transformation".

Dr Steenkamp shares his experiences and insights into four succeeding eras covering the period from 1975 to 2007, with special attention to two eras: firstly, the wasted years between 1975 and 1989, and particularly the "lost decade" under PW Botha that had preceded the 1990 pivot to negotiation – critical years marked first by stasis under Premier Vorster, and then "fever dreams" under Botha, leading to flawed strategies and priorities, as well as to the NP Government scoring seriously damaging "own goals" (such as the Rubicon speech). This litany of errors had left the white government ruefully unprepared when it was finally understood by the New Nats that the era of negotiations had unavoidably dawned. This was then followed by the other main era focused upon in the eBook, namely that of the negotiations and transition to a non-racial democracy, initiated by FW de Klerk.

Dr Steenkamp explains why and how the white government lost the political struggle, despite having defeated the ANC/SACP's "armed struggle". He sees this as due, in the main, to the fact that South Africa's internal conflict had always been a political rather than a military contest – a reality which during the "lost decade" had escaped those in the Defence establishment who saw the ANC's "armed struggle" as a "total onslaught" to be countered primarily by force of arms (whilst in truth the "armed struggle" was essentially armed propaganda, being just one part of the ANC's excellent overall propaganda campaign aimed at winning, locally and internationally, the contest for political power).

Dr Steenkamp points out that the security/intelligence community during the "lost decade" under PW Botha was by no means the homogenous monolith with all its members marching in lockstep (as is often imagined). Fundamental differences existed on strategy as well as regarding maintaining legality. A grouping within the Army (with whom many in the Navy and Air Force did not always see eye-to-eye) had opted to respond to what they

termed this “total onslaught” with a strategy geared towards preparing the state and society for the large-scale war they believed was inevitably coming – believing that, at its heart, it was a struggle over “whose land it is” and that such struggles historically are determined by force of arms. PW Botha had persisted in refusing inclusive negotiations over an open agenda (preferring to rather “go down hard-arsed,” as he had on multiple occasions stated in private) because he had rightly understood that such negotiations would require compromise on that which he held sacred, namely effective white monopoly control over political power – believing that losing such monopoly control posed an existential threat to his people.

Summed up, what passed as national strategy under PW prioritised preparation to “**shoot**” rather than “**settle**”, thus overturning the negotiation-focused strategy of his predecessor, John Vorster (whose team had rightly seen the conflict as being political rather than military, thus ultimately requiring a negotiated political settlement). Eventually the PW Botha strategy of top-down incremental cosmetic change whilst preparing to “shoot” rather than “settle” had amply demonstrated its fatal defects, to the point that by the mid-eighties it was questioned by the entire spectrum of influence in the Afrikaner establishment (church, Broederbond, business, academia, the NIS, and the entire Civil Service leadership outside of the SADF). His successor FW de Klerk thus ironically had to revert to the Vorster “settle” strategy post-haste, but then with far fewer cards in hand and with little preparation in place, nor with due regard to the theoretical fundamentals of negotiation and of Behaviouralist power politics. What De Klerk and the “New Nats” had realised, was that the true existential threat to their people actually lay in them continuing to refuse to negotiate and accept the compromises which that of necessity would entail. Accordingly, they ditched the PW Botha strategy of building the ability to “shoot” it out, and opted to “settle” – but with the same systemic dysfunctionality regarding strategic decision-making still ever-present, resulting in flawed planning and preparation for how best to implement this new strategic choice of seeking to “settle”.

An important insight that Dr Steenkamp shares, is that the Army-led Security Forces had during the “lost decade” increasingly become a “state within a state” focused on its own internal highly polarised debates on appropriate **national security strategy**. These debates within the Securocrat orbit were thematically quite distinct from the party-political debates at that time encountered in the societal sphere – such as over whether to be “Verlig” or “Verkramp”. Quite contrary to the public perception of a unified monolith marching in lockstep under the “total onslaught” banner, the security and intelligence “deep state” was in fact a deeply divided one with little true internal coordination and cohesion, nor agreement on core threat assumptions and strategy. It was **deeply dysfunctional** as strategic national security decision-making subsystem of the political system, despite the outward pretensions of unity and the ostentatious autocratic organisational structure centred on the NSMS, the National Security Management System that PW Botha had imposed from above. This dysfunction persisted and was even exacerbated under De Klerk.

The threat analysis and strategic options long seen coming by institutions such as the NIS, as well as the Departments of Foreign Affairs and of Information had through-out PW’s reign remained much the same as it had been under the prior Vorster-associated departmental leaders such as Intelligence head General Hendrik van den Bergh (who had warned that race-based policies were tantamount to white suicide – in which he was backed by Information head Dr Eschel Rhoodie). Foreign Affairs leaders doctors Hilgard Muller and Brand Fourie had concurred. Accordingly, the strategic thinking that persisted within the NIS/DFA during the PW Botha years differed fundamentally from the assumptions that underpinned the “total onslaught” thinking dominant within the PW Botha/Magnus Malan aligned group in the Army and Military Intelligence. From 1985 on the Afrikaner intelligentsia, the Church, business leaders and academics and even the Broederbond increasingly came to support seeking a negotiated settlement as the only remaining realistic strategic option – which PW Botha kept resisting till he was ousted by his own cabinet in 1989.

Within the Security Branch of the Police, for its part, a transition was visible over the course of the “lost decade”. Those like Dr Steenkamp’s father who had supported Vorster’s approach, had believed in legality. These “old-school” officers favoured a negotiated solution, but commanders appointed later acquiesced to the “total onslaught” dictate and began to justify extra-legal methods as being necessary because of believing the country to be in a state of total war (as preached by the PW Botha faction).

On the other hand, the NIS was pointing out that the main threat to the security and stability of the nation in fact emanated from the inherent conflicts of group interests accentuated by the then white government's own race-based policies – a threat that could only be overcome through a national consensus about an equitable new constitutional dispensation, reached inclusively around the negotiation table over an open agenda. This was also the view of the civilian departments, particularly the DCDP (Dr Steenkamp i.a. highlights the "civilian" departments' little-known "*Skrik vir Niks*" proposal of 1987). Foreign Affairs, for its part, continued to try and negotiate non-aggression pacts (such as the Nkomati Accord) and engage with the world to create a climate conducive to an internal settlement.

The "total onslaught" adherents, however, remained convinced under PW Botha that South Africa was in the grip of a zero-sum dispute about whose land it was, and that a dispute of that nature could only be resolved by armed conflict, with the winner taking all (and the loser, losing everything – thus, requiring that every effort and resource be invested into preparing to win such an armed confrontation at all cost). This erroneous prioritisation of military preparation over preparing for negotiating a political solution, caused the "total onslaught" brigade to decisively lose the propaganda war (after, as if to compound their error, they had first dismantled the counter-propaganda capacity that Dr Rhoodie had built).

This, in turn, caused Botha's successor, FW de Klerk, to decisively lose the contest for political power, because (unlike the planning for a negotiated transition in SWA/Namibia under Vorster) during the "lost decade" there had not been any careful preparation for the coming contest of ideas around the conference table.

The Security/Intel-community undeniably had physically won their skirmishes with the "liberation" forces, and they are due enormous credit for having prevented that a Marxist "people's republic" be imposed through revolutionary means. The Security/Intel-community also played a decisive role in moving the protagonists to search for a political settlement, and in protecting that process – without them, South Africa would not have witnessed the largely peaceful transition that in fact occurred.

Yet, still, the contest for the sharing of political power was in the end decisively lost by the erstwhile governing party – most of all because those who had come to power in 1978 by means of a palace revolution had lacked understanding of the true nature of the threat. Consequently, during the "lost decade" of their reign they had chosen wrong options in terms of strategy and allocation of funds and means, which perhaps at moments favoured short-term tactical gains, but which inevitably resulted in long-term strategic setbacks.

On the other hand, "civilian" government entities like the National Intelligence Service, Foreign Affairs, and Constitutional Development and Planning played unsung and mostly still under-reported roles in getting the negotiation process started, as well as later ensuring that it be maintained, despite the many challenges the process faced. It is noticeable how fast the National Party collapsed (to the point of disbanding) when the NP politicians no longer had access to expert guidance from officials after the transition to ANC rule in 1994…

The determining impact on the eventual negotiations of those "wasted years" between 1975 and 1989 (the stagnation under Vorster after PW's unilateral invasion of Angola in 1975 killed détente, and then the "lost decade" under PW Botha with its litany of own goals and dysfunction regarding strategy formulation) is detailed by Dr Steenkamp in the second part of his narrative, where he explains the forces at play shaping the "hand of cards" that each party held. He then details how the negotiations secretly got started, providing a valuable timeline of key events of the first year after FW de Klerk was elected NP leader in February 1989, till the negotiations became real in February 1990. Dr Steenkamp also reveals the astute way in which the true (bilateral) negotiation process was eventually (post-1992) structured by the new negotiation team of Roelf Meyer, Niël Barnard, and Fanie van der Merwe on the Government side, and their ANC counterparts Cyril Ramaphosa, Mac Maharaj and Joe Slovo – doing so around the discreet, bilateral "Channel". Having explained what really had happened, providing detailed time-lines, Dr Steenkamp de-bunks many of the myths and conspiracy theories doing the rounds, such as the nonsense that it had been FW de Klerk's eventual second wife Elita who during his presidency had influenced him to supposedly "sell out".

In his conclusions, Dr Steenkamp reviews all three parts of his contribution to this ***NONGQAI*** eyewitness series, looking at Southern African history from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century. He does so with the goal to highlight learning opportunities, considering the challenges that lie ahead for the country. He identifies the key "forks in the road" in SA history where, if crucial decisions had gone the other way, that could have led to materially different outcomes today. Examples of such "what ifs" that he cites are what could have resulted if the short-lived Batavian Republic at the Cape (Africa's first non-racial, anti-slavery democracy) had continued to exist and not been annexed by Britain, with its world-wide imperial legacy of blatant white supremacy and racism. The Old Cape had not been a structurally racist society. However, after Britain's permanent occupation of the Cape, Afrikaners increasingly chose to adopt the British Empire's colonial model of institutionalised racism.

What if the influential Jan Smuts had not been so firmly racist, when he dominated the drafting of the Union constitution? What if Smuts had supported Prime Minister Barry Hertzog's ethno-nationalist constitutional initiative in the late 1920s to integrate the Coloured population into the "white" political mainstream? (Which, if those Acts attempting to move South Africa from a race-based to an ethno-cultural division had been adopted in parliament with the necessary enhanced majority – which Smuts could have enabled – would have completely undercut the later so damaging charges against South Africa as abhorrently racist, as well as having changed the later politico-demographic equation significantly).

What if John Vorster had consistently acted on his own realisation (which he articulated in private) that Verwoerdian Grand Apartheid was unworkable, and had not allowed himself in the end to get caught up in the so-called Information Scandal?

What if the sly coup (enabled by Pik Botha) that brought PW Botha to power in 1978 had failed? What if heir apparent Dr Connie Mulder had won? What would his policies have been? Dr Steenkamp's belief is that Mulder's outlook was much more based on ethno-nationalism than on race, and that his key advisors were in fact much clearer in their understanding of the true nature of the threat (that it was **political**, propaganda-based rather than on military force, requiring advanced counter-propaganda abilities and – most importantly – new non-racial policies). Those around Mulder had also far better comprehended the viable strategic options, as well as realising in advance the deficiencies of the PW Botha approach of top-down, incremental change. In short, they were the true "verligtes", far more so than the image created by PW Botha's damning spin machine.

In this regard, Dr Steenkamp reveals important new evidence about the underhand "lawfare" that had been employed during the "Muldergate" saga. He also reveals much that is insightful about the true strategic thinking of the much-vilified General "Lang Hendrik" van den Bergh, quoting extensively from the latter's unpublished autobiography – in which the general rightly foresaw the failure of Botha's tricameral parliament and the downfall of his military rule, expressed preference for freedom of association instead of enforced racial categorisation, and had his eye through-out on a negotiated solution – on having "a seat at the table", on preparing to hold the strongest possible hand in the inevitable negotiation process.

What if FW de Klerk had not initiated negotiations when he did? Dr Steenkamp explains how severely the international pressure would have escalated, after the fall of the USSR. What if the NP Government had not in the end accepted a constitution based on majority rule? Then, simply, there would have been no peace, and the Afrikaner would have been back in an even worse position than before. Were the might of the Security Forces a trump card that De Klerk had failed to play? (Supposedly because he "hated" them?). Not true – and, it was a card better held up the sleave, because everyone in any case knew well enough the capabilities of the forces.

Was there a risk of a right-wing coup – Yes!

Could (and should) De Klerk's acceptance of the need for a negotiated settlement (and his 2 February 1990 speech that laid the foundation for it) have been better planned and prepared? Undoubtedly YES, both when judged from a practical and an academic-theoretical viewpoint. Dr Steenkamp provides an interesting "war gaming" style exercise, in which he takes actual key announcements and policy positions adopted under De Klerk during the

transition (i.e., not airy-fairy hypotheticals), and simply re-arrange the chronology in order to illustrate how the 2 February speech could have been better packaged, in terms of the basic principles of negotiation theory. Which, if done "correctly", could likely have somewhat improved the leverage of the NP negotiators – but not to the extent of avoiding the fundamental outcome of majority rule in a unitary state. Similarly, Dr Steenkamp shows that there indeed were other options available regarding the structuring of the transition that had needed to be at least considered if there had been a properly functioning decision-making system in place, which point he illustrates by means of a hypothetical phased approach instead of De Klerk's "Big Bang".

From a learning perspective (looking at future challenges), Dr Steenkamp makes the fundamental point that the biggest challenge that faced and still faces South Africans of moderate, democratic and free market inclination from the start of the transition to this day, is to ensure that the radical element in the ANC does not control the party and the country. Therefore, the most vital strategic question had always been, and still is, how to cooperate with the ANC's moderate faction. Perhaps the biggest "what if" that Dr Steenkamp touches on, is what could have been, had FW de Klerk chosen from the outset to enter into a patriotic strategic partnership with Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki rather than adopting the adversarial approach he maintained through-out (considering that the National Party in any event disbanded and joined the ANC within a few years of De Klerk's retirement from politics).

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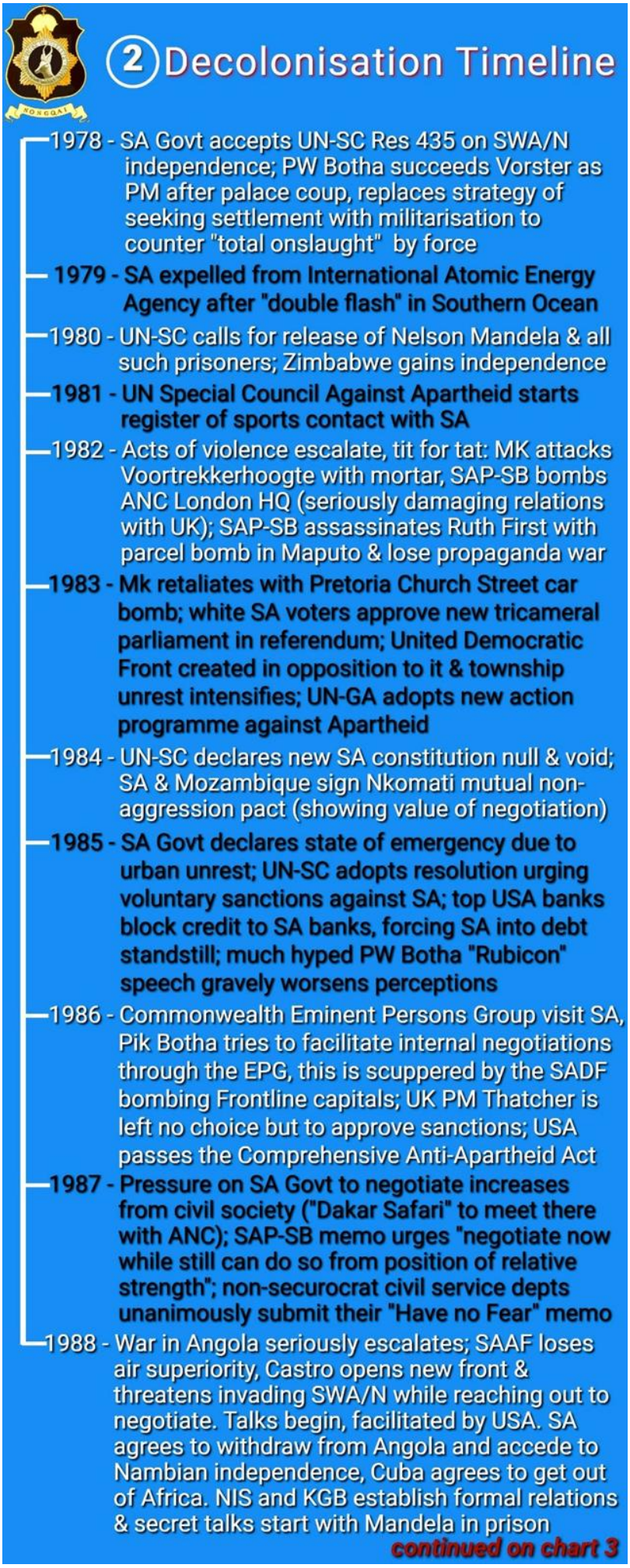

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# *INFOGRAPHIC: DECOLONISATION TIMELINE*




2 Decolonisation Timeline
1978 - SA Govt accepts UN-SC Res 435 on SWA/N independence; PW Botha succeeds Vorster as PM after palace coup, replaces strategy of seeking settlement with militarisation to counter "total onslaught" by force
1979 - SA expelled from International Atomic Energy Agency after "double flash" in Southern Ocean
1980 - UN-SC calls for release of Nelson Mandela & all such prisoners; Zimbabwe gains independence
1981 - UN Special Council Against Apartheid starts register of sports contact with SA
1982 - Acts of violence escalate, tit for tat: MK attacks Voortrekkerhoogte with mortar, SAP-SB bombs ANC London HQ (seriously damaging relations with UK); SAP-SB assassinates Ruth First with parcel bomb in Maputo & lose propaganda war
1983 - Mk retaliates with Pretoria Church Street car bomb; white SA voters approve new tricameral parliament in referendum; United Democratic Front created in opposition to it & township unrest intensifies; UN-GA adopts new action programme against Apartheid
1984 - UN-SC declares new SA constitution null & void; SA & Mozambique sign Nkomati mutual non-aggression pact (showing value of negotiation)
1985 - SA Govt declares state of emergency due to urban unrest; UN-SC adopts resolution urging voluntary sanctions against SA; top USA banks block credit to SA banks, forcing SA into debt standstill; much hyped PW Botha "Rubicon" speech gravely worsens perceptions
1986 - Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group visit SA, Pik Botha tries to facilitate internal negotiations through the EPG, this is scuppered by the SADF bombing Frontline capitals; UK PM Thatcher is left no choice but to approve sanctions; USA passes the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act
1987 - Pressure on SA Govt to negotiate increases from civil society ("Dakar Safari" to meet there with ANC); SAP-SB memo urges "negotiate now while still can do so from position of relative strength"; non-securocrat civil service depts unanimously submit their "Have no Fear" memo
1988 - War in Angola seriously escalates; SAAF loses air superiority, Castro opens new front & threatens invading SWA/N while reaching out to negotiate. Talks begin, facilitated by USA. SA agrees to withdraw from Angola and accede to Nambian independence, Cuba agrees to get out of Africa. NIS and KGB establish formal relations & secret talks start with Mandela in prison
continued on chart 3

# 3 Decolonisation Timeline

- 1988 - NIS exploits a UK Govt/business initiative facilitating talks between ANC and leading Afrikaners to prepare the ground with a view to formal contact with external ANC leadership so as to test their attitude to negotiations. The International Convention Against Apartheid in Sport enters into force as part of Law of Nations
- 1989 - PW Botha suffers stroke & resigns as NP leader; control of SWA/N is handed to UN leading to elections won by SWAPO; end May '89 NIS activates outreach to ANC's Thabo Mbeki; SA Cabinet obliges PW Botha to resign as president, succeeded by FW de Klerk. On 16 Aug '89 NIS gets (by sleight of hand) a mandate from State Security Council for "making contact with external ANC". End Aug '89 OAU adopts declaration sponsored by ANC recognising that opportunity exists for negotiations. On 11 Sept NIS meets with ANC in Switzerland & confirms their willingness to enter into negotiations
- 1990 - On 2 Feb '90 De Klerk announces end of Apartheid and commits SA Govt to non-racial, inclusive settlement based on universal franchise. Nelson Mandela is released. Namibia gains independence from SA on 21 March '90 (Sharpeville Day/International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination) leaving SA itself as the last vestige of a race-based colonial past, just three decades after UK PM Harold Macmillan's "Winds of Change" warning & only 15 years after Vorster had warned that the alternative to settling was "too ghastly to contemplate" (with in-between, a "lost decade")
- 1991 - Inaugural meeting of CODESA constitutional convention takes place in Dec '90
- 1992 - Acts of political violence escalate between ANC and IFP, as ANC/SACP implement their "people's war" strategy; NP Govt loses initiative and loses the propaganda war. Last whites-only referendum supports effort to seek a negotiated settlement by 2/3 majority
- 1993 - SA Govt announces the existence & unilaterial dismantlement of its nuclear weapons. CODESA talks resume. In Dec '93 a Transitional Executive Council is established, supervising the NP Govt's exercise of its powers.
- 1994 - The Multi-Party Negotiating Process reached sufficient consensus on an interim constitution, which the Tri-Cameral parliament then enacted, coming into effect on 27 April 1994 for the first non-racial general elections, which the ANC won. President Nelson Mandela was inaugurated on 10 May 1994, ending 342 years of white rule.

# CHAPTER 1.

# THE FOCUS AND ORGANISATION OF THIS 3RD & FINAL PART IN MY SERIES OF "FIRESIDE CHATS" ABOUT SOUTH AFRICA'S TRANSITION

## 1.1 FOCUS: WHAT HAPPENED & WHY, PRIOR TO AND DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS

Most South Africans, particularly whites and more specifically Afrikaners, wonder today how we went from three hundred years of political dominance to effective irrelevance in the space of just a couple of decades. Consequently, misinformation and misperceptions abound. With conspiracy theories ever more to the fore…

What I will be sharing here, is "my truth" (as the modern saying goes). My observations and explanation of what had really happened behind the scenes in the decades prior to, and then during South Africa's transition to a non-racial democracy as the latter played out over those tumultuous years from 1989 to 1994.

Why me, to write this? I've had the privilege, through pure chance, to have had insights into these events from a somewhat unique series of vantage points: as intelligence analyst, ambassador, lawyer, private sector entrepreneur, and political scientist (plus the dual benefits of having been close to my late father, a former commanding general of the SA Police Security Branch, and lately also as co-editor of the SA Forces history magazine ***NONGQAI***, in which capacity a lot of what had really been going on has been shared with me by eyewitnesses).

To understand the why, who, when and what of the negotiations and the transition as such, it is evidently necessary to look also at the run-up to it. Because those goings-on and personalities had so significantly shaped the eventual negotiations and their outcome. Especially, the preceding decade under PW Botha, which in turn had been highly impacted by the premiership of his predecessor, John Vorster. With the general foundations laid even farther back by imperialist European colonial conquest, the struggle between Boer and Brit, the highly centralised state created by Jan Smuts at te time of Union, the 1948 election victory of Afrikaner nationalism, Verwoerd and "Grand Apartheid", and the post-WW2 context of rapid decolonisation, the Cold War, and rising world-wide abhorrence of racism.

A complex history, about which very different views understandably are held.

One expression of it is the many hand-wringing *mea culpas* one nowadays hear about Apartheid and the former Security Forces (cringeworthy latter-day condemnations of our history, as if the "common wisdom" subscribed to by most white South Africans of that era had been somehow unique to us, during that centuries-long period of the global practice of colonialism and racism). Let me be clear: I strongly believe that no justification can or should today be attempted for those practices that had caused such immense hurt and harm to so many. But – personally speaking, and despite what I now understand and admit – I nevertheless absolutely abhor the often-exaggerated shows of white "woke" contrition now too regularly on display…

However, from the opposite end of the spectrum to the handwringers, we hear opinions that historically are equally exaggerated and inaccurate. This is when that past is uniformly glorified (without any reference the damage done). Or, more commonly, when many among us are now overly defensive and justificatory about each and all of the actions taken back then to protect white supremacy – as if we, as mere mortals, were not subject to error, miscalculation and human vices. Those in this latter camp prefer only to dwell on and glorify that which we had done well. Of course, I will be among the first to insist that there was much that was well-intentioned and intrinsically good (of which there indeed was a LOT, to be justly proud of). But then they unbalance the picture and dilute its teaching value by ignoring the many ways in which we were also **the architects of our own undoing** – particularly over the course of the last three decades of white rule between the early seventies and the early 2000s.

I will not shy away here from pointing out and explaining the grave consequences brought about by the dysfunction that had existed in national decision-making, the deep discord over strategy, and the clashing personal agendas and ambitions of top politicians – all of which in the end determined the course and outcome of the negotiations. For example, we need to be willing to own up to the reality that the clashing personal agendas at highest level (advanced often by means of deceit and double-dealing) that we witnessed between 1974 and 1978 torpedoed the détente initiative, robbed white South Africa of its "aura of invincibility", and set back the historically inevitable process of seeking a negotiated settlement by a dozen critical years, severely weakening the white government's bargaining position in the process.

Too many of us also still fail to admit that the period that followed the 1978 NP caucus election of PW Botha as premier (i.e., the years from 1978 to the middle of 1989), was in reality a "lost decade". During that vital period, serious dysfunction and discord continued to reign in the process of decision-making about national strategy, despite pretentions of coordination. We also continue to ignore (at least in public) the hard truth that the clashing personal ambitions, strongly opposing viewpoints on key issues (such as whether to prepare to negotiate or to shoot), and the underhand means employed by leading politicians in their arm-wrestling with each other, resulted in gravely damaging own goals. Just think of PW Botha's disastrous 1985 Rubicon speech… Plus the wrong decisions on strategic direction (most fundamentally, as to whether to prepare for shooting it out, or for settling). Which resulted in stagnation, most noticeably towards the end-years of both the Vorster and PW Botha governments).

All of which in the end left the FW de Klerk team with a very weak hand when the inevitable negotiation phase had finally to be (re)entered by the "New Nat" led government, post-haste, in 1990.

There are also many misconceptions around, about the what, why, and how of the real negotiation process – when and why it started, and among whom? (With, for example, very few knowing that the secret conversations between the then still imprisoned Mr Nelson Mandela and government officials had actually already started around 1984). Plus, the misconception that the key constitutional negotiations were those we saw conducted in public, via CODESA 1 & 2 and the Multi-Party Forum – whereas the real negotiations were in truth conducted bilaterally between only the ANC and the NP Government, far from public view, via a confidential bilateral process which its participants called the "Channel".

Perhaps understandably, there is also nowadays a lot of criticism – from both left and right – about the performance of the respective negotiation teams, to the point even of silly conspiracy theories doing the rounds. With many in the ANC and further left criticising Mandela for having "sold out", whilst many erstwhile Nat supporters and further right are accusing FW de Klerk and Roelf Meyer of exactly the same thing…

Many people today criticize the 1994/1996 Constitution, the negotiations and especially the negotiators, doing so from different partisan angles across the political spectrum. Much of their criticism seem to be premised on the assumption that the negotiators were engaged in an abstract exercise of textbook-based drafting of a constitution, instead of understanding that they were in fact negotiating the terms of a PEACE DEAL. So that their end product is now being judged not in terms of whether it achieved peace, but against criteria of what supposedly, in terms of current legal-theoretical thinking (and with the considerable benefit of 20/20 hindsight) would have been the "best" or even "ideal" legal constitutional outcome. However, the real question that had confronted the negotiators back then wasn't what would have constituted theoretical legal PERFECTION, but rather what was then POLITICALLY POSSIBLE, in practical, real-world terms – as determined not by textbooks of constitutional law, but by the hard reality of the balance of power that existed around the negotiation table, and by the need for achieving the underlying objective, which was restoring PEACE to a deeply conflicted country.

Key to understanding the process, is to comprehend what exactly the negotiators (particularly on the government side) saw as the main objective which they had to achieve. They were NOT merely drafting a new constitution (that would be a necessary consequence, a form of written recordal of the terms upon which their real goal was achieved). As said – and it cannot be stressed enough – their overriding goal was to **MAKE PEACE**, to end South Africa's destructive, often deadly internal political conflict (which under PW Botha had indeed been termed a war). So that PEACE could reign and the country could return to stability and normality. Thus, the content of the

constitution would be dictated by the compromises necessary to achieve peace, and not by abstract legal theory – however important the latter was obviously also recognised to be.

The criticism today revolves mostly around the constitutional model we ended up with. It comes from those who had wished for a Federalist model to be adopted (such as the IFP, and nowadays the DA with its recent emphasis on devolution). Also, there's ongoing criticism from those who wanted a "group rights" based model (FF+), or an outright Volkstaat or even Western Cape secession. There's also increasingly sharp criticism as well from the far left of the spectrum, such as the EFF and MKP, directed at Mr Nelson Mandela and the ANC "moderates" because of the Western liberal free-market nature of the constitution to which they had agreed in 1994 – with these critics wishing for a socialist state to be imposed through a Marxist-style "second revolution (the NDR – their "National Democratic Revolution).

Many whites also criticise the lead government negotiator, Roelf Meyer, as personally having been "too weak". Instead of recognising that that which in truth had been really weak, was the "hand of cards" that he had been dealt to play (i.e., the weak political power base from which he had to operate, largely thanks to the white government's litany of strategic errors and own goals of the seventies and eighties).

It is also popular nowadays to be wise after the fact about the FW de Klerk government supposedly not having played its alleged "trump card" – i.e., its security forces. Without explaining the crucial "**how**". How could or should it have been played? (other than in the manner in which it in fact was). What would the likely consequences have been of trying to overtly do so, instead of having kept it "up the sleeve"? Consider this: in the context of the psychological balance of power around the negotiation table, weren't the ANC/SACP in any case sufficiently aware of the overwhelming capability of the security forces, without it needing to be overtly demonstrated – with all the negatives that that would have entailed?

Do those who are now after the fact pontificating that the "security force card" should have been played, consider the overpowering strength of the ANC's counterbalancing international and internal political support, if ever it had come to such a naked contest of actual leverage?

Do they consider the very real potential that existed right up to the election of a coup by the white right, which likely would have been supported by many in the security forces? With the potential for such a coup that would have been greatly enhanced by any attempt to overtly involve those forces in the negotiation process?

Would **peace** have been possible at all, had that supposed "card" actually been openly played?

Thus, it is easy to criticise now the negotiations, negotiators, and constitution, whilst enjoying the evident benefit of 20/20 hindsight. Stating this, does not mean that it is not essential today to identify, through unsparing critical analysis, the weaknesses of the highly centralised, Westminster-style constitutional system that emerged from those negotiations. A system which allows the majority faction in parliament's majority party to capture the totality of state power – as the Zuma faction did... Equally, one should analyse the underlying determinants that had shaped the negotiation process and its logically inevitable outcome. But doing such critical analysis must be for the sake of comprehension and preparing adequately for the challenges of the FUTURE, and not to *ex post facto* try to now, quite futilely, allocate blame for perceived PAST errors.

Apart from criticism of real or imagined shortcomings in the constitution (that was negotiated to end a complex conflict), one should certainly also give credit to the miracle that was accomplished. Namely, PEACE, when the rest of the world had been expecting a race-driven bloodbath, believing the clashing interests of the opposing sides to be intractable. A peace which has already lasted more than thirty years. And a constitution which, despite some shortcomings, was hailed as a model for the world to take cognizance of.

I believe that readers have a need and a right to understand the truth about what had really been going on prior to, and during the negotiations. Such as the role of the National Intelligence Service (NIS) and the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning (CDP). Referring, for example, to the secret contact between the NIS and the external ANC, which had actually begun well before what most people now assume was the first official

meeting between the ANC and senior NIS officials (i.e., such as now publicly known, thanks to the excellent autobiographical writings of the likes of Prof Willie Esterhuyse).

What I'm referring to, is the more than half a dozen secret NIS/ANC contacts that had pre-dated the first such publicly acknowledged "official meeting", namely the one in Switzerland in September 1989 (being the one that Prof Esterhuyse – as NIS agent "Gert" – had helped facilitate, and which had been held between, from the NIS: Deputy DG Mike Louw & Operations Head Maritz Spaarwater, and from the ANC: Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma).

Because, just as the Government had needed prior reassurance about the ANC's willingness to negotiate before President FW de Klerk could make his 2 February 1990 speech, the NIS had obviously also needed reassurance from the ANC before venturing into that first now publicly known "official" meeting. Furthermore – because of the subsequent writings of Esterhuyse, Spaarwater, and Dr Niël Barnard (former NIS DG) there's information in the public domain about three important top-level official meetings between the NIS/CDP and the ANC in Switzerland at the outset of the negotiation process – but, truth is that there actually were more.

The importance of this, from the perspective of the historical record, lies in how it illustrates the very consequential role that senior officials like Barnard, Louw, and Fanie van der Merwe of the CDP played in facilitating the negotiation process and keeping it on track – not just at its beginning, but through-out, helping to maintain it viable despite its often-convoluted course.

Referencing this kind information (which I have from the mouths of those who were actually there – with the necessary circumspection about operational detail), will also serve to put some of the forementioned autobiographical revelations into perspective. For example, it illustrates that the NIS didn't have all their eggs in just the Esterhuyse / Mells Park Process basket (that operation, culminating in "Project Flair" – i.e., the first "official" meeting – can be described as essentially the public "cover story" that eventually could be made known, and which in part served to conceal the other clandestine contacts that had been going on in parallel).

This will be the kind of hitherto unreported additional detail that I will be sharing with you as readers, later in this "campfire chat", when we will deal with seminal events such as the "Information Scandal", PW's Rubicon Speech, turning around Moscow's stance on Southern Africa, and how the negotiations actually were initiated and conducted.

My top priority with presenting this "fireside chat" is to help clarify the true, unvarnished and often untold story of how we actually got from where we were, to where we are today. So that we can take from that period the lessons we absolutely need to learn, if we are to be prepared for what likely awaits in the very near future. Most likely, what's coming is going to be the gravest challenge we've ever faced, and its roots lie in the how and what of our recent past.

Let there be no doubt that South Africans of all hues and persuasions urgently need to start preparing for the challenges that the short-term future is about to present. To be able to properly do that, we (talking about my tribe, i.e. those who speak Afrikaans) need to understand the lessons from our recent history which explain how we got here and what the true shortcomings of our then and current systems were and are. In short, what kind of unrealistic political wishful thinking we need now to consign, once and for all, to the ash-heap of history – if we are to realistically plan ahead and coalesce again around fundamental shared values.

Because this is all about learning from what is obviously now inalterable history, I'm not writing this in order to fight all over again, the past battles about policy and strategy – particularly not to fight again those that occurred interminably within the security/intel community and which led to so much dysfunction and discord when the post-colonial "winds of change" started blowing with increasing ferocity, undeniably closing in on us in the seventies.

There'd be no sense in fighting those battles again, because what's done is done. What must now be done, if we are to learn, is to record and share what actually had happened in the inner circles, warts and all (due mostly to typical human frailties at leadership level, of which "our side" were of course not exempt).

So, I'm not going to be focused on polishing the image of this or that white government, but neither will I be apologising for anything. Nor am I going to shy away from uncomfortable truths hitherto hidden, because it is precisely in those underlying realities that the most valuable lessons are to be found. That said, it bears repeating again that what I will be sharing will be "**my truth**", as it is nowadays called. Thus, my admittedly subjective analysis and interpretations – yet, which I nevertheless tried to make as impartial and fact-based as human nature permits. Insights formed by my training and experience as professional intelligence analyst, diplomat, lawyer, private sector entrepreneur, by what my father shared with me from the Security Police perspective, as well as by my academic background and what has been shared with me by eyewitnesses in my editorial capacity with ***NONGQAI***. All of which that together constituted different valuable vantage points for observing – vantage points that were composed of multiple angles of insight, and thus not limited to one institutional career silo.

Indeed, a somewhat unique position that providence had seen fit to provide me with…

## 1.2 ORGANISATION

As regards how this third and last part of my "fireside chat" series is organized, it will revolve around the period in South Africa's history stretching from the premiership of John Vorster, through the PW Botha era to that of FW de Klerk, concluding with what happened to the National Party (NP) and Afrikaner political influence post-1996. Not only about the "**what**" of that which had really happened (often behind closed doors, and mostly not publicly articulated at the time) but particularly my personal conclusions about the "**why**".

In other words, unlike in Part Two of my series (which had contained a lot of personal anecdotes about what I myself had experienced and observed during my time in National Intelligence during the seventies and early eighties), this third part will not focus on personal derring-do, but rather on the broader fate of the white state and the events in general that determined the outcome we live with today.

In this third part of the series I will be **analysing** and **interpreting**, more than merely **narrating**. For the sake of maintaining the causal chain between events, I will reach back and touch again on the Vorster era, because the events from that time were interlinked with what occurred under PW Botha and then FW de Klerk.

One can identify four distinct phases that the country went through, in quick succession, over the three decades of the 1970s, '80s and '90s. This consisted, in a nutshell, of:

- a first phase under Prime Minister John Vorster, stretching up to September 1978, during which the strategy was to try and create conditions for **negotiating settlements** in the region (which phase had two sub-phases – an optimistic one during the blossoming of his détente initiative, and a frustrated, stagnated second phase after Operation Savannah and the Soweto Uprising effectively killed détente);
- a second phase under PW Botha during which the pendulum swung the other way, when preparing to "**shoot**", not "settle", was imposed as strategy, driven by the "total onslaught" faction (this also had two sub-phases, first of optimism that top-down incremental changes to "petty" Apartheid would allow the white government to remain in control, and then from 1985 on, another period of stagnation, when it was realised that those initiatives such as the tricameral parliament had in reality only caused resistance to flame up more fiercely);
- a third phase under FW de Klerk from August 1989 to May/June 1996 during which the pendulum swung all the way back (when at the December 1989 D'Nyala cabinet "Bosberaad" the PW Botha era's "shoot" strategy was definitively abandoned and the De Klerk government reverted to seeking a settlement through inclusive negotiations; this phase also consisted of two sub-phases: starting out with seeking to base a new constitution on **group rights**, but then – from 1992 on – focusing primarily on achieving **peace**, as well as the rehabilitation of the Afrikaner's image plus the securing of individual and property rights;
- a fourth phase from 1996 onwards when the focus shifted to normal competition for political power between political parties within the framework of the new non-racial constitution – this phase also had its distinct sub-phases (four of them) with the first seeing the NP initially part of the Government of National Unity, then secondly, with the NP stepping out of the GNU (and into political oblivion), followed thirdly by the NNP merging with the ANC and then soon enough ceasing to exist altogether; with the fourth phase

being the December 2007 take-over of the ANC by its more radical “Lusaka” wing under Jacob Zuma, guided by Mac Maharaj – which latter event laid bare serious weaknesses in the current Westminster-style constitution.

(These phases have not had equal weight in getting us to where we are today, meaning that they will not each occupy equal space in this overview – clearly the two phases during which the most consequential events occurred are the PW Botha era and then the negotiations / transition between 1990 and 1994, so that the emphasis will be on those two; their “before and after” will be dealt with only to the extent necessary to place the pivotal period contextually into proper perspective).

Essentially, what I will be trying to do here is to identify the pieces of the puzzle that will help us understand how come we’ve arrived at where we are today, considering where we were just three decades ago. What were the forces, personalities, and agendas that drove our history during the seventies, eighties and early nineties? How should one understand what then followed, after the remarkable transformation of the middle-nineties?

What are the vital lessons we need to draw from this, so as to best prepare for the challenges that the near future undoubtedly will confront us with?

To give you as reader a quick preview of the key issues and events that I will be delving into, I’m listing some of those below – mentioned now, also to confirm that my aim here is not a dry chronological academic dissertation, but a real-world analysis of watershed moments, the main actors who were involved, their motivations, and the often shady, back-stabbing inner machinations that have remained mostly unreported, plus then the profound implications that these episodes of dysfunction had held for the course of our history:

- the real history of the internal skulduggery and back-stabbing that occurred within the National Party (NP) around the “Info/Muldergate Scandal” and the “bloodless coup” which in 1978 brought PW Botha to power by a slim margin, with the self-serving help of Pik Botha;
- the intelligence community warning to PW Botha in 1983 that his proposed establishment of a tricameral parliament would further inflame the already heated internal security situation;
- the true causes behind the 1985 “Rubicon speech” debacle and the manipulative role of Pik Botha there-in;
- the underhand sabotage of important diplomatic initiatives aimed at re-starting negotiations (such as when Pik Botha’s efforts to use the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group’s 1986 visit to set the table for starting negotiations was exploded by the SADF, which at that critical moment launched bombing raids on the Frontline Commonwealth capitals);
- the revealing chronology of the formative events that occurred in the year between February 1989 (when FW de Klerk became NP leader) and February 1990, which saw the first steps that were secretly taken by the National Intelligence Service (NIS) to launch its own outreach to the external ANC/SACP and holding top-level meetings with them in Switzerland (Operation Flair), plus
- how Pretoria had secretly “turned around Moscow’s head” from being an arch-enemy supporting the ANC, to the USSR helping upgrade our aging French Mirage fighters with MIG-29 engines...
- How the negotiations really advanced, almost clandestinely via the so-called “Channel” between the ANC and NP, facilitated by the use of intelligence back-channels (as opposed to the public perception of broad-based multi-party talks, held in the open at Kempton Park);
- How real a threat a coup by the white right in fact was;
- How achieving PEACE became the overriding objective on the side of the NP Government’s negotiating team, leading them inevitably to accepting majority rule; and
- How the NP politicians’ strategic sense evaporated after 1994, when they no longer enjoyed the benefit of input and guidance from expert professional analysts and counsellors from the ranks of the Civil Service…

In addition to revealing and analysing these key events, I will be focusing on identifying and interpreting the top trends across the forementioned four historical phases – such as on the dysfunction and discord in the security/intelligence community from the seventies up to the late eighties. Which discord existed between two main camps: those wishing to focus on preparing to **settle** through inclusive negotiations, versus those committed

to preparations for **shoot** as the only way in which they believed the issue of "whose land it was", could and would inevitably be settled. Which fundamental discord on strategy was only finally brought to a head by the ouster of PW Botha in 1989 by his cabinet.

The "shoot" versus "settle" debate was then supplanted by a new divide in Afrikaner leadership's strategic thinking that emerged during the third (transition) phase under FW de Klerk that followed from 1990 on, and lasted till 1992. This divide was between those who wishfully thought that the government could achieve some power-sharing arrangement centred on group rights, versus those "New Nats" within the NP who understood the power realities, namely of a very weak hand that the "lost decade" had left the NP Government to try and play at the negotiation table (a harsh reality that became abundantly clear by the end of 1992).

These "New Nats" therefore believed that, realistically, the goals to be focused on should no longer be power-sharing based upon group rights, but rather, that what needed to be achieved can be summed up by the acronym "PRP": **peace** in the country, **rehabilitation** of the image of the whites (and Afrikaner in particular), and the **protection of property and individual rights**.

On the right of the white spectrum, there were those Afrikaner leaders who were yearning for a constitutional dispensation based on **GR**: "**group rights**" (a line of thought initially also evident among many NP politicians till 1992, but thereafter essentially limited to the Afrikaner right-wing opposition and the Zulu traditionalists who together had formed COSAG – the Concerned South Africans Group).

The unfortunate reality was, however, that – rightly or wrongly – the concept of "group rights" had become so toxically contaminated by its association with Apartheid, that it was in truth an absolute non-starter for all other groups (among whom it could be very effectively condemned as simply an attempt to introduce again Apartheid, but under a different name).

Furthermore, what the decision of the FW-led NP to enter into inclusive negotiations with representatives of all races of necessity had done, was to take away the monopoly on decision-making once held by the whites, and the NP in particular. So that, during this third phase of negotiation and transition, it was no longer a question of just two opposing viewpoints as held within Afrikaner ranks that counted (such as, in phases one and two, between "shoot" and "settle", and initially during phase three between PRP and GR).

Now the goals of the liberal English-speaking establishment were also in play. Which for many was to shift all blame for perceived past wrongs to the Afrikaners (as if the record of the British Empire around the world had been of a liberal non-racial happy family of inclusiveness and equality) and to steer the constitutional debate towards a British Westminster-style liberal model based fundamentally on the protection of individual rights, irrespective of race or tribe.

Most importantly, there were the goals of the ANC/SACP that henceforth had to be reckoned with more than those of any other group (an ANC that had tactically abandoned their earlier dreams of establishing a Marxist "people's republic" and which now were single-mindedly focused on winning political power via whatever constitutional model that would maximise that opportunity).

In the balance of power around the negotiation table, what was critically important about the ANC was that they held – thanks to them having won hands-down the propaganda war for international and local support – an effective veto power over the success or not of the entire negotiation process. Thus, in real-world terms being able to hold the NP Government over a barrel on the basis that there would be no peace, no rehabilitation and no protection for property rights, if the ANC's bottom-line aspirations for power were not met.

What the ANC/SACP had understood from early on, was that the Westminster model (designed centuries before in the UK to ensure that the English elite would be able to powerfully rule over the other nations and social classes of the United Kingdom, through strongly centralised structures) would – among the Western liberal democratic constitutional models – provide them with the best platform from which to rule to maximum own advantage. Just as the Afrikaners had realised in 1909, when the constitution for the Union of South Africa was drafted…

Because what the Westminster model's focus on individual rights in effect did, was to "democratically" neutralise objections to majority dominance on the part of minorities (*you have nothing to complain about, Irishman, because you as individual enjoy exactly the same rights as any individual Englishman* – without accounting at all for the majority versus minority dynamic). Thus, Westminster was, in real-world power terms, well aligned with the ANC/SACP's philosophy of "democratic centralism".

The Westminster-derived model in which the head of the executive is not chosen directly by the electorate (such as in the USA, or in Namibia) but is chosen instead by the majority party in parliament, thus suited the centralist Marxist tendencies of the ANC/SACP to a T. However, what this model in practice meant, was that it would be the majority faction within the majority party who would determine the holder of the presidency and through him/her hold all the real power in and of the state – such as resulted when Jacob Zuma's faction ousted the Thabo Mbeki faction, for him to become president.

Especially so, if the South African state would remain structured as Jan Smuts had shaped it during the formative years of the Union – very highly centralised, with for example just one countrywide police force controlled from Pretoria.

So that, with the forces on the left advocating for continuing a Westminster kind of constitutional model, and with the vocal but ineffectual opposition from the right (COSAG) doggedly pursuing "group rights" as supposed alternative thereto, plus with time running out in 1994 (since the NP could hardly afford another white election later that year), we now know to our sorrow that far too little attention was given to a constitutional "third way" – one indeed protecting the rights of the individual, but also countering majority excesses by:

- Ensuring a strict separation of powers between the three branches of government (legislature, executive and judiciary) primarily by means of directly electing the president;
- devolving and decentralising power as much as possible, to the lowest possible level, as close as possible to the people (in other words, empowering provincial and local government as much as possible, through a non-Eurocentric constitution tailored to our African reality); and
- configuring the constitution in such a way that it would facilitate coalition government such as in Governments of National Unity, which is something that a Westminster-style model is not ideal for (because of its tradition of differentiating the role of government and that of opposition; meaning that, in our current Westminster-style constitution, we have the untenable situation that – in a coalition cabinet such as the first GNU and now again the present one, it is expected of the leader of the second strongest party to simultaneously be both the leader of the official opposition criticising the government, and then a senior member of the cabinet forming that self-same government, and thus subject to the cabinet conventions on abiding by cabinet decisions).

Ironically, many liberal whites now realise that there should have been an equally strong focus (as had been placed on individual and property rights), on ensuring a proper division between the legislative, judicial, and executive branches by providing for the direct election of the president (in which case Zuma certainly would not have become president). Plus, on crafting a constitution that would truly have devolved powers down to the very lowest possible level (not just ineffectual lip service to the concept, as in the current constitution), as well as the decentralisation of the institutions of state power such as the police, education, health care and the like to be locally controlled by maximally empowered neighbourhoods, municipalities, districts and provinces – with many such cultural responsibilities that could have been devolved to groups on the basis of freedom of association rather than territorial definition, especially given the cyber-world we now live in.

Definitely not handed on a platter to a dominant central government in Pretoria which is directed by the majority faction within a majority party that's itself composed of and electorally beholden to a racially defined demographic majority...

Equally ironically, there are still many on the white right who still cling to the notion of "group rights" and a Volkstaat – even though the provisions included in the current constitution three decades ago to explore these ideas, have to date not been effectively made use of, and despite the reality that there still is no general consensus on how group composition should be defined (i.e., as encompassing all "whites", or otherwise as all Afrikaans-speakers

irrespective of colour, or as just exclusively as Afrikaans-speakers whose skin colour can pass as “white”?). Nor is there any consensus on where a *Volkstaat* could conceivably be located, accessible to whom?

These are the kind of practical lessons about what caused us to find ourselves where we now are, that I would like to highlight in my discourse – not to turn the clock back (which obviously cannot be done) or engage in party politics, but for the sake of being properly prepared for the likely quite challenging **future**. Because it is – in my humble opinion – highly likely that further electoral setbacks lie ahead for the ANC, without the DA however showing any real growth that coul conceivably make it an alternate government.

A near future in which the Ramaphosa faction of the ANC and their 2024 decision to enter into a GNU with the “moderate” parties at the supposed behest of “white capital” will then be finally sidelined within what remains of the ANC – which – in any event – will need to elect a new leader...

Which will then very possibly lead to ungovernability (through no-one being able to put together a workable governing majority in parliament), or to the formation of a new governing coalition – this time, however, between the remaining radicalised ANCs, EFF and MKP, aimed at “restoring” the ANC of old with its earlier near two-thirds majority. Which will then, with these “radical economic transformers” and advocates of a “national democratic revolution” in charge of all the levers of government, demonstrate what a pity it is that the negotiation process of 1992-1994 did not result in better separation of the judicial, legislative and executive powers and the decentralisation and maximum devolution of functions to the lowest possible level…

This “campfire talk” of mine will try and explain why the negotiations and the resultant constitution, whilst widely lauded and generally good, had not resulted in an optimal model (said with the benefit of hindsight, due to challenges emerging that were not foreseen back then). Explaining that this was essentially due to a focus on unrealistic aspirations by many participants in the then negotiations, and to a fixation with high-sounding liberal legal theory, rather than on the practical realities of acquiring and exercising political power (again, being easy to identify now with the benefit of hind-sight, and with me stating it here not being meant to denigrate the truly exceptional efforts of those who back then had succeeded in moving South Africa from the path of war to a state of peace).

Perhaps, though, the next general election will deliver a victory not to the radical coalition outlined above, but to one that could favour taking an objective fresh look at improving the current constitution – so that me reviewing the “errors” of 1990 – 1994 is not strictly an academic exercise of the “what if” kind, but may then have definite practical learning value…

That said, I need to revert now to explaining further how this third part of my series will differ from the previous two.

As stated, I **won’t** be focusing here on my own personal exploits during the period covered (when I was for the most part a diplomat). However, it should please be understood that that is not due to nothing much of interest having happened to me during that time.

Far from it!

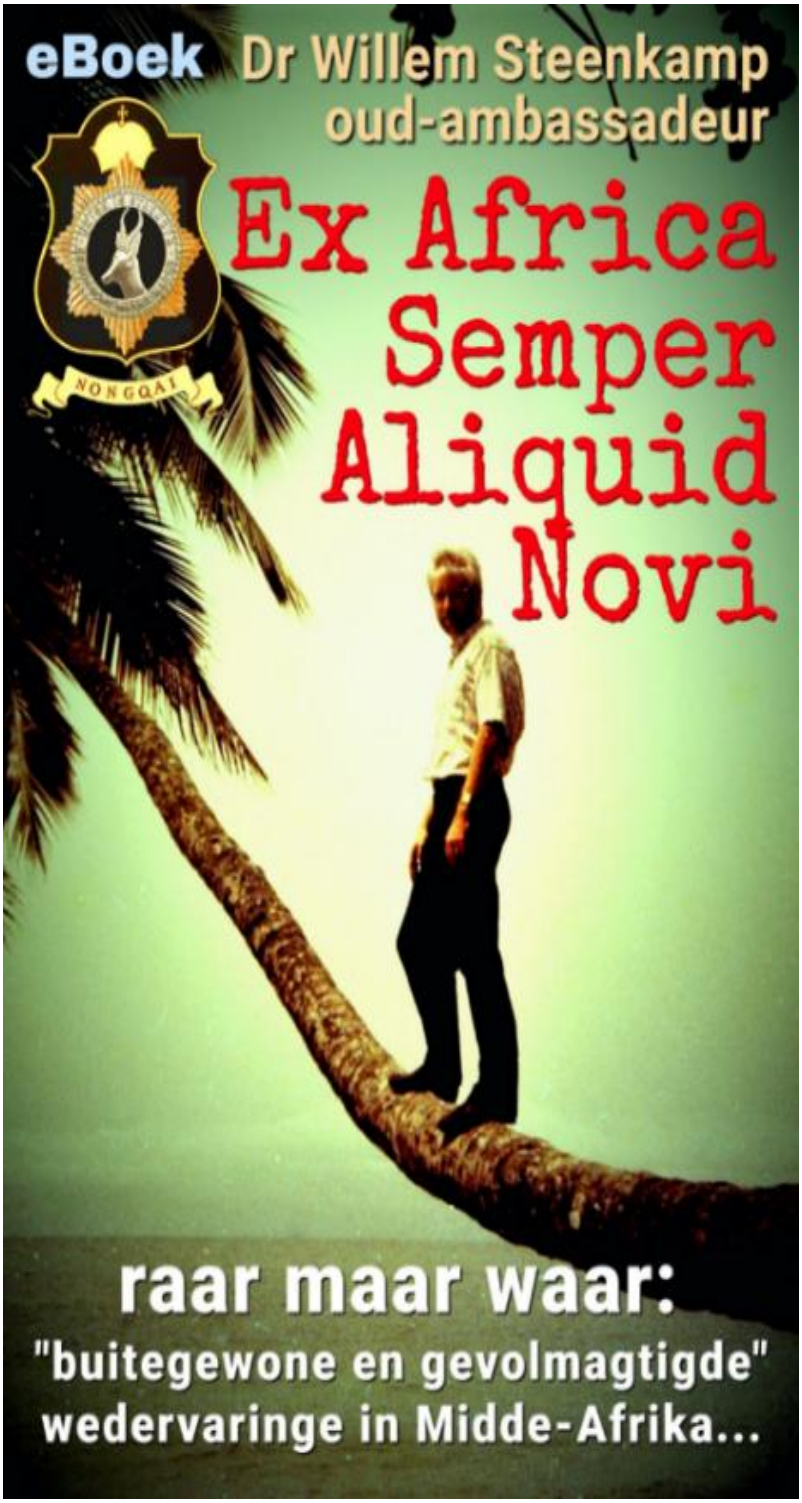
Especially during my term as the New South Africa’s first ambassador to previously hostile Black Africa, where I was based right on the equator in Libreville, Gabon, in tropical West-Central Africa with six diverse countries in my bailiwick – Gabon, Tchad, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome & Principe. (A diplomatic breakthrough that was important in January 1993, because it showed the ANC that they could not take the support of Africa for granted).

However, I’ve already shared many of those anecdotes and tall tales of extraordinary and plenipotentiary happenings with ***NONGQAI’s*** readers, serialised in this magazine and available as a ***NONGQAI*** e-book. I therefore don’t wish to bore you by repeating all of that here again.

That series about my ambassadorial experiences in Africa is available in our archive. You can download it as an e-Book by clicking on this link:

## Ex Africa semper aliquid novi

(Please allow time for it to download and be sure to have an e-pub reader installed – they're free).




To help readers better understand the organizational structure and content of this Part Three of my "campfire chat" series, the ***Table of Contents*** starting on the next page outlines what is to come.

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# 1.3 MY BACKGROUND AND UNIQUE VANTAGE POINTS AS OBSERVER

Readers may wonder about the confluence of circumstances that provided me with multi-faceted professional training and experience, as well as academic background plus some rather unique vantage points from which to have observed and now interpret the goings-on in our national security and intelligence spheres during the years

in question (i.e., from the middle seventies through to the first half of the nineties). In short, it was thanks to my years in the NIS, then subsequently my time as diplomat (1st Secretary in Paris, then Head of Diplomatic Training, followed by having been the New South Africa's first ambassador to previously hostile Black Africa). In addition to my stints in intelligence and diplomacy, there were also my years in legal practice as attorney of the High Court, my years in the private sector as entrepreneur, plus my doctorate in Political Science (with thesis focused on the intelligence function). And, of course, much time in conversation with my late father (a former commanding general of the Security Branch of the SA Police), as well as my years volunteering as co-editor of ***NONGQAI***, (the South African Forces history magazine), during which latter labour of love, quite a bit of what had before been hidden has lately been shared with me by eyewitnesses…

These distinct angles have all allowed me to observe what was really going on, policy-wise, within the South African security/intelligence establishment immediately before, during and directly after that period which my colleague Brigadier Hennie Heymans and I here at ***NONGQAI*** have come to call the "lost decade" (the ten year reign of PW Botha, after the 1978 coup that so narrowly won him the premiership) and the period of stagnation from 1975 – 1978 that had preceded it.

I saw how the individual strategies followed by that sequence of governments had very fundamentally changed – from seeking to "settle" under Vorster, to preparing to "shoot" under Botha, and then back again to "settle" under FW de Klerk. The hazard of circumstance that had afforded me these multiple vantage points for observing what had occurred and to analyse and interpret it all from an intelligence, legal, diplomatic and security perspective (with later a private sector business outlook thrown in as well) allowed me to see things from different institutional angles (such as from the NIS, Foreign Affairs and the SAP-SB, plus the private sector and academia; thus, a broad spectrum unlike what most former members of the intel-community had been limited to, who typically experienced those years from within just one institutional "silo").

As explained in detail in Part Two of the series I had the opportunity to debate at high level with military colleagues their threat assumptions and strategic analysis when I headed the SWA/Namibia section at the BfSS/NIS. Then, my scope broadened to encompass the entire intelligence picture, due to having served as secretary to the KIK (Coordinating Intelligence Committee) as well as having been the conceptual designer of the computerized system of production of NIS reports, which had included setting up and helping head the central editorial division "N.11" of the Service (where I had to edit inputs from all divisions for eventual dissemination as the daily NIFS, the National Intelligence Flashes and Sketches, to top policymakers, thus covering the entire intelligence picture in all its dimensions).

Furthermore, I also experienced the SAP-SB viewpoint through my very close relationship with my late father. Followed by then getting acquainted first hand with the international dimension, i.a. through having headed the diplomatic academy and serving as ambassador. Plus, of course, my dual academic training as lawyer and as political scientist.

Lastly, but definitely not least, thanks also to all that I had subsequently come to learn first-hand from key original sources, in my latter-day capacity as co-editor of the ***Nongqai***.

Because of considerations of length, I will of necessity be focusing in this part on the big picture – on what I've learnt about what had underpinned the key decision-making at the decisive moments during the wasted years of 1975 – 1989, and then, the negotiations and transition. In other words, trying to cast light on the fundamentals, rather than primarily on regaling you here with anecdotes about my personal experiences (an account of the latter being available in e-book form, as said above).

## 1.4 THE KEY OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS TO BE PUT FORWARD

I'm now going to provide you as reader, up front, with a brief "heads up" in which I will set out the gist of my personal theories about the principal why's and wherefores behind that which had shaped our recent history. I'm doing it here, at the outset, so that you can start testing the validity of my thinking for yourself as you work your way through my story (and not have to wait to the Conclusions at the very end to know what I'll be getting at). In

other words, a short synopsis of my key points of focus and hypotheses that I will be presenting in much greater detail as I try to explain how we got from where we were, to where we are today.

In this Part Three of my contribution to ***NONGQAI***'s series in the style of fireside chats called "*The Men Speak*" I will be principally covering the forementioned four distinct phases (during which the pendulum swung back and forth on strategic goals) that marked the period from John Vorster's détente outreach of the early seventies, through the "lost decade" under PW Botha and the transformation under FW de Klerk, to the once-mighty National Party's decision in 2005 to merge with the ANC, and then to disband itself.

## 1.4.1. THE WASTED YEARS BETWEEN 1975 AND 1989

An essential platform for understanding the eventual **negotiations** (which latter, in itself, will of course form a significant part of my tale) will be knowing what actually had been going on during the **preceding wasted years** under John Vorster and PW Botha. Therefore, before getting to the negotiations and transition, I will discuss this historic platform that provided the context for the negotiations. I will describe and analyse that era here as I (from my angles of observation), came to know and understand it. Which will of necessity include reference back to the Vorster era and the inglorious demise of that regime, because it had in significant ways seen patterns of dubious political behaviour emerge that would bedevil the national decision-making process for years to come. The Vorster and PW Botha eras formed two intertwined phases of our national story, which had in common severe discord and dysfunction, lamentable "own goals" as well as unrealistic "fever dreams", culminating in the fatally deficient strategies under PW Botha. Which had as consequence that the De Klerk government was left with no other choice but to urgently initiate negotiations to settle, and having to do so from a seriously weakened bargaining position.

Fact is, "white" South Africa was by 1990 "the last one standing" of the world's colonial relics when that crucial third phase that I referred to (i.e., negotiations/transition) inevitably dawned. Also, the myth that military superiority was going to be decisive had by then already been rudely exposed as being without substance or strategic relevance (just as had occurred in the likes of Vietnam, Algeria, Iraq and Afghanistan). More so, in our case – that the huge emphasis on the military and the scarce resources lavishly dedicated to it under PW Botha had actually worked counter-productively, in terms of the true longer-term strategic interests of the white electorate.

### *1.4.1.1 The necessary groundwork in preparation of negotiations had not been done*

Most crucially, we then entered the historically unavoidable negotiation process (inevitable, because the only alternative would have been all-out race war, to whatever finish that would have resulted in). What then stood starkly exposed was the hard reality that the essential political groundwork for negotiations had not been done beforehand (such as nurturing allies, building alliances and having set up an own capacity to engage in counter-propaganda – the latter being critical to besting a propaganda-driven political onslaught such as the ANC had expertly mounted). As regards the negotiation dimension, effective negotiation strategies had not been developed beforehand, nor leverage identified and developed, or clear goals pre-defined as to what outcomes should be strived for.

All thanks to PW Botha's strategic choice to prepare for a shooting match, rather than for negotiations – because he had correctly understood that negotiation would of necessity require compromise on that which he was absolutely unwilling to consider compromising, namely giving up the white monopoly on political power (being willing to rather "go down *hardegat*" than to compromise).

Equally grave was that an expert team of political negotiators had not been built up till around 1992, with expertise from Afrikaner civil society remaining excluded right through the negotiation process. As I will show, it was only thanks to the involvement of highly competent senior civil servants from particularly the NIS (National Intelligence Service) and the CDP (Department of Constitutional Development and Planning) that the negotiations were facilitated from start to finish, keeping it on track when it frequently threatened to derail. The governing NP had not kept separate the two distinct functions of, on the one hand, governing the country and on the other, representing the interests of its own constituency at the negotiation table (the top NP political echelon tried to handle both functions themselves at the same time, gifting its opponents and their expert propaganda machine, ample opportunities for alleging "cross-contamination", whilst on the other hand leading to Afrikaner interests not being represented by the most experienced negotiators that could dedicate themselves solely to that).

Nor had the NP established, in timely manner, a dedicated, high-powered team of political operatives to focus on the most predictable and decisive of real-world challenges that could and should have been foreseen – namely, that of preparing for the upcoming **contest for political power** that would soon culminate at the ballot box, in the form of the first non-racial election (i.e., essential preparations such as urgently building alliances and reaching out effectively to a new electorate across the erstwhile colour barriers).

Perhaps most limiting, was that the NP had not developed counters for the ANC's two main weapons. These were, inside the country, its "peoples war", which the ANC used to build black majority support around itself and which provided it with the threat of initiating "rolling mass action", and externally, the ANC's standing in the eyes of the international community, the West included, as the inevitable new government – which gave the ANC the absolute leverage of being able to "walk away" without consequence for itself, blaming the NP for any and every hiccup. This latter weapon, together with "rolling mass action" was something that the NP Government knew by 1992 already, that – if truly used – would have left white South Africa in a far worse position than even that which had prevailed before De Klerk's 2 February 1990 speech.

In brief, the NP under FW de Klerk had (of necessity and quite bravely) got onto the back of a tiger – which it had not prepared itself properly how to ride, nor how to safely get off from…

With so much that was lacking, it could thus hardly have been expected that a **perfect** outcome to the settlement process and contest for power would result (from the NP perspective, that is). However, saying that there were errors made and that perfection was not achieved, does not mean that what was actually accomplished – peace, the rehabilitation of the image of the Afrikaner, and protection of individual and property rights – didn't by themselves constitute a near miracle, given the circumstances and the weak hand that the De Klerk team had inherited.

The reality of the preceding wasted years that had determined the De Klerk government's bargaining power (or rather, lack of it) was that it had indeed seen us win the individual small kinetic skirmishes that had occurred during the "armed struggle". However, because the armed struggle had never had any relevance in military terms (it was in fact armed propaganda, i.e., **politics** conducted psychologically, in part by coercion) we still decisively lost the ultimate contest – i.e., for a meaningful share in the future exercise of political power.

However, we (the security/intelligence community) certainly did ensure – crucially – that the ANC/SAP-alliance's initial aim of a constitutional model based on a Marxist "people's republic" was abandoned by them, in favour of the Western-style, capitalist model we had favoured. Of equal importance is that our successes had forced them to accept that they would not be able to gain power through armed revolutionary means and that, perforce, they therefore had to participate in negotiations. And, last but not least, even whilst kept "up the sleave" of the government negotiators and not played overtly, the well-known capabilities of the security forces psychologically served as a decisive latent "persuader" enabling the moderate faction in the ANC to keep the more extravagant demands of their radical faction in check.

### 1.4.2 THE "WHY" OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED – OR, OFTEN, HAD BEEN LEFT UNDONE…

Even more important than the **WHAT** and **HOW** of the events covered in this Part Three, is the **WHY**. Such as: what were the motivations and reasoning, plus the goals (mostly not publicly articulated) that actually had dominated strategic decision-making during the PW Botha and subsequently the FW de Klerk eras? What had really been going on, during the "lost decade", inside what had during that time become the true, behind the scenes guiding force on strategy – namely, the "state within a state" that the securocracy had become under PW Botha? (in other words, as opposed to the public debates about ideology and party policy – such as "verlig" versus "verkramp" – that had then superficially predominated in the media, civil society, and the party-political spheres).

Why were certain key decisions taken? What role did personalities play, their ambitions, threat assumptions, as well as counsel from international advisers? What you as reader will see emerge as a key hypothesis as my story unfolds, is that – **contrary** to public perceptions about a monolithic, well-drilled, like-minded machine marching in lock-step – there in reality existed, on the government side in especially the security/intelligence sphere, a highly dysfunctional decision-making system riven by discord and devious ploys under PW Botha.

What were the consequences? Inevitably, a dysfunctional security/intelligence establishment marked by fragmentation, diametrically opposing viewpoints on strategy, un-coordinated independent actions often at cross-purposes, and afflicted by a growing disregard for respecting the rule of law. Such a dysfunctional security/intelligence subsystem wasn't an ideal instrument for facilitating optimal decision-making by the political system at a critical time, as for example shown by the disastrous "own goals" that piled up...

National governmental decision-making was debilitated by the attempts to force it into **groupthink** under PW Botha, where the traditional role of the cabinet was watered down almost to insignificance and dissenting critical thinking was not tolerated. In place of a proper system of deliberative, collegial decision-making informed by objective intelligence and critical thinking, there existed abrasively arrogant, autocratic one-man rule founded on bullying intimidation, rather than on persuasion.

PW the autocrat and his like-minded faction within the military did not correctly understand the real threat environment. They also were wedded to their own interpretations of the theories expounded by their favoured foreign "theoreticians on strategy" as to how the country's undoubtedly complex challenges could supposedly best be resolved. Consequently, a situation was reached where this "total onslaught" faction embedded in part of the military, came to dominate against the opposing **pro-settle** positions taken by the NIS, Foreign Affairs, Constitutional Development – actually, the whole of the civilian Public Service – plus Afrikaner academia and even the Broederbond and the Church, who had all by the middle of the eighties already understood full well the need for a fundamentally new constitutional dispensation, to be arrived at through inclusive negotiation.

### 1.4.3 THE CONSEQUENCES

All of the foregoing had greatly weakened the De Klerk government's eventual bargaining position, through:

- severe preceding loss of credibility (with the white government's *bona fides* not trusted),
- loss of psychological deterrence (through exposure of its relative military and financial weaknesses),
- dangerously sharpened international isolation,
- a deep racial polarisation of South African society,
- radicalisation of opposition to the government,
- the deep political division of the Afrikaner, and
- the PW Botha government's incremental "reforms" being seen by its opponents as cosmetic concessions wrung from it under pressure, and thus as a sign of weakness (all because of Botha stubbornly refusing to accept that the **negotiation** of an entirely new constitutional dispensation on the basis of starting on a clean slate, was both essential and unavoidable).

### 1.4.4 IS IT DISLOYAL TO "THE TEAM" TO ANALYSE HOW OUR OWN ERRORS HARMED US?

I comprehend perfectly well that many will see this analysis as a form of disloyalty on my part against "the team".

As me washing our dirty linen in public…

To which my response is two-fold: firstly, we owe our children the unvarnished historical reality, so that we as a people can learn from our past, truthfully told, and not make the same mistakes again. Secondly: I understand perfectly that those who identified back then with the PW Botha "team" (and many obviously still do) will not regard positively my critical yet factual observations about the damage caused by the dysfunction and strategic errors as well as "own goals" conceded under the stewardship of "Team PW".

However, isn't the other "team" (those who believed, like BJ Vorster and FW de Klerk, that strategy needed to be focused on preparing for and achieving a negotiated peace settlement) entitled to the same respect?

Which, unfortunately, was not accorded to Vorster, Lang Hendrik van den Bergh and Eschel Rhoodie, whose real views have been warped and denigrated, leaving them practically written out of history – with the same now manifesting regarding FW de Klerk and Roelf Meyer, who are increasingly being portrayed as "sell-outs" and even "traitors" with little regard for reality or fact, and based on all kinds of erroneous innuendo about De Klerk's private life, for example.

It should also be kept in mind that, from both the perspectives of an academic and an intelligence analyst (and I am both) it is necessary and obligatory – for learning purposes – to look critically at history. Not to burnish the image of this or that person or institution, but to objectively analyse and interpret the why's and wherefores of the outcomes that historical events produced. Otherwise, we will learn nothing…

Of course we do this with the benefit of hindsight. It is always easy to be clever after the fact – that I roundly admit. The insights that I now hold, I definitely didn't possess in this now organised and contextualised manner, at the height of that very complex and challenging era. So that I have great empathy for all who had done the best they could, by the necessarily limited light they then had. But that does not mean that now, three decades on, we should – out of deference – not be objective and critical, calling a spade a spade, so that our children can learn form our mistakes.

Disclaimer: I wish to state up front that I personally always had identified with and supported the "settle" approach, believing that an inclusively negotiated peace accord and resultant constitution for a new fully democratic, non-racial South Africa was the best – the only – strategic option, given the pressing realities we faced. And I believed then, and still do, that the likes of Van den Bergh and Rhoodie had a far better understanding of the threat, as well as clearer vision of workable strategy, than had those who replaced them after the bloodless coup that brought PW Botha and the "total onslaught" brigade to power.

This I say based in large part on the litany of needless, hugely damaging own goals subsequently scored by our own side under PW Botha. Own goals conceded by the "fever dreamers" who had supplanted the Vorster team after one of the most flagrant pieces of political treachery in our history – the backstabbing "lawfare" against Vorster, Van den Bergh, Dr Connie Mulder, and Eschel Rhoodie that was spin-fed to a gullible public by the establishment media of the era, as directed by PW Botha. The so-called "Info Scandal" followed by "Muldergate" (remembering that no social media then existed, so that the English and Afrikaans establishment media – who had motive to cooperate on this subject – had had the field entirely to themselves; more about that later...).

So, to those who still today emotionally identify with the PW Botha camp – whilst I respect your right to your views, I can only say: please don't cry "disloyalty" when I and others like me today reflect negatively on the ego-driven shenanigans of the leaders of PW-Pik coup, as well as on their limited comprehension of reality, and their poor decision-making and the dysfunction and illegalities over which they presided. The unvarnished truth about that sorry part of our history needs to be recorded now, because future generations deserve to know what had really happened. What was it that had caused our already meagre bargaining chips to have been squandered away, thus dropping us into where we are today…

Exposing that leadership cabal is **NOT** an attack on the broader SADF or on the sacrifices and fighting abilities of our troops and commanders in the field, for whom I have the greatest respect and appreciation.

### 1.4.5 KEY ASPECTS OF THE NEGOTIATION / TRANSITION PHASE TO BE COVERED

Turning now to the core conclusions about the negotiation phase (which I will be expanding upon in the second half of my story) it is notable that there again were two main strategic goals that served as options for Afrikaner leadership to choose between. Just as during the lost decades when there was conflicted thinking as to whether to prepare to shoot or to negotiate, when at last negotiation had been accepted as both inevitable and desirable, there were again two mutually exclusive goals that could be pursued: insisting on a constitutional model based upon **group rights**, or accepting that **Peace** had to be the overriding goal. As the talks caused the realities of the power balance to sink in, by 1992 the New Nats had realised that pursuing a Group Rights model was incompatible with the pursuit of Peace – which eventually led them to the inevitable acceptance of a model based on majority rule (I will be explaining the reasons why Group Rights were incompatible with pursuing peace in detail in the second half of my story).

Similar to the earlier issue of shoot vs negotiate, the inter-relationship between Group Rights and Peace weren't options confronting only those involved in Afrikaner politics – just as the ANC/SACP itself also had earlier to face essentially the same choice between shoot and negotiate, when they had to choose between trying to take over the country by force of arms (and thereby gain the whole cake, if successful) or opt for negotiation (and the

compromises that it would of necessity require), the ANC also once again had to choose, at the end of the negotiations, between Peace and some ostensible accommodation of the notion of Group Rights in the constitution (referring here to the last-minute concessions made to the COSAG group, particularly the IFP and Volksfront, to allow them the political cover they needed to participate in the 1994 election, thereby preserving peace).

In other words, the key strategic choices that had vexed Afrikaner decision-makers from Vorster onwards, also had confronted the ANC – negotiate or shoot, as well as the conundrum over Peace and Group Rights.

In reality, though, because negotiations are about both give and take, there always were only two significant parties to the real negotiations, namely the NP Government and the ANC. Because they were the only two parties who could actually **give** something that the other one wanted (or withhold it). The NP could agree (or not) to peacefully hand over to the ANC the political power that the latter craved above all else – but which they could not hope to gain militarily. Whereas a deal acceptable to the ANC would in turn give the NP Government the peace they had realised the country needed, plus the rehabilitation of image and guarantees fr individual and property rights they had wanted.

The VF & IFP had nothing to give, but they very much could act as spoilers – they could wreck the peace by threatening violence (even a coup) if their demands were not sufficiently accommodated. Thus, the inter-connectivity between Group Rights and Peace taxed not only the NP Government but also the ANC, who knew that they themselves as new government would be extremely vulnerable in the period immediately after the hand-over of power to them (when a coup would have been very difficult for them to handle). Therefore, the ANC in the end chose to (ostensibly) compromise on Group Rights for the sake of a pledge of peace from the potential spoilers.

Through both the NP Government and the ANC accepting the need to negotiate and then to make the pursuit of peace paramount there-in, the following dynamic came into play: the NP Government dangled before the ANC the prospect of governing, of handing over power despite the fact that the ANC had not won their armed struggle (not by a long shot!) which prospect induced the ANC not to do anything crazy that could ruin their chances of sliding quickly and comfortably into the pound seats. The ANC in turn dangled before the NP Government the prospect of peace, rehabilitation, and protection of individual and property rights, so that the NP would be amenable to handing over power and likewise not do anything crazy that could ruin such a deal (a deal that would in effect leave both parties equally unhappy, and thus could qualify as a win-win).

As regards the negotiation phase, my key observations which I will be detailing when we deal with that process, can thus be summed up here as follows, bullet-point wise (to be expanded upon as we progress):

- Among Afrikaners, there again were two strategic visions, particularly from 1992 onwards: those leaning right, who prioritised achieving a **group-based** constitutional dispensation, versus the "New Nat" led NP Government, who prioritised achieving **peace** as overriding objective, together with the rehabilitation of the Afrikaner's image plus protection of individual and property rights.
- Because the conflict over political power with the likes of the ANC/SACP was essentially political and not military in nature, the only possible way to achieve peace and stability was through inclusively negotiating a comprehensive peace settlement over an open agenda – it had been amply proven under PW Botha that peace could not be achieved through incremental, top-down enforced cosmetic changes to Apartheid whilst evidently attempting to maintain a white monopoly over political power.
- Once the New Nats became convinced of the need to negotiate (rather than try and keep on resisting the demands of the world and South Africa's huge non-white majority), the focus of necessity shifted to the question of **who to negotiate with**? (after all, it takes two to tango). The other party had to enjoy credibility and possess the ability to make stick any accord reached, thus able to bring the left-wing forces along with it – the only conceivable such credible interlocutor was the ANC/SACP/COSATU alliance under the charismatic leadership of Nelson Mandela.
- The demonstrable failure (in Namibia/Angola and in the townships) of the PW Botha securocrat era's strategy of top-down dictating cosmetic change whilst preparing to be able to win a shooting contest in order to protect white monopoly over political power, ironically served the beneficial purpose of disabusing

white South Africans in general of any notion that they could conceivably maintain a white monopoly over political power indefinitely by force of arms.

- The threat of a military coup attempted by the white right was nevertheless a very real risk, which could have turned disastrous if a large proportion of the security forces decided to support it (remembering that those security forces had shortly before still propounded the "total onslaught" fallacy and had in 1978 been part of what in effect had been an underhand palace coup that had brough PW Botha to power); it is in such light that the "night of the generals" and the pre-emptive dismantling of South Africa's nuclear, biological and chemical arsenal plus intercontinental ballistic missiles should be seen – as will be explained in detail later;
- Sanctions and isolation were imposing too high a price to pay in terms of economic risk, cost and inconvenience, whilst stigmatization of the white populace and Afrikaners in particular held an unacceptable risk of condemning the government's own people to international outcast status for generations; furthermore, continuing to rely on armed force to try and maintain a white monopoly on power and then losing, would truly have resulted in "going down hard-arsed" with then no bargaining chips left – that latter probability had therefore rightly come to be seen as the true existential threat facing the "Volk".
- The fall of the Berlin Wall and, shortly thereafter, of the USSR itself, had removed the "red threat" and further discredited the entire notion of a Marxist "people's republic" model, opening the door for sensible negotiations without the Cold War fear of Soviet expansionist ambitions (what I will also be touching on, is how Pretoria had in any event succeeded in turning Moscow's head around even before the fall of the Berlin Wall, leading for example to the USSR entering into a joint venture to develop and equip our aging Mirage fighter jets with re-designed MIG-29 engines).
- The biggest consequence of the fall of the Berlin Wall and then of the USSR itself, effectively ending the Cold War, was that it immediately took away any rationale for the West to continue supporting and protecting the white government as it had been doing under the table throughout the Cold War – it was clear that, henceforth, Western policy towards South Africa would be determined by their own internal political dynamics in which their non-white voting blocks were becoming increasingly influential; Reagan and Thatcher were no longer in charge, and one can easily imagine what a Clinton, Obama or Biden would have done, had FW de Klerk not chosen to initiate a negotiated settlement for a non-racial South Africa.
- As the negotiation process dragged on and faced one crisis after another (like Boipatong, Bisho, and the assassination of Chris Hani) time became ever more of the essence, not in the least because the old constitution would have required white elections in 1994 which the NP could not have been sure to win (if that old constitution had not, in time, been replaced by the new non-racial one).
- Two other, equally fundamental realities were making it essential to negotiate sooner rather than later – the one being inexorable demographic trends (born from falling white population growth due to the contraceptive pill and emigration, whilst non-white numbers grew due to better health care plus immigration from the rest of Africa) and the other, the historic reality that South Africa was by 1990 the last remaining white-governed former European colony ruling over a vast disenfranchised non-white majority, so that we found ourselves caught on the rail-track of time with the "locomotive" of history rushing down upon us…
- What was understood by the NP negotiators was the importance of the negotiation PROCESS as such, rather than getting stuck on with which specific policy wish list the negotiations were to be entered into – it would be the process that would work out the detail of the eventual outcome (through compromise that had garnered sufficient consensus around the negotiating table); thus it was the process that the white voters had supported in the whites-only referendum, rather than a specific policy platform or desired constitutional model (this harks back to Vorster's understanding – as proven in the SWA/Namibia whites-only referendum – that white voters would likely support a consensually agreed negotiated deal offering the prospect of peace without too much concern about its finer detail, so that the focus needed to be on maintaining the process that would bring forth such a deal, rather than on spending time and energy on divisive debate within white ranks about the limitless spectrum of possible models of constitutional configuration, 99% of which would not pass the test of consensual compromise anyway).
- It was in this sense that it was understood within the NP Government by 1992 that the "gut feel" wish for a new non-racial constitution to be based upon the amorphous notion of "Group Rights" was totally incompatible with achieving **peace**, because a "Group Rights" approach would never pass the test of consensual compromise – the entire notion of "Group Rights" had (rightly or wrongly) become too

contaminated by its association with the Apartheid legacy and with the hard-line positions taken by those proposing it, such as the AWB, IFP and VF, whilst it also suffered from fatal lack of definition (which groups, how composed, and *Volkstaat* for whom, where located); the fact that the broad segment of the population that had opposed the ANC/SACP had become so divided among themselves about the issue of pushing for "Group Rights" or not, had only served to weaken the anti-ANC forces around the negotiation table and to distract from other very important aspects of the new constitution that in the end had not received the time necessary to properly attend to them – such as amnesty, a directly-elected president (to ensure a proper division of the three branches of government), and devolution of governmental powers to the lowest level, and effective anti-corruption measures.

- What was increasingly understood at the time by the government's negotiators was that there would, in our complex composite society, in any event be a natural human tendency for political parties to be formed around group interests (as the past thirty years have in fact proven, with the plethora of parties we now have); however, what had not been sufficiently catered for in the retention of the essentially Westminster-style constitution anticipating a two-party system, is adaptation to make the model work for coalition government between such a range of interest-driven political parties – the new constitution could have been made much more apt for catering for the indirect promotion of "interest group rights" via political parties based on voluntary association, rather than on the divisive notion of constitutionally prescribed territorial and/or ethnic definition of groups that would have been lacking in clarity about its very basics.
- As regards to how the negotiation process itself had actually functioned, there exist today many misconceptions, with the public still associating it largely with the "talk shop" showcased at Kempton Park; the reality was that the negotiations were essentially bilateral, between the NP Government team and the ANC/SACP, in which the initiation and maintenance of the process had depended significantly on intelligence initiatives and expertise – the real negotiations were conducted away from the spotlight via what was broadly known as "The Channel", with the actual government negotiation team consisting of a relatively small core group of politicians with the support of expert civil servants (in which Intelligence and the Dept. of Constitutional Development and Planning played a leading role, together with government lawyers).
- The manner in which the bilateral negotiation process between the NP and ANC functioned, can be summarised as follows:
    - at its pinnacle stood the two "Principals", being FW de Klerk and Nelson Mandela, who had to finally sign off on proposals and resolve disputes that could not be settled lower down the chain;
    - below the two Principals were "The Channel" proper, being Roelf Meyer and Cyril Ramaphosa, who were mandated to keep the process going and reach preliminary consensus on key issues;
    - Below Meyer and Ramaphosa existed the "Extended Channel" consisting of working groups who debated issues and formulated agreed principles and options for presentation to Roelf & Cyril – on the government side the teams participating in these working groups were mostly led by a select handful of key ministers entrusted by FW de Klerk with participating in the negotiations such as Leon Wessels and Dawie de Villiers, together with top officials drawn from Intelligence as well as Constitutional and Legal backgrounds whilst on the ANC/SACP side it consisted of top alliance functionaries and expert advisers drawn from civil society (on the government side, a key step was when the NIS DG Dr Niël Barnard was transferred in 1992 to head the CDP and took with him a number of NIS experts);
    - Below the "Extended Channel" laboured the "Drafters" who between them, working in tandem, crafted the agreed principles into draft laws such as on the TEC and the interim constitution (legal experts, such as on government side adv Jan Heunis & prof Fanie Venter, and on ANC side the likes of Fink Haysom and Arthur Chaskelson);
    - A key component can be called the "Problem Resolvers" (Fanie van der Merwe and Mac Maharaj, to whom sticking points arising at the working level were referred for resolution, and who in practice made an enormous contribution to keeping the show on the road);
    - Another key component were the "Pursuaders" who were tasked with engaging with and keeping the left and right-wing extremes on board (Niël Barnard for liaising with the far right and Joe Slovo with the far left) who were mainly responsible for the outreach to keep these respective forces in check, reasonable, and finally - constructively engaged with the peace process.

- The Intelligence Service and Constitutional Development played a very significant role in getting the negotiations started and keeping it on track, with the NIS responsible for the initial outreach and organisation of the early phase of return of exiles and preparation for the start of negotiations (which were jointly planned in NIS safe houses), and with the key "re-connect" meeting between Cyril Ramaphosa and Roelf Meyer (after negotiations had broken down) for example having taken place on the secluded campus of the National Intelligence Academy east of Pretoria; the NIS also became pivotal in keeping President De Klerk apprised of the evolving intelligence picture regarding threats from both the left and the right, such as the ANC/SACP's "Operation Vula" (which had been deeply penetrated since its inception) and threats of a *coup de état* from the right, including elements associated with the security forces.
- It is notable how quickly the venerable National Party unravelled after 1994, once it no longer could count on the expert institutional input it had become accustomed to derive from the Civil Service.
- The loss of political power not only hugely impacted the NP, but also Afrikaner institutions across the board, such as the Church, Broederbond, and the Civil Service as traditional career launch platform / secure employment for Afrikaners.
- FW de Klerk expertly managed his party and cabinet, thereby allowing the designated negotiators the necessary leeway to reach consensus with the ANC/SACP and ensuring that key consensual positions agreed at the negotiation table not be derailed by conservative elements in the cabinet and party.
- To properly understand the actions of individual participants on the government side (such as minister Kobie Coetsee's lack of action on amnesty) one should apply "rational actor" theory rather than seeking answers in conspiracies and salacious rumours – what this theory simply means, is that humans tend to always "look out for Number One", to do what would best serve their own personal self-interest; this is what we will apply to explain what lay behind, for example, what had gone wrong with the issue of a general amnesty.
- The currently circulating conspiracy theory that FW de Klerk's eventual second wife Elita had influenced FW's decisions as president during the negotiations is utter nonsense.
- Key to comprehending the negotiation process and its outcome, is to understand that the Afrikaner government had over decades of wrong strategic options and lethargy allowed itself to end up in a situation where – when negotiations finally started – the ANC enjoyed the power of veto over the negotiation process (thanks to its overwhelming international and internal support), this, together with the global trends and tides of the times regarding racism and democracy, ensured that majority rule became inevitable, if peace was to be achieved.
- There were indeed many errors on the government side during the negotiation process – the ground had not been properly prepared; there was no clearly agreed plan with no theoretical understanding (in terms of the basic principles of negotiation theory) of what needed to be prioritised to enhance leverage; there was no unity among either the cabinet, the Afrikaners or whites in general; there was a lack of focus and preparation for contesting effectively for political power in the first non-racial elections; the negotiation team could arguably have been stronger if Afrikaner civil society had been drawn in; key constitutional issues had not been settled in time before the elections and the interim constitution itself could arguably have been better) but nevertheless, the main objective of restoring peace was achieved, the image of the Afrikaner was rehabilitated with international isolation ended, and individual as well as property rights were guaranteed in a constitution based on Western liberal democratic and free market principles – not a Marxist people's republic.
- More than the "errors" listed above, or alleged "weakness" as negotiators (Roelf Meyer and FW de Klerk), the true challenge had been the historical legacy that the NP negotiators had to try and overcome – the true weakness was the feeble hand they held to play.
- To suggest that involving directly the security forces in that process, overtly playing the supposed trump card of the government's ability to still project overwhelming physical force, is wishful thinking at best, and a hugely dangerous risking of the entire process at worst, which could have caused the situation to collapse back into a worse scenario of isolation, mass action, and stronger international punitive measures than even before – the best option had clearly been to keep the reality of force "up the sleeve" as fall-back, because the other parties had obviously known about it well enough, without any need to brandish it.
- It has to be concluded that the likes of FW de Klerk, Roelf Meyer, Leon Wessels and Dawie de Villiers, plus Fanie van der Merwe, Niël Barnard, Fanie Venter and adv Jan Heunis were heroes rather than traitors,

given the obstacles (created by legacy) that they had to overcome to achieve what they did, and the absolutely dire consequences that would have resulted had they failed – what would our situation likely have been today if they had not (belatedly) started negotiations when they did, or had failed to conclude a peace deal that the world rightly regarded as a miracle?

- Credit needs also to be given to the moderate leadership in the ANC/SACP that they at last had understood that they could not conceivably win a revolutionary armed struggle and overthrow the white state by force and thus had to negotiate and compromise; it was also astute on their part to comprehend, when towards the end of the process everything was quite precariously balanced, that including provisions for potentially having to recognise Group Rights and even a *Volkstaat* in the interim constitution (in order to provide political cover for the likes of the IFP and VF to participate in the elections) would in practice prove to be of no consequence, because no-one would concretely and substantively take up these provisions due to the simple reality that after three decades there has been no progress made by proponents of such rights to actually define either what and who such groups should consist of, or of where such a *Volkstaat* conceivably could be located, to be accessible to whom?
- What both the NP and ANC/SACP had finally come to understand was that it was precisely their most cherished policy platforms (Apartheid / people's republic) that were exactly what the other side feared most and would fight against to the end; they also both came to understand that force of arms would in any case not gain them the possibility of imposing/maintaining those original political platforms of theirs – thus, negotiating an entirely new dispensation in the course of which compromise was inevitable, was the only way of each gaining through peace what they fundamentally most wanted: on the part of the ANC/SACP, gaining political power, and on the part of the NP, rehabilitation of the Afrikaner's image and guarantees for individual and property rights within the framework of a Western-style democratic free-market system functioning as a "regstaat" (state where the law rules supreme).

### 1.4.6 KEY ASPECTS OF THE POST-TRANSITION PHASE

As regards **the phase post-1996**, these are some of the key assessments that I'll be putting forward:

- Current political reality is increasingly vindicating what the New Nats had foreseen - namely, that group interests would in practice not be best served by inclusion of theoretical undefinable group rights in the constitution, but rather that human nature itself would lead to the increasing emergence of political parties identified with specific interest groups (this has been why the DA has not gone up in support, in sync with the ANC going down). This tendency of splintering into parties largely representing interest groups may in future of necessity – to gain a parliamentary majority – lead to new alliances or coalitions that may not form around the political middle ground, but (perilously) among the radical left within the ANC + EFF + MKP and their like.
- Regarding the original GNU and subsequently Thabo Mbeki's appeal for white voter support in order to keep the Zuma faction out, what most whites had not fully appreciated was that the real deciding factor regarding who would govern the country was not which party nominally held a parliamentary majority, but rather which faction within the ANC would appoint the president? It was not sufficiently understood that it had been absolutely imperative to support the ANC moderates – doing so as the destiny-bound partners that Mandela had sought – and not to merely fall back on the knee-jerk option of acting as official opposition to the ANC when the latter was under moderate control.
- The current GNU is once again faced with the same dilemmas that had faced FW in the first GNU – how to be simultaneously part of a coalition cabinet and be leader of the official opposition (in respect of, for example, key issues such as BEE and NHI). That the need for coalition government would increasingly arise was not properly catered for in the 1996 Westminster-style constitution, and will become more acute in future as political parties increasingly will form around and represent group interests – where the interests of the "haves" and "have nots" in our complex society (still largely race-based) will for the foreseeable future still be materially opposed.
- The fact that provision for the possibility of recognition for Group Rights based institutions and a *Volkstaat* (subject to proven viability and sufficient public support) have been in the constitution for more than three decades but as yet there has not been any concerted and effective attempt of any self-perceived "group" to avail themselves of these rights, is proof that this matter was in terms of the hard reality of practical politics no more than yet another "fever dream" that unfortunately had seriously split and thus weakened

Afrikaner representation at the peace talks, as well as having split what would have been a natural alliance between the NP, Inkatha and traditionalist forces – seriously weakening the bargaining power of them all at the negotiation table (if they instead had been united in focusing on what we now know would emerge as the real problematic constitutional issues, namely the conflation of executive and legislature in terms of the Westminster model and the over-centralisation of power, then – if not distracted by the GR "red herring" – the forces to the right of the ANC would have had time and negotiating power to push more effectively for the timely finalisation of a directly-elected president, for more decentralisation and devolution of power, and for a general amnesty). The GR debate had eaten up valuable time, which resulted in important issues such as the form of presidency and amnesty not being properly finalised. It had also divided natural allies, whilst in truth it never held any real potential for practical implementation due to the demographic and economic realities of Southern Africa and the intrinsic impossibility to give definition to either “group” or “*Volkstaat*” in a manner that would satisfy even a bare minimum of those who involve themselves with these notions. (To illustrate: what the Zulu king had demanded as the sovereign Zulu state he claimed, were the entire KwaZulu-Natal, the north-eastern Free State, south-eastern Transvaal and the better part of the Witwatersrand; Gen Constand Viljoen in turn had demanded greater Pretoria and all parts east of it – leaving one with the suspicion that these two COSAG allies were looking jointly, with a military eye, at contiguous territories that would ensure port access, good agricultural land, plus access for the Witwatersrand/Pretoria to essential water resources, coal, and electricity generation capacity).

- On the other hand, the advent of the digital era and cyberspace may well lead to the cultural dimensions of group rights (especially affecting mother-tongue education) now being far easier to accommodate, since geography is no longer a factor…
- I predict that, as political parties increasingly will come to represent group interests, the focus should be on forming alliances or coalitions around **shared values**, rather than trying to build a majority party (simply because the latter is not practical politics, given our fragmented society of divergent interest groups). I further predict that the key new strategic choice that will emerge (of similar import to the earlier strategic choices around whether to settle or shoot, and subsequently whether peace should be the prime objective, will – and, rightfully, should) become to "make the country work". This means that political parties and politicians, in their interaction with each other in structures such as the GNU, should in the final analysis always calibrate their positions and actions to achieve compromises that will contribute to making the country work. Because the only alternative strategy would be to cling to hard policy positions that will make cooperation impossible, doing so in the name of “being principled” – but which could lead to the country becoming ungovernable, or to potential coalition partners opting to rather go into radical coalitions which then could do great harm to the country. This latter scenario is the outcome that should at all cost be avoided. What the history of the negotiations and the first GNU taught us is that striving always for perfection, for what you yourself see as "ideal", is in truth the enemy of what is achievable, of that which at least would be "good"...
- In talking about coalitions and what we’ve witnessed especially after the last general election in 2024, is that perhaps the great flaw in the 1996 constitution (apart from not having cemented in place direct presidential election by popular vote), was that it wasn't sufficiently understood back then that the traditional two-party system would not in the long run satisfy the country’s large diversity of interest groups and that it would thus become very difficult to assemble a governing majority unless in the form of coalitions; as corollary to this, it was furthermore not understood well enough that the Westminster cabinet system does not optimally facilitate coalition governance due to the dichotomy of compelling leaders to be senior cabinet ministers bound by the convention of having to accept majority decisions, whilst simultaneously have to publicly criticise that cabinet’s decisions as leader of the official opposition. This had sunk the first GNU and is threatening the same lot for the current one.
- Another very important issue which hard experience after 1996 has underscored (especially during the Zuma presidency) is the potential for corruption and thus the need for more effective institutional measures to contain it, to have been made part of the constitution – I remember well how my father had warned about this, based on his worry as policeman about the significant number of criminals (such as members of car theft gangs – especially among Indians) who during the “struggle” years had fled the country to join the liberation movements in exile, essentially to escape the SAP and the criminal justice system pursuing them...

## 1.4.7 KEY CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE MAJOR "FORKS IN THE ROAD" AND "WHAT IFS" OF OUR HISTORY

In my conclusions at the very end, I will review all three parts of my contribution to this ***NONGQAI*** eyewitness series. I will be looking at Southern African history from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century, doing so with the objective of highlighting learning opportunities as preparation for the challenges that lie ahead.

I will identify the key "forks in the road" where crucial decisions to have gone the other way could have led to materially different outcomes today. Examples of such "what ifs" that are that the Old Cape had, prior to the British installing themselves there permanently in 1806, not been a structurally and institutionally racist society. Inter-racial marriage was common and not frowned on by the church, which itself was integrated. Schooling was integrated. In fact, the short-lived Batavian Republic (1802 – 1806) founded upon the enlightened principles of the French Revolution had been Africa's first non-racial, anti-slavery democracy. When the British landed in force at Blaauwberg in 1806, those who fought hardest against them were the Cape's Afrikaans-speakers – the volunteer Javaanse Artillerie-korps consisting of free citizens with Malay roots, the Hottentot Infanterie-korps and the Boer dragoons who rode in from their farms had fought shoulder to shoulder while the European mercenaries (the Waldeckers) had rum away at the first shot…

However, after Britain's permanent occupation of the Cape, Afrikaners increasingly began adopting the British Empire's colonial model of institutionalised racism.

What if the influential Jan Smuts had not been so firmly racist, when he dominated the drafting of the 1910 Union constitution that actually had laid the foundations of what became known as Apartheid, long before the NP came to power in 1948? What if Smuts had not bequeathed us such a highly centralised state? (such as having just one national police force centrally controlled from Pretoria, which he did because he feared that nationalist leanings in the likes of the Free State could lead to alternative centres of power arising if provinces controlled their own police).

What if Smuts had supported Prime Minister Barry Hertzog's ethno-nationalist constitutional initiative in the late 1920s to integrate the Coloured population into the "white" political mainstream? (Which, if those acts attempting to move South Africa from a race-based to an ethno-cultural division had been adopted in parliament with the necessary enhanced majority – which Smuts could have enabled – would have completely undercut the later so damaging charges against South Africa as being abhorrently racist, as well as would have changed the politico-demographic equation significantly).

What if John Vorster had consistently acted on his own realisation that Verwoerdian Grand Apartheid was unworkable, and that the alternative to reaching a settlement would be "too ghastly to contemplate"?

What if PW Botha had not, in 1975, unilaterally invaded Angola? (which, when it failed, had killed détente and had irreparably burst our psychological bubble of invincibility in the eyes of the non-white population).

What if the Security Forces, the Police in particular, had not scored gravely damaging own goals over the years, such as Sharpeville, Soweto, the death of Steve Biko and the like?

What if the sly coup (enabled by Pik Botha) that brought PW Botha to power in 1978 had failed? What would a Pik Botha government had resulted in? What if heir apparent Dr Connie Mulder had won? What would his policies have been? My belief then and now is that Mulder's outlook was much more based on ethno-nationalism than on race, and that his key advisors were in fact much clearer in their understanding of the true nature of the threat (that it was propaganda-based rather than on military force, above all requiring advanced counter-propaganda abilities). They also far better comprehended the viable strategic options, as well as realising in advance the deficiencies of the PW Botha approach. In short, they were the true "verligtes", far more so than the image created by PW Botha's damning spin machine. In this regard, Dr Steenkamp reveals important new evidence about the underhand "lawfare" that had been employed during the "Muldergate" saga. He also reveals much that is insightful about the true strategic thinking of the much-vilified General "Lang Hendrik" van den Bergh, quoting extensively from the latter's unpublished autobiography – in which the general rightly foresaw the failure of Botha's tricameral parliament and the downfall of his military rule, expressed preference for freedom of association instead of

enforced racial categorisation, and had his eye through-out on a negotiated solution – on having "a seat at the table", on preparing to hold the strongest possible hand in the inevitable negotiation process.

What if PW Botha had not directed the bulk of national means towards equipping the SADF with costly conventional weaponry as well as NBC arms and ICBM's (which in the end had to be dismantled or wound up rusting away at Wallmannsthal) for countering a supposed coming external threat, and instead had appropriately funded the Police and social services in order to counter the eventually decisive internal threat to stability and governability in the townships?

What if PW Botha had in 1984, after the visible failure of his political initiatives, listened to all those Afrikaner leaders in the Broederbond, Church, business, academia, the civilian government departments and the intelligence service who had urged that a settlement should be negotiated before it was too late? Would he, with his know administrative abilities, have prepared better for it, and would he have been a better negotiator than De Klerk (as Niël Barnard believed) or an utter disaster?

What if FW de Klerk had not initiated negotiations when he did? How severely would the international pressure then have escalated, after the fall of the USSR? (would Clinton, for example, have initiated coercive military intervention as he had done with the destructive air wars that NATO had twice launched against a recalcitrant Serbia?

What if the NP Government had not accepted a constitution based on majority rule? (Then, simply, there would have been no peace, and the Afrikaner would have been back in an even worse position than before).

Was the might of the Security Forces really a trump card that De Klerk had failed to play, supposedly because he "hated" them? In my view the "hate" perception is not true at all. In fact, the ability of the Security Forces to intervene decisively, if ever needed and so ordered by Government, was not a "trump card" to be tarnished by involving the SADF/SAP politically in the negotiations to influence their course, but rather an "ace in the hole" held in reserve for if and when the security situation in the country needed it (for example, through some black swan event occurring, such as a high-profile assassination triggering a collapse in public order, or a coup attempt by radicals from the left or right).

The well-known capabilities of the SADF/SAP were, therefore, psychologically always very much in play, because everyone obviously knew full well that they would be able to intervene decisively, if needed. However, it was a card better held up the sleeve. Better for the other side to have drawn their own conclusions than for the white government to have overtly in the political negotiations (which would have been seen as blackmail by threatening force, which would only have resulted in a propaganda disaster, international alienation and counter-threats). It is also evident that, for the efficacy and legitimacy of the Security Forces in an emergency (if they should ever have been needed to intervene) it was also essential that they not earlier have been seen as politically aligned and actively engaged, but as above the political arena and doing their job within their domain (i.e., security, not politics), in a professionally neutral manner.

(The leadership of the Security Forces in fact did play a key role in avoiding a right-wing coup, when both the SADF and SAP commands made clear to Gen Constand Viljoen that extra-legal action would not be tolerated and reportedly had deflated his ardour with the key counter-question when he had asked if they couldn't see and agree that together they would be able to take over the country in an afternoon – to which the counter-question was: "yes, but what are you then going to do the next day?").

Was there a risk of a coup instigated by radical right-wingers? Supported by many in the Security Forces, particularly the rural Citizen Force Kommandos? Yes! Undeniably so. In fact, senior retired generals like Constand Viljoen and Tienie Groenewald had openly threatened just that. Former Recce officer Willem Ratte and his group in 1993 had briefly occupied Fort Klapperkop. A number of secretive groupings such as the "Death Order" had made threats. There is no doubt that, had a significant number of SADF members at any moment decided that they wanted to stage a coup and if they had the support of the high command, then they would have been successful in doing so. Many in the Police would have joined them, and the SAP command would in such an event

likely not have intervened in what would have resulted in a fight of brother against brother, probably preferring to typify such a situation as being essentially political and thus instruct to stay out of it. If ever the SADF high Command could have been persuaded by the right, through former commanding generals like Constand Viljoen to indeed stage a coup, then they would undoubtedly have succeeded – at least in the short term.

What had actually been most dissuasive was the question of what happens the day after? How would such an insurrection stand against the whole world? In this regard, De Klerk's rapid dismantling of the NBC arms and ICBM's was in my estimation important, because if plotters could have laid their hands on these, then they may rightly or wrongly have believed that they would have the necessary deterrent at hand with which to keep the international community at bay... It is against the backdrop of this very real potential threat that the "Night of the Generals" (when a number of senior officers were fired) needs to be understood – knowing also that it wasn't De Klerk who decided who needed to be sacked, but the SADF high command itself who presented their sacrificial list to him…

It must also not be forgotten that Operation Vula, continued by the ANC/SACP radicals after negotiations had formally started and aimed at smuggling arms into the country (including a specialised sniper rifle, suspiciously linked to Mandela as potential target) could in part be interpreted as preparation by the radicals to "take out" their moderates in an intra-party coup of their own, if ever the negotiations had gone sour as judged from the radical perspective…

Again, the bullet points presented above in very synoptic manner serves here only as early indication for you, the reader, of what topics, assessments and opinions you will be encountering in the rest of this "fireside chat" – elaborated there in much more detail.

## 1.5 MY MOTIVATION FOR WRITING DOWN WHAT I'VE LEARNT HAD REALLY HAPPENED

Considering all of the foregoing, I should answer here another **why**-question, which speaks to my personal motivation: why am I writing this, with which goals in mind?

Let me start with what I definitely **DO NOT** have as objective.

Clearly no-one can now change even one iota of what had occurred. What is done, is done. Irrevocably. Furthermore, those who have done it, are now practically all already dead. No conceivable practical purpose could therefore be served, if I should set as my main goal here to allocate blame**, merely for blame's sake**.

The focus should be on recording objectively the what I regard as the truth, the good as well as the bad, for the sake of learning. Thus, my goal is not to engage here in a purposeless game of blame, of attempting either to attach culpability to some, or exonerate others. I see my task as trying to help later generations to understand the whole truth – what went well, and what went wrong – and, above all, **why**. To achieve this, it is mandatory that I don't here try and spin things in order to try and shine some "team's" image. If the truth happens to be embarrassing and discomforting at times, then it still needs to be acknowledged and told, warts and all.

As said, the simple reality remains that most of those (on "our" side) who were most responsible for what had happened – those who had held the reins of political and institutional power back then – are now dead. We cannot punish them, nor claim compensation from them. In any event – and let me be clear about this – however wrong they were (as seen objectively now with the huge **benefit of hindsight**), they had for the most part acted in good faith, fondly believing then that what they were doing, would be in the best interest of their/our people. And as complex as our country has always been, there obviously was more than enough scope for different viewpoints then to have existed, each at the time with a seemingly logical case to be made out for it (even though some were inevitably to be proven wrong by history).

The other reality is that those leaders had far less ability to control destiny than we may have then imagined. We realise today to what extent even they – despite white South Africa's significant power at the time – were merely

bit-players in the greater scheme of things. With powerful global forces – the tides and trends of time – inexorably pushing towards macro-scale new perceptions gaining currency around the world regarding race and colonialism. A tide that no man, nor any small nation (however plucky and tactically adept), could conceivably have held back.

That said, **why** then mull over it all, again? The answer is simple: there is still far too much one-sided political posturing, misplaced grand-standing, myths and even ridiculous conspiracy theories afoot about our past – on all sides. The reality is still too much obscured by self-serving "spin". As an intelligence analyst, I can see clearly that we still very much need to **understand** what had <u>really</u> happened (and why), in order to learn from our history **and not repeat the mistakes of the past**.

Questions such as this key one: What would our leaders such as Verwoerd, Vorster, and even PW Botha likely have done, if some crystal ball had shown them, back then, how very rapidly British PM Harold Macmillan's "Winds of Change" warnings of 1960 would come true? (Within just thirty years of making them, in fact). If they could have known, back then, that the course which they had been plotting would in fact lead to the very opposite of what they had intended – in actual reality, to white rule being replaced in 1994 by black majority rule in a unitary state – what would they have done differently? A whole lot, and a whole lot quicker, I believe…

Another key question (being the other side of the coin, of the first one above): Why do Afrikaners now find themselves effectively excluded from participating in political decision-making? We, the people who for more than three centuries had played such a pivotal role in the shaping of South Africa's history and who for almost half a century before 1994 had enjoyed an exclusive hold on all the levers of power of government!

And let's not doubt, nor try to deny it – we **are** now effectively excluded.

What had we ourselves done to contribute to this?

We had gone, in short order, from all-powerful to the ignominious disbanding of our erstwhile governing party. Today we as Afrikaners (especially those of lighter hue) are effectively leaderless, lacking a strong political movement looking out for our interests, and as a group we exert practically no influence over the course of the ship of state.

Not that we can lay claim to some God-given right to rule – or even to share in doing so. But it is not only that our voice is now silent. Looking around us, it is clear to see that our experience and skills are being sorely missed.

The third key question to ask ourselves, is where would we be today if the 1994 peace settlement had not been achieved? How would a President Clinton, Obama, Biden and a slew of ever more liberal leaders in the UK and Europe have tightened the screws? What would rolling mass action and the "people's war" inside South Africa have led to? Obviously, we would not have been able to hold on many years more, and if we then lost the physical contest for power (effectively against the pressure from the whole world, and from the internal revolutionary forces) then we would have been confronted by **capitulation**, not negotiation, and the unrestrained taking of power from us…

As to who, exactly, that **we** are (the "us/we/our people" I'm referring to), you may recall from Part One that I'm confining myself, for the purpose of this analysis, to the white Afrikaner population of Southern Africa. Not to glorify us or accord us some imagined special superior status – but also not to engage in some grotesque, even if nowadays fashionable, "cloth and ash" *mea culpa* that negates the truth of all the good that we as group had also contributed. Here I reluctantly identify "us/we" as the "white Afrikaners" simply because, by virtue of the laws of the time and the demographic mathematics, that's the group that had back then held a virtual monopoly on state power.

We are the ones who, as the saying goes, still "own" all of what had at that time been done with those powers, in our name.

It's for that legalistic reason only, that I reluctantly need to use here the "white Afrikaner" definition – because I, myself (just like my forebears such as "Oudok" Willem Steenkamp, the "Lion of the Northwest") by personal

preference identify “my ethnic group” as all who share my language and culture – all of us who proudly speak Afrikaans as mother tongue, irrespective of their skin colour.

With the further qualification that I always am, first and foremost, a proud South African.

The only sensible purpose in re-visiting our past would therefore be: **TO LEARN**. So that we can take on board its lessons and try and avoid repeating our mistakes. Avoid more emotionally appealing yet impractical, totally unrealistic “fever dreams” and instead, rather maximise the benefit of so much that was good that we also did – and did well.

To learn from the past that which really matters, we need to distinguish between the forest and the trees. It is easy to get lost in the diverse detail of the individual trees, the myriad little incidents that together make up an era. It is also easy to fall back into old animosities and policy differences of yesteryear, contesting those long-ago debates all over again. That would be a senseless waste of your time, and mine. What is needed is a dispassionately truthful, objective, non-defensive, overall picture and thus, an understanding of the forest as such. Of the trends and tides of time. The big shaping forces. Which again is reason for me not to dilute the thrust of this Part Three with too many personal anecdotes here.

With that said, let me explain now in Chapter Two what I mean when I will be using terms such as “lost decade” and strategies of “shoot” versus “settle”, so that we can be on the same page regarding definitions.

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# CHAPTER 2.

# WHAT DO I MEAN WITH "LOST DECADE" AND "SETTLE" VS "SHOOT"

As earlier explained, I'm dividing the era I'm covering into four phases, in terms of the years in power of the key Afrikaner leaders of the time. Phase One was the premiership of John Vorster, during which the underlying strategic objective – never publicly articulated – was to prepare for settlement negotiations then already seen as inevitable. Phase Two was the reign of PW Botha and his "total onslaught" faction, who believed that South Africa's conflict was at its heart over which group (white or black) owned the land – a kind of conflict that they believed historically is settled only by force of arms, and which thus required that all assets and energy of state and society be mobilised to prepare for.

The strategic goals and threat assumptions underpinning the "shoot" versus "settle" options, were thus diametrically opposite: The "shoot" faction believed that any loss of an effective white monopoly over political power would represent an existential threat to the very survival of white South Africans. To them, this meant that the inevitable challenge to white supremacy and white control over the levers of political power (instigated and supported, they believed, by international communism, using the ANC/SACP as proxy) had to be resisted by force of arms – meaning that the highest priority should be to maximally prepare for just such an armed conflict. (It just so happened, of course, that this threat assumption would naturally strengthen their claim upon the resources of the state, to expand their institutional bureaucracy and their costly arsenal of hardware).

On the other hand, those who favoured reaching a negotiated settlement believed that the true existential threat to the white / Afrikaner would derive precisely from trying to militarily enforce a perpetual white monopoly hold on all effective levers of political power, trying to do so in the face of internal demographic reality, the needs of the integrated economy and the overwhelming local and international opposition to racism and colonialism. To their way of thinking, the only manner in which to avoid such an unwinnable contest (with its high risk of losing in the end, and then holding no leverage to negotiate), was to recognise that the nature of the conflict was at its heart political, not military, and thus to seek, in timely manner, a political solution – which could only legitimately be reached by means of inclusive negotiation over an open agenda. Therefore, what needed to be prepared and strived for was to achieve peace through a compromise political settlement – with preparations aimed at holding the strongest attainable hand of cards at the (political/constitutional) negotiation table.

That said, I recognise that it is always risky to attach name tags to periods of time and to concepts, because it may appear glib and seem to over-simply hugely complex situations. On the other hand, concise tags such as "lost decade" do serve the purpose of capturing and portraying the essential characteristic that marked a key time frame such as the PW Botha rule, by outlining the theoretical foundations as well as the hard practical consequences of the strategies that had then prevailed.

Therefore, the meaning that I attach to such tags absolutely needs to be properly defined here, in order to do justice to the enormous complexities with which the main actors of the era had earnestly wrestled. With the caveat, though, that I would not want this "fireside chat" to evolve into something resembling a formal, dour academic treatise. For those with a Political Science background or interest, I can briefly mention that the conceptual / theoretical framework for my analysis is based on a David Easton type systems approach plus structural-functional analysis (as regards the decision-making and dysfunction in the security/intelligence subsystem that I will demonstrate). Two other theories that I believe have relevance are "political learning" (where actors take due cognisance of the outcomes in previous experience and adjust accordingly) as well as "rational decision-making" (where actors in politics and business are likely to choose options that, to their minds, most benefit their own interests).

My purpose in defining now – up front – what I understand under the admittedly less scientific terms of "lost decade", and "settle" versus "shoot", is simply to help readers to orientate themselves and to enable them to assess the validity of my conclusions, as we later work through the body of proof that I will present in the coming sections of this narrative.

# 2.1 THE TERM "LOST DECADE"

The term "lost decade" obviously has two components: **decade**, being the more-or-less ten years that PW Botha dominated decision-making after narrowly winning the premiership in September 1978, and subsequently then consolidating his power as executive president, till he was pushed into resigning as state president in August 1989.

The description of this decade as being "**lost**" is motivated by one undeniable, pivotal reality and a rather large set of hard consequences. It is an inescapable historical reality that PW Botha deliberately had first undermined and then (when he came to power) had abandoned John Vorster's settlement- focused strategy (which latter had been based on a core threat assessment that the government was confronted by a **political** challenge requiring a **political** solution, which inevitably would come only through **negotiation** rather than military confrontation). Only broad acceptance obtained by means of inclusive negotiation could conceivably secure legitimacy for any solution. Therefore, Vorster's team had been carefully preparing to be as best positioned as possible for **negotiated settlements** (in Rhodesia, SWA/Namibia and South Africa itself) with Vorster famously stating that the alternative to settling would be "too ghastly to contemplate".

In its stead, PW Botha had favoured a strategy of closely managed incremental "reforms" to be **dictated top-down** and backed where necessary by force of arms. He was never willing to negotiate inclusively with all entities and leaders, and never on the basis of an open agenda – in particular, he never contemplated letting effective political power slip from white hands. His was a strategy that caused a sharp escalation in internal polarisation and unrest, stringent international isolation, damning moral opprobrium, and punitive measures – particularly regarding armaments procurement from abroad and in the financial, economic, and cultural spheres. His strategy nearly bankrupted the country, almost resulted in effective ungovernability of metropolitan townships and inflamed an interminable insurgency. In the end the militarist approach threatened to escalate the situation in Angola into an un-winnable large-scale conventional war, whilst simultaneously (through wrong budget priorities) increasingly debilitating the ability of the Police and Social Service departments to counter internal instability.

Botha's was a strategy which in the end did not achieve anything approximating true solutions anywhere. Despite its pretence at coordinated management, it caused seriously damaging dysfunction and discord in the security/intelligence establishment as PW's threat assumptions and choice of strategy remained under question outside of the military, and as disregard for the rule of law disconcertingly grew. Boxing us into a dead-end, resulting in stasis from 1985 on, so that his own party in 1989 under his successor FW de Klerk was obliged to accept the inevitability of having to return to the Vorster "settle" strategy based on the unavoidable necessity of reaching a negotiated settlement as the only workable alternative to the ghastly prospect of an armed racial "fight-it-out" scenario.

Thus, the NP under De Klerk finally had no option but to start seeking such a negotiated settlement for the creation of an entirely new, non-racial South Africa around a conference table, abandoning any vestige of Apartheid. However, by then they had to do so post-haste, without any proper prior preparation having been made for entering into and conducting such crucial negotiations, and without a clear set of objectives. Nor had there been proper preparation for the other essential component besides negotiation, namely the parallel process of preparing to **contest effectively in the new non-racial democratic context for political power** – be it in the negotiation phase through alliance building, or in the non-racial elections to follow… (as I will show, in this latter respect the NP lagged far behind the ANC/SACP, who had understood and focused on the reality that, in the end, **it is all about gaining political power**).

Thus, ten irreplaceable years lost on the calendar. But, more than that, the loss of a unique **opportunity** (think of what could have been achieved through a strategy of preparing properly and initiating negotiations in timely manner – for example, preferably to have started during the time before the fall of the Portuguese empire, or at least when Reagan and Thatcher were in power during the 1980's in the USA and UK, and when the world was still caught up in the Cold War – the self-preservation dynamics of which conflict would then, in terms of Western fears of the time, have psychologically and geo-strategically benefitted the NP Government's hand at the negotiation table).

Gravest of all was this consequence of a grave imbalance in **bargaining power at the negotiation table**, when the hand of cards held by FW de Klerk and Roelf Meyer is compared to the effective veto power the ANC/SACP had come to hold – and even when comparing it to the admittedly limited yet still consequential negotiating cards that Vorster had held before he and his team were ousted by PW & Pik Botha in that 1978 palace coup. This hugely consequential loss in bargaining power was i.a. due to:

- the loss of credibility as trustworthy negotiation partners (both internally and internationally) because of PW Botha being perceived as insincere/devious as well as inappropriately abrasive and overbearing in interpersonal relations, with his foreign minister and coup co-conspirator Pik Botha being perceived abroad as a self-serving, unserious, overly loud individual of dubious morals and reliability, limited professional skills, and inadequate strategic vision;
- the loss of our pre-existing perceived stature of almost unchallengeable strength, through having (by our very own hand, starting in Angola with Ops Savannah), deflated our psychological "bubble of invincibility" with ill-advised and ultimately unsuccessful military adventures which nakedly put on display our real weaknesses, both militarily and financially/economically;
- the goodwill lost among the public and potential alliance partners from non-white ranks, due to the deep polarisation and resentments that resulted from PW's autocratic style of governance, inter-personal abrasiveness, and his supposedly "clever" but dubious top-down incrementalist "reform" attempts that were actually perceived as signs of weakness (through being forced concessions with no clearly-defined end goal), which merely fed expectations, disillusionment, and heightened the morale and resolve of the radicals;
- the inadequate capacitation of internal stability policing forces that became severely under-financed, under-equipped and under-manned, due to the totally lop-sided allocation of budgetary resources, prioritising the military and their external campaigns plus development of expensive armaments (even ICBMS and NBC weapons) over policing and social upliftment, with the resultant country-wide internal discord and instability severely denting investor confidence and limiting the essential inflow of foreign direct investment capital;
- the dysfunction caused within the security/intelligence establishment due to imposing structures for supposed "coordination" that were clearly perceived by the other entities as designed simply to enable military domination over them, and which thus resulted in even more fragmentation and suppression of true viewpoints – resulting in "own goals" through not appreciating sufficiently that we were caught in what was essentially a propaganda war for public perceptions abroad and internally, as well as in uncoordinated independent "silo"-type actions – all hidden behind dutiful feigned submission to the "total onslaught" groupthink;
- the ever-increasing Security Force transgressions of the rule of law, due to the preaching of "total onslaught" theories which caused some in the military and police to believe that the supposed "existence of a state of war" justified any and all kind of counter-measures;
- the loss of the state's capacity for effective counter-propaganda, due to the destruction of the networks and projects built up by the erstwhile Department of Information and the alienation of their high-level foreign contacts when the latter were hung out in public to dry, in furtherance of PW Botha's personal political campaign to completely force out John Vorster and Dr Connie Muller; and – last but not least
- the fact that (unlike what the Vorster team had done for SWA/Namibia) no substantive policy planning, goal identification, nor political groundwork preparation had been allowed to be made for what should have been understood as inevitable, namely the necessarily urgent and obviously crucial negotiations about the New South Africa's constitutional future; nor for effectively competing in the electoral contest for political power that the new dispensation would evidently unleash – so that the National Party government ended up isolated, bereft of allies and influence (in fact, with the once mighty party ceasing to exist, shortly after the first non-racial elections).

In the end, the war psychosis and resultant radicalisation and polarisation of South Africa's population during the "lost decade" had heavily impacted the necessary focus of the negotiations and the leverage available to the protagonists. When negotiations were belatedly entered into under De Klerk, the over-riding goal had of necessity become to achieve **peace**. This meant that the development of a suitable own constitutional model became a corollary to achieving peace (rather than what could and should have been, namely a free debate of a new

constitution as primary goal in itself, among South Africans relatively at peace with one another). This dynamic of needing above all to achieve peace had put the NP Government under De Klerk at an enormous disadvantage during the negotiations, regarding the nature and extent of the compromises needed. Because the threat of returning to the "toral onslaught" era's state of war and international pressure had effectively accorded the ANC/SACP a veto-like leverage against the NP Government.

Considering all of the foregoing, I believe it is fully justified to typify the ten years under PW Botha as a "lost decade"- constituting the key portion of what I had earlier called the "wasted years" from 1975 to 1989, with reference also to the stagnation under Vorster during his latter years, after PW's Operation Savannah had effectively killed détente.

## 2.2 THE "SHOOT" OPTION

Turning now to tagging the two main (opposing) strategies of as preparing either to "shoot" or to "settle", I would be the first to attest to the fact that not each and every officer involved with national security decision-making could be neatly placed into one of my somewhat arbitrary two camps, as far as their own nuanced thinking at the time is concerned. There were indeed also those who were looking for third options. A kind of middle way. Compromise positions around which they perhaps hoped to be able to reconcile the two camps. With some merit in certain components of their thought, such as that good governance should be prioritised…

However, such "third way" thinking never gained real traction – perhaps because they dared not (within the reality of enforced groupthink and authoritarian rule) insist very hard on their point of view.

I will also be the first to acknowledge that the "total onslaught" disciples within the military were by no means simplistic in the strategic option they favoured, nor completely unjustified in their view that the then South African state was under threat by communist proxies (given the nature and intensity of the Cold War, prior to Gorbachev having come to power in the USSR).

With all of the military men of course very familiar with the famous dictum by Von Clausewitz that "war is merely the continuation of politics by other means" (meaning that the use of military force always must serve, and must inevitably result in a **political** outcome) most of the "brown shoes" (i.e., Army officers) that I had discussions with had indeed always piously acknowledged the theoretical dogma that the final outcome of South Africa's conflict would of necessity be some form of political solution. In their hearts, however, these disciples of "total onslaught" believed, like Chairman Mao, that the winning "political solution" would flow from the barrel of a gun – and they were adamant for it to do so from the barrels of <u>their</u> guns.

What the difference in strategic visions within the SA security/intel-community thus revolved around, was HOW such a "political" solution realistically could be arrived at.

Those who believed in the "total onslaught" doctrine were convinced that the "white" state's interests could only be secured through possessing unchallengeable militarily might, particularly as regards countering the communist proxy forces (the SACP/ANC-Alliance) which they saw as the root cause and instigators of all of South Africa's problems and which therefore had to be utterly defeated and destroyed so that negotiations could take place from a position of dominant strength.

These military men in theory recognised the need for political change, but in their view the transition from the British colonial legacy to a more palatable dispensation needed to be achieved through a carefully managed, top-down, gradual process of **reforms** of the pre-existing system. The intention was that this should lead to an ostensible **power-sharing settlement,** but one **dictated by them from above** and which in actual reality would be so configured as to **preserve effective white power** (this, to be achieved in accordance with the now discredited theories of top-down "managed change" developed by the American scholar Dr Samuel Huntington, then a professor of Political Science at Harvard University, who had spent many hours with PW Botha, Magnus Malan and Pik Botha – as I will discuss in more detail later).

Those adhering to this school of thought favouring incremental, essentially cosmetic "reforms" imposed from above, but without weakening the white monopoly hold on political power, had positioned themselves as "enlightened" (*verlig*) in the Afrikaner political context. They postured as such and were so accepted by the Afrikaans media, because they were focusing their reforms on the elimination of so-called "petty Apartheid" (the hurtful discriminatory measures typical of the British Empire, as encountered in the context of everyday societal interaction and based purely on skin colour). As regards fundamental constitutional change, however, they were clearly less than liberal – believing that any loss of effective political power would literally doom white South Africans to the same lot as had befallen European settlers in the rest of Africa. So that, in their minds, the most that could be considered would be some carefully configured and managed formula of pretended **sharing** of power (i.e., without loss of effective white control), structured on a **racial** group basis (white, black, Indian and "Coloured", not equal individual rights or eve on culturo-linguistic ethnic groups rights) which "solution" was to be secured – and imposed – by means of overwhelming white military force.

Given the vehement non-white opposition to this form of top-down, closely managed incremental change aimed at merely "reforming" the cosmetics of the existing system (so as to ostensibly share power but without the whites losing effective control), the only way to achieve such an outcome would logically have been through possessing sufficient military might to physically enforce its acceptance, both internally against opposition groups and externally against an ever more insistent international opinion which increasingly threatened punitive measures and even intervention.

For this reason (as I had explained in Part Two) there was a view among the PW Botha/Magnus Malan group in the military that the harsh reality of South Africa's colonial legacy was that it was at its heart **a struggle about who's land it was**. They believed fervently that this kind of conflict inevitably, throughout history, ended up being decided on the battlefield (especially because during the Cold War the USSR had clearly coveted controlling South Africa's resources and strategic location). Hence, the pressing need that these officers saw to dedicate all of the state and society's resources to preparing for such an inevitable apocalyptic military show-down. Which preparations stretched from a build-up of armaments (even including nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles such as the RSA-3) to remaining perpetually active on neighbouring battlefields in order to provide every annual intake of our conscripted "*troepies*" with actual combat experience (the first-hand proof of the latter, I recounted in detail in the earlier Part Two of my contribution to this ***NONGQAI*** series).

As regards to how to achieve maximum military preparedness and potential, these officers were proponents of their interpretation of the theory of "total strategy" as set forth by the French military strategist André Beaufre, which theory they had adapted (by their own lights) to South African circumstance. So, what was Beaufre really all about? Michael Shurkin of the Rand Corporation wrote of Beaufre's theories that: "*There is a single thread that runs through Beaufre's half-dozen books about strategy, which he wrote in the years between his retirement from the French army in 1961 and his death* (in 1975). *That thread is a desire to understand the nature of war **in the modern nuclear era**, and to use that insight to resurrect strategy and elaborate a strategic method **appropriate for great powers today**."* (emphasis and underscoring added – thus, Beaufre's "total strategy" was not intended for countering a political liberation struggle that in reality employed armed propaganda as its main weapon).

Beaufre was also quoted by then ANC president Oliver Tambo in a speech Tambo delivered in Nigeria in 1971 in which he rejected the Vorster government's overtures for dialogue (détente) with Africa. In support of his thesis that South Africa actually had the conquest of Africa in mind and was thus window-dressing, Tambo highlighted that Beaufre (who he knew had acquired great standing in South African military circles) had advised: "*A South African policy which does not disarm (the opposition to Apartheid from the Third World)... by some well-conceived reforms and by **a big information effort**, risks allowing a hostile atmosphere to build up and to harden*."

As we shall see when we later discuss in detail the so-called "Information Scandal" that was used to topple the Vorster team, that *coup* quite deliberately caused irreparable damage to precisely South Africa's capacity to maintain a "*big information effort*" – i.e., to engage in effective counterpropaganda and expert dissemination of information – despite the fact that propaganda is the foremost component of a political liberation struggle. Thus, the core of what Beaufre actually had had to say about what South Africa's strategic emphasis should be – namely, a big information effort exploiting well-conceived reforms – was purposely undermined and recklessly destroyed

by PW's co-conspirators. Who then went on to twist Beaufre's thinking on big power military strategy in the nuclear bomb age, to ostensibly theoretically justify South Africa adopting a tightly-managed "total onslaught" counter-strategy run by securocrats which would establish the SADF's own political (and budgetary) dominance…

Beaufre went to great lengths to emphasize that military action always must be subordinate to politics and be seen as but one part of a larger cluster of actions that a country could and should undertake to achieve desired political ends. Beaufre argued (in his memoir on the 1956 Suez War) that this was one of the key lessons to be learnt from that debacle, in which France, Britain, and Israel conspired to topple then Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser and seize the Suez Canal – without having prepared the ground diplomatically and politically, thereby dooming the campaign, regardless of anything that might have been achieved in battle.

In his *Strategy for Tomorrow* Beaufre explained this further: "*Military war generally is no longer decisive in the literal sense of the word. Political decision* (i.e., results)*, always necessary, can only be obtained through a combination of limited military action with appropriate actions taken in the psychological, economic, and diplomatic domains. The strategy of war, previously governed by military strategy, which for a while gave pre-eminence to military leaders, now depends on a total strategy led by the heads of the government, with military strategy only playing a subordinate role*."

Despite Beaufre's emphasis on the primacy of politics over war, his thinking was interpreted by his adherents within the South African military as if Beaufre proposed a "total strategy" comprising the mobilisation of all of the means of state and society which should be centrally directed under military control (think NSMS – National Security Management System). This should happen, they believed, in order to thereby counter the "total onslaught" by armed communist proxies directed by the USSR – in other words, that which the "total onslaught" grouping within the military had (self-servingly?) postulated to be the core threat faced by the white government, instead of recognising that the discontent and instability was at its heart caused by racial discrimination.

As we will see, contrary to the Soviet-driven military threat seen by the "total onslaught" adherents as being the main cause of rising insecurity, the National Intelligence Service came to identify the destabilising and polarising impact of the then **white government's own race-based political policies** as the main driver of the real security threat against the stability, harmony, and welfare of the nation as a whole, because those policies were the cause of popular discontent among the bulk of our own population.

As I will discuss in more detail later, the South African military's interpretation of Beaufre was self-serving on the part of the "total onslaught" grouping, proffered by them as theoretical justification for centralisation of state power under their control and affording them the bulk of state resources. This, despite and without recognising that the central thrust of Beaufre's thinking was the primacy of politics over war, and that he was in any case not focused on how best a small nation should deal with internal political opposition, but on how one major power (such as France) could establish effective deterrence against another powerful foreign foe (such as the USSR) in the **nuclear** age (as such, Beaufre was the intellectual force behind France's own "*force de frappe*" nuclear deterrent).

What the "total onslaught" brigade (by their own lights) did take from Beaufre, were two things: the mobilisation of all of society under military direction, plus the need for what they saw as constituting a credible own nuclear and conventional military deterrent. From the latter, flowed the over-development of South Africa's conventional as well as nuclear arms. The nuclear programme had under PW Botha gone way beyond the Vorster era's identified need of having a basic nuclear capacity that's psychologically sufficient to deter, to eventually the grandiose and costly development of intercontinental ballistic missiles actually capable of delivering new-generation nuclear warheads to world capitals as far afield as Moscow (which ICBM's required the development of nuclear bombs of much reduced size capable of installation as warheads into such rocketry, which the massive old first-generation of gun-barrel type bombs were far too large for).

What the "total onslaught" adherents extrapolated from Beaufre, using their interpretation of him as pseudo-scientific justification, was the centralisation of national decision-making in a securocrat state-within-a-state effectively controlled by themselves, plus the allocation of the bulk of national resources to enhancing military preparedness by acquiring ever larger volumes of ever more potent weaponry with which to fight perceived

external conventional foes (that, while internally the townships burned and while the propaganda war abroad was being lost wholesale).

Because, again – like Mao – they in their hearts believed (even if they did not profess it publicly) that political power really does grow from the barrel of a gun, and that to lose the white monopoly over political power would constitute and existential threat to whites…

In conjunction with the theories of Huntington on dictated incremental change, the "total onslaught/total strategy" approach, to be carried out under close management by the military-controlled National Security Management System, was clearly predicated on the white state possessing the military means with which to enforce acceptance of its policies and defeat any physical challenge to white retention of effective political control.

From there, then, my tagging of this strategy as the "**shoot**" option, since they were in truth aiming to impose a military solution on what clearly was a political problem. (It is not for nothing that one of PW's nicknames was "Piet Skiet" Botha).

In addition to the forementioned "theoretical" foundations, it will benefit better understanding if we quickly survey the history of how perceptions about defence needs had evolved in South Africa after the 2nd World War. It is of course not a phenomenon unique to South Africa that those with uniforms and guns naturally trend towards a "shoot" option, while those in suits and armed with pens, tend to favour settling. The history of USA foreign policy since World War II demonstrate this same syndrome, having caused President Eisenhower to warn his nation against the perils posed by the insidious influence exerted by their own incestuous military-industrial complex…

Colonial reality in Africa up to the end of the 1950's was such that no credible conventional military threat emanating from the continent itself, had even remotely existed against South Africa. Military planning and procurement up to the sixties had thus been focused on the role that South Africa could play on the side of the West in case the Cold War ever became conventionally kinetic (with the protection of the Cape Sea Route then having been the main objective and the principal role allocated to South Africa in the context of the broad "Western Alliance").

Furthermore, the Union Defence Force (UDF) had always been seen as a very "English" institution, and therefore not near and dear to the hearts of the National Party government that came to power in 1948. That government, for the next couple of decades, saw the main security threat against white rule as being rebellion amongst the natives, for the suppression of which the Police would be primarily responsible so that their needs thus needed to be prioritised (with the UDF providing at most some back-up). As a consequence of these internally-focused threat assumptions, half of the 200 Centurion tanks that South Africa had received from Britain after WWII were, for example, sold to Switzerland – most of them still completely unused.

Things started to change in the early sixties, when the UDF became the SADF after the 1961 change to a Republic. The SADF had become more "Afrikaans" in terms of its leadership, and by necessity had also started to develop an own intelligence capacity (since the British were no longer freely sharing).

The first ever conceivable potential external conventional military threat against the Republic that the new military intelligence analysts could point to, arose in the early sixties. India in 1960 had invaded the Portuguese territory of Goa on the Indian subcontinent, overwhelming and annexing it and thereby demonstrating its capacity for aggressive military action. The next year, the Indian Air Force played a pivotal role in the U.N.'s peacekeeping efforts in Katanga (Congo). A squadron of Indian Canberra bombers had been deployed there and, with their 1000 pound bombs, had had a considerable impact. The South African Air Force at that time would have had its work cut out to interdict such a force, had it been deployed against South Africa. Which was at least a theoretical future possibility, given India's strong stance against South Africa at the U.N. and the fact that the international dispute over the legal status of SWA/Namibia could provide the Afro-Asian block with a *casus belli* for having the U.N. deploy another intervention force on the continent.

Already in August 1966, SADF intelligence analysts stated pointedly that the threat against the white government was of a military nature: "*It is clear from their militant attitude that the Afro-Asiatic countries' chief goal, namely the obliteration of white authority in the RSA, is to be achieved by force of arms*". (HSI AMI, Hoof van Verdedigingsstaf, Aanvullende Militêre Inligtingsrapport, Waardering van die Vyandelike Militêre Dreigment Teen die RSA soos op 13 September 1966, p. 41).

This resulted in a very rapid expansion of South Africa's air defence capabilities, with the deployment of a radar network and the acquisition of French Mirage interceptors, plus Canberra and Buccaneer bombers from the U.K. It also resulted in the Vorster government deciding to establish a limited own nuclear deterrent, premised on the idea that any country thinking of joining an international intervention force would think twice if they knew that any staging area near enough to our borders, would be within easy striking distance of such nuclear bombs – which, as aircraft-delivered glide bombs, obviously could wipe out an entire such staging area.

That said, the Vorster team still regarded the instigation of internal political unrest as the main national security threat against the country, with the Police thus the priority institution. Importantly, the Vorster team also understood that the best way to head off any threat of an international intervention force would be through diplomacy – hence the policy of détente with Black Africa that Vorster embarked upon early in his premiership and his acceptance that SWA/Namibia in fact was not the "fifth province" of the RSA but required a solution negotiated with the international community so that SWA/Namibia could not be used as a justification for military intervention against South Africa.

Vorster also well understood the true political and thus propaganda nature of the threats against white rule, which is why a concerted effort was launched during his premiership to build an effective counter-propaganda capacity within a much-enhanced Department of Information under Dr Eschel Rhoodie. The core Vorster national security team thus consisted of Foreign Affairs (Drs Hilgard Muller and Brand Fourie), Information (Drs Connie Mulder and Eschel Rhoodie) and the Bureau for State Security (Genl Hendrik van den Bergh – and, through him, the Police). Accordingly, the SADF were never, under Vorster, part of any high-level delegation to meet with foreign leaders such as Dr Henry Kissinger, the U.S. Secretary of State.

One example of the shrewd strategy developed by the Vorster team to counter hostile propaganda efforts trying to make the South African government out as irredeemably racist modern-day Nazis, was the concerted efforts initiated by Dr Rhoodie for the Vorster government to become public best friends with the Israeli government (which soon enough invited premier Vorster on a state visit). Because it would obviously have been mighty strange indeed for Israel to have strong ties with Nazis… (there were, of course, also other tangible benefits from this cooperation, for both parties).

When PW Botha took over as Defence Minister, the efforts to start using military interventions to influence regional politics started. Clandestine support was, for example, given by the SADF to Zambian rebels who wished to topple President Kenneth Kaunda, despite the fact that the latter was then a leading interlocutor for Vorster in his détente initiative. The plug was pulled on this ill-conceived adventure when the BfSS (the earliest iteration of national intelligence, under Gen Van den Bergh) found out about it, much to PW's chagrin. Another example was when SADF special forces were stopped at Komatipoort from going into Mozambique and supporting white settlers there who had wanted to take over the radio station in Lourenço Marques after the Carnation Revolution in Lisbon in 1974 – again, because the BfSS had found out about it in time, allowing Van den Bergh to alert Vorster, who countermanded the original order to go in, knowing the damage such foolishness would have done to South Africa's regional and international standing.

The next such episode was Operation Savannah in Angola, where the SADF "mission creeped" the pre-authorised covert training assistance to UNITA into embarking (off their own bat – against the advice of the BfSS and DFA, and without actual approval from Vorster) on a full-blown mechanized assault towards Luanda. The disastrous results of which I had related in Part Two.

Savannah brough the Cubans into play in the region, and therefore the need for the further escalated modernization and expansion of the SADF's conventional capabilities. This began to suck up an ever-larger

proportion of the national budget. The more the SADF would get involved in fighting with the Cubans and FAPLA in Angola, the more the need for ever more sophisticated weaponry, in ever larger numbers, could of course be "justified".

As a consequence of the military's actions under PW Botha, Vorster's détente (which the "total onslaught" brigade saw as appeasement) was sunk – one of the most consequential "own goals" that would see us end up where we eventually did. The military got ever more hardware, our own military-industrial complex grew exponentially, and the SADF had their "training ground" where every new intake could be given combat experience…

To what effect, one may ask? Eventually South Africa had no other option but to withdraw from Angola and then entirely from SWA/Namibia. Likewise, the De Klerk government had little choice but to accept the inevitability of having to inclusively negotiate a transition to a non-racial democracy. The huge investment in the SADF had mattered not one iota in determining the outcome of South Africa's own eventual constitutional negotiations either – much of that costly hardware had in fact ended up rusting away, parked at Wallmannsthal; similarly, the nuclear and ballistic missile programmes had to be dismantled...

## 2.3 THE "SETTLE" OPTION

Under Jan Smuts white South Africa's survival strategy had been to ally itself with and integrate as much as possible with the British Empire, believing that being seen as equivalent to the "white nations" of Australia, New Zealand and Canada (who had committed actual racist genocide against their indigenous populations to become majority white, far worse than South Africa) would serve as protective umbrella. This was wishful thinking on the part of Smuts, as eventually became abundantly clear after the Zues crisis of 1956 forced the U.K. to abandon its colonial aspirations, and particularly after Harold Macmillan's 1960 speech on the "Winds of Change" which coincided with a wave of independence ceremonies for the erstwhile British colonies in Africa. Britain would thus side with its Commonwealth, with international opinion, and with its own growing non-white electorate against white South Africa (and Rhodesia).

The Second World War had been fought against institutionalised racism and the subjugation of peoples by force. The destruction and pain the Nazi's had lit the fuse for with their racist policies, had set the world strongly against racism and against colonialism. The two then superpowers, the USA and USSR, had for their own respective ends supported the dismantling of European empires. What had been accepted as "normal" for centuries regarding white dominance over non-white populations, thus had become taboo.

Consequently, it had become clear to Afrikaner thinkers that the old colonial order of race-based exercise of political power by whites could not and should not persist. However, with the destruction and bloodshed that Uhuru had brought to much of Africa, they were not ready either for a system of one man, one vote in a unitary state, because of its inevitable consequence of black majority rule. To understand the psychology behind this, it is illuminating to view on YouTube the Italian documentary of the era, "*Africa Addio*" (available in English) which had had a huge psychological impact among white South Africans at the time: Africa Addio (Africa: Blood and Guts/ Farewell Africa)

Be that as it may, it was clear that the right to an equitable say in their own political destiny in some form or another, could not continue to be denied to non-white citizens – especially if such exclusion was based merely on the basis of their skin colour.

Apart then from a unitary state with universal, undifferentiated franchise for all (as the 1994 interim constitution eventually would provide), in the post-WW2 era there appeared in principle to be two other possible constitutional models for trying to permit equity whilst avoiding black majority. One was some form of structured **power sharing** within in a unitary state (as the erstwhile United and Progressive parties had proposed, based on universal but qualified voting rights).

The other option was that the geographical entity known as the Union of South Africa which had resulted from British imperial conquest had to be re-divided physically (i.e., **Apartheid / separate development**), to create again independent tribe-based own states for black South Africans. These would be no different, it was argued, than the

already-existing sovereign tribal mini-states of Lesotho, Swaziland (now eSwatini) and Botswana – the so-called BLS countries. The aims of such a re-division of the Union and its land would then be that blacks would exercise their voting rights in those tribal states (just as the migrant labour from the BLS countries were already doing). Being then "guest workers" (when living and working within the borders of what would remain as "white" South Africa), Black Africans would thus enjoy no voting rights in white South Africa.

This did not address the lot of so-called "Coloured" and Indian South Africans, of course. The main architects of this "separate states" vision were Dr Hendrik Verwoerd and the Paul Sauer Commission of the National Party, with PW Botha having served as secretary to that commission.

What both a form of national power sharing based on a qualified vote and separate development had in common, was that it would be "solutions" imposed unilaterally by the white government (it was rather evident that the non-white masses would not have accepted either, if a true settlement was to have been sought around a negotiation table).

By the time that advocate John Vorster had succeeded the assassinated Dr Verwoerd as prime minister in 1966, it had become increasingly clear that the notion of whites imposing any constitutional model, whether it be in Rhodesia, SWA/Namibia or South Africa itself, would not be accepted locally or internationally. With the Cold War then going badly for the West (Vietnam) and the USSR under Brezhnev expanding its support for "wars of national liberation" into Southern Africa via its proxies such as Cuba and East Germany, it was becoming evident that the remaining white regimes were going to become increasingly internationally isolated and subjected to internal dissent and armed challenge, which could even result in military coercion by the international community (if the Third World and USSR had their way).

It is often still assumed that men like Vorster and Gen Van den Bergh were hell-bent on maintaining Verwoerdian Apartheid. However, evidence has been shared with us at ***Nongqai*** of Vorster in private telling confidants straight out that Apartheid cannot work (which has since become public – Dr Georg Scharf, Vorster's physician, had recently confirmed this on Radio Pretoria). For his part, Van den Bergh (in his unpublished autobiography), had made clear that he also had fully understood that Apartheid provided no logical solution for the aspirations of the so-called Coloureds and Indians. Most fundamentally, though, he had also understood that Apartheid did not make provision for South Africa's core geographical, demographic and economic **reality**, namely that the bulk of supposedly "white" South Africa's territory (and practically all of it that was of national economic significance, such as the urban areas in particular) was in terms of practical reality in fact **shared** land, and that Grand Apartheid as conceived by Verwoerd provided no solution for equitably accommodating the political aspirations of all of those who inhabited this shared part of the land. Furthermore, Van den Bergh advocated that policies should not be based on race, but on ethnicity, and always as a function of **individual freedom** of choice, not imposed. As regards Eschel Rhoodie, he had also identified basing the constitution and the organisation of everyday life on race as the NP Government's Achilles heel (it was actually Rhoodie's vocal advocacy for the "Coloureds" to be accorded full rights that caused his downfall…).

What Vorster and his core national security team (ministers Hilgard Muller and Connie Mulder of respectively Foreign Affairs and Information, plus their departmental heads Drs Brand Fourie and Eschel Rhoodie, as well as Vorster's national security adviser, General Hendrik van den Bergh, the head of the Bureau for State Security) had understood, was that the only kind of solutions for Rhodesia, SWA/Namibia and South Africa itself that would be deemed legitimate by the world at large, as well as by non-whites internally, would be constitutional settlements that had been duly **negotiated** by and between all stake-holders and which could show a seal of approval by the other African states.

This reality that legitimacy could only be achieved through inclusive negotiation had become increasingly evident as efforts to impose ostensibly non-discriminatory models by means of top-down, "managed reforms" of the existing systems had failed to move the needle. First in the Portuguese African territories, which had supposedly been placed on equal footing, as full-fledged provinces of the motherland (provinces that, by irksome quirk of history, just happened to be located overseas). Then also in Rhodesia, and finally in SWA/Namibia, where powerful anti-Apartheid leaders like chief Clemens Kapuuo of the Herero and the Wambo-based SWAPO movement were

gaining international traction for their demand of an entirely new, independent, non-racial dispensation to be created by means of a settlement arrived at through inclusive negotiations among all inhabitants as equals, irrespective of race.

Having witnessed the impact of United Nations military intervention in the Congo crisis (particularly the role of the Indian Air Force) Vorster and his team were especially wary that the situations in Rhodesia and SWA/Namibia not be allowed to deteriorate to the point where either could legitimately be seized upon as a *casus belli*, i.e., as a justification for international military intervention in the subcontinent. This was due to the complicated status in International Law then enjoyed by these two territories, because of the former being viewed legally by the international community as British territory and the latter falling under the United Nations (since South Africa's League of Nations mandate had ostensibly been revoked).

This brings us to the key issue that needs to be understood about what divided the security/intelligence establishment. Unlike the public political debate in civil society which centred largely around the merits or de-merits of power sharing vs separate development vs undifferentiated universal franchise, the national security debate was focused on two main **strategic** options.

As explained before, the one favoured by the military was that white South Africa needed to invest in the centrally coordinated mobilisation of all state and societal means, in order to prepare maximally for what was seen as inevitable armed conflict about who would "own the land" and hold political power, whilst sweetening this with top-down managed reforms of the existing system that could then be imposed through overwhelming force (based on the threat assumption that what the white government faced, was in its essence a Soviet-directed armed revolutionary threat). This is what I earlier called the "shoot" option, based upon the maximal optimisation of coercive force.

The second strategic option defined the challenge the government faced as being essentially of a political nature, with a return to stability only possible via a truly inclusive and thus legitimate settlement subscribed to by all internal stakeholders. It was well understood in the intelligence service, also by some in the Security Branch of the SAP, and within our diplomatic corps that such a settlement was not achievable via the top-down imposition of incremental reforms of the existing system, but that it would require a transition to a fundamentally new South Africa, to be legitimately negotiated inclusively among all stakeholders, from the bottom up.

It was understood that such transformation could only happen on the basis of a new beginning for the country, inclusively negotiated over an open agenda, to be shaped and polished through mutual compromise so as to achieve sufficient consensus. This is what I called the "**settle**" option, based upon non-prescriptive negotiation in utmost good faith (which did not mean that each negotiation partner would not have its own preferred outcome, nor that the government needed to have gone into it without proper preparation or the creation of an own set of alliances with which to promote its own preferences).

It is evident that the "settle" option required equally as much careful planning and preparation as the "shoot" option did – however, not centred on building up military might for its own sake, but on placing the white government in the strongest possible bargaining position in the **political** context. For the Vorster team (as articulated later by Rhoodie and Van den Bergh), the strength of your bargaining position did not primarily depend on your military capacity (which was not under-rated either, having already invested in the modernisation of the Air Force and Navy and also launched the programme to build a psychologically sufficient nuclear deterrent). The main elements of a strong political bargaining position would, in the perception of the Vorster team, have been:

- Correctly understanding the threat environment for what it truly was, namely a contest for political power and not one of defence against threatened military conquest, whether conventional or revolutionary;
- Comprehending that the British colonial legacy of a system based purely on race (rather than on ethno-linguistic groups or otherwise on individual rights), was the heart of the problem, meaning that Apartheid was neither sustainable nor defendable;
- Understanding that, geographically, demographically and economically (and thus effectively constitutionally), South Africa could not be entirely "unscrambled" back into its pre-colonial components

because it had largely become a shared land in which all needed to enjoy equal political rights if peace and stability was to be ensured;
- Understanding that negotiations require “two to tango”, so that it was essential that the other protagonist be seen as legitimate;
- The other main protagonist also had to be convinced that it would only ever be able to aspire to winning political power through negotiation, and not through revolutionary force.
- The necessity to maintain a practical, realpolitik approach to defining clear, achiebale and thus realistic strategic goals for the negotiations, as well as the need for alwys being cognisant of the reality that politics is in the end all about **power**, not about theoretical constitutional models;
- For the Vorster team, ensuring that any constitutional formula to be agreed would take account of the real actual power and “stake” that any particular group possessed, and not merely be based on concepts such as demographic numbers was important;
- The Vorster team (Van den Bergh in particular) recognised also the need to accommodate what he called the “territorial imperative” in some agreed form or another, with groups defined by voluntary association preserving own “bastion” areas (i.e., not own states or a Volkstaat) seen as essential to the effective projection of such real power across the shared entity.
- Ensuring, at all times, the maintenance of internal stability and security as the essential environment for negotiations and for the resultant constitutional contest for political power at the ballot box, so as to be able to take place without intimidation;
- Basing one’s planning not on wishful thinking but on the empirical reality existing on the ground – such as that the supposed “white South Africa” envisioned by Grand Apartheid actually had a far greater black population than white (because of the needs of the economy), and thus was in fact “shared” territory, plus the reality that South Africa as a whole, had become one integrated economic entity which thus needed to be governed as such, whilst also accommodating the reality of a highly pluralistic society in terms of the many hugely divergent ethnic groups in its make-up;
- Creating strong political alliances internally, but also regionally and internationally (thus, détente);
- Maintaining credibility as a good faith negotiation partner (principally by not trying to impose one’s will by force, however “cleverly” disguised);
- Being seen as an intrinsically strong political stakeholder because of representing a unified constituency that cannot and should not be ignored or side-lined by other stakeholders;
- Not frittering away your stature of strength through engaging in a series of incremental reforms which could be portrayed as cosmetic concessions “too little, too late” which were made under and because of pressure, thus reflecting growing weakness on your part;
- Maintaining the unity of your own base and expanding it through alliances; and
- Having at hand the necessary institutional capacity with which to counter the inevitable propaganda war against you, which always was central to the contest for political power (with recognition that the “armed struggle” in essence was nothing other than armed propaganda).

In many ways SWA/Namibia was, for the Vorster team, a test bed and future model (as FW de Klerk would later admit that it had been for his team as well, when the choice was made to go all-in for a negotiated settlement in South Africa at the end of 1989). Regarding SWA/Namibia, Vorster and his team knew that they needed to achieve a number of strategic objectives. Foremost among these, was to avoid that the issue of the Territory’s future be used as an excuse to forcibly impose the will of the international community on South Africa.

Secondly, there was a dire need to provide white South Africans with a working example of a peaceful and prosperous African state based on a non-racial democracy (given how sceptical white South Africans were, due to what Uhuru had tragically and very visibly wrought in many countries to the north). It was well understood that such concrete reassurance by means of an actual example would be essential, if the white electorate were to be convinced in future to consider approving a negotiated inclusive settlement for South Africa itself.

Thirdly, the Territory would provide a practical and real-world apprenticeship in how to prepare for and conduct such a negotiated internal settlement, providing lessons on alliance building and regarding détente (international outreach and influencing). By being seen to facilitate in good faith the establishment of a non-racial, democratic Namibia (and Zimbabwe, for that matter) the South African government of the Vorster era could burnish its

credentials, give moderate African states reason to support its legitimate concerns about minority group rights in South Africa itself, and weaken the appeal of radical political elements in South Africa such as the communist-aligned movements (considering the then Cold War context).

I dealt with the SWA/Namibia issue in much detail in Part Two and don't want to burden you with repeating it all here again. Suffice it to say that the process which Vorster, Van den Bergh and company initiated and which culminated in the Turnhalle negotiations, with the South African cabinet finally accepting United Nations Security Council Resolution 435 shortly before the coup which brought PW Botha to power, was based on the understanding that SWA/Namibia was a political and diplomatic challenge rather than a military one, which could only be resolved through a negotiated settlement aimed at the creation of a new state based on a non-racial democracy.

Dirk Mudge personified this project, which showed that political alliances could indeed be built bottom-up on a non-racial basis, even including erstwhile arch anti-Apartheid activists such as Herero Chief Clemens Kapuuo. It further demonstrated that the white populace would overwhelmingly support a radically new, non-racial constitutional dispensation resulting from such *bona fide* negotiations (as evidenced by the results of the white referendum on the Turnhalle constitution, which was supported by more than nine out of ten whites in the Territory).

To come back to, and conclude these definitions of "**shoot**" vs "**settle**", the core issue on strategy that vexed and deeply divided the security/intelligence community ever since the Bureau for State Security had been set up, was thus not what kind of constitutional dispensation should eventually emerge, but whether it should be **imposed** top-down by a militarily all-powerful white government as incremental "reforms" softening the cosmetics of the existing system, or inclusively **negotiated** from the bottom up so as to constitute an entirely new consensual beginning (in the process of which the whites would, of course, try and maximise the levers of power available to them to achieve the most favourable constitutional dispensation regarding political, economic, judicial, individual and group rights and guarantees – first and foremost of which, being to avoid the imposition of a Marxist "People's Republic" of the kind that already had ruined some neighbouring states).

Before we deal in more detail with the chronology of the main events that occurred in the lead-up to, during, and in the immediate aftermath of the "lost decade", I will now briefly situate you with regard to the vantage points I had occupied for observing how things unfolded during the period 1975 – 1994. With that provided, we will then jump straight into what transpired between 1978 and 1988 under PW Botha (which had landed the country in two successive states of emergency, as well as rapidly increasing international isolation), fortunately followed by the return to the Vorster/Van den Bergh negotiation-based strategy between 1989 and 1994 under FW de Klerk.

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# CHAPTER 3.

# A QUICK ORIENTATION: SITUATING MYSELF, CAREER-WISE, DURING THIS ERA

## 3.1 A BRIEF RECAP: MY FAMILY TIES AND MY YEARS IN NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

During the "wasted" last years under John Vorster, the PW Botha "lost decade" and the transition under FW de Klerk, my career paths and family history allowed me to observe national security interests from four distinct vantage points.

In Parts One and Two of this series I've recounted my insights into the SAP-SB, thanks to my relationships with my father, my then wife, and my brother (who were all SB-members, with my father having been its commanding general at national level during the early eighties). I also mentioned my family relationship with the military, through my uncle (CO of Regiment Port Natal) and my cousins, all parabats.

In Part Two I had explained at length how I did my compulsory national service in the BfSS / NIS, whilst also working off my Public Service bursary obligations there (in the end clocking up some eight years). These positions that I had found myself placed in within the Bureau / Service (such as heading the SWA/Namibia analytical desks, serving as secretary of the "KIK" and helping set up and lead the central editorial division of the NIS), allowed me an holistic insight into the broad intelligence picture. The years spent on the analytical side was followed by a stint in covert collections. This practical experience plus professional training (within the service and with the German BND), was supplemented by my doctoral studies in Political Science, with my thesis focussed on the intelligence function. My eventual departure from the NIS (after I had completed my national service and bursary obligations) was where I had ended Part Two of my saga.

Because all of this has already been fully explained I will not dwell upon it again. Here in this Part Three (having cursorily mentioned the key elements of Parts 1 & 2 now only for the benefit of those readers who may not yet have read parts 1 & 2), I will be explaining how my trajectory beyond the NIS allowed me equally valuable perspectives on the security and legal situation, but now from additional institutional angles.

There will be brief reference to my time serving articles as law clerk to gain admission as an attorney (which coincided with the time that my father had served as the CO of the SAP-SB nationally – before he requested early retirement at the end of August 1984 at age 55, because he could not see eye-to-eye with PW Botha and the "total onslaught" faction). Essentially, though, this part will focus on my observations during my years as diplomat – i.a. as 1st Secretary at the embassy in Paris, then as Head of Diplomatic Training (as today's Diplomatic Academy was then known), and finally as the New South Africa's first ambassador to formerly hostile "Black Africa". This covered the period from the mid-eighties through to 1997, thus including the end of the PW Botha era, the transition under FW de Klerk, and the early years of the new dispensation. Post-1997 I gained further valuable perspective beyond that in public service, as practising lawyer and entrepreneur in the private sector. Last but not least, my volunteer role in the decade of the 2020s as co-editor of ***NONGQAI*** has provided me with valuable further insights as to what had really happened, thanks to hitherto hidden facts being shared by eyewitnesses.

## 3.2 GAINING ADMISSION AS ATTORNEY

You may recall from my previous instalment (Part Two in the series) that in 1983 I had received an invitation from an old varsity friend to join him in his law practice in Frankfort in the North-East of the Free State province. This provided me with the opportunity to progress my legal qualifications from the merely academic to the practical, by gaining admission in early 1985 as attorney of the High Court (after having completed my articles and passing the Bar Exam). I saw this formalised status of being officially admitted to practice as an attorney as an important "insurance policy" to have in my back pocket, given that the signs were then already there that change was

inevitably afoot in South Africa. As white Afrikaner male, one could no longer reckon on a life-long career in the Civil Service.

Frankfort is a beautiful town in the "Riemland" of the North-East Orange Free State province. Overlooking a lush bend in the Wilge (*willow*) River. Which never would run dry, because the Wilge served as conduit to carry the abundant waters from the Lesotho Highlands Project in the Drakensberg Mountains, to the Vaal Dam serving South Africa's industrial and mining heartland of the Witwatersrand.

The Riemland is a rich farming area, allowing both planting (wheat and maize) and raising all types of livestock, including dairy. It had suffered severely during the 2nd Anglo-Boer War, with literally every single house, including that of God, having been destroyed by the British. Even the church bible was stolen (it was only returned from England many decades later, by repentant descendants).

Talking about stealing: a famous bank robbery took place there, shortly after the end of the Boer War. Since every building in town had been destroyed by the British (deliberately burnt down, or dynamited in the case of the sturdier stone-built ones) the new Barclays Bank branch was temporarily housed in an ex-Army Bell tent. Which presented too much of a temptation to a burly, determined robber – a hungry cow, who got her head into the tent during an unguarded moment and joyfully munched on a rich diet consisting of all the bank notes in the open cash box…

Being a city boytjie from Durban, I experienced there for the first time the divisive legacy of the traumatic past suffered by rural Afrikaners. The Riemland had had its full quota, and more, of "Bitter-enders" (who had fiercely resisted the British throughout the war). They were still, nearly a century later, facing off against the "hensoppers", and worse still, the "joiners" (the latter who had gone over to the British side, joined the National Scout units and fought against their former comrades-in-arms).

This had led to deep and abiding antagonisms lasting well beyond the few years I had spent there during the eighties. This enduring loathing was further exacerbated by the fact that some of the joiners had benefited materially from their treason – firstly, in that their farms were not destroyed, and secondly, from having schemed to come into possession of the properties of some of the destitute Bitter-enders. The fact that these individuals (who were regarded as traitors), emerged as suddenly being amongst the wealthiest farmers in the district caused schisms even in the church, because others refused to be in the same congregation with them.

My own situation, however, demonstrated that differences about politics need not ruin personal friendships. My friend and partner in the law firm was a leading figure in the then newly-formed Conservative Party, where-as I had been elected as chair of the local National Party branch shortly after arriving there. Then, and to this day, we remain good friends. It was he who had nominated me to be elected chair of the local Frankfort Rapportryers as well, the Afrikaner cultural organisation to which we both belonged.

Apart from my community involvement, my focus during my time in Frankfort was very much on furthering my legal studies and gaining admission as attorney of the High Court. For the latter, I had to pass the Bar exam, which in those days was very tough indeed. Only 14% of candidates made it on their first try. I was fortunate to achieve that goal on my first attempt and successfully completed my two years of serving "articles" as candidate attorney, so that I was formally admitted on the 9th of May 1985.

Most people have a perception of lawyers spending most of their time in court, arguing important cases and defending miscreants. There are some lawyers who do, indeed, specialise in court work, but for the most part we strive to help people to actually stay out of court. The bulk of one's professional duties are rather mundane, involving commercial matters and the occasional civil disputes such as divorce. However, since it is the criminal cases that most interest the public (and especially a readership consisting of many former policemen) I will relate here just one of the petty cases I did defend, for its comedic effect.

It involved our local provincial traffic cop, Buks (we knew each other well, Frankfort being a small town). The main road out towards the town of Reitz had been freshly re-tarred and still had lacked painted markings when Buks had ticketed the driver of a farm lorry who had overtaken another vehicle at a spot where Buks knew a white line

would normally have been. The driver was the foreman of two formidable sisters who, on their own, had built up quite a farming enterprise and brooked no nonsense from anyone. They had instructed me to defend their foreman against what they regarded as a ridiculous case of harassment against him, their black driver.

Buks had based his case entirely on his own testimony about what he alleged he had seen, and on his knowledge of the road marking system – namely, that the authorities affixed metal plates with particular markings on the farm fencing running alongside the roads, to indicate to paint teams where white lines should commence and end. Of course, the driver maintained that his overtaking had been entirely safe and not in a dangerous spot, noting the absence of a white line.

Therefore, the court was confronted by opposing testimonies, to be resolved on the basis of who's version could most be trusted.

Buks has stood in the witness box with his left hand and wrist heavily bandaged. He and his wife had recently acquired a bull mastiff pup. They also owned a tandem bicycle, and they would ride through town with this pup sitting in a cardboard box tethered to the rear cargo carrier. This somewhat unusual sight, of course, had attracted the attention of all and sundry in our rather uneventful little town – myself and our mutual friend, the local magistrate, included. So, we all knew about Buks and his dog.

Then, for some reason, this young dog had bitten the hand of his master, doing quite some damage – as we all could see from the rather copious bandage.

When I had the opportunity to cross-examen Buks, I first went through the basics: There was no white line on the day of the offence? (true, he confirmed); could members of the public be expected to know about the metal markings on fences? (no, he admitted); was any traffic endangered by the overtaking? (none, he testified).

So, it is a mere technicality, and beyond that, a question of whether we should believe your word or that of the defendant? (Yes, he acknowledged).

"*Now Buks, please tell us about your hand?"* I then innocently asked. "*What exactly happened to you?*"

Buks tried to avoid answering, pleading with the magistrate that, surely, that could not be relevant to this case?

Our mutual friend the *landdros* (who already knew that, as matters stood, there couldn't possibly be a conviction in this silly case), was nevertheless intrigued to see what I was up to with this novel line of questioning, and so he solemnly ordered Buks to answer.

What had transpired was that Buks had been feeding his dog, and the animal had mistaken a gesture by Buks to add some tidbit to the bowl as an attempt to take away his food, so that it then bit him. This Buks duly explained to the court.

The court – Buks included – dissolved in shared laughter when I concluded by asking: "*So, Buks, if your very own dog clearly doesn't trust you, how can you expect this court to trust you?*"

You will discern from this anecdote that lawyering in Frankfort wasn't exactly professionally challenging nor hugely intellectually stimulating. My first love remained Political Science, and the moment I had concluded my studies for admission as lawyer, I had immediately resumed my doctoral research in that field.

The deteriorating situation in the country, especially after the "Rubicon speech" disaster in August 1985, also had me yearn to get back into service of "*volk en vaderland*". A serious case of "wanderlust" had furthermore taken hold of us, after my stints abroad during my NIS years. Both my wife and I longed to see more of the world.

So that the Foreign Service became the obvious government department for me to set my sights on.

# 3.3. MY YEARS AS DIPLOMAT: 1st SECRETARY at SA EMBASSY in PARIS, HEAD OF DIPLOMATIC TRAINING, AMBASSADOR

I started my career as diplomat in the middle of 1986. It had of course meant that my family and I moved back to Pretoria. The first year or so was spent in compulsory cadet training, where I was fortunate to once again – as had been the case with BfSS / NIS training – end up at the head of my cohort (blowing my own bugle a bit: my average had exceeded the score of my colleague who came 2nd by more than 10%).

Foreign Affairs had the tradition of affording the cadet who emerged top of class the privilege of selecting which of the then vacant posts overseas he/she wanted to be transferred to (the rest of the field were simply told where they were posted to). Called in and presented with the list of vacancies, I phoned my wife, and when she heard that Paris was available, she immediately wanted me to select "the City of Light" – even though that position had to be filled within less than a month (leaving precious little time, if any, for French classes).

We arrived in Paris on the 1st of September 1987 and were lucky to find a very nice house close to the British School in the sought-after, leafy western suburbs. I started out in the information section, dealing principally with the journalists of the local media. I was given responsibility as well for liaising with the local France/South Africa friendship organisation, as well as with the churches, student organisations, and the French branch of the IPA, the International Police Association (their national head was an avid collector of police caps; he had been pleased to hear of my own familial police connections and more than thrilled when I presented him with an SAP cap with all the trimmings of a general, which my father had kindly provided).

As stated at the outset, I am not going to cover here in detail everything that had come across my path during my time as a diplomat, particularly not in some kind of chronological rendering as if in a diary. The most novel and interesting of those experiences (during my term as ambassador) have already been covered in my "ex Africa" series in ***Nongqai*** - which is available free, as e-book: https://tinyurl.com/yt9dvapn

I want to keep the focus on how things had developed in South Africa during that lost decade, so that I will mention here, as situational orientation, just that which will now assist the reader to appreciate the vantage points I had from which to observe political developments close-up, as well as to form my own, first-hand understanding of the international context to South Africa's challenges during those fateful years at the end of the PW Botha era, followed by the negotiated transition.

Suffice it, therefore, to just situate you about how my diplomatic career unfolded. Upon my return to South Africa from Paris in September 1990, I was appointed as head of diplomatic training. The transition had of course started, following on President De Klerk's epoch-making speech to parliament on 2 February of that year, so that my brief was to entirely re-conceptualise the training system to make it suited to the needs of the New South Africa – in particular, to start taking in cadets from the former liberation movements.

In order to establish proper verifiable academic standards regarding both content and methods, I had reached out to the HSRC (Human Sciences Research Council) for their expert outside certification. Our new training programme was thus designed as an MBA-style course, with a "CAN-DO" emphasis rather than being focused on merely studying and knowing relevant theory in the abstract. Cadets were made proficient to perform their future tasks at embassies, with focus on the fields of International Relations, International Law, Economics, Intelligence, Media and Public Relations, Protocol and Social Engagement (the latter down to how to entertain officially, even including flower arranging).

Two years on, after having set up and initiated the implementation of the new training system, I was nominated (still only 38 years old at the time) as the New South Africa's designated first ambassador to formerly hostile Black Africa. In January 1993 I took up my post as resident ambassador in Libreville, capital of oil-rich Gabon (then Africa's richest nation per capita), with responsibility for relations with six countries in the West-Central region of equatorial Africa (Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome & Principe, and Gabon itself). It is about this period of four years that the e-book mentioned earlier provides ample (often humorous) detail, so that I will not go over its chronology again. The structure of this Part Three of my saga will be

dictated by and follow the unfolding of seminal events in South Africa, rather than by my own autobiographical chronology of experiences. (However, later in this narrative – when it fits the timeline of how the negotiations and transition chronologically unfolded – I will come back to some of the moments in my diplomatic career that directly related to South Africa's transition).

What you will now begin to see unfold is a tale of internal discord and dysfunction within the cabinet and intel/security establishment. Of dissension about strategy, of unwise actions that often were uncoordinated and at cross-purposes or lacked broader situational awareness (usually undertaken for supposed short-term tactical gain). All of which in fact resulted in far too many very serious "own goals".

Most grave were fundamental errors about the true nature of the threat and consequently, of what needed to have been our long-term strategic objectives. The result was that the NP Government's bargaining power at the eventual negotiation table was gravely diminished.

You will also see the role of personal ambition among leading politicians, their manipulations and back-stabbing which eventually culminated in a "save your own backside" syndrome that left many of the more junior officers in especially the Police, as the sacrificial lambs paraded at the TRC – to flood that system and save the big brass from too much attention…

First, though, it is also necessary (for the sake of context) to go over the shenanigans during Vorster's final "wasted years" in the lead-up to "lost decade" under PW Botha, Because then already clear evidence emerged of the beginnings of a pattern of devious back-stabbing and discord on strategy.

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# CHAPTER 4.
# VORSTER: DÉTENTE, DISILLUSION, AND THE DISASTER OF THE "QUIET COUP"

## 4.1 VORSTER's UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHALLENGES THE COUNTRY FACED

John Vorster understood full well that Verwoerd's Grand Apartheid vision couldn't be made to work in practice (first-hand evidence that Vorster in confidence had privately confided this realisation to confidants has lately emerged, as earlier shown).

However, Vorster was confronted by a practically insurmountable political problem. How to move from his assassinated and still revered predecessor Dr Verwoerd's segregationist blueprint to a more inclusive new constitutional dispensation, when the white voters clearly were not yet ready for fundamental transformation? With Verwoerd still too much venerated, for Vorster to be able to publicly and starkly declare that his predecessor's Grand Apartheid concept was unworkable? With whites increasingly fearful as Macmillan's "winds of change" came blowing closer and closer to home? With Afrikaner unity already fragile, as demonstrated by the break-away of the small hard-right HNP from the NP?

From my own close involvement at the time with SWA/Namibian affairs, it was clear to me that Vorster and his team had sensed – although this was never publicly articulated as official strategy – that the only legitimate and politically "marketable" way in which there could be significant movement towards something as fundamental as a new constitutional dispensation with which to replace Apartheid would be through stakeholders negotiating a broadly supported comprehensive **settlement** (again, because the alternative to negotiating a settlement was – in Vorster's own famous words – "too ghastly to contemplate").

It was more a case of feeling the way forward based on political intuition, experience, and common sense than of some clairvoyant having penned down a fully detailed and structured strategy and operational plan. It was a case of probe, test and learn. It also clearly had to be a continuous balancing act of different political interests such as retaining Afrikaner unity (through accommodation of opposing views and not triggering intra-party conflict with policy moves that could be deemed too aggressive), whilst trying to better South Africa's international position (or at least not allowing to deteriorate further, especially not in terms of issues such as Rhodesia and SWA/Namibia providing ostensible legal justification for foreign intervention), ameliorate internal race relations, and protect the economy and its needs. Perhaps the biggest balancing act lay in simultaneously trying to move the electorate towards acceptance of what Vorster knew was realistic and necessary, whilst at the same trying to maintain the NP Government's "strong man" image so as to protect its eventual bargaining position and keep fearful white voters reassured.

Within the cabinet and the national security decision-making system, Vorster (a naturally affable person who was by his nature somewhat averse to direct head-on confrontation, and who thus had allowed his ministers considerable own scope) had to deal with the conflict between PW Botha and Lang Hendrik van den Bergh over the choice between whether to strive for maximum capability to "shoot", or to accept that inevitably the negotiation of a settlement will become a necessity, requiring that the government's primary focus should be on doing all that would ensure that it would enjoy the strongest possible bargaining position at the negotiation table.

In between these underlying strategic issues, Vorster evidently also had to attend daily to governing the country and being fireman-in-chief responsible for dealing with the conflagrations that "black swan" events precipitated by others – such as most gravely the consequences of the abortive invasion of Angola in 1975 and the Soweto youth uprising of 1976.

It appears to me that Vorster had intuitively realised that even his government's best attempts to initiate changes incrementally and unilaterally would satisfy no-one – especially if dictated by him top down, and particularly so if it was done cosmetically, merely for the sake of pretending change. It would always be rejected as "too little, too late" and/or as unilateral government dictate. It would also be perceived as a sign that the government's resolve was weakening and that it was making concessions under pressure. This would fan the flames of non-white resistance, whilst prematurely playing away cards that the government could later use to better effect during the settlement negotiations. It would also put Afrikaner unity at risk, because the self-same incremental changes which the Left would decry as "cosmetic" and "too little, too late" would be decried on Vorster's right as "the thin end of the wedge" foreshadowing doom.

Vorster knew that embarking on truly significant change without spelling out a clearly defined end-outcome would result in the Afrikaner splitting politically. That was unacceptable to him, both from a legacy standpoint and because he knew that Afrikaner unity would be an important element determining his people's bargaining power at the negotiation table. Vorster was thus loathe to do anything, especially in terms of changing the Smuts/Verwoerdian constitutional model, that could precipitate such a split.

So, how to move the ball forward?

What would be needed were two things. Firstly, NP leadership endowed with the necessary popularity and public appeal that could take the white electorate with it to a more progressive outlook. Secondly, a methodology through which to legitimately initiate the desired transformation without having first to subject every little divisive detail of such a new constitution's proposed end formulation to prior debate at the governing party's congresses and suffer the interminable, polarising wrangling (both within the party, as well as among opposing forces) that that would entail. In other words, to rather present the white electorate with a package deal (or, at the minimum, a proven plan of travel) that had resulted from a negotiated consensus between a sufficient proportion of the country's stake-holders, for voters to accept or reject.

Vorster was by the mid-seventies quite ill (he suffered from a genetic blood disease), and also frustrated and disillusioned with the death of his détente initiative after the mortal wounds it had received at the hands of PW Botha's Angola invasion in 1975 and police blunders such as the Soweto Uprising of 1976 and Steve Biko's death not long thereafter. Vorster was increasingly thinking about his retirement and succession. Unfortunately, Vorster's once close relationship with Gen Van den Bergh and Eschel Rhoodie had soured, because they were pushing him to move faster. Both were in private confiding to friends that in their view Vorster had become a stumbling block to progress, lamenting the stagnation that had set in after 1975 (against the background of the reality that the country's situation had become exponentially more serious at this time and the need for solution thus ever more urgent). This criticism had reached Vorster's ears and had greatly annoyed him, to the point of resulting in the Information Scandal (as will later be shown in much more detail).

So, where to find a leader to succeed him, who would with oratorical flourish and the appeal of his public persona be able to inspire the NP voters to start moving away from Apartheid to an accommodation with the other population groups? Allegedly Vorster had described the two men who were then regarded as apparent possible successors, namely Transvaal NP leader Dr Connie Mulder (the clear front-runner) and Cape leader PW Botha, in disparaging terms. Mulder, he described as a naivete (perhaps because of Mulder's close association with Rhoodie and Van den Bergh, by then out of favour with Vorster and seen by him as scheming manipulators?). PW Botha, Vorster referred to as a "bull in a China shop".

As prime minister, seeing the need for the party and its constituents to be moved more towards the "*verligte*" side, John Vorster had increasingly been promoting a number of progressive young NP members such as Wynand Malan, Dennis Worral and Pik Botha. It was the latter – by far the NP's best exponent of television as medium and personally popular among white voters despite his clear progressive leanings – that Vorster towards the end of his own political career started favouring as successor, for example by having Pik Botha share the stage with him when Vorster announced his resignation as prime minister. Only to later ruefully acknowledge that the biggest mistake that he had made in his political career, was to trust Pik Botha…

As regards testing means and procedures by which white voters could be presented with a transformation package or plan that already enjoyed broad consensual acceptance as a "take it or leave it" choice, rather than first going through endless divisive intra-party debate about the minutiae of change, the Vorster team comprehended that the likely way to achieve that would be through inclusively negotiating such a constitutional settlement package. The focus had thus to be shifted from POLICY DETAIL to PROCESS.

What would be concretely needed in order to start shifting white opinion, would be a successful model to show of just such a negotiated transition to a non-racial new constitutional dispensation. Which is where Rhodesia and SWA/Namibia came in…

It is this strategic understanding, namely that the table needed to be set for negotiations (as only alternative to bloody confrontation), that had informed the Vorster team's détente outreach, seeking to prepare the environment for negotiations and for creating (in Zimbabwe and SWA/Namibia) models that would help convince white South Africans that non-racial democracies which were achieved through legitimate, inclusive negotiated settlements can work and wouldn't amount to suicide.

The development and testing of such a strategy for change that would be driven by process rather than by polemical wrangling about policy, needed to be unfolded largely in secrecy via confidential channels so as not to prejudice the talks with black interlocutors in the region, and which in any event was not the kind of a strategy of which the detail could be easily explained to the white public in advance. Such a strategy had to establish acceptance not through a preceding plethora of position papers and policy statements, but rather after the fact, based on it having produced concrete examples of success. In reality, precisely as the Turnhalle process in SWA/N in fact achieved under Vorster, when more than nine out of ten of the traditionally conservative white Southwesters voted "yes" in the 1977 white referendum there on the acceptance of the non-racial constitution that process had produced (as did nearly seven out of ten white South Africans vote yes in the referendum conducted by FW de Klerk in 1992, to obtain a mandate for his process to negotiate fundamental change).

Vorster's team (particularly Rhoodie and Van den Bergh) had understood the unstoppable trajectory of history. They understood the critical damage that institutionalised racism was doing to South Africa and to its image, as well as to relations inside the country. They also had comprehended that not a single colonial power, not even the Superpower USA intervening in Vietnam after the French defeat there, had been able to militarily resist the tide of decolonisation and anti-racism that had been sweeping the world since the end of the Second World War. And they knew that it was not true that the anti-imperialist wave sweeping the world was the result uniquely, or even primarily, of being driven by communist agitation – instead, it was at its heart driven by popular nationalist sentiments similar to those dearly held by Afrikaners themselves.

## 4.2 VORSTER's MOVES TO ACCOMMODATE PRACTICAL REALITY

Early during the Vorster government laws prohibiting multi-racial sports teams were repealed, leading to the break-away of the ultra-conservative HNP, the "Re-founded National Party". Vorster also actively reached out to Black Africa through his détente initiative, meeting and shaking hands with Black heads of state – a simple gesture which Verwoerd as rigid segregationist had refused to do.

Vorster's outreach to Africa and the world had been bearing fruit, as can be seen from the fact that in early 1975 the African Union had been evenly split between those countries supporting the communist-leaning forces in Angola and those who were supporting the forces leaning towards the West. These latter African countries had also favoured moderation towards South Africa, appreciating Vorster's efforts to help resolve the Rhodesia issue and the indications he had given of seeking accommodation about SWA/ Namibia and in South Africa itself ("give us six months and you will not know this country" he had said). Then came the disaster of the SADF's non-mandated mission creep in Angola, culminating in the race to Luanda (Ops Savannah) which ended ingloriously with the Cubans stepping in and the realities on the ground leaving no other option but to abort the operation – which led to the African Union from then on overwhelmingly supporting the MPLA, SWAPO and the ANC, effectively spelling the end of Vorster's détente.

Ops Savannah was an own goal of the gravest consequence, because it burst white South Africa's "bubble of invincibility" in the eyes of Africans, meaning that white rule would henceforth be challenged with increasing confidence and intensity. As started happening only months later, in June 1976, with the outbreak of the Soweto Youth Uprising triggered by ill-conceived "show them who's boss" police action against the marching schoolchildren – what harm could have come from simply allowing them to walk, as the police had done in Durban in 1973?

These events had constituted a turning point, not only for the trajectory of Vorster's reign but for the country. It led to the last years of Vorster's premiership stagnating, with heightened tension within the security/intel-community and leading eventually to the "quiet coup" that saw PW Botha narrowly elected to prime minister in 1978. (Savannah and Soweto were dealt with in detail in the second instalment of this series, and "Info/Muldergate" and the "Quiet Coup" will be revisited extensively later in this chapter).

Yet those last "wasted years" under Vorster weren't without significant internal policy developments – ones which in fact set the scene for the later abandonment of Apartheid by the NP – because what Vorster did, would show up the real-world unworkability of the Verwoerdian dream.

In 1976 and 1977 respectively, two seminal initiatives had been set in motion by Vorster that were in reality the first fundamental steps in starting to move the NP away from rigid Verwoerdian "grand Apartheid" doctrine. These dealt with, on the one hand, the conundrum of "Coloured" (and, by extension, Indian) political rights – two groups for whom a homeland solution was hardly imaginable. On the other hand, there was the issue of organised labour rights for black Africans working in the so-called "white" part of South Africa (where they nevertheless constituted an overwhelming majority of the population).

The black labour initiative resulted from the 1973 Durban labour unrest. These massive protest marches had carried in themselves a far greater explosive potential than the later 1976 Soweto youth march. Fortunately, the Durban situation was expertly handled by the local police, resulting in no bloodshed. It was quickly established by the Port Natal SAP-SB that there was no "communist instigation" behind it, and premier Vorster was prevailed upon to publicly call local industrialists to account for not paying living wages and having reneged on promises made to their workers. (For more detail, see: THE WIDELY PRAISED POLICE HANDLING OF THE 1973 DURBAN STRIKES - Nongqai BLOG )

What the 1973 Durban labour unrest did do, was to put the reality of how essential to the economy black labour had become, front-and-centre. With as corollary the reality of needing to recognise these labourers as permanent within the "white" area. Therefore, the Nic Wiehahn commission of inquiry was established on 8 July 1977. As Wiehahn himself had later testified to the TRC, their aim from the outset was to bring about the demise of Apartheid, by means of negating its central tenet that South Africa (minus the black homelands) is or could ever be a "whites only" state.

In an interview recorded shortly before his passing, FW de Klerk said about Vorster's initiative on labour: "…he did do one thing which changed the face of South Africa and which laid the foundation for the abolition of Apartheid later, and that was in the labour field. He appointed Prof Wiehahn, the Wiehahn Commission, to have a big re-look and to reorganise the whole labour system. This ended up in the Wiehahn Report which ended up in black trade unions being fully recognised having the same rights as all other trade unions and from there onwards the place of the urban black was established in South Africa … And that made a vast difference, so I think that people who say that Vorster didn't do enough are a bit harsh on him."

A similar commission had in March 1973 been appointed by Vorster to inquire into solutions for the challenge of how to accord the "Coloured" population political rights. This was chaired by Dr Erika Theron, and reported on 18 June 1976 (i.e., two days after the outbreak of the Soweto youth uprising, so that it was somewhat overshadowed by that impactful event). Nevertheless, already in August 1976 Vorster appointed PW Botha (as then Cape leader of the NP – the province within which the vast majority of "Coloureds" resided) to head a special committee of senior cabinet members to develop a new constitution that would incorporate those recommendations of the Theron Commission that had been accepted by the government.

A year later, in August 1977, this special cabinet committee's proposals were accepted by the broader Vorster cabinet and then approved by the different NP provincial congresses. What the proposals boiled down to, was a system of three separate parliaments (each with its own prime minster and cabinet) for respectively the whites, Indians and "Coloureds". With each parliament to be responsible for the "own affairs" of each racial group. Matters of common interest would be dealt with by all three parliaments separately, and when and where an harmonisation of positions could not be achieved between them, then a Joint Council of Cabinets would attempt to forge consensus (however, with white members constituted as an effective deciding majority, authorised to break logjams).

The significance of this admittedly unworkable machination was that it nevertheless signalled, for the first time, a definitive movement away from reserving all political decision-making power within so-called "white" South Africa exclusively for whites – which psychologically was a very significant step indeed that Vorster had taken, preparing his electorate for where the trajectory of history was inevitably headed…

When considering the accusations then and today of "stagnation" that had marked the final Vorster years, it should be remembered that during the latter part of Vorster's reign it would have been virtually impossible to convince the ANC/SACP to give up their dream of capturing all power through a USSR-backed Marxist revolution. Because at that time – following the defeat of the USA in Vietnam, and the victory of communist-oriented movements in Angola and Mozambique – the USSR was riding high in public perceptions of power.

The SADF's aborted invasion of Angola had burst South Africa's psychological "bubble of invincibility". Furthermore, the changed geo-strategic reality in the region due to the fall of the Portuguese Empire in 1974 and the fatal blow that Ops Savannah had dealt to Vorster's détente initiative, also inevitably braked the progress that had been made during Vorster's early years as prime minister – which was then further worsened by the 1976 Soweto uprising.

In brief, during the latter years of Vorster's premiership – with communist forces on the ascendancy in Asia and Africa, with Angola and Mozambique in the hands of their comrades after successful guerrilla wars, the ANC would have been highly unlikely to sit down around a table to compromise…

The sense of insecurity generated by these events exacerbated the reality that South Africa's white electorate was not yet ready then for a non-racial democracy. It also sharpened the divisions in the security/intel-community about whether to focus on preparing to "shoot", or to "settle".

The differences in viewpoints between Van den Bergh's BfSS and PW Botha's SADF became ever more heated. To the latter, the mere idea of seeking negotiated settlements in Rhodesia, SAW/Namibia and eventually in South Africa itself, reeked of appeasement.

The stage was thus set for the underhand "quiet coup" that was to bring PW Botha to power, once the so-called "Information Scandal" and his own deteriorating health had weakened Vorster to the point of him deciding in 1978 to resign as Prime Minister and seek the ceremonial presidency.

The goings-on during the "Info Scandal" and the subsequent "Muldergate" show the patterns of division and backstabbing that would mark the "lost decade" that was to follow, so that it is important to review these events here – also because they had a clear bearing on the eventual negotiation process and transition, thus having significantly contributed to where we find ourselves today.

## 4.3 BROADER HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE "QUIET COUP"

Any cursory glance at news coverage of the goings-on in practically every political system on this planet, over all the ages, will show a litany of intrigues, back-stabbing, jealousies and jockeying for position and power. Politicians are and always will be politicians, everywhere. South Africa was (and is) no different.

We Afrikaners may feel (with some reason) that we have seen perhaps more of this than most, through-out our own history. Each one wanting to lead his own trek, in his own direction, believing himself to know best how to save the nation...

Furthermore, as a young nation, South Africa did not possess a centuries-old “institutional memory” of how to do intelligence and strategic decision-making. In our case, the governments of the Union of South Africa (for much of its existence) did not have to concern themselves too much with intelligence about the world at large because London provided input. Pretoria’s focus was thus on local threats, such as right-wing extremists and the SA Communist Party.

This intel-sharing from London was particularly true during the Smuts years, due to his very close relationship with the imperial powers-that-be. He also basically attended to national security policy almost single-handedly during the world wars, being part of the British War Cabinets during both conflicts.

However, when the Afrikaner-based National Party was elected in 1948, things soon began to change. As South Africa moved closer towards becoming a republic outside of the British Commonwealth, the stream of strategic intelligence from London practically dried up.

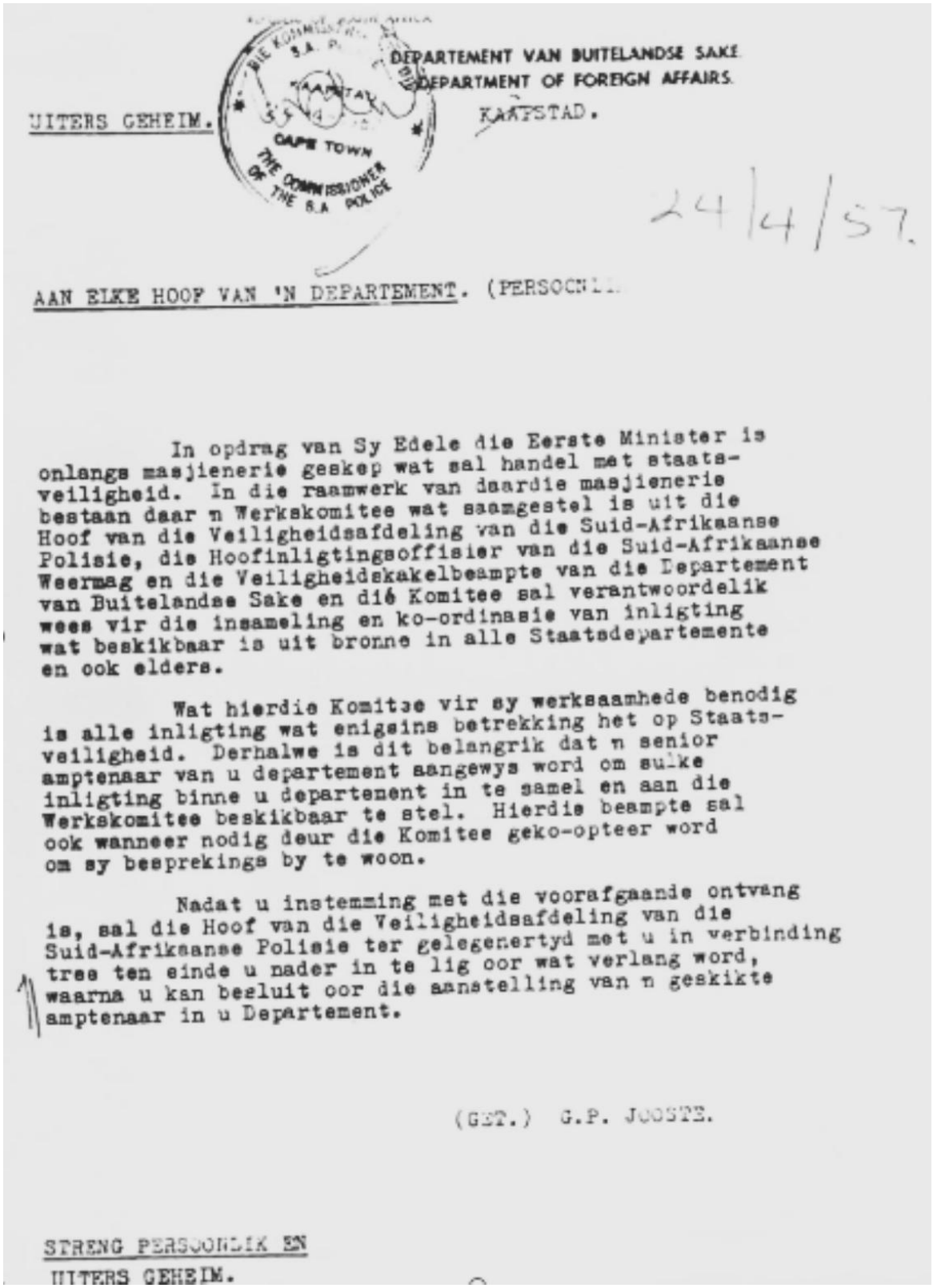
The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) had identified the coming need for an own South African intelligence capability already in April 1957, under Prime Minister JG Strijdom (see copy of circular letter below). You may ask why the DFA were the first to point out this need. In the British system, the UK’s foreign intelligence service, the SIS (colloquially known from wartime as MI6), organisationally forms part of their DFA, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Schooled in the British tradition, it is thus not surprising that the DFA was sensitive to this growing void in our institutional machinery. Knowing the international environment, the DFA could also clearly see the increasing threat that may emanate from abroad against South Africa, as the Cold War intensified and the Third World became more vocally assertive, and as the rapid close of the era of colonialism was signalled by the 1956 Suez crisis.

Knowing how intelligence coordination functioned in other countries, and having seen the attention in, for example, the USA to this need to establish dedicated structures for this (such as the CIA, in 1947) to avoid a repeat of lapses caused by a lack of coordination during the 2nd World War, the DFA was well positioned to draw the spotlight to this matter. It is also true that, up till the premiership of Mr Strijdom the DFA had functioned directly under the Prime Minister himself, from the Union Buildings, so that there was a close nexus with the office of the premier (as illustrated by the letter copied below).

The letter’s gist, translated into English, is that an inter-departmental working group had been established to deal with security intelligence, consisting of the Head of the SAP-SB, the chief intelligence officer of the SADF and the Security Liaison Officer of the DFA, which committee was to be responsible for the collection and coordination of information to be derived from “all departments” in the Public Service and elsewhere.

Noteworthy is that intelligence was (correctly) seen as not just limited to the “security” departments, but as being a responsibility of all departments – in the second paragraph of the letter, which had been circulated to all heads of government departments, it is stated that: “*It is accordingly important that a senior official from your department be appointed to collect such information within your department and to make it available to this working committee.”*



DEPARTEMENT VAN BUITELANDSE SAKE
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
KAAPSTAD.

UITERS GEHEIM.

24/4/57.

AAN ELKE HOOF VAN 'N DEPARTEMENT. (PERSOON

In opdrag van Sy Edele die Eerste Minister is onlangs masjienerie geskep wat sal handel met staatsveiligheid. In die raamwerk van daardie masjienerie bestaan daar n Werkskomitee wat saamgestel is uit die Hoof van die Veiligheidsafdeling van die Suid-Afrikaanse Polisie, die Hoofinligtingsoffisier van die Suid-Afrikaanse Weermag en die Veiligheidskakelbeampte van die Departement van Buitelandse Sake en dié Komitee sal verantwoordelik wees vir die insameling en ko-ordinasie van inligting wat beskikbaar is uit bronne in alle Staatsdepartemente en ook elders.

Wat hierdie Komitee vir sy werksaamhede benodig is alle inligting wat enigsins betrekking het op Staatsveiligheid. Derhalwe is dit belangrik dat n senior amptenaar van u departement aangewys word om sulke inligting binne u departement in te samel en aan die Werkskomitee beskikbaar te stel. Hierdie beampte sal ook wanneer nodig deur die Komitee geko-opteer word om sy besprekings by te woon.

Nadat u instemming met die voorafgaande ontvang is, sal die Hoof van die Veiligheidsafdeling van die Suid-Afrikaanse Polisie ter gelegenertyd met u in verbinding tree ten einde u nader in te lig oor wat verlang word, waarna u kan beslui oor die aanstelling van n geskikte amptenaar in u Departement.

(GET.) G.P. JOOSTE.

STRENG PERSOONLIK EN
UITERS GEHEIM.

Unfortunately, Strijdom's health failed at this stage, leading to long absences from work during this, his last year in office. He passed away in August 1958 and was succeeded by Dr HF Verwoerd.

Dr Verwoerd never demonstrated much interest in strategic intelligence, so that the question of collection, coordination and analysis/interpretation of strategic intelligence for the purpose of informing national policymaking didn't advance under his premiership.

This was not the case when Verwoerd was succeeded by Adv John Vorster in 1966. At the suggestion of his long-time friend, General "Lang Hendrik" van den Bergh (then head of the SAP-SB) Vorster accepted the need for the

already somewhat isolated Republic of South Africa to establish its own civilian national intelligence service to coordinate input from all state entities and provide objective analysis and interpretations.

The main reason behind the need for such an institutionally independent civilian central intelligence clearing house was that experience had shown (such as in Vietnam) that it was virtually impossible for intelligence organs attached to line function departments such as the military, to not succumb to the natural bias of viewing things from their team's perspective. In the case of Vietnam it was illustrated by the overly rosy intelligence assessments that the Pentagon's DIA provided on the course which that conflict had been taking, based on so-called "kill stats" (the exact same issue that had brought me into conflict with Dr Gerrit Viljoen when he was the AG for SWA/Namibia, as earlier recounted in Part Two – it's safe to say that such bias favouring your own department is common, the world over; from there the need for professional analysis and interpretation by experts not beholden to any particular line function silo).

When in 1969 Vorster established such a national intelligence service, headed by Van den Bergh as his National Security Advisor, this gave rise to a storm of criticism and recalcitrance on the part of PW Botha and the SADF, who felt themselves undervalued. Such was the bitterness that Vorster had to appoint a judicial commission under Judge Potgieter, who came up with essentially the same recommendations as those that had underpinned the original founding of the Bureau for State Security.

In Part Two of this Series I explained in some detail the un-edifying goings-on of this era, with "banana republic" style stand-offs with fixed bayonets, mutual wiretappings and a break-in into Van den Bergh's safe by Military Intelligence. Suffice it to say that relations had never been functional – not inter-personally between PW Botha and Van den Bergh, nor institutionally between the military and the intelligence service. This open hostility would form the backdrop to the shocking incidents of back-stabbing, manipulation and – eventually – manifesting as the silent coup of 1978. It was this palace revolution that was to be the immediate cause for the dysfunction and discord that only heightened during the "lost decade".

The causal connection between the dysfunction and discord in the security/intel-community during the "lost decade" and the 1978 coup (to secure the premiership for PW Botha and to eliminate politically any possible impediments to his autocratic rule) is clear to see. It shows the same poisonous mix of inter-personal intrigues driven by individual traits of character (or sometimes lack of character) and policy discord at its root. It was a pattern of conduct that had strengthened through the seventies, thus becoming somehow "normalized", and which fostered the amoral methods that so flourished during that lamentable "lost decade".

## 4.4 THE "INFO-SCANDAL / MULDERGATE"

In Part Two of this series, I had briefly made mention of the "Information Scandal / Muldergate" coup, which had been pulled off when I was still a member of the BfSS / NIS. At that time, though, the real goings-on, including the main players and their personal motivations, were all still shrouded in mystery fed by an enormous amount of media spin directed by the PW Botha camp.

During the eighties much more information of a factual nature became known about what had actually transpired around the coup – such as with what motives it was launched and driven by whom.

Lately, thanks to my own involvement with ***Nongqa***i as co-editor, quite critical evidence became available to me for the first time, allowing for the puzzle to be fitted together. Why had Vorster not nipped it in the bud at the outset? How come the close relationship between Vorster and Van den Bergh had soured? What roles did PW and Pik Botha respectively play?

It is due to the greater availability now of accurate information about the actual events, plus the importance of what had resulted from that coup, that I'm re-visiting it here again. Firstly, it had enabled PW to consolidate his absolute power and thus had established the foundation for the "lost decade". Secondly, one can gain a clearer understanding of the origins of the culture of divisiveness and debilitating dysfunction in the security/intelligence community, by means of now revisiting and exploring in more depth what had actually occurred in 1978 – because

it now allows one to comprehend the then emerging methods and culture that would contribute so greatly to the dysfunction and discord of later years.

I have already described in my Part Two the strong personal aversion that had existed between “Lang Hendrik” van den Bergh and PW Botha when the latter was Defence Minister, and the institutional infighting that had resulted from that (see section 4.4 of Part Two). Bugging of phones and offices, break-ins into safes and the like). PW’s abrasively arrogant and domineering personality is also well-known, so I do not need to expand too much upon it again here – he didn’t acquire the nickname “Groot Krokodil” for nothing (it was joked among his detractors that he was a very balanced person – he had a chip on each shoulder!).

Van den Bergh, for his part, was certainly not a personality loved by all either. My own father respected the acute insight and professional capabilities of the “Lang Man” but he detested Van den Bergh’s tendency to grand-stand and to hog centre-stage, plus his love of hearing his own voice. What my dad also intensely disliked was Van den Bergh’s over-enthusiastic involvement in the inside politics of the ruling party and the Broederbond (my dad – who abhorred such secret organisations and didn’t believe it appropriate for an officer to belong to any of them, never was an AB member, and neither was I). Because of all these dislikes, my dad had opted to stay with the SAP-SB and had not accepted to join the BfSS when it was formed by Lang Hendrik.

Another main player, Dr Eschel Rhoodie (who had headed the Department of Information) was himself also not loved by all, either – as I will show. The substantial circle of people of influence who actively disliked Van den Bergh and Rhoodie would later make the two of them easy targets as scapegoats when their political patrons, Prime Minister John Vorster and his expected successor Dr Connie Mulder, were targeted to be side-lined.

That said, Van den Bergh and Dr Eschel Rhoodie were the brains behind the strategic direction aimed at abandoning racism and preparing for negotiations to “settle” (which the Vorster team had opted for), leading to Vorster’s policy of seeking détente adopted at the end of the sixties.

The two of them thought alike on the main threats and possible solutions – in many ways progressive for their times, whilst on other issues, they trended strongly Afrikaner nationalist “conservative”. They both had understood that the Verwoerdian Grand Apartheid model was neither practical nor did it address key questions, such as “Coloured” (and Indian) political rights and the reality that the bulk of the economically important part of the territory constituting the so-called “white” South Africa, was in actual fact shared territory – with the whites within it, decidedly a minority and destined to become ever more so over time.

What they had both also realised at the fundamental level, was that South Africa’s racist British colonial constitutional heritage and Jan Smuts’s legacy of a highly centralised state had held us **trapped in the wrong paradigm**, namely that of a system defined in terms of **race**. Their instinctive natural preference instead was for an **ethnically defined, group-based** constitutional dispensation affording recognition and opportunity to all groups formed organically through voluntary association, not classification. Quite naturally, they were most concerned about the Afrikaner tribe (after all, they didn’t speak “white”, but Afrikaans – and they understood the damage that defining everything in terms of race was causing).

What Rhoodie and Van den Bergh also had understood was the importance of **process**.

Lip service was indeed being paid by all and sundry to the saying that there needs to be a “political solution” – even by the most ardent “total onslaught” adherents in the military. However, the real issue was: by means of what **process** do we get to a political solution? Do we incrementally enforce it from the top? (could that ever work?). Or was the only process through which a settlement could be reached – one that would be accepted by all concerned as legitimate – through inclusively negotiating a settlement with all leaders of substantive constituencies, in terms of an open agenda? Rhoodie and Van den Bergh had understood that negotiating a settlement was inevitable, and that the strategic priority therefore needed to be to prepare assiduously for such negotiation and have it launched asap, because they had also understood that the government’s bargaining power was diminishing by the day… What would count was to have “a seat at the table” (as the last chapter of Van den Bergh’s unpublished autobiography indeed was entitled) and to hold as strong a bargaining hand as possible.

Hence, the apparent dichotomy of appearing progressive regarding certain things such as getting rid of racism and negotiating a settlement, but "conservative" (as then defined) regarding other matters, such as the preferred modalities of the eventual constitutional model. I will expand more upon what we now know they had had in mind, later in this chapter.

### 4.4.1 STAGE ONE ("INFOGATE"): VORSTER WISHES TO BE RID OF ESCHEL RHOODIE

Eschel Rhoodie's own personality was to play a leading role in his eventual downfall. He hailed from a family of modest means, but whose offspring were endowed with intellectual brilliance (he and his two brothers all three obtained doctorates). He had made his professional career in the Information Department – then a typical, stolidly bureaucratic government department. In its ranks he had made rapid progress, thanks to his dedication, sharp insights and superior "can do" abilities.

When Dr Connie Mulder was entrusted by Vorster with the Information Department (vitally important, because of the key role propaganda played in the contest for political power between the NP Government and its extra-parliamentary foes), the then head of that department, Mr Gerald Barrie, was moved from Information to become the Auditor-general. In September 1972 Dr Eschel Rhoodie was promoted over the heads of other officials to become the new Secretary of Information, before he was even forty years old.

Eschel Rhoodie and Connie Mulder came to form a close professional bond, even though they did not necessarily see eye-to-eye on everything (such as on the urgency of the "Coloured" issue). To cut a long story short, this close relationship with Mulder, plus resentments caused by Rhoodie's rapid rise (coupled with the fact that his brother, Dr Denys Rhoodie, then was made Deputy Secretary of the department) was to come back and haunt Eschel Rhoodie, when he was eventually politically targeted by means of what we would nowadays call "lawfare".

To understand the so-called "Information Scandal" or "Infogate" (later to evolve into "Muldergate") one needs to be aware of these interpersonal dimensions at its root. The other key fact to take note of is that it had played out in **two distinct stages**, of which each had quite different objectives and key players.

Like Van den Bergh, Rhoodie had held a very elevated opinion of himself and his intellectual abilities, which he wasn't in the least demure about. Both men were to be dogged by their tendency to accumulate personal enemies in their wake. In addition, Rhoodie was to suffer the consequences of his outspokenness, as he was perceived to have become "too big for his boots".

This was to be compounded when the saga moved up from the initial personal stage to the national political realm. At first it had been limited to Rhoodie as the target, in the course of which he as individual had been set up for a fall (i.e., to establish valid reason for removing him from his post). The second and much broader and more significant stage of the embroglio revolved around obtaining for PW Botha the premiership and securing his position as undisputed leader. Here the stakes were much, much higher, with the effort to oust Rhoodie from his post inadvertently having served as stepping stone for getting at Rhoodie's political boss and then acknowledged NP crown prince, Dr Connie Mulder, and at Vorster himself (who by that stage occupied the ceremonial role of state president).

This latter stage, the key part of the saga, thus entailed the dirty struggle over who would succeed Vorster as prime minister and about who would hold all the reins of power in South Africa exclusively in his own hands. This was when the coup to install PW Botha, was successfully pulled off. But, back first to how it had all started.

Regarding the task of the Department of Information, Eschel Rhoodie had understood one thing very clearly: propaganda was at the heart of the political struggle being waged. He also understood that the Western media would not, of their own volition, carry any positive news about South Africa. No matter how many perfectly worded press releases the Information Department may put out, or glossy yearbooks it published.

This was not a challenge unique to South Africa – practically all countries of any consequence had come to learn that there were then (before the advent of the internet and social media) only two effective means of getting your message across: you either had to set up (or take control) of media that you yourself owned and could thus direct,

or you had to “incentivise” existing media (with money) to in fact publish your side of the story as well. For the sake of public credibility, the media so used had to appear independent of the government that was “sponsoring” it.

For this reason, most countries had set up (and, to this day, operate) covert structures and projects through which to achieve such means of controlled, assured but supposedly independent information dissemination.

Rhoodie had understood the imperative need to set up an own covert counter-propaganda infrastructure and was supported in it by Van den Bergh, who had also comprehended that the government was, above all, confronted by a **political** power contest – in the deciding of which, **propaganda** would play the leading role. Meaning, that in this form of “warfare” an effective counter-propaganda capability would be as essential as an air defence capability is in case of actual war. This is how Rhoodie himself described it:

“*During the 1970 - 1973 period it also became clear that the policy of separate development on its own would not sell. The only alternative was to simply go over and under the barriers, in order to directly reach the opinion formers and decision makers. Not to play the Apartheid card, but to play our strong ones: South Africa's strategic minerals and metals, the strategic Cape Sea Route, South Africa's stability, its history as an ally in times of conflict, its ability to produce and export food and technology. What we would have to do was to establish lines of communication and create organisations that would, ostensibly, be "independent" but would actually carry South Africa's official message*”.

In December 1973 Vorster’s office had thus issued a circular to all ministers and heads of government departments about a change in vision regarding the responsibilities and methods of the Department of Information. The key sections of this circular letter read as follows:

“*In the light of increasing political and propaganda attacks against the Republic, both in intensity and scope, as well as the unorthodox and sophisticated forms that they take, it has become necessary to adapt accordingly, the function of the Department of Information in promoting national interest in general and national security in particular. This situation poses higher and new demands and the Department's organisation, working methods and means will therefore be adapted to this.*

*“The mandate of the Department of Information and its objective abroad is to convey already announced government policy, as well as all relevant facts concerning the Republic and South- West Africa and its population groups, in all possible ways to the populations of other countries and in particular to opinion formers and decision-makers in all fields*…

“*In carrying out this mandate, it is left to the Minister of Information to determine which methods, means and actions, whether* ***overt or covert****, would be necessary and most effective to achieve the above-mentioned objective*” (emphasis added).

The fundamental problem at an organisational level was, however, that the then Department of Information did not possess the legal infrastructure for waging such a covert campaign. There was no parliamentary provision, in terms of the national budget, for it to have an own account for secret funds (meaning, and account that’s not subject to detailed parliamentary scrutiny – in other words, one such as that which the BfSS and Defence had). There was also no statutory provision for Information to conduct secret operations protected from disclosure by the Official Secrets Act.

Moreover, publicly setting up such statutory infrastructure through parliament by passing new legislation, would have been to give the game away.

Thus, it was decided to channel the necessary funds through the secret account of the BfSS, with Information’s expenditure on secret projects to be verified by the BfSS’s internal auditor. But, since the annual BfSS secret fund allocation was relatively small, so that it would accordingly have raised suspicions if that amount was suddenly significantly pumped up, it was decided that the other main secret fund at the disposal of government (namely the large Defence Procurement fund), would be used as the actual source of the money that would be employed, but still to be made available to Information via the BfSS.

A three-member supervisory team at senior cabinet level, consisting of the Prime Minister himself plus the ministers of Information and Finance, was set up to approve and oversee such covert projects and their funding, and PW Botha as minister of defence would need to sign off on transfers out of the secret funds under his control. The secret funds channelled to Information in this manner did not fall under the detailed audit of parliament's auditor-general (i.e., to the standard type of openly-reported audits as conducted by the auditor-general with regard to expenditure by all other departments; the AG was independent and responsible only to parliament).

Rhoodie, Van den Bergh, and Mulder had considerable success with their covert outreach, right out of the blocks. They had correctly reasoned that one of the best ways with which to counter the intensifying propaganda which painted the South African government as consisting of modern-day racist Nazi's, was to establish the closest possible ties with Israel. This was achieved in short order, leading *i.a.* to an unabashedly public official visit by premier Vorster to Israel, on formal invitation by the latter. Vorster, who had earlier been thinking of retiring because of his health, was thrilled and increasingly began to see his own legacy as centred around a role of peacemaker, particularly regarding Rhodesia and SWA/Namibia.

It was also understood by Rhoodie and Van den Bergh that Western policy towards South Africa would increasingly be influenced by the positions taken towards South Africa by the newly independent African states. Thus, it was essential to reach out to these states. Again, this met with significant success (what became known as the détente initiative). All of which benefited Vorster's local and international stature.

In a September 1976 nationwide poll, 87% of white voters regarded Vorster as a good to excellent prime minister. Significantly, in a poll conducted by *The World* among black readers, 53% thought that John Vorster was a good or excellent prime minister. In the 1977 general election, the NP under Vorster won a two-thirds majority of seats – the largest ever majority in the history of the white parliament.

However, the covert initiatives by Information under Rhoodie to reach out to Israel and African heads of State, did not sit well with many in the Department of Foreign Affairs. Among them was the equally young and ambitious Mr Pik Botha. This group within the DFA felt that all interactions with foreign governments and opinion formers should be the responsibility of Foreign Affairs, and that Information was thus intruding on their terrain.

Having "been there and done it" myself, I believe that those who thought like this, did not sufficiently appreciate the specialist nature of the kind of covert operations involved. Nor did they understand the fact that it was important for the credibility of Foreign Affairs itself, in its management of formal diplomatic relationships, to not be "contaminated" by having its fingers in this sort of activity. This had become clear to me, first-hand, when I had served in the then DFA-run information section of the SA Embassy in Paris in the late eighties – contrary to Rhoodie's Dept of Information, we were, in essence, merely a press liaison section reactively trying to put out fires, with no real means of proactively spreading our message and ensuring that it indeed be aired.

What Eschel Rhoodie had also understood is that even the best marketing expertise and efforts can make little headway if the product being sold is tarnished – in the case of the official policy of Separate Development, by blatant racism. He was, therefore, also keen on the Vorster government urgently and visibly stepping away from the overtly racist practices that had been inherited from the colonial legacy. One key such issue was, for Rhoodie, the position of the "Coloureds" and Indians.

As the second half of the seventies unfolded, Vorster was becoming increasingly frustrated. His détente initiative had been effectively killed by PW's unilateral (and ultimately abortive) attempt to launch a mechanized assault intended to capture Luanda, the capital of Angola (Ops Savannah). The final nail in the coffin of détente was the fall-out from the atrocious way that the local SA Police in Soweto had mismanaged their response to the youth protest that broke out there in June 1976. (It is worth remembering here that, mainly thanks to the outreach managed by the Department of Information and the BfSS in terms of the détente policy, the Organisation for African Unity had been split 50/50 between moderate and radical states before Operation Savannah happened; however, due to the invasion – and a large cash payment made from the communist side to Nigeria's then leadership – the tide subsequently turned and a majority started voting in favour of the Marxist liberation movements).

Eschel Rhoodie, who in the eyes of many had grown too enamoured of his own stature and influence, at this stressful time of rapidly increasing threat levels all round (following on Savannah/Soweto), had become perhaps a bit too brazen in his outspokenness about the urgent need for fundamental change, to leave racism behind once and for all. He was becoming frustrated with the pace of reform under Vorster, who had always placed a high premium on maintaining Afrikaner unity.

In his annual public report about Information's 1976 activities presented in May 1977, Rhoodie went as far as to directly state that in the eyes of the world press Mr Vorster was seen as a man who was unable to control developments in South Africa, and was also unable, or perhaps unwilling, to bring about the necessary changes required to prevent racial conflict. He further wrote that, if inter-group relations in South Africa continued to leave too much to be desired, no amount of money spent abroad, nor any expansion of his department's manpower, would have any effect in furthering South Africa's cause. He concluded his prognosis by saying that foreign opinion of South Africa would not change except through large-scale and imaginative steps inside South Africa and the implementation of proposed Government policies to move away from racial discrimination.

Rhoodie soon enough found out that Vorster was furious about this report, so publicly delivered.

What would then worsen matters beyond tipping point, was that Rhoodie did not know that his old student pal and close family friend, advocate Retief (Rit) van Rooyen – who was also Vorster's personal lawyer – was serving as secret informant to Vorster about all that Rhoodie had been saying to close friends in private, in informal settings. The Rhoodie and Van Rooyen families were extremely close – their wives having been bosom friends from their university days, their children going on holiday together, and Rhoodie eventually buying a neighbouring plot to Van Rooyen's family holiday property in the Cape.

Van Rooyen dutifully had informed Vorster that Rhoodie's views on the "Coloured" issue was "progressive-liberal" (Eschel Rhoodie had even gone so far as to set up, with his brother Nic, a civil society pressure group to try and accelerate change on this issue).

Probably the cherry on the cake was (by Rhoodie's own later admission) that he had complained in private to Van Rooyen over a braai fire that Vorster was becoming a brake on progress. The rather unambiguously vivid analogy that Rhoodie had used, was to describe the "Vorster problem" as akin to the difficulty of extracting an old cork which had got stuck down the inside of a bottle of good wine…

If, with the benefit of hindsight, one should apply the theories taught in Political Science and Management, then what Vorster should have done, ideally, was to summon Rhoodie and demand of him to explain himself. **Listening** to, and reasoning with the man who was, after all, his top executive and counsellor in the crucial domain of the propaganda war, and then perhaps cautioning him about his "forewardness" if afterwards he deemed it necessary. As I will show, one of the biggest problems regarding strategic decision-making was the Afrikaner establishment's insistence on rigid adherence to **groupthink**; enforcing this had largely **stifled critical thinking** and thus the airing and exploration of alternatives. Because truth is that we now know that Rhoodie and Van den Bergh had in fact been prescient and should have been listened to. Thus, in addition to the damage caused by the dismantling of the critically needed counter-propaganda capacity through their sidelining due to the abominable machinations of the Info/Muldergate debacle, the country's strategic decision-making capability also suffered because of the loss of their critical thinking and wise counsel.

It is also true that Vorster could simply have used the enormous authority that he had enjoyed at that stage to just go ahead and fire or move Rhoodie. After the rank insubordination of PW with Savannah, Vorster evidently was sensitive about his authority being undermined and was apparently fearful that Rhoodie (and Van den Bergh) were beginning to run ahead of him.

However, Vorster's style was precisely to avoid direct confrontation – as had been demonstrated when he had kept on PW Botha, even after the Ops Savannah fiasco.

What Vorster had therefore wanted was an ostensible justification, known to the public, so that he could "with cause" rid himself of the cocky Eschel Rhoodie. (Vorster knew that Dr Connie Mulder, then leader of the powerful Transvaal provincial formation of the NP and widely seen as the crown prince likely to succeed Vorster, as well as General van den Bergh, would have been highly upset by any summary firing of Rhoodie; therefore, a plan had to be hatched to first publicly discredit Rhoodie).

Enter Rhoodie's former boss, Gerald Barrie, the auditor general. Who (presumably at the behest of Vorster) had begun to investigate the rather incessant foreign travelling undertaken by Rhoodie and his senior officials, often accompanied by their wives, and often conveniently coinciding with major events such as the Wimbledon tennis… (and with Rhoodie a well-known tennis aficionado).

This investigation immediately confronted Rhoodie with a problem, in that among his overseas trips (all genuine) there had been significant number in fact related to the secret projects paid out of the secret funds (so that the accounting was difficult to reconcile). Also, as had been common even in Barrie's own time as the former secretary of information, these trips had not been pre-authorised in writing by the minister (as required by a strict interpretation of the Civil Service regulations) but had only been verbally approved.

The first suspicion that it was Vorster who had actually been behind the whole audit investigation was when he gave an instruction to Barrie (in front of Mulder, Rhoodie, and Van den Bergh, who had wanted everything stopped so as to protect the secret projects) that Barrie as AG may not investigate or report on any secret project as such, but that he should regard all foreign travel associated with it as indeed falling within the ambit of his investigatory powers. An illogical but very effective arrangement – for checkmating Rhoodie, that is – because Rhoodie would be caught in a situation of being damned if he said anything (which would of necessity entail revealing the secret projects) and equally being damned if he said nothing to defend himself. On the face of it a clever scheme – but, as its unfolding proved, a fatally dangerous one also for Vorster himself. Exactly as a puzzled Van den Bergh had warned the prime minister…

As auditor-general, Barrie was responsible only to parliament, not to the cabinet. So that Vorster could wash his hands and say that he's obliged to let this process play out. As said, Barrie was however instructed by Vorster not to do or reveal anything about the secret projects as such – just to focus on the foreign travel aspect and Rhoodie's management responsibility in that regard.

Barrie, who had been moved to make way for Rhoodie, had clearly not been averse to being entrusted by Vorster with this task. In his enthusiastic investigative endeavours he was happily assisted by other disgruntled former Information officials over whose heads the Rhoodie brothers had been promoted, and who had sufficient inside information that could be used to embellish a case against Eschel Rhoodie for not having been a highly responsible and dutiful custodian of taxpayer funds. Barrie then delivered to Vorster a written report outlining his findings, which report he swore that he and Vorster held the only two copies of.

However, soon enough a photocopy of the key pages of this report ended up in the hands of journalist Kitt Katzin of the Sunday Express...

Who was responsible for the leak? Applying basic tenets of intelligence analysis, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that Vorster himself was behind it (even if it wasn't, necessarily, he himself who personally had handed it over, and even though it must be stressed that no concrete evidence had ever emerged).

What leads one to this conclusion, is the reluctance of Vorster to intervene and use his immense influence – firstly, right when Barrie's investigation started (when he simply and very logically could have ordered that all travel related to secret projects was also classified, and thus off limits to Barrie). Secondly, when Rhoodie and Van den Bergh began scrambling to try and do damage control when on Friday 28 April 1978 Katzin had approached Dr Mulder for comment on the revelations contained in the photocopied report (Katzin had promised to give Mulder a week within which to comment, intending to publish the following Sunday). Mulder, Van den Bergh, and Rhoodie then had made an appointment to meet with and inform Vorster.

Through a process of logical deduction, it appears today that the photocopy had ended up with Katzin not from Barrie, but indeed from the original held by Vorster. It is alleged that a certain cabinet minister (most likely Vorster's then new confidant, Pik Botha) had somehow come into possession of the photocopy and had prevailed upon an MP to take it to the Afrikaans newspaper ***Beeld*** (which had refused to publish it) from where it found its way to Katzin. Did Vorster directly instruct someone to make the copy and see to it that it ends up in the hands of the press? Or did he share and discuss it with a cabinet colleague close to him, who then decided that it would benefit himself if this would become public? Or a combination of the two possibilities? Was it done only with Rhoodie as target, or also to start discrediting Mulder as potential successor (Vorster wasn't enthusiastic about Mulder succeeding him and wanted a more overtly *verligte* to eventually take over from him). No-one knows for sure…

Tellingly, when told about Katzin's intent to publish, Vorster did not try to have publication stopped – he instructed Van den Bergh to tell Katzin that he may proceed to make public those parts revealing the foreign travel expenses, but nothing about the related projects as such, which was deemed classified information because of the BfSS angle (i.e., being projects executed by Information, but with BfSS secret funds). This restriction Katzin did in fact respect.

The publication of Katzin's article had immediately set in motion some serious digging by other journalists, and they soon enough found willing sources among disgruntled former Information officials who had felt themselves wronged by the Rhoodie brothers and their rapid promotion. Accordingly, more and more scoops were forthcoming, exactly as Van den Bergh had predicted. So that Vorster increasingly had to go into damage control mode.

When Vorster eventually made a statement to parliament about what he deemed to have been unacceptable failings at the Department of Information under Rhoodie's stewardship with regard to proper accounting and strict adherence to Treasury regulations, Eschel Rhoodie had only one honourable way out, namely, to take early retirement.

Instead of providing closure, however, all that this first phase of the "Information Scandal" achieved was to set the scene for much worse to come – which would eventually backfire spectacularly on Vorster himself and, also, then be slyly exploited to doom Mulder's candidacy to succeed Vorster as premier.

When the attention to Information's secret projects refused to die down, Vorster instructed that Lood Reynders, the BfSS's internal auditor of the secret accounts, should do a detailed investigation into the financial affairs of Information's secret projects and prepare a report on it.

Reynders did this and in his three-paragraph report he came to the conclusion that there had been no self-enrichment, misappropriation or wrongdoing of any kind.

Vorster sat on this report. We shall shortly see how he, in the end, chose to use and manipulate this report to the detriment of Rhoodie and Mulder in particular, even though it could have exonerated them if published expeditiously, and in the form drafted by Reynders…

The evident miscalculation on Vorster's part (from the first day that this scheme to get rid of Rhoodie had been planned), was his apparent belief that it would be possible to contain the fall-out and limit it to Rhoodie only. Van den Bergh, with his usual perspicacity, had warned Vorster from early on that the matter had the potential to bring his government down; Lang Hendrik – as well as Rhoodie and Mulder – at the time could not understand why Vorster did not immediately nip it in the bud and, on the contrary, seemed to be facilitating for it to continue playing out.

On the 21st of August 1978 the death was announced of State President and former finance minister Dr Nico Diederichs, who upon his passing had held the ceremonial presidency of the Republic. At this stage Vorster himself was suffering increasingly serious health problems. His signature détente policy was dead, and in all senses running the NP and the government was becoming more difficult and taxing by the day. He accordingly seized upon this opportunity to hand off the onerous duties of the premiership, in exchange for the ceremonial ones of

the presidency (and the protection that that would afford). In other words, he would resign as prime minister and put forward his name for election as state president – it having been a foregone conclusion that he would be elected to that position, given the tremendous esteem in which he was then still held.

This, Vorster publicly announced on Wednesday the 20 September 1978 (in the conference room of the Union Buildings, which was packed). He had only one person at his side – his new protégé. The man he had appointed to the high-profile position of Minister of Foreign Affairs just a year before, as the youngest of his cabinet members. The then 44-year-old Pik Botha.

A year later, Vorster would state that: "*One of the biggest mistakes I've made in my life, if not the biggest, was to trust Pik Botha*".

Vorster could not openly try and influence the NP caucus, whose task it was to elect the new prime minister. But the symbolism of having Pik Botha at his side on stage (and no other minister) was not lost on anyone. The two other contenders for the premiership would be Dr Mulder as the Transvaal leader, and PW Botha as the Cape leader (Pik at that stage enjoyed much favour with the general public because of his eloquent appearances on TV, but in reality had no hope at all of being elected by his caucus colleagues, who had come to know him better than the public did – his role would, in effect, be that of spoiler / kingmaker).

With Mulder deemed to be in the pound seats, what the other two candidates needed to do was to strip away some support from him, by hook or by crook.

When advocate Retief van Rooyen heard it announced that his patron, John Vorster, had decided to resign as prime minister, he had to urgently review his own interests, as well as "those of the country" (as, by his own lights, he saw the latter to be). He decided that his best choice regarding whom to cultivate as new political patron was Pik Botha, who he had known from student days and with whom he had formed part of South Africa's legal team at The Hague in the case over South-West Africa. As regards the "best interest of the country", he convinced himself that it was his duty to prevent the "*triumvirate of Mulder, Rhoodie, and Van den Bergh to take over and establish a dictatorship*".

Retief van Rooyen was now ready to play his trump card. He arranged to urgently meet with Pik Botha. Through Vorster's recommendation, he (Van Rooyen) had some years before been enlisted as a paid agent for the Department of Information, intimately involved with some of its most sensitive secret projects. For example, knowing about the secret project that had succeeded in getting James Mancham elected as president of the Seychelles, and Rhoodie's related trips to those islands under cover of "diving excursions". Also, it was Van Rooyen who had been employed to set up and ostensibly manage the front company Thor Communicators, used for channelling funds employed in the acquisition and influencing of media outlets.

Most importantly, Retief van Rooyen also knew about the politically most explosive of Rhoodie's media acquisition operations ("explosive" as judged in terms of South Africa's internal politics). Which then was still completely unknown to the media and the public. His possessing this information was due to his role as lawyer in the launch of *The Citizen* newspaper in Johannesburg, which had been set up to have at least one English-language daily not openly hostile to the government.

Van Rooyen knew that these delicate secret projects would be news to Pik Botha, since information about them had always been made available only to a very limited number of ministers on a need-to-know basis, and in any event, the projects had been approved before Pik Botha had become a minister. His assumption that Pik Botha would see the potential of this information for damaging Mulder in the race for the premiership, was immediately proved correct.

Upon being informed and seeing the potential for mischief-making, Pik Botha instantly took the decision to get hold of PW Botha. The priority interest of both Pik and PW was to weaken Mulder – otherwise the Transvaal leader would likely win on the first round of caucus voting. Pik also knew that PW couldn't under the best of circumstances win against Mulder on his own, so that the votes that Pik could siphon off Mulder and channel PW's way for winning

in a second round, would serve to provide him (Pik) with considerable leverage in any resulting PW Botha cabinet and allow him to position himself for the next leadership election…

PW arranged post haste for a military plane to fly Pik and Van Rooyen down to Cape Town for a strategy session. There it emerged that Van Rooyen's revelations about *The Citizen* (already explosive enough in its own right) and about the other overseas publications bought or financially supported by Information via Thor Communicators, could tie in perfectly with another "black ops" type of effort designed by the PW team to discredit Mulder in the eyes of his NP caucus colleagues. This latter was to be the kill shot – never mind that it had no basis in fact, nor in morality either.

On the Tuesday the 25th of September the cabinet met for the last time under Vorster's premiership, with much of the session taken up by well-wishing on the part of ministers. The other matter on the agenda, was the release of the three-paragraph Reynders report. Reynders had stated that his was an audit report, as per the instructions he had received, which looked at whether all the funds allocated had been properly applied and accounted for, with none of it used for personal gain (in other words, he did not investigate the strategic merit of the projects as such, since that dimension had fallen outside of his mandate). The report – which was categorical about the fact that no funds had been mis-appropriated by anyone – was discussed in detail, to the satisfaction of cabinet. Pik Botha had at the end of the meeting raised the (hitherto unknown) issue of "The Citizen" newspaper, but that was also explained to the satisfaction of cabinet.

However, when the report was published on the morning of Wednesday the 26th of September, it suddenly contained four paragraphs – a new one (which had not served before cabinet) had been added at the end. This paragraph had been shrewdly worded to leave the impression that the matter was not yet concluded, stating that the evaluation of the projects as such will be continuing…

Dr Mulder immediately realised how damaging this last paragraph would be for his chances in the race for the premiership. When he contacted Vorster about this, Vorster's excuse was that it had been crazy busy in his office the previous day; he (Vorster) had sent the original through to Neville Krige to be published, and Krige then apparently cleared the added last paragraph with "somebody", with Krige probably having "misunderstood the instruction". When Mulder eventually went to Krige personally and enquired about the origin of the fourth paragraph, Krige still had the original document which he had been instructed to publish. Beneath the three original Reynders paragraphs had been added the last, handwritten paragraph. Which was in the handwriting of Vorster himself…

This incident serves as further proof that it almost certainly was Vorster himself who had initiated the entire debacle, and who had persisted even when it started going seriously wrong, because of his soured personal relations with Rhoodie and Van den Bergh (because of their criticism of the stagnation that had set in). It seems logical that Vorster then turned against Dr Mulder because he believed that Mulder would entrust the two with key positions in his government, should he have been elected prime minister.

Be that as it may – despite the Reynders report having been deftly converted from being conclusive to being a sword dangling anew over Mulder's head, his position in the cabinet and caucus still was strong. On Thursday the 27th of September two senior ministers, Piet Koornhof and Jimmy Kruger, formally nominated Mulder for premier. It was then that the dark machinations on the part of PW and Pik became deeply disturbing.

It so happened that, at that time, a judicial inquiry chaired by judge Anton Mostert was investigating the problem of ever more frequent transgressions of the currency control regulations that prohibited the unauthorized sending abroad of funds from South Africa (these exchange control measures had as objective to prevent funds from leaving South Africa in such amounts that it would harm the stability of the local financial system). Evidently, Thor Communicators had been handling the transfer abroad of significant sums of money, thus providing an ostensible rationale to the anti-Mulder conspirators for presenting Thor's activities as being of interest to the Mostert Commission…

The long and the short is that Van Rooyen was expeditiously set up to testify before judge Mostert, and soon thereafter – in the hours prior to the election in caucus on Friday the 28th of September – the totally false story started circulating among NP caucus members (fed by PW and Pik adherents) that Mostert was about to subpoena Mulder to come testify before his commission, regarding a rumoured amount of R2 million that Mulder himself allegedly had surreptitiously transferred abroad to a supposed personal Swiss bank account of his.

Given the febrile state of matters thanks to the seemingly interminable Information saga that had, by then, been stewing away for some time and apparently never ceased to produce some startling new revelation, a persuasive context clearly now existed that made these allegations seem believable to some caucus members who otherwise would have supported Mulder. (The angle of approach to them was: "can we, considering the interest of the party, afford to elect a man to be our leader and prime minister, if within 24-hours he is going to receive a summons from a judge about R2 million illegally sent to his personal Swiss bank account?").

On 28 September 1978 the NP caucus elected, on the second round of voting, PW Botha as the new prime minister. He beat Mulder by the narrowest of margins (a question of only six votes), thanks to two things: the Transvaal support that Pik Botha had siphoned off and channelled to him, plus of course the impact of the votes that Mulder had been deprived of by means of the outright lie that had been spread about the supposed summons (of which nothing ever came, not from judge Mostert or any other investigative entity in South Africa, nor has any modicum of proof ever surfaced that Mulder had owned a personal Swiss bank account, or that he ever had transferred any amount of money whatsoever to anything approximating such an account).

It is, of course, unknowable what benefit or harm a Mulder premiership would have held for South Africa, so that I'm not recounting here this amoral political trick because of some now quite senseless pining for Mulder to in fact have been elected. I'm recounting it here to show what manner of conduct our politics had sunk to back then, within and by the governing party and its top leadership. Because it casts a light on the dysfunction and discord that was to continue to plague the security/intel-community and cabinet during the "lost decade".

To clarify my own thinking back at that time: like most NP supporters I had then in good faith believed the investigative processes into the "Info Scandal" and "Muldergate" to have been *bona fide.* I had stuck with the NP, despite it then having PW as leader – in Frankfort I had been the local NP branch chairman, for example working hard to get the "yes" option accepted in the November 1983 referendum on PW's Tri-Cameral parliament proposal. I had felt no personal liking for PW Botha. To the contrary! (I had seen too much during my BfSS / NIS days, especially regarding Ops Savannah and his handling of SWA/Namibia).

I certainly didn't believe PW to have been more inherently "*verlig*" (progressive) than Rhoodie, Mulder, and Van den Bergh when it came to what mattered most. In fact, as regards the fundamentals such as the need for a negotiated settlement regarding a new non-racial constitutional dispensation, I had regarded PW as decidedly reactionary and authoritarian. I also then believed, and still do, that had Mulder won, we would have seen a much more rapid moving away from overt racism to an ethno-cultural group approach, as well as towards a much more negotiation-based approach towards the process of establishing a new constitutional dispensation.

Here is a translation of extracts from a contribution that Dr Mulder had made in 1973 to a book published by the National Party to commemorate its 25 years in power:

*"The short-sightedness of previous eras and previous leaders with regard to this specific issue* (i.e., political rights for non-whites) *is almost astonishing when one looks back on it now. That leaders in the previous century* (i.e., 19th), *even at the beginning of this century, saw few problems with regard to the developing and emerging non-White peoples of Southern Africa, is beyond human comprehension. They reacted and acted as if the Whites would of course be perpetually in a position of power and the others would be perpetually content with the position they have historically and traditionally occupied in this continent.*

*"In these past 25 years, however, the root of the whole matter has been penetrated, namely, that South Africa is inhabited by different peoples who, as time progresses, will each claim their right as a people and as a human being and that in that process the opportunities must be created for them to then exist side by side in full national*

*dignity and human dignity in peaceful coexistence, without threatening or trying to destroy each other in an effort for self-preservation and self-promotion."*

Here are some extracts from an article in The Argus of 9 June 1978, about a speech that Dr Mulder had made the day before to students of the University of Pretoria (i.e., three months before the NP caucus elected a new premier):

*"Southern Africa 20 years from now will be a family of nations* ("volke") *similar to that of Western Europe, the Minister of Plural Relations and Development, Dr CP Mulder, has predicted.*

*"Each nation* ("volk") *must have political sovereignty but they will all be militarily, socially and economically* ***interdependent****", he told several hundred students* (emphasis added).

*Dr Mulder said blacks and coloured people must be dealt with on the same level as whites. "We must treat each other as equals. I will accept the next man for what he is and I expect him to deal with me in the same way. The key to success lies in our own hands. If we can get relations between our peoples right, then Africa will take another look at us. They will want us to join the Organisation of African Unity because we will strengthen them economically, militarily and socially", he said.*

(It should be noted that the English language does not have an exact translation for the Afrikaans "*volk*" which Mulder had obviously been using when addressing the Tukkies students; it is often translated as "nation" but it actually trends more towards "my people" or "my tribe").

Mulder was, to my mind, more ethno-nationalistic than just purely a racist white supremacist. He had, for instance, suggested that a more culturally and language-based approach to defining and projecting our identity was needed, thus emphasising Afrikaans and "*Afrikanerskap*" because of the Afrikaner's intrinsic African-ness (as accepted by Black Africa in the Lusaka Manifesto). This Mulder wished to see happen in the place of the essentially vacuous defining of us as "white" – which latter is devoid of any cultural or linguistic content and merely a record of our skin colour (and thus inherently racist). Of course, Mulder was heavily criticised for this in the English-language media, as if he had something against English-speaking South Africans…

PW Botha, on the other hand, was increasingly emulating Smuts with the fundamentally racist "white nation" approach (perhaps because of his association with the SADF and conscription, which made emphasis on whiteness a numbers multiplier – although, if Afrikaans had been accepted as the defining norm and the "Coloureds" integrated on the basis of sharing the same language, religion and culture, then of course their numbers would have far exceeded that of English-speaking "white" South Africans).

Nevertheless, given the party-political options available around 1983 and the fact that I had even less love for the die-hard racist element on the hard-right, such as the HNP, I did at the time actively support the NP and thus, by necessity, PW Botha as its leader.

However, with what I now know, I can clearly see that the shenanigans during "Muldergate" had done much to lay the foundation for and make the dysfunctional scheming, back-stabbing and discord that marked the "lost decade" a part of our political culture…

A further point to clarify, is that when I refer here to the 1978 palace revolution or bloodless coup, I'm not referring to the fact or manner of Vorster being replaced as prime minister – John Vorster had, after all, voluntarily chosen to resign from that position. He himself had also been the intellectual author of Stage One of the "Infogate" affair, aimed at adducing reasons (that Mulder could not take exception to) for getting rid of Rhoodie. When talking about the 1978 *coup* I'm therefore talking about how the Stage One "Infogate" was subsequently finessed for PW to gain the premiership, and thereafter (in the form of the Stage Two "Muldergate"), to be totally rid of any threat that Vorster as president or Mulder as Transvaal NP leader could pose to PW's unfettered control of the NP and government.

We'll now look more closely at this second phase, which by now had become known as "Muldergate". In particular, at the amoral "lawfare" that had been liberally employed in its course. As an initial orientation for you, the reader, it needs to be stressed here that Lood Reynders, in his audit of Information's use of the secret funds channelled to it, had found no evidence of abuses. Similarly, general Christie Zietsman, then head of the Police's detective division (who had also looked into the matter) had also dismissed any notion that there had been any theft or misappropriation of taxpayer funds. And, last but not least, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court had, in the end, unanimously overturned all charges that had been brought against Eschel Rhoodie.

It can thus be confidently stated that, despite the media's spin of lurid tales, there had been no abuse of taxpayer funds for personal gain (which is not to say that there wasn't a lack of the necessary sensitivity and discretion on Rhoodie's part, as to how some of the spending decisions would be perceived by the public if dished up to discredit him – such as choosing to fly Concord across the Atlantic, or the timing of certain trips to fortuitously coincide with big events abroad…).

We will look at this from the perspective of how "Infogate/Muldergate" had helped to set up, in terms of an insidiously growing culture, the security/intel-community and cabinet for the dysfunction and discord that was to reign in the critical domain of strategic decision-making during the "lost decade". When the existing statute-based system of objective, professional civilian intelligence coordination and interpretation (under the stewardship of the NIS) was substituted by the PW-decreed NSMS, which he ensured that the SADF controlled, contrary to the legal framework that parliament had established.

What the upcoming sections will hopefully do, is to highlight for you the negative impact of **enforced groupthink** – of punishing critical thinking. It bears stressing here, again, that the objective is to learn from what had happened, so as to cast light on the roots of the later dysfunction. Which occurred because officials had lost respect for their political masters (due to these shenanigans), and then had engaged in the same kind of divisive and dysfunctional activity in their inter-departmental tiffs. And at cabinet level, senior ministers themselves would continue to play these games, trying to paint each other into corners or to block necessary initiatives by any means at hand. Exactly as we had seen in the case of the Rubicon speech and the handling of the EPG visit, for example – to the great detriment of the country.

With very, very serious consequences indeed for the eventual bargaining power available to the DE Klerk government's negotiators…

### 4.4.2 STAGE TWO ("MULDERGATE"): PW BOTHA WANTS TO BE RID OF MULDER & VORSTER

Having secured his election with the help of the handful of votes Pik Botha had siphoned off from Mulder, but thanks mainly to the unsubstantiated rumour that had been put into circulation alleging that Mulder was about to be summoned by a judge over a supposed R2 million illegal funds transfer to a (non-existent) personal account in Switzerland, PW Botha had no more use for either Retief van Rooyen or Judge Mostert. Shortly after winning the premiership, PW terminated the Mostert commission; Van Rooyen was simply cast aside.

Mulder seems to have adopted a kind of "*oh well, you win some, you lose some*" attitude about his loss. What he couldn't accept, though, was the cloud over his good name due to that rumour about the alleged R2 million. He therefore approached PW, insisting that a judicial commission of inquiry composed of three judges of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court be appointed. In the discussion between Mulder and Botha, PW had been conciliatory, mentioning that it was important for the unity of the NP as party that he and Mulder be seen to get along; to Mulder, PW also seemed amenable to the appointment of such a top-level judicial commission.

Mulder was therefore surprised and disappointed when in November 1978 PW appointed what was to become known as the Erasmus commission (officially known as the: "Commission of Inquiry into Alleged Irregularities in the Former Department of Information"), chaired by a hitherto little-known Free State provincial division judge, Rudolph Erasmus, with two civil servants from the PW Botha camp as his fellow commissioners.

It is noteworthy how this commission decided to go about its task: the chairman claimed for himself the role of inquisitor, to directly engage with and question witnesses (i.e., not content with having the commission's advocate

lead evidence). Individuals who were clearly being accused of wrongdoing (such as Eschel Rhoodie, in particular) were not allowed to cross-examen witnesses who were making such accusations against them. Neither were they allowed to call witnesses on their own behalf. Nor did the commission accept documentary proof offered, unless they had asked for it themselves. In other words, it was a travesty, from a legal perspective – an entirely one-sided political lynching.

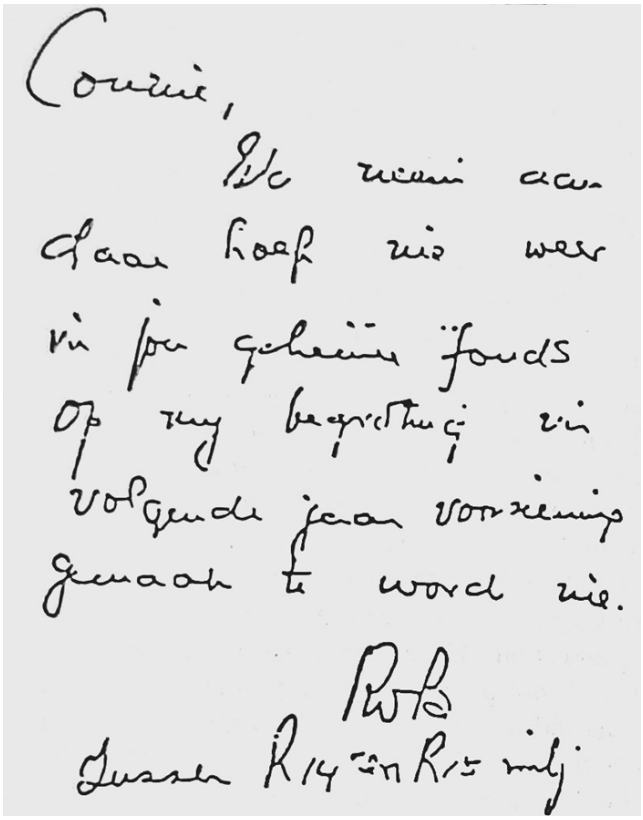
The commissioners clearly did not believe that the actual record of these proceedings (which were tape-recorded) would one day become available to the public. A telling example of how Erasmus conducted matters can be gleaned from that recording regarding the evidence of Mr Lood Reynders of the BfSS (who had audited Information's secret project expenses and had given it a clean bill of health). He was being pushed to make an admission to the effect that he had only found so, because "he had been afraid of General van den Bergh". Five times in succession Reynders had strenuously denied this, on the record.

Exasperated, Erasmus then abruptly adjourned the proceedings and called Reynders into a back room, where they stayed in conversation for a while. When they re-emerged and proceedings resumed, Reynders now testified that he had indeed been afraid and had only issued his "false" certificate because he had been pressured into doing so by Dr Mulder and Van den Bergh. On the tape, it is recorded that Reynders ended up asking the commission "Is that what the advocate wanted me to say?"

Continuing his testimony (being led by the counsel for the commission) leading questions were now blatantly put to Reynders, for him merely to confirm. At one stage, Erasmus intervened to add pressure, instructing Reynders to "Say you also thought so."

The tape reveals that Erasmus had also done this with other witnesses – in the case of Minister Piet Koornhof (who had a bit of a tendency to waffle), Erasmus had put words in his mouth with a string of leading questions that Koornhof then answered only with "correct".

All the cabinet ministers called to testify swore that they had absolutely no knowledge of the secret projects and their funding – including PW Botha himself. This was nothing other than bare-faced lying to cover themselves, flying in the face of the known facts (as well as of simple logic, and also of documentary proof – which latter, the commission had refused to consider).


Connie,
Ek neem aan
daar hoef nie weer
vir jou geheime fonds
op my begroting vir
volgende jaar voorsiening
gemaak te word nie.
PWB

One such document is a note, hand-written and initialled by PW himself, in which he had asked then Information Minister Mulder: "Connie, I presume that there's no need to again provide for your secret fund on my budget for next year. PWB". This is a copy of that note:

When the commission brought out its interim report, it completely exonerated all the ministers, except for Mulder. Neither Owen Horwood nor John Vorster (who, with Mulder, were the three ministers that had formed the committee that had supervised and approved the projects) were deemed by the commission to have known anything about anything! Equally, PW Botha (whose department had actually provided the funds from its secret account, and whose top officials were demonstrably, on the record, involved with some of the projects) was completely exonerated.

After that first report that had targeted Rhoodie, Mulder, and Van den Bergh as the unique "wrongdoers", Mulder was no longer willing to testify again before the commission. Van den Bergh had refused from the outset, asserting that the commission was nothing other than a rigged political witch-

hunt. When PW supporters started circulating a petition country-wide to have Van den Bergh prosecuted for his refusal, he went down to Church Square in Pretoria and himself signed one such petition, publicly daring PW Botha to charge him. Nothing came of it, because the then Police Commissioner, General Mike Geldenhuys, had soon enough formally warned PW that it would be a huge mistake to afford the "*Lang Man*" his day in court, since the Police knew that Van den Bergh had all the evidence on his side…

Who was Rudolph Erasmus? Prior to the change of government after the 1948 election, he had been a "Smuts man" who had been part of the United Party information apparatus. However, when the political winds shifted, he was quick to switch his allegiance to the NP. He became close to the NP's Free State provincial leader, Alwyn Schlebusch, and thus began acting as the Free State NP's legal advisor. (PW was himself a born Free Stater, and Schlebusch had acted as one of his principal agents during the short but intense campaign for the election of the new prime minister).

Recently, in my latter-day capacity as ***Nongqai'***s co-editor, some very revealing eyewitness evidence became available to me about what had really been going on "behind the scenes" regarding the Erasmus commission. It will suffice here to cite fully, one such example which illustrates the conspiratorial nature of the plot and the sham of the Erasmus Commission having been an "independent" judicial inquiry.

On 16 December 2022, as co-editor of ***Nongqai***, I personally spoke at length with Warrant Officer Barry Swart, who during the seventies was a member of the SA Police's Special Task Force (STF). Part of the STF's functions was VIP protection. Barry was at that time the only STF member who was also a member of the Afrikaner-Broederbond (AB). He was one of the very youngest AB members. He lived in the Wonderboom constituency of Mr Pik Botha (1970-74; later Pik Botha represented Westdene, on his return to parliament after having served as ambassador to the UN/USA). Barry Swart, who was politically active within and on behalf of the NP, therefore knew Pik Botha and Pik knew him – both in the constituency context and within the AB.

Barry suspects that, as a result of his AB membership and the surmised "political reliability" associated with it, he was appointed as the personal bodyguard and chauffeur for Judge Rudolph Erasmus. Because of the access that Barry had in terms of his official duties, but also because of his position of trust as fellow AB member, Barry was directly exposed to the personal interactions surrounding the commission's operation, and therefore in a position to be able to form a valid judgment as to whether the Erasmus Commission was in fact an objective, unfettered exercise of judicial impartiality, or a political "hit job" under the guise of law ("lawfare", as we would now call it).

Barry's opinion on this matter is unequivocal – during our conversation (which was "on the record", for publication in ***Nongqa***i) he told me: "*Dit was 'n gekonkel*" (it was an underhand conspiracy").

As one concrete example of this, Barry mentioned that one day at the beginning of the commission's investigation he was instructed to drive Judge Erasmus to the official residence of Min. Pik Botha in Pretoria. Known to both these two principals and apparently trusted by them, he was invited to lunch with them and was not asked to leave the room when they began to discuss in detail the judicial investigation and how it should – according to Pik's wishes – be conducted by Erasmus. Barry's clear recollection is that the whole thrust of Pik Botha's conversation with the judge was to tell Erasmus (as Barry said: "*he told him*") about how to "handle" Mr BJ Vorster (then still state president). Pertinently, "*how to manage the investigation in order to get rid of Vorster*". Furthermore: "*I could clearly deduce that people were against Connie Mulder*".

Barry did not have a particular personal preference or dislike in relation to any of the politicians involved and his communication to me of these facts was therefore not motivated by any grudge. Barry also unhesitatingly agreed that his account may be published by ***Nongqai*** and that he may be cited by name as its source (I had sent him my summation of our conversation to check, which he approved without alterations). Barry resigned from the AB in 1981, over what he saw as the culture of "conspiratorial plotting" that surrounded the AB.

As indicated above, the commission's interim report had exonerated Vorster completely. This did not serve PW's purposes. It is alleged that, when Erasmus was coming back from a meeting with PW, he was overheard to have said that he wishes that these politicians would make up their +%$ minds as to what exactly they wanted…

PW needed the still influential Vorster entirely removed from the political scene, because even in the ceremonial post of state president, Vorster could still have a significant impact on policy and thinking within the NP.

In stark contrast to the interim report (which had entirely exonerated Vorster) the final report of the commission was, accordingly, damning about Vorster's role with regard to Information's secret projects. It left Vorster with no other option, politically, but to resign as state president, which he did. Not long after, he died – an embittered man.

Similar to the later surfacing of the original tapes of the commission's proceedings, the actual draft of the final Erasmus report also later surfaced. What was noticed, was that this draft was adorned with handwritten edits and amendments – but not in the handwriting of any one of the three commissioners (which fact they each had acknowledged, swearing that they had not made the changes).

These "third party" changes to the draft had then been adopted into the final report. Which meant that a criminal offence had been committed – someone outside of the actual commission had been given the opportunity to alter the text as submitted by the commissioners, leading thereto that a final version different to the report crafted by the actual commissioners (and which served that outside person's political needs) was presented to the state president as the commission's final report (such commissions are technically appointed by the president and report to him).

Nothing ever came of the investigation as to who the culprit was… (It is ironic that Vorster was "hanged" by the same method he himself had used, to change the thrust of the Reynders report).

Apart from condemning Vorster to opprobrium, the final report also made mention of the alleged "conspiracy" by the triumvirate of Mulder, Rhoodie, and Van den Bergh to manipulate the election of the new prime minister so that Mulder could win and the three of them then supposedly would establish a "dictatorship".

Contrary to his initial willingness to trust the commission, when Dr Connie Mulder realised what had in reality been its objective and methods, he refused to accept its findings, and for that he was expelled from the NP. Here is a short videoclip of him explaining the reasoning behind the Department of Information's secret projects – reasons which (given the fact that South Africa's future would be decided by the propaganda war, rather than a military contest) were entirely logical (the clip also illustrates Dr Mulder's clear understanding of the need to be focused on improving relations with the Black African population): **YouTube Dr Mulder**

The person most singled out as scapegoat was Eschel Rhoodie. Subsequently he was criminally charged, his passport (and that of his wife) were confiscated, there was an attempt by the state attorney to sequestrate his estate, and the PW-controlled Afrikaans media went after him at a personal level with a vengeance. Rhoodie spent six months in jail in France, waiting to be extradited to South Africa. Where, in the end, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court (in other words, the then top court in the land) unanimously overturned the findings of the prior proceedings against him.

Here is a short video where Rhoodie himself alleges that he was made the scapegoat, and where he confirms his belief that South Africa absolutely needed the kind of counter-propaganda capacity that he had built – stating at the end of the clip that all countries engage in this kind of covert influencing operation and that South Africa had needed it "more than anybody else": **YouTube Dr Rhoodie**

Was Rhoodie targeted by Vorster because of his criticism about the stagnation? In other words, the truth about the urgent need for make progress with needed reforms, but expressed inconveniently and too personally? Was Vorster then, in the end, hoisted on his own petard? Was it really due to all of the devious manoeuvring that PW Botha won election as prime minister – something which had shortly before the caucus election still looked highly unlikely? The answer to all three questions is, in my humble opinion, a resounding "yes".

The consequences of the Infogate/Muldergate affair in fact went far wider than the 1978 leadership election. Its machinations served as clear forerunner to the dysfunction and discord that had reigned under PW Botha. However, before we deal with the dysfunction and discord during the "lost decade" and in order to better understand the role of personalities who drove it, we first need to look deeper at the other principal characters who

had come to occupy centre stage during the Info/Muldergate affair, as well as later, in relation to the manipulations, backstabbing and "own goals" scored under PW's reign – Pik Botha, and Hendrik van den Bergh.

## 4.5 THE MULTI-FACETED MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, PIK BOTHA

Roelof F. (Pik) Botha was undoubtedly popular among white voters in South Africa. He was by far the cabinet minister best able to handle television. He was media savvy, intelligent, and articulate. However, despite these talents, he wasn't ever popular in the NP caucus, nor was he widely admired in Foreign Affairs or among senior civil servants from other departments or officers in the security services, who knew the real Pik Botha much better than the man in the street....

In other words, those who worked with him and knew both his strengths and his weaknesses, rated him much lower than those who only knew him from their TV screens…

Pik Botha was an ambitious politician, and a risk-taker by nature. Taking risks as regards his political positions, but also in his personal life. Almost as if addicted to it…

I've recently read a journalist describing Pik as a "flirt", which is a euphemism if ever there was one… Mentioning Pik's human frailties here is not done for its salacious value, or to besmirch the dead – it is necessary, in order to understand the personality traits of the man who had played such a very big part in some of the most serious "own goals" of the "lost decade", in the course of which his scheming, his risk-taking "style" of doing things (as PW had called it), had in large measure helped escalate the gravity of those own goals.

I had known from an early stage about Pik's character weaknesses. I had seen how annoyed and concerned my father was about the incident with the prostitute in Durban, early on in Pik Botha's ministerial career (a matter "resolved" through one of his junior staffers taking the fall for the hiring of the lady of the night, and then being awarded with a plum ambassadorial appointment to one of the G7 capitals whilst still in his early thirties).

When the SABC was part of Pik's ministerial portfolio, there were also rumours doing the rounds about a friendship that he maintained with one of the ladies in a senior position there. These indiscreet "flirtations" had raised concern in our counter-intelligence circles, because it was known that foreign intelligence services were aware of Pik's looseness with ladies and liquor – which could have made him an inviting target for such services.

I have it on impeccable authority that the situation had eventually caused so much concern that, one day – with Pik having just taken his seat on an SAA aircraft for a Johannesburg / Cape Town flight – an official stationed at the airport who enjoyed security clearance (that gave him access to planes on the tarmac), entered the craft, came up to Pik and handed him an envelope, before immediately leaving again.

Inside the envelope there was a letter printed on plain paper (without letterhead) and without signature or attribution. It warned Pik that the security services were aware of and deeply concerned about his indiscretions, and that he should stop such conduct, or consider resigning. It was not difficult (as it probably was intended not to be) to figure out that the individual who had handed over the envelope was from the NIS. It appears that this "move" was related to a very serious matter – not related to ladies or drink – that had come to the attention of the NIS, and which was of such a nature that it was closely handled, personally brought to the attention of President De Klerk by NIS DG Barnard.

Did the Intelligence Service take this "anonymous letter" initiative off its own bat? Not likely. More probable, is that they were instructed from the presidency to fire some such clear but "not officially attributable" warning shot across Pik's bows…

A rather telling story (and a quite humorous one at that) which was well-known in civil service circles about Pik's fondness for the bottle, also is related to airplanes. He was flying abroad and had taken exception to the stewardesses closing the bar at 11pm. Remonstrating with them (they were not willing to cede) he resorted to the old shtick of: "Do you know who I am?". Upon which the senior stewardess called back to the purser: "*Joe* (or whatever his name was) *come help here please – it's urgent – there's a bloke here who doesn't know who he is!*"

Dr Niël Barnard, then still head of the NIS, recounts in his Book "*Peaceful Revolution*" a telling encounter that he had with the top leadership of Foreign Affairs after he (Barnard) in mid-1991 had visited Moscow and inter alia was officially received by Michael Gorbachev: "*I also informed Neil van Heerden, Derek Auret and Herbert Beukes of Foreign Affairs fully about my visit to Moscow, who could hardly hide their unhappiness at what they saw as NIS's encroachment on their territory. This was entirely understandable, but I had no choice than to give these esteemed colleagues a watered-down portion of bitter medicine: that the Russians had emphatically informed me that they saw no possibility to expand the informal, confidential diplomatic relations that existed in some places. The reason given was straightforward, namely that Min. Pik Botha was simply unable to keep sensitive and secret matters to himself, while the Russians were particularly concerned that the American CIA, the British SIS and other European services should not know about the developments*" (i.e., the growing ties between Moscow and Pretoria).

Barnard would, later in his same autobiography, ponder: "*It remains an open question whether Pik Botha, when he assured President Ronald Reagan and Alexander Haig, the American Secretary of State, on 19 May 1981 that South Africa would not test its nuclear weapons without first consulting Washington, did so with the authority and knowledge of President Botha. Most likely not*." (Referring to a revelation that Pik Botha had later made to a South African journalist who wrote a biography on him).

Most observers would have noted that Pik Botha – despite his personality and his previous insertion of himself and the DFA into every effort to get internal negotiations going – was almost invisible during the actual negotiations. In part this may be due to FW de Klerk's self-confirmed wariness about Pik's style being prone to igniting unintended consequences, and FW thus having kept him out of matters because of that fear. However, there clearly also was concern about his (in)ability to appropriately deal with confidential situations. I have, for example, been made aware of an instance of this kind that occurred when the American and British governments wished to jointly make a delicate approach to President de Klerk about a matter of particular importance to them and desired a high-level personal meeting. Normally, the UK's Foreign Office and the USA's State Department would have raised this through the usual diplomatic channels – in other words, with the DFA and Pik Botha, for onward communication to the president. However, the British and Americans had purposely initiated this outreach via the NIS instead, pertinently stressing that they did not wish for Pik Botha to be involved and requesting that the NIS should clearly convey this caveat to FW de Klerk. I would thus surmise that the "non-utilisation" of Pik Botha during the negotiations could have had a dual reasoning behind it: concern that his style may cause complications; and secondly, concern about his discretion when confidential situations were being dealt with.

My own first personal encounter with Pik was brief but revealing. As the old saying goes, a picture can sometimes speak a thousand words. It occurred back in 1987, at a reception in the Union Buildings where Pik handed out certificates to cadets who had successfully completed their diplomatic training. I had obtained the highest mark in class, so I was set to prominently receive the huge certificate you see in the photo below.



Pik always had his personal photographer in tow, and on this occasion it had not been different. It was this gentleman who later gave me a copy of the photo. Now, one would normally assume that such a photo will at least include the face of the recipient in it, typically standing side by side with the honourable minister. Not when receiving it from Pik, though. He was front and centre in the photograph, with the most that can be said about my presence in it, is that the hair on the back of my head was particularly neatly cut and combed… 😉

My next exposure to Pik's scheming came during the early nineties, when I headed Diplomatic Training (which was how the forerunner to today's Diplomatic Academy was then known). One morning I received a call from one of the very, very top officials in the Department of Foreign Affairs, who asked me to come over and see him.

Arriving at his office, he stressed that the matter that he wanted to discuss with me was highly confidential. I had to promise that I would not reveal what he was about to ask me to do, to anyone. I could refuse to be part of it, he said, but knowing my background in intelligence, he felt that I was the right person to approach – that I was the one person he could trust to solve a delicate problem that had arisen, and whom he believed would know how to achieve the desired goal and do so discreetly, without collateral damage.

He then explained the nature of the problem to me. In those years of transition (with political positions obviously caught up in a flux of uncertainty), Pik was trying to "persuade" some officials in the department's financial section to accord him certain benefits regarding pensions for different roles he had occupied – benefits that it was not believed that he was entitled to. But Pik wasn't taking "no" for an answer and was making life very unpleasant for the staff concerned. Thus, he somehow needed to be discreetly brought to his senses.

I handled the matter by way of an anonymous letter which I knew how to get published unattributably in a leading Afrikaans newspaper. A letter that I knew would be brought to Pik's attention. No names, nor identifying the Department involved. Just writing as a "concerned citizen" but giving enough detail so that Pik himself would indeed see his actions reflected in the content. Saying that it is worrying that in these difficult times, there are senior politicians who are trying to butter their bread on both sides, without sufficiently considering the damage that could result to their own image as well as to that of the government and the governing party, if their actions should become publicly known – it would be so terribly sad, I wrote, if some political opponent would reveal to the press the sordid details…

Needless to say, Pik got the message, and his intimidation of the officials concerned immediately ceased. At the time I was quite pleased with myself – as I then saw it, it was a morally justifiable intervention, executed effectively and discreetly, with no collateral damage. Today, I'm not so sure. What does it say about our system as it functioned back then, that this kind of "secret operation" was even necessary? What did it say about the culture that had become prevalent, that instead of sorting out problems face-to-face based on norms and rules, it had become almost the default approach to scheme and use such clandestine moves to checkmate others?

The person who had asked me for my help was one of the officials of the highest integrity that I had ever known – a real straight shooter and an exceptionally good man all round. What did it say about our system that even someone like him, in his very senior position, had to feel so concerned about the possible repercussions of standing up to a powerful politician – even when in the right?

Reflecting upon all this while writing here, I could identify with and comprehend the position that a highly intelligent, superbly capable young operator such as a Craig Williamson had found himself in when he had received orders to do stupid, highly counter-productive things such as go fire-bomb the ANC offices in London. You're young, you want to be of service to your country, you believe that it's for a good cause, you feel it morally justified to stop evil, and you have the confidence and the professional expertise to know that you can indeed do it…

My conclusion? Don't blame the young men who were asked from above to go do those things – theirs was not the responsibility to reason about the appropriateness, as seen against the broader strategic canvas. Blame the real decision-makers, who had not seen to it that there was a functional decision-making system in place that could have properly weighed the pros and cons.

My next personal encounter with Pik Botha was altogether more positive and pleasant. He could indeed be very charming. In January 1993 my family and I left from Johannesburg on Air Gabon's weekly flight to Libreville, to go and take up my post there on the equator as the New South Africa's first ambassador to previously hostile Black Africa.

It was an important mission, coming as it did in the middle of the negotiations, because it would demonstrate to the ANC/SACP that they could no longer take African support for granted. Its importance was also evidenced by the quality of the staff I had been allocated – the previous year's "junior diplomat of the year" was my 1st Secretary, my head of admin and consular services was the DFA's top young administrator, and even the code room lady had been top of her class (of course, the other possible explanation that one could attribute to senior

management's decision to send this top team with me, was that they were so concerned about this young ambassador – I wasn't yet forty – that they had felt obliged to surround me with such first-rate people 😊).

To cut a long story short, those Wednesday flights of Air Gabon carried on to London, after its normal brief stop-over in Libreville. Pik Botha, who had needed to fly at that time to the British capital, was therefore routed on the same flight, because clearly his presence at my side when landing in Libreville would lend some additional lustre to my arrival there. We were all sitting in first class together, including my three kids (the elder two of them twins, with all three who had just turned teenager). I had greatly appreciated the fact that Pik Botha had soon after take-off come over to us to personally thank my wife and I for our willingness to venture into "Darkest Africa" for *volk en vaderland*, and for him making pleasant small talk with the kids. He could be a genuinely charming man, indeed.

My last encounter with Pik's clan was when his brother-in-law Neels Swart (who owned the World Trade Centre in Kempton Park) and entourage, one day descended upon the embassy in Libreville from a private jet. He had a certain business venture in mind in the region and was in need of our support and guidance, whilst liberally name-dropping his sister's husband to all and sundry. As we did for all South African businesspeople, we gave Swart all possible support because it was one of our priorities to expand South African business ties with those states.



*Myself with Neels Swart in equatorial Africa, introducing him to government ministers*

Swart and his entourage soon became regulars at the embassy, all the while becoming more and more demanding and prescriptive. Till one day I told him to get out of my office and not try and come back there whilst I'm the ambassador (because I felt that what he was insisting upon, had crossed all ethical and legal lines). He was furious and shouted at me that I'll be "hearing from the minister". Which I said that I'd welcome, because I would really relish the opportunity to personally tell Pik what his brother-in-law had been requiring of us…

Of course, Pik Botha never called – again, I'm recounting this incident only because it was illustrative of a certain culture of "chance your luck" and "looking after number one" (i.e., yourself) that had seeped in among many in the Afrikaner elite at that turbulent time…

You may have adduced already that Pik Botha had not been universally popular within Foreign Affairs. Among the department's professionals his insight into what our foreign policy needed to be at the strategic level was questioned (he was very much focused on the USA and Europe, apparently not understanding sufficiently well that those capitals were increasingly following the lead of the African states as regards South Africa).

My late colleague, ambassador Glenn Babb, had written in PoliticsWeb (which he also made available to ***Nongqai***) that Pik Botha had been the wrong man for the job, pursuing the wrong policy, in a 2020 article entitled "*The Hollowness of National Party Foreign Policy and the Hollow Man that pursued it – Pik Botha, an Assessment*". In the lead-in to this article Babb explained where the name "Pik" had originated from: *"He got the name 'Pik' from being cheerleader (rasieleier) at the University of Pretoria's intervarsity rugby sing-song, wearing swallow-tails and white bow-tie, looking like a penguin (pikkewyn), hence Pik. This role suited him and for his full career he*

*was rasieleier, always looking for the limelight, wanting to be, as someone said on his death, 'the bride at every wedding and the cadaver at every funeral'.*"

Most in the SADF top brass had despised Pik Botha, but they knew how to play up to his outsized ego by awarding him gongs and making him Honorary Colonel in the SA Air Force (he proudly pitched at a press conference in July 1982, splendidly dressed in that uniform). As previously mentioned, Chris Heunis had also often been irked by Pik's tendency to "take over" with regard to constitutional issues.

Pik's relationship with PW would remain somewhat difficult to fathom. It was clear that PW had in large part owed his surprise election as prime minister to Pik, and that Pik had also played a key role in slyly forcing John Vorster (his own former patron and benefactor) out of the ceremonial presidency. It is also true that PW's support had never been rock-solid within the NP caucus, so that the break-aways that had occurred to the right under Dr Andries Treurnicht (forming the Conservative Party), could have been made fatal if Pik had broken away to the left.

The result was the kind of sparring matches that we saw play out, where Pik in his sly style tried to paint PW into a corner, and PW answered with the likes of his defiant Rubicon speech and the bombing of the Frontline capitals whilst the Commonwealth EPG were waiting for the cabinet to confirm the seven points that Pik had slipped them and had promised was the new SA government policy, which supposedly was aimed at starting negotiations…

To me, personally, the most damning thing that Pik had done was when he – the man who, more than most, had understood the immeasurable damage that PW had wrought with Operation Savannah – was the one to enable that self-same author of Savannah to become prime minister and to autocratically enforce a policy of preparing to "shoot" rather than "settle", thereby losing us a critical decade (whilst Pik had known full well that preparing to negotiate a settlement had always been the only viable option – indeed, a vital necessity).

## 4.6 WHAT WERE RHOODIE AND VAN DEN BERGH'S VIEWS ON THE SITUATION SOUTH AFRICA HAD FOUND ITSELF IN, AND WHICH STRATEGIC OPTIONS DID THEY FAVOUR?

Had John Vorster – instead of scheming to fire Rhoodie – rather convened the State Security Council after Rhoodie's 1977 report about the dire need for progress in getting rid of overt racism (as mentioned earlier) and had Vorster asked the BfSS and DFA representatives on the SSC (i.e., General van den Bergh and Dr Brand Fourie) whether Rhoodie's assessment was correct, then assuredly both would have answered in the affirmative.

Even though the Botha camp's media spin has been effective in demonising Van den Bergh in particular, portraying him as a Nazi-style racist, support for my opinion on this can be found in the likes of a *New York Times* article on General van den Bergh, written by John F. Burns and published on 1 April 1979. Burns concluded his reportage by saying of Van den Bergh: "*While he was security chief he was understood to have urged Mr. Vorster to make a radical break with white supremacist policies, seeing Apartheid as a policy of suicide...*"

What had upset Vorster about Rhoodie's assertions (about the need for rapid change, away from race-based policies – such as in regard to "Coloured" rights) was not that it wasn't true. Vorster had clearly felt personally slighted by Rhoodie describing him as the cork blocking the neck of the bottle, as well as by Rhoodie making critical statements (as he for example had in his Department's annual report, doing so in such public a manner), because Vorster feared that this would put at risk Afrikaner political unity – which Vorster is known to have always regarded as of prime importance to maintain, also with a view to the NP's bargaining position in future negotiations.

Vorster's once tight personal relationship with Hendrik van den Bergh (dating back to their WW2 internment at Koffiefontein) had evidently also begun to sour during the last years of his premiership. Again, a personal informant of Vorster had had a hand in that. Just as Rhoodie had been informed on by his friend Retief van Rooyen, Van den Bergh had suffered the same fate at the hands of his friend Piet Rautenbach, the then chair of the Public Service Commission. Van den Bergh had the habit of inviting friends over to lunch with him in his private dining room in the Concilium building, the BfSS HQ on Skinner Street. Including, regularly, Piet Rautenbach.

Van den Bergh had, as things hotted up after the Portuguese Carnation Revolution, Ops Savannah, the Soweto unrest, and furore about Steve Biko's death in September 1977, shared Rhoodie's concern that Vorster was moving too slowly (as said, Vorster had always placed a high premium on Afrikaner unity, and in his personal style was confrontation-averse; he thus had tried to keep everyone together through a laisse-faire approach that allowed his ministers a large amount of leeway). Van den Bergh, like Rhoodie, felt that the times demanded more urgent and forceful leadership that more clearly indicated the a new, non race-based direction in which the country (and the white electorate in particular) needed to move. Especially regarding moving away from racial discrimination, to an ethnic foundation – a belief not inspired by bleeding-heart liberalism, but because of their hard-nosed, realpolitik assessment of the Afrikaner's best long-term strategic interests.

Van den Bergh's sense of urgency and his more progressive views about race (particularly regarding the "Coloureds", since that had been much in the news due to the Erika Theron commission) had been reported to Vorster by Rautenbach, at the same time as Van Rooyen was reporting the same about Rhoodie's declarations. Vorster had complained to Mulder (his bridge partner) about what Rautenbach (who Vorster mentioned by name) had been telling him – namely that Van den Bergh was "stabbing him in the back". Vorster had even added to Mulder that "*as you know, Piet is a friend of Hendrik*" to underline that Rautenbach would not have lied to him about this.

I know from having been in charge of the BfSS "Coloured and Indian" analytical desk at that time, that we at the BfSS had indeed been seriously concerned about the likelihood that the deep and hurtful sense of being rejected by the whites that most "coloureds" understandably felt, would cause them to end up in the arms of the black liberation camp. Exactly as the NP prime minster of a half a century earlier, General Barry Hertzog, had so explicitly warned against in the late 1920s when he had tried to get a legislation passed that would have fully included the "Coloureds" into the white parliamentary system – only to be stymied at the time because Smuts (a died-in-the-wool racist) did not support him, as well as by the hullabaloo around the flag question and then the Great Depression requiring parliament's attention.

It was obviously not for the BfSS to interfere in politics by propounding constitutional solutions, but I remember how I had been agitating that, at the psychologically important symbolic level, there should be visible efforts made to include the "Coloureds" and Indians into the white ambit – for example, by having "Coloured" and Indian TV presenters and newsreaders on the SABC-TV's Afrikaans and English-language channels, and by doing away in the Police with the British colonial legacy of "non-white" uniforms, so that white, "Coloured" and Indian policemen would all wear the exact same uniforms (as had historically been the case in the old Transvaal republic, where the ZARP's all had worn the same uniform, irrespective of skin colour).

### 4.6.1 GEN VAN DEN BERGH'S REVEALING AUTOBIOGRAPHY (UNPUBLISHED)

So, what was General van den Bergh's thinking on the main political issues of the day? (We have already seen enough to know what Rhoodie's views were). A valuable source of information about this is the general's unpublished manuscript entitled "*No Boats in the Harbour*" (the title refers to a favourite saying of his, which he had *i.a.* used in conversation with Dr Henry Kissinger during the meeting between Premier Vorster and the Americans in Germany in 1976; the General had explained to the U.S. Secretary of State the difference between the Afrikaners and the Portuguese of Angola and Mozambique – unlike them, we have no boats in the harbour, thus no means nor place to flee back to).

In his manuscript Van den Bergh went out of his way to stress that he is not an academic, but a hard-nosed, realistic security analyst. He therefore did not attempt to design a detailed constitutional model for South Africa. He was more interested in what he saw as the main formative factors, and the practical realities that needed to be accommodated. Because, what he rightly understood, is that politics is always about POWER. What concerned him was not theoretical constitutional models existing on paper (in which he had very little faith) but real, actual power employable on the ground – he believed that his people needed to retain sufficient such power to serve to dissuade others in the broader South African crucible from unfairly jeopardising Afrikaner interests and to be able to protect kith and kin, if ever push should come to shove.

Him being somewhat dismissive of academic opinions did not mean that Van den Bergh was not extremely widely read about constitutional theory and politics as well as social and economic sciences, as his manuscript amply shows. However, he was a realist and above all, an innovative and original thinker.

Reading through the almost 500 pages of his manuscript (written towards the end of 1983), it is clear that he fully understood the deficiencies in the Verwoerdian concept of sovereignly independent black homelands. He appreciated the difficulty inherent in making these territories economically viable (due in part to Verwoerd's "border industry" policy). But most of all he comprehended that the homeland policy did not address the country's principal reality. This he saw as being the existence of a large and ever-growing urbanised black population which then already had seriously outnumbered the whites in so-called White South Africa, and upon whom the country's economy depended for their indispensable labour. Thus, he accepted that the core component of supposedly White South African territory was actually better described as **shared** land. He also understood the self-evident reality that the homelands policy offered no solution for meeting the aspirations of the "Coloured" and Indian populations.

The concluding (ninth) chapter of the manuscript was titled by Van den Bergh: "*The Survival Imperative – A Seat at the Table*" (indicating in itself that he knew that negotiation was inevitable). In these conclusions are reflected his very original thinking about what he believed Afrikaners and whites in general had to strategically be working towards.

As security analyst, he had identified that there were three main strategic options. It is worthwhile to quote him directly:

*"What then, are the three basic survival options for the white African that I have referred to? The first option is one of a gradual transition to majority government, with an acceptance that in the end this would logically and inevitably mean a black-dominated political system. The whites supporting this option - call it the integration option - argue that South Africa already has an integrated economy and a permanent multi-racial population; they accept that a majority political system is inevitable"* (he then goes on to dissect this option, which he found unacceptable because of the risk of domination of minorities by the majority).

*"So much for the Integration Option. This brings me to the second basic option available to South African whites, namely, establishing a constitutional structure which entrenches white control of the system and which then affords a legitimacy of sorts for defending the constitution by means of a totalitarian type quasi-military regime. Call it the Military Option. All the signs are there that this is the thinking that lay behind the planning of the new Constitution of 1983. This constitution entrenches ultimate white control of the constitution-changing process of the South African state, while making it possible for the majority white party to seek some sort of alliance with Coloured and Asian elites to face up to the combined black majority who are completely excluded from direct participation in the new central parliamentary institutions.*

*"I have referred to the Integration Option and, now, the Military Option. But perhaps one cannot really call the Military Option a policy option such as the Integration Option certainly is. The Military Option is in effect a powerful military-business alliance which already exists and which provides apparatus for carrying out a specific policy or political ideology. I have called it one of the three basic survival options open to whites because it is the driving force behind the new South African Constitution which is trying to create a power-sharing consociation-type political system for the white, Coloured and Asian groups, while precluding the black groups from participating in the tricameral Parliament under whose jurisdiction they fall. Perhaps I should rather refer to it as the Power-sharing Option. Until a satisfactory political solution has been found for the black groups and put into operation, the major survival dilemma of the whites - the white / black relationship - remains unresolved in terms of political policy and power politics. I have already dealt with the shortcomings and unanswered questions of the new constitutional order in this connection. Military and quasi-military regimes are usually very impressive and also popular. But only initially. It is no substitute for basic ideology and long-term policy."*

Having at length detailed the deficiencies of the Tri-Cameral system (such as the fleeting applicability of its demographics-based formula of representation) as well as the dangers inherent in PW Botha's accumulation of

executive power, Van den Bergh went on to the third option he had identified, which he called the “Territorial Option” or “Territorial Imperative” or also the “Territorial Element”. Lest readers, because of the name, immediately jump to the conclusion that he was simply proposing a white or Afrikaner homeland or “Volkstaat” let me explain that Van den Bergh’s thinking was far more nuanced than that. It did not stem from a wish to secede from the rest of South Africa, but was motivated by his very practical, realpolitik understanding of **power** and about what conditions were required to exist, in order to have the ability to effectively project power.

To Van den Bergh the exercise of real power was like using a crowbar to exert force – a crowbar needs a solid base to wedge against, without which no force can be leveraged. Because he did not believe in academic models or the lofty wording of constitutions, he believed that only if the Afrikaners retained a sufficient measure of real power could their interests be safeguarded, if and when the need should arise. And for the sake of being able, in the real world, to project such power when and if needed, there needed to be a territorial base (contiguous or as a judicious scattering of “bastions” to serve as solid footing for the grounding of the crowbar.

*Lang Hendrik* made it clear that identifying such a safe haven(s) from which to be able to project power (which he called a “canton” or “bastion”) was not intended to serve as a homeland to which Afrikaners should be confined: “*In the light of the historical facts of South Africa, I see no reason why the Afrikaner should retreat to one homeland; I see even less reason why the Afrikaner should go into a diaspora (abroad)”.* He also did not believe that it needed to be huge (the state of Israel is, for example, smaller than the Kruger National Park). Neither did he believe that possessing such an own bastion (or patchwork of bastions) would in itself constitute the totality of a solution – it would be part of a broader scheme, of an agreed arrangement between the interest groups that shared South Africa’s integrated economy and which could borrow parts from all kinds of existing constitutional models, at different levels of government, to construct a set of solutions uniquely suited to South Africa’s complex reality.

In this regard, he suggested that one could imagine incorporating parts of the Westminster model regarding the protection of individual rights, as well as take from consociationalism regarding group rights, plus from the British colonial model of native reserves, commonwealths, the already-existing example of the BLS countries, and Verwoerd’s homelands policy, in order to provide to such groups their own ethno-cultural safe havens within the larger integrated and shared whole, all the while (in Van den Bergh’s view) basing it on voluntary association and doing away with race as defining factor.

What Van den Bergh wanted was for white South Africans to understand the urgency of the need to leverage their economic and political power (while they still had it) to develop, through negotiation (i.e., in conjunction with the non-white population), a new dispensation that would not be either integration or power-sharing in accordance with some Eurocentric theoretical model such as consociationalism, union, confederacy or federation, but something apt to African reality:

“*It would be presumptuous of me to try and present a detailed constitutional model of my own in the course of a few chapters of a book. I am convinced, however, that the whites of South Africa will have to thoroughly re-examine the various options open to them, using a valid frame of reference. I am also convinced that if the territorial imperative is not incorporated in one or other form, the alternative may well be a majority-system in a single state, i.e. a black-dominated state. The whites can ignore the territorial imperative only if they are prepared to accept a white diaspora* (i.e., having to leave the country) *and worse.*

*“The only counter to the growing threat to the ethnic self-determination of South Africa’s whites lies in putting the country's economic and political strength to work to bring about a geo-political dispensation which will at least give the white nation a chance to defend itself. That will be the only way to ensure a full place for the whites at the political table of South Africa. The whites will have to negotiate from a position of strength and with an ability to defend that place at the table – fine words do not suffice to cope with the realities of power politics. The alternative could be to accept the inevitability of white diaspora, which means settling for the crumbs on the floor.*

*“The white tribe of South Africa must realise that in contrast to all the other white communities that existed in the African continent, if they do not create a sure territorial foothold or bastion of their own – as the Israelis did in a*

*sea of Arabs – there will be no boats in the harbour to carry them to safety and a new life in some metropolitan haven across the sea".*

On many an occasion in the manuscript Van den Bergh made reference to the example of the Jews and the state of Israel – a tiny bastion (as said, smaller in size than the Kruger National Park) which does not only serve as ultimate refuge, but which is the solid base from where the Jewish state can project power to protect the more than half of the world's Jews who live outside the borders of Israel.

What he thus had in mind was not that South Africa be further fragmented with the creation of a separate "Boerestan" Volkstaat to which Afrikaners may be exiled.

He accepted that South Africa had irreversibly become an integrated entity, where the need was to move away from race and enforced segregation to a system of voluntary association, where individuals could choose which group to identify with, and where the reality of a shared industrial heartland is recognized. In terms of administrative arrangements, he favoured the devolution of power to the lowest level possible. And he had wished that movement towards the development of such a new dispensation could have started decades before the writing of his manuscript:

*"I have referred to the dilly-dallying of the white South African Government in the period following Dr. Verwoerd's term of office. In particular I think the white Government of South Africa missed a golden opportunity in 1974 when the political leader of the Zulus, the largest ethnic group in South Africa and forming with the white Afrikaner nation the two dominating ethnic tribes in South Africa, opened the door wide for implementing the Territorial Option in a decisive way. I am referring to Chief Gatsha Buthelezi's Hoernlé Memorial Lecture delivered in 1974 under the auspices of the South African Institute of Race Relations ... the following consolidated extract from Chief Buthelezi's lecture is exceedingly relevant to my theme: 'Three types of states could be envisaged in a federal republic or commonwealth: (I) States in which the interests of an (black) African ethnic group are paramount; (2) States in which the interests of White people are paramount; (3) Special or federal areas which are multi-ethnic in character in which no particular group interests are designated'."*

Van den Bergh explained his thinking on the "territorial imperative" in more detail, as follows:

*"When I speak of the Territorial option, I appreciate that it is said that partition is the worst of all options. One must not forget, however, that one should differentiate between the principle (the territorial factor in organising human life) and the type of geographical division that can be employed to meet particular situations.*

*"People are inclined to say: well, if it is to be a division of territory, what will it be – a federation, a confederation, a commonwealth, a cantonal system or even completely independent units co-operating on a multi-lateral and bi-lateral treaty basis? The answer is that there are many territorial variants that can be employed. Various combinations of the acknowledged types of territorial separation can even be put to use next to each other in the same region, especially in an extremely complex plural situation such as South Africa. The other misconception that exists is the impression that providing a territorial element for inter-group existence means having to resettle people on a large scale overnight in exclusive areas and to forego economic interdependence and participation in a supra-group economic system…*

*"I do not intend constructing a partition model for South Africa, but I would like to raise certain considerations and points that deserve serious attention. I have said before that I am not an academic. My world has been that of the hard reality of national security, which therefore involved all practically manifested facets of inter-group conflict situations in South Africa and far beyond the borders of South Africa. I did not spend my time in book-lined studies, but among people and in real life situations. That is the background against which I am writing. But that does not mean that I do not try to keep abreast of field research and academic writings that have a significant bearing on my field of professional interest…*

*"The Territorial Option for South Africa can be better evaluated if viewed through a frame of reference that over the past decades has increasingly been challenging the idea that the so-called international states system,*

*consisting of the 157 states (also referred to as nations or nation states) into which the world is currently divided, is the only valid political framework also for accommodating and regulating group conflict. This new frame of reference is based on a phenomenon of group assertiveness called ethnic self-determination or a sense of ethnic identity or just plain ethnicity…*

*"One of the possibilities under the Territorial Option could be to consider territorially defining and designating the major industrial complexes as common market areas to function in terms of a pre-negotiated charter. These commonwealth areas could serve as industrial dynamos for all the population groups of South Africa and could back up against states, regions, cantons and even city states for whites, blacks, Coloureds and Asians, respectively, wherever population concentration justify a particular geographical demarcation.*

*"The obvious flaw in the present geographical-political pattern of South Africa is that in terms of the Group Areas Act, all areas are legally designated either white, or black, or Coloured or Asian areas. There are no common or so-called grey areas to soften the rigidity and inflexibility of the way in which the various ethnic groups are organized administratively geographically."*

In the previous-to-last chapter of his manuscript Van den Bergh had also made some telling observations (in his critique there of the Tri-Cameral Parliament) which provides further insight into his thinking regarding race and ethnicity: "*I believe that consociationalism or similar variants of democratic pluralism, cannot succeed in South Africa in the long term for as long as it is rooted in a plurality of groups* ***that is essentially race- or colour-based****… The new constitution will have a much greater chance of success (if based on) a system allowing for an association of voluntarily constituted groups that define themselves in ethnic and/or cultural-historical (but not racial/colour) terms as Afrikaners, Portuguese, Anglo-South Africans, Griquas, Malays, Moslems, Hindus, etc. In other words, the basis for power-sharing would have to shift to interest groups that define themselves in ethnic or cultural-historical terms but not in racial/colour terms."*

So, what would have been the direction that a Mulder / Rhoodie / Van den Bergh "dictatorship" would likely have attempted to lead the country towards? (on the assumption that the three of them were more or less in accord on fundamental principles, as seems broadly to have been the case).

There was clearly an urgency among them to get rid of the colonial legacy of **race** as determinant, and substitute that with voluntary association in an ethno-cultural **group**-defined context (which would have allowed more scope as well to the Afrikaner group to look after its own cultural interests). There was also acceptance of the reality that the better part of South Africa was in fact shared land, the shared governance of which had to be negotiated. The shortcoming that Van den Bergh here articulated, was that the Afrikaners didn't have an own "bastion" (as the Jews have Israel) from where protective or dissuasive power can be projected when and if needed.

General Van den Bergh wasn't, therefore, that much concerned with demographics-based numerical formulae for sharing power, as long as his people could retain sufficient real power of their own and safe havens or base areas from which to be able to project it to where it may in an emergency be needed in the over-arching shared state. Thus, in his vision the bulk of Afrikaners / whites would continue living, entrepreneuring, and farming across the whole of South Africa, to the benefit of all – but secure in the knowledge that there was a territory (or patchwork of parcels) that possessed, for example, a potent enough "national guard" (as in the USA states) or a citizen force "commando" whose mere existence would ensure that accords be respected and interests be taken into account.

In other words, when Van den Bergh referred to the "territorial imperative" he wasn't thinking in terms of an utopian idealization, such as of an own sovereign state ("*volkstaat*") for Afrikaners where they could go live separate from the rest of South Africa; however, he understood that controlling at least some territory somewhere was, in practical terms, an essential prerequisite for possessing real power within the greater plural whole. Because he was always primarily concerned with the realpolitik of actual power, Hendrik van den Bergh didn't have much faith in lofty words on paper, or in theoretical models – what he was concerned about was the establishment of a balance of real power that in and of itself could maintain harmonious co-existence, which he did not trust that demographics-based theoretical formulae put down on paper was able to do, if ever push should come to shove.

He didn't believe either in a system that has as only recourse to run to the apex court of the land and plead for an interdict, if something like the 2021 Zuma Riots (or worse) should come about.

What he was musing about wasn't that unique, either. Take the constitution of the USA, for example. Yes, their founders did pay a lot of attention to crafting clauses that would ensure fair representation and the like. But they also were very much focused on crafting a dispensation that would not allow that central government power be abused. On the one hand, they assured this through devolution of power to the lowest possible level, for example through their federal framework, as well as through the strict separation of the powers of the three branches of government. But on the other hand, they had also made sure that there would be a dissuading balance of actual power to inhibit a rogue central government – by guaranteeing the citizenry the right to bear arms, and by providing that each federal state would possess its own national guard, under command if its own governor…

Of course, analysing today Van den Bergh's viewpoints is all just supposition. Spilt milk, over which there's absolutely no use crying now. What can be safely said, though, is that Van den Bergh had had a far better understanding of reality – of the reality that a fundamentally new constitutional dispensation inevitably would have to be negotiated. He thus understood the pressing urgency of the need to prepare for it, such as to realistically identify basic strategic goals to negotiate for. Above all, he comprehended the pressing necessity of preparing ahead politically for the time when that "seat at the table" would become all-important, and when Afrikaner representatives would need to hold the best cards possible…

Could there have been any realistic hope that a settlement could have been negotiated with non-white South Africans on the basis of Van den Bergh's thinking. As he himself had said, it would ideally have needed to have been attempted by 1974 (before the fall of the Portuguese Empire, and all that geo-strategically had flown from it). Given that the 1969 Lusaka Manifesto adopted by the Frontline States and AU had explicitly given recognition to South African whites as Africans and had included support for protective transitional measures for them as group, it is not beyond the realm of the possible that a sufficient internal consensus could have been reached, supported by a sufficient weight of African states, to then be accepted by the West (even if the ANC had not participated). This would have been largely due to the Cold War context. The more interesting question is, however, whether Van den Bergh's thinking could gain traction now, after out three decades plus experience of the real-world shortcomings of our current constitution. Should another round of CODESA-style negotiations be held, under the present sentiment of disillusion about what was achieved with the 1996 constitution, then Van den Bergh's approach may indeed prove valuable and even attainable in future…

Why I've included quotes from HJ van den Bergh here, is not to glorify his thinking on the territorial imperative or to suggest that it should (or could) be re-visited, given today's realties. I quoted him here, firstly because there is too much nonsense in circulation nowadays about the man and his views (thanks to his actual thoughts not being known), and secondly to show that the conflict of ideas over the options of "shoot" or "settle" did not emerge only after PW Botha became premier – it had been at the heart of the policy discord between Van den Bergh and the military's "total onslaught" faction from Vorster's days. Thirdly, I've quoted him here – and told the story about Eschel Rhoodie's problems with John Vorster – to show that FW de Klerk didn't suddenly realise (only when he became president) that a fundamentally new dispensation had to be negotiated, instead of being dictated; a new dispensation that would decisively step away from the Smuts/Verwoerdian racially defined paradigms. Such understanding was actually present at the highest level within the intel-community already in the seventies.

## 4.7 THE END OF VORSTER'S REIGN: CONSEQUENCES OF THE 1978 COUP

*NOW!* Magazine on 5 October 1979 published a lengthy article written by John Fullerton. It was headed: "***South Africa – Day of the Generals***". The content was clearly briefed to Fullerton by top members of the SADF. In it, the author roundly and repeatedly stated that PW Botha had been installed in a "quiet coup d'etat by the military" who were now in charge, as "the most powerful source of inspiration for cabinet-level decisions" – see this article in ***Nongqai***:

"QUIET COUP D'ETAT" AGAINST PM JOHN VORSTER - Nongqai BLOG

As a result of the palace revolution of 1978, pulled off with the help of the "Information scandal" and Pik Botha, government power ended up in the hands of the very man who should have borne primary responsibility for the Angola debacle.

To sum up: the Vorster team had understood that “Apartheid cannot work” (as he himself had confided this, to his physician, Dr Scharf). Furthermore, that South Africa – because of being faced by a political challenge, rather than a military one – needed a political **settlement** on a new constitutional dispensation, which could only be achieved through a legitimate process of negotiation (which they then already saw as historically unavoidable, as well as logically preferable to the “shoot” alternative that Vorster had rightly described as “too ghastly to contemplate”).

Accordingly, what needed to be prioritised as the government’s main strategic focus, was assuring its “seat at the table” and strengthening the cards it would hold, by means of proper preparation across the spectrum of potential leverage – stretching from counter-propaganda capacity through a unified own constituency and strategic political alliances with foreign as well as local stake-holders, plus maintaining economic strength and internal stability, right through to having available the necessary means of physical dissuasion should South Africa be attacked from abroad. They understood that waiting too long and/or not preparing the ground in timely manner for the unavoidable necessity of negotiating a new constitutional dispensation, would lead to exactly that violent alternative to a negotiated settlement that Vorster had so eloquently warned was “too ghastly to contemplate”.

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# CHAPTER 5.

# THE "LOST DECADE" UNDER PW: WRONG ASSUMPTIONS, WRONG STRATEGY, DEEP DISCORD, LOST CREDIBILITY, AND CONSEQUENT LOSS OF TIME & BARGAINING POWER

## 5.1 PW BOTHA's ASSUMPTIONS

In getting acquainted with the Riemlanders back in Frankfort when serving articles on the way to gaining admission as attorney, it had amazed me how alive the legacy of Afrikaner division dating from the Boer War still was, eighty years after that war – perpetuated (one could almost say, nurtured) from generation to generation. Underlining our inclination to bear grudges and to fracture into factions. When PW Botha's political machinations and autocratic style led in 1982 to the first serious political split in Afrikaner ranks with the founding of the Conservative Party, this reverberated also in the Riemland Afrikaner community.

By that time, it had become patently clear that the "Grand Apartheid" dream of a majority of black South Africans reverting to the tribal homelands, had been nothing more than a pipe dream.

At an ideological level (that is, as focused on possible constitutional models), the national debate had begun to centre on how to accommodate non-white political aspirations – or not. First regarding the so-called coloureds and the Indians, for whom separate "homelands" were inconceivable. Also in the spotlight, was how to get rid of rudely racist discriminatory measures – the so-called "Petty Apartheid". This concerned measures such as the obligatory use of separate entrances to public buildings, "group areas" where racial groups were designated to live (to which they were often forcibly removed), prohibition of mixed marriages and sex across the colour line, and other hurtful, like-minded measures.

There were essentially two broad schools of thought emerging then among Afrikaners – those who saw the inevitability of a non-racial, shared future dispensation that necessarily would have to be arrived at through a negotiated settlement (in which we hoped that our rich ethnic diversity would be treasured and accommodated, and that group rights and western capitalist, democratic values would be securely ensconced). On the other side of the Afrikaner political spectrum there were those who saw the abandoning of even the petty discriminatory measures, even if incremental, as the thin end of the wedge that would inevitably lead to black majority rule (which latter they regarded as nothing short of a doomsday scenario).

As can be seen, the debate in Afrikanerdom was focussed very much on the WHAT of the constitutional and societal dispensation – what its provisions should look like (with one group being in favour of various degrees of change, while another group wanted to retain the colonial legacy essentially unchanged, entrenching white supremacy and privilege). It was thus a debate about **product**, of legal form, rather than about **process** – with, in the latter regard, very little attention to the HOW of getting to the desired WHAT.

To the extent that the how of process did receive attention from those who favoured change, there were again two schools. On the one side, there were those who desired any change to be incremental, i.e., evolutionary, and be dictated from above (because, at their core, they were not willing to contemplate fundamental change that could deprive whites of ultimate control – therefore, favouring only change that would ameliorate the hurtful aspects of petty discrimination inherited from the colonial legacy in the hope that such moves would soften internal and external criticism).

On the other side there were those who understood that fundamental change was inevitable – after all, the trajectory of history was clear, with only Southern Africa then still having white minorities ruling non-white indigenous majorities. Those who had understood this reality also understood that, in order to gain legitimacy at home and abroad, any resulting new dispensation would have to be the product of a settlement arrived at through

inclusive negotiation. This would unavoidably deliver a final constitutional form and content that evidently could not be predicted beforehand nor dictated in advance, because the agenda needed to be open and the negotiation process itself would generate the final product.

Yes, PW Botha had understood the need for some form of change (in his case, of the incremental top-down, dictated kind) and had campaigned for the leadership based upon that promise because he had sensed that that was what the majority of the white electorate expected. Mostly thanks to Vorster, the National Party had truly become the political home for most, if not all Afrikaners (and for a large segment of English-speaking whites as well). As the NP had grown, incorporating previous supporters of Field Marshal Jan Smuts, it became an ever bigger ideological tent – no longer consisting mostly of right-wing conservative Afrikaners as in the 1948 version, but by the seventies representing the broad spectrum of Afrikaner and white thinking in general.

Unsurprisingly, this led to there being a somewhat liberally inclined as well as a conservative wing, the so-called "*verlig*" versus "*verkramp*" division, even though the respective positions were admittedly amorphous. With increased Afrikaner urbanisation, economic advancement, and tertiary education, the "*verlig*" outlook had come to dominate, so that PW Botha had sought to align himself, at least superficially, with its expectation that there needed to be adaptation to evolving realities.

However, no matter how much PW Botha professed the need for change (such as in his "adapt or die" speech) he presented no clear, logical new constitutional concept as to where, or to what, such change should lead to. Yes, he had his "12 points" which he unveiled in a speech in Durban on 15 September 1979, and which variously was called a plan, a policy, or a process – but which in reality was no more than a platter of platitudes (as a test of the veracity of my description of it: can you at all remembered Botha's "12 points", before I mentioned it here – and can you recall today, even vaguely, what they were about?).

Where-as the Verwoerdian dream at least had a clear endpoint in mind – something that could actually be concretely visualised, even if demonstrably unrealistic in practice – PW Botha through-out had refused to define his **intent**. Despite the fact that this was exactly what was being demanded of Botha, from both the right and the left: *what, in the end, is the dispensation that you have in mind for the country, sir*?

This question about his intent, and his persistent refusal to divulge it, naturally led to him being suspected of bad faith by both the left and the right. It was a substantial contributor to the break-away of the Conservative Party, and later to the massive own goal that was the August 1985 "Rubicon" speech. In the latter he had once again explicitly stated that, regarding making a statement about his intent: "*I am not prepared to make it, not now and not tomorr*ow." (We will come back to the Rubicon debacle a bit later, in more detail).

With hindsight, it seems clear to me that PW Botha's true intention was of the kind that he dared not communicate from the public stage. He firmly believed that it was imperative for white South Africans to maintain their grip on full political power, albeit by force of arms, since he remained convinced that losing power (or even diluting it) would result in an extinction-level event for our people. He and those around him (with the "total onslaught" mindset) in any event believed that a physical clash about who's land it was, was historically inevitable. Therefore, to them it was neither here nor there that by not working to settle the matter at the negotiation table, they inevitably left a bloody physical clash as the only means of eventually resolving the matter. To their way of thinking, the thing of greatest import was to be as well prepared as possible for that approaching armed contest over who would hold political power, so as to be able to retain it at all cost.

Because of this manner of viewing things, what PW Botha and his group were focused on wasn't finding a **political** solution to what was quintessentially a **political** problem. They believed it would inevitably be decided by military means. Which required a "Total National Strategy" centrally coordinated and controlled through a National Security Management System. The "12 points" were therefore explicitly stated to be just a sub-component of this "Total National Strategy". This strategy was totally geared towards maximising (white) South Africa's military capability to resist the communist-inspired "Total Onslaught".

Thereby they were ignoring the reality that, what they perceived as being essentially a **communist**-driven threat, was in truth part of what had become a world-wide movement among colonised peoples, a surge of their popular nationalist sentiment, a "tide of the time" which would have occurred irrespective of whether the Soviet Union had tried to nurture and exploit it, or not. This post- World War II "zeitgeist" was quintessentially anti-colonial and anti-racist – a tide against which white South Africa was the proverbial "last man standing" (meaning that we would bear the brunt of it, if not deflected in time through a negotiated accommodation).

As was earlier mentioned, the military's notion of a "Total National Strategy" that would be able to "manage" cosmetic change whilst retaining control over the levers of power, was derived mostly from the writings of retired French army general André Beaufre, but also from the American political scientist Sam Huntington. Let's look at their thinking in some more detail now.

It needs to be remembered that Beaufre was focused on mega-war including nuclear weapons between the top powers – his view was that, in this context and when combating the Soviets' Cold War designs of communist domination of the world, the boundaries between the military and civil society should be dissolved. The battlefield should be extended to encompass all aspects of civil society, closely managed in terms of a "total strategy" – but, for Beaufre, with the military always in service of the political goals.

Beaufre's theories were adopted by the Magnus Malan/PW Botha grouping in the SADF as template for their "Total National Strategy" and "National Security Management System", reflecting that they believed that white South Africa needed to prepare for such an Armageddon type war over whose land it was in which the SADF should be central to white survival, but apparently without considering a number of key points that place in doubt the applicability of Beaufre's views to the South African situation, and their correctness in the first place:

- Firstly, it bears repeating that Beaufre was most concerned about France's survival in the Cold War context, more specifically about the need for developing an own French nuclear deterrent against the USSR and, secondarily, to contain Moscow's global expansion, such as into the European colonies.
- Secondly, Beaufre (having been commander in both Indo-China and Algeria, where the French army had been defeated by insurgents) developed the counter-insurgency part of his theories against the backdrop of a need he then felt to reason away the annoying reality that the mighty French army,(including the "Iron Division" which he had led), had been beaten by mere peasants; his theories were underpinned by his notion that these losses had not so much been due to deficiencies on the part of the army, but to the fact that the political powers-that-be had not adopted at the time such a "total strategy" to back the military with all and everything at the French nation's disposal – thus (subconsciously?) excusing the defeats that he and the French military had suffered.
- Underlying Beaufre's threat analysis was the erroneous assumption that these "insurgency" conflicts in the colonies were, always and everywhere, essentially inspired and driven by **communist** agitation in the context of the Cold War, and by nothing else. He did not recognise that, even though communist agitation was certainly a clear and present background reality, it was in fact popular **nationalist, anti-colonial** aspirations for national liberation from foreign domination and exploitation that had in truth served as prime motivator. Colonised peoples were wishing to drive out foreign invaders who had earlier imperialistically conquered and subjected indigenous peoples by force of arms (in the case of Algeria, for example, that uprising was not even principally supported logistically by Moscow, but instead had Nasser's Egypt as its key backer, as part of a pan-Arab and Moslem awakening).
- The essential wrong-headedness of the basic assumptions is evidenced by the use of the paradoxical term of "insurgency" to describe indigenous combatants fighting to liberate their own country. Why do I say that "insurgency" is not logically apt to describe the essence of such conflict – even though the term has stuck? Ask yourself: who actually had "surged into" their country in the first place? The conquering imperial powers were the ones who, uninvited, had forced their way in, from the outside. Self-evidently, the individuals who were resisting Western colonial forces were the actual **indigenous** populations of those territories, resident there in their own land; they were fighting to free **their own people** from occupation – by any logic, the colonial powers had been the true "insurgents" who had in the imperial era surged in across those nations borders from abroad, suppressing and exploiting the locals (the irony of this terminology is illustrated by the latter-day use of the concept of "surge" to describe sending in additional forces from outside countries

such as the USA into Iraq or Afghanistan – with those sent in as part of a "surge" logically being the "insurgents", not those indigenous combatants resisting them).

- Beaufre's approach was applied to South Africa by the likes of Magnus Malan on the assumption that the white government essentially faced a military threat driven by communist expansionism which thus needed to be defeated by military means, whereas the conflict was in fact at its heart **political.** What was thus ignored or misunderstood was the reality that "armed struggle" (as employed in this type of conflict over political power by those seeking "liberation"), consists in reality of "armed **propaganda**". The "armed" element plays but a support role in the core political struggle, aimed at grabbing attention and projecting a "strong man" image of the political movement, as well as suggesting that there will not be peace till their political demands are accommodated.
- Justifying themselves by their interpretation of Beaufre, it was assumed by the "total onslaught" faction in the SADF that the white government could, with military force, remain in control and win that anticipated great showdown, on condition that the political powers-that-be implement their "total strategy" approach, entailing close military management of the state apparatus and the channelling of the bulk of the state's resources to the military. Which is an assumption proven false by the way that the conflict within South Africa increasingly disastrously unfolded over the course of the "lost decade", as well as by many such conflicts since, where seemingly overwhelming state military power augmented by and coordinated with socio-economic and psychological operations (such as in Iraq and Afghanistan), dismally failed to overcome motivated peasants operating on foot, on camels or on horseback…

Be as they may the aptness and correctness of Beaufre's theories as the SADF adopted them for South Africa – what should be evident from both its roots and its very nature, is that Beaufre's recipe is one for managing and (hopefully) winning **shooting** matches, not for how to go about (pre-emptively) **settling** through negotiation, such internal disputes that are essentially **political** by nature. His approach was focused on the mobilisation of all resources and the coordinated management there-of, in support of the military, who in turn would support the political order by means of exerting physical control rather than allowing democratic control over the levers of political power. Such "total strategy" does not seek to indicate a peaceful path for avoiding or resolving conflict, but rather assumes that future armed conflict (in Beaufre's case, with the Soviet Union) is a given and needs to be won – just as the SADF's "total onslaught" faction saw armed conflict over who owns the land, as inevitable.

The PW Botha / Magnus Malan adaptation of the notion of a "Total National Strategy" was thus focused upon centralised control over state and society, its means and its budget, under the auspices of the SADF. What it strove to develop and manage (in the form of the National Security Management System, or NSMS for short) was a model for mobilising and directing all of South Africa's resources and manpower towards militarily defeating what was depicted as a "total onslaught" inspired by communism, rather than recognising that the non-white population's anger was motivated by their natural aspirations for equality. "Total onslaught" was an approach based on viewing the so-called liberation movements simplistically as being nothing other than proxies in service of the Soviet Union, with their internal support structures being at best unwitting "fellow-travellers". This erroneous analysis effectively denied that non-white South Africans had reason to be aggrieved about being discriminated against and deprived of political participation and simplistically ascribed the entire extent of their discontent to communist agitation.

Wat was PW Botha and his team's overriding goal? They were absolutely determined to retain white domination. This they hoped to do through, on the one hand, unilaterally dictating from above incremental **changes** of a cosmetic nature to the existing dispensation, so as to make it (hopefully) more palatable. On the other hand, they believed that a physical contest over who would control the levers of political power was inevitable (as stated to me personally by an Army general: "over whose land it was") and that everything should therefore be done to prepare to win this supposedly unavoidable shooting contest.

PW Botha's focus was thus on incremental, top-down managed change of the superficialities of the **existing** system (which had caused him to admonish his electorate to "adapt or die"). He was never willing to accept the inevitability of inclusive settlement negotiations to arrive consensually at a legitimate, fundamentally new system that would not be based on race and that would entirely replace – not merely reform – the old race-based colonial legacy. This approach of necessity required that there be sufficient hard power available to not only enforce acquiescence to the top-down dictated changes, but also to crush any challenge to the white monopoly hold on

political power, whether such resistance originated internally or externally. Hence, the focus on building up military might. Focusing on the ability to shoot and win (if push comes to shove – as they believed it inevitably would) rather than to have to accept settlement negotiations. Because the PW Botha camp did understand that committing to genuinely open and inclusive negotiations and the compromises that that would of necessity entail, would inevitably mean the end of white domination. Consequently, any strategy based on seeking to pre-emptively settle through inclusive negotiations over an open agenda, was seen by them as appeasement and as constituting an existential threat to white survival.

As a consequence of the shift in strategy and in power in favour of the military with PW's election as premier, the national budget priority then increasingly became to feed the almost insatiable funding needs of a military that wanted to be equipped to continue fighting a war in their chosen training ground of southern Angola and also wanted to have expensive weaponry such as inter-continental ballistic missiles on hand for waging war against potential foreign aggressors further afield – this, while the townships burnt domestically…

It is ironic that the SADF had come into relevance in the 1960's precisely because of their warnings about the threat potentially posed by foreign armies on African soil (with the Indian Air Force in Katanga as example) but that it then was the SADF itself, through its own unilateral actions in 1975 with Ops Savannah, that had caused a far more potent such foreign threat to become reality, with the arrival of the Soviet-backed Cubans in Angola…

A necessary caveat to state at the outset here is that a thorough distinction must be made between the SADF as a large, conscript based institution encompassing the whole of white society, and the direction in which it was being led by what many Army officers would later describe to foreign researchers as a "cabal" around PW Botha, General Magnus Malan and later General Kat Liebenberg – a "cabal" or clique which was marked out by its manner of manipulatively operating politically.

PW Botha, for example, as defence minister, already before 1975 had singled out Magnus Malan as *de facto* policy maker for the SADF, over the head of the then serving head of the Armed Forces, Admiral Hugo Biermann. Another senior officer who was marginalized and in effect forced out was Lieutenant General Hein du Toit, then head of DMI and later Chief of Staff: Intelligence (Du Toit, and the DMI under him, at the time did not share PW Botha's / Magnus Malan's view that the threat to South Africa was fundamentally attributable to a USSR-driven, communist "total assault" on the country, and did not regard the possibility of an invasion from the North as a realistic threat – a view which naturally called into question the foundations and necessity for a "forward defence" strategy and for waging a preventive war north of the country's borders). In 1973, PW Botha also got rid of the office of Secretary of Defence (the civilian "supervisor" over especially the SADF's finances and purchase programs), which position had before enjoyed the same hierarchical stature as the Chief of the SADF.

The consolidation of power in the hands of a particular ideological group within the Army who held a particular view on appropriate national strategy, coupled with the autocratic tendencies of PW Botha and the enforcement of groupthink as the increasingly acrimonious split on strategy grew in Afrikaner ranks, meant that after 1978 the decision to prepare for shooting rather than settling, could not be openly challenged without fear of personal consequences. On the one hand, that oppressive "thought policing" had led to some (such as Pik Botha) resorting to sly machinations to try and get settlement negotiations going, as will be described in relation to the Rubicon speech and the EPG visit. In other instances, it led to stagnation, with institutions and individuals simply going through the motions dictated by the NSMS (but not being able to prepare for the inevitable negotiation phase either).

The dysfunction and discord that had found expression in the palace revolution, had thus strengthened a culture of "*eiegeregtigheid*", of operating in silo's, of unilaterally doing your own thing. It was a culture that would grow and significantly impact the course of key events during the "lost decade". It would impact the debate (or rather, lack of it) regarding appropriate strategy, also regarding developing a plan for what should be important goals to be negotiating for, as well as regarding preparing for holding the strongest possible hand of cards at the negotiation table, and – last but not least – for how to compete effectively for political power at the ballot box in a new dispensation.

Soon enough, this period of stasis with regard to progress on what should really have mattered (as seen especially from 1985 on), unfortunately led to an over-emphasis on covert operational methods as the preferred means to counter the "revolutionary war" and to stem the "total onslaught". Which, lamentably, led to confusion and dysfunction about the moral, legal, as well as practical need to always respect the rule of law (by referring also to the practical, I mean in terms of "own best interest" functionality in the context of what was essentially a propaganda war, where underhand methods typically achieve very little positive, and usually plays directly into the hand of the opponent by providing fodder for their propaganda machine) .

The saddest result of these transgressions of norms and legality was that it would eventually leave the rank-and-file of especially the SAP-SB to carry the can for what they had genuinely believed at the time had been expected of them by their leadership. A leadership (up to the ministers and PW Botha as state president themselves), who were insisting on "results" whilst psychologically conditioning the security forces that they were engaged in a "war", defending against a "total onslaught" that needed to be countered just as totally, in terms of strategy and tactics...

PW Botha's "Total National Strategy" was at no stage aimed at preparing the ground for inclusive negotiations for a non-racial South African democracy. Nor at developing, in timely manner, appropriate processes for peacefully resolving what was at heart a quest for equitable access to political power on the part of the country's non-white population. It refused to recognise that this quest was at its core driven by their very human aspirations (deep-felt aspirations which in fact mirrored those of the Afrikaner, as manifested against British imperialism and prejudice).

What I will repeatedly show as this part of my story unfolds, is that the national security decision-making under the NSBS was – despite the latter's pretensions at coordination – highly dysfunctional and fractured, leading to any number of disastrous own goals. As the security/intel establishment (the "deep state" in modern parlance) ascended in importance in determining the real direction of the state, largely supplanting parliament and even the broader cabinet, that establishment became ever more internally divided on fundamental threat assumptions and strategic options.

Contrary to popular depictions, the "security forces" were no monolithic behemoth. The underlaying differences about whether to prepare for a shoot-out or for negotiating a settlement – the clash of visions that had bedevilled the middle seventies – very much persisted, despite the ostensible take-over of power by the military after the palace revolution that had toppled Vorster and his group of advisors. Turf wars, opposing bureaucratic agendas, and decidedly different strategic visions persisted, as did the tendency towards vertical, "silo-type" disjointed operations.

The NSBS was seen by other departments as in truth being just a dressed-up attempt to put the SADF in charge of everything and everyone. It was therefore not perceived, nor at heart supported, by the rest of the security and intelligence community nor by the civilian Public Service as a mechanism for national salvation. Instead, it was seen as a tool with which the SADF could and did boost its own stature, its influence over decision-making, and its ballooning budget (the latter, to the detriment of other departments, particularly such as the Police).

My own father was very much convinced that the true motive behind the NSMS was to dominate and dictate, even though he in principle strongly supported the need for inter-departmental coordination and co-operation and also had wished that clear-headed, objective national intelligence assessments should underpin decision-making. In preparing this contribution for ***NONGQAI***, I had gone through some documents my father had left me. Among which was a copy of a lengthy article that he had kept. It had appeared in *NOW!* Magazine of 5 October 1979. Written by John Fullerton, it was headed: "*South Africa – Day of the Generals*". The content had clearly been briefed to Fullerton by top members of the SADF. In it, the author roundly and repeatedly stated that PW Botha had been installed in a "quiet coup d'etat by the military" who were now in charge, as "the most powerful source of inspiration for cabinet-level decisions" – see this article in ***NONGQAI***: "QUIET COUP D'ETAT" AGAINST PM JOHN VORSTER - Nongqai BLOG

Turning now to the fallacious theory that governments under internal societal pressure can successfully manage that and stay in power by means of incremental, top-down imposed change. Samuel Huntington (of "Clash of Civilizations" fame) came to South Africa in 1981 with his self-styled recipe for how, supposedly, any government

anywhere that was "*truly made up of dedicated reformers intent upon affecting major change*", could do so without losing control – even when caught between strong opposition forces on both their left and right. Clearly, this was an appealing prospect for the management and control-obsessed PW Botha securocrats, but again – Huntington's was a theoretical academic recipe focused upon those in government systematically imposing incremental change from above whilst maintaining control, rather than on preparing the ground for all societal forces to seek a peace settlement by means of jointly and freely determining the nature and shape of necessary fundamental transformation around the negotiation table.

In any event, when Huntington returned to South Africa five years later to review how things had evolved, he found that none of the prerequisites he had identified for his model to work, had been met by the Botha administration. Huntington's model therefore does not need to be elaborated upon further. Its relevance here lies in it being further proof that the focus of Botha and his military advisers had been on **management** and **control** (into perpetuity?!), not on finding definitive solutions for the root political causes of conflict by means of **negotiated settlements**.

It is also noteworthy that Prof Arend Lijphart, the Dutch/American academic regarded as the leading theoretician on consociationalism as constitutional model for plural societies, had told the NP Government straight up that it would not work in South Africa, and that the only theoretical choice was between either democratic majority rule, or minority rule imposed by force (consociationalism was one of the models looked at as a possible means of ensconcing group rights, when some in the NP still saw that as objective).

During the "lost decade", lacking a timely acceptance of the need to settle and without preparing at all for negotiations, South Africa was staring down the barrel of what Vorster had rightly said would be – in the absence of a settlement – an "alternative too ghastly to contemplate".

As explained earlier, the approach that Vorster and his team had been leaning towards was tested in SWA/Namibia. Vorster avoided getting stuck in debates about **constitutional models**, which necessarily haunts the author there-of when (like PW) one abrogates to oneself the power to unilaterally try and impose something like the Tri-Cameral constitution from above.

Vorster instead supported **process**, such as the Turnhalle approach, where the nature of a new non-racial constitutional dispensation was thrashed out round the negotiation table. The resultant draft constitution, being clear and concrete, was then (after the fact) put to the electorate – and was overwhelmingly approved by more than 90% of the white voters of that territory, because they had something definite and tangible to either approve or reject. One can imagine how difficult the debate would have been if the voters had, before the fact, been let loose to quibble first about theories and principles, rather than confronting them with a "take it or leave it" choice on something precise and definitive (it is noteworthy that this was the exact same tactic adopted by FW de Klerk when in the 1992 referendum he asked for a mandate for the process – for whether to negotiate a settlement or not).

Instead of lopsidedly focusing on military preparedness (but without having ignored security needs either) Vorster in Namibia employed a strategy of preparing the terrain there properly and realistically – not for an inevitable Armageddon, but for inevitable negotiations. With the view to subsequently use that model in South Africa as well, knowing that if the white SWA-voters (i.e., of then the most conservative "province") were willing to accept a negotiated non-racial constitution by more than 90%, then there were grounds for using the same kind of **process** to arrive at a settlement here as well.

In contrast, the results of PW Botha's attempts at incrementally imposing "change" – but without ever being willing to spell out what his ultimate intent of the end objective was – was that the Afrikaner voters in South Africa during the "lost decade" became deeply divided and caught up in quibbling over the merits or de-merits of differently configured policy options and variants of wishful thinking. It caused serious division of what should later have been De Klerk's power base, that would greatly weaken the Afrikaners' voice at the negotiation table in Kempton Park…

The fact that the PW Botha administration had for more than a decade focussed all means and energy on preparing for a military shoot-out, and not for laying the groundwork for participating in and influencing a negotiated

settlement process, was to severely limit his successor, FW de Klerk – who ended up at the CODESA table, isolated and with few cards in hand… But more about that, a bit later in the timeline of our tale.

By disproportionally investing in military hardware, PW Botha's erroneous threat assumptions and skewed budget priorities also singularly failed to address what everyone else could see: that the increasingly **volatile internal situation** was much more of a national security consideration than any **external military threat** could conceivably be.

## 5.2 UNDER-FUNDING THE POLICE

According to the UN, the average number of policemen per thousand of the population is **three** officers; in Argentina, for example, it is 7.98/1000; in France, 4.22; Italy 4.56; Greece 5.07; Netherlands 2.95; and in the New South Africa 3.5).

So, in the "Apartheid Police State", what was the number of policemen the S.A.P. had, per thousand of the population? It is easy to prove that South Africa, supposedly a "police state", was a rather weird one, because it didn't have many actual police...

If we take 1975 as a base, the South African ratio of number of policemen per thousand of the population was only **1.241/1000**.

The only other countries on earth with anywhere near such low figures that I could detect are Haiti and Lesotho, and then Finland (each of which cannot be compared to South Africa at all).

In addition to the RSA+SWA's already substantial population at the time, it must also be remembered how enormously vast the piece of earth was that had to be policed by the S.A.P. in those years – then it was the 13th largest territory on earth, larger than all of the following European countries' territories combined: Spain + Portugal + France + Italy + Belgium + the Netherlands + Germany + Luxembourg + Switzerland + the Czech Republic!

The land borders alone that had then to be guarded were 6,434km long – 2.5 times the distance between London and Moscow. The coastline collectively covered 4,912 kilometres...

Then came Operation Savannah in 1975, with PW unilaterally ordering that what had been authorized as a training mission be "mission creeped" into a conventional armoured assault towards Luanda, aimed at installing UNITA and the FNLA as the post-Portuguese independence government in Angola. Apart from effectively killing Vorster's détente with Africa, the other main "own goal" result of this adventure was that it pricked and publicly deflated White South Africa's so important psychological balloon of hitherto having been an "unchallengeable strongman" in the eyes of the non-White population, followed in short order by the outbreak of the June 1976 Soweto student riots. Thus started an era of onerous new additional policing challenges: of containing growing **internal unrest** plus also needing to counter **armed inflitration** across the now very much closer borders (with nominally Marxist states such as Mozambique just some 300km from Pretoria).

Nevertheless, despite this huge additional responsibility on the borders (to which soon was added a huge new need for a public order policing component) the proportion of police to size of the population dropped **even further** after Mr. PW Botha took over in 1978, due to the prioritization of the Armed Forces – to just **1.126**/1000 in 1980. This, despite the additional responsibilities regarding internal stability and "counterinsurgency".

As we know, the situation continued to deteriorate rapidly domestically after 1980, with the popular revolt growing among the black, brown and Indian populations against the 1983 tri-cameral constitution (which was enforced by PW from above, without consultation with those groups themselves – with PW going against an explicit warning by the Secretariat of the State Security Council, that doing so and not including Black Africans, would further fuel just such a situation of general insurrection in the urban areas).

Despite this enormously increased S.A.P. workload (noting again – with entirely new, extremely important and manpower-intensive new components such as counter-insurgency and internal stability now added) the Police

Force's proportion to the population in 1985 had only just returned to about what it was in 1970, namely **1.404**/1000.

To give a comparative example, with regard to manpower solely dedicated to maintaining domestic order – France has the same size of population as South Africa. It has two specialized public order forces dedicated exclusively to maintaining internal stability, being the National Police's CRS (strength – 13,000), and the *Gendarmerie Mobile* (12,000). The National Police mainly serve the urban metropoles, and the *Gendarmerie* is the police in the countryside – both, however, fall under the command and control of the French Ministry of the Interior, which is charged with law and order. Together, therefore, 25,000 men just for riot control, in a developed country, covering a quarter of the RSA+ SWA/N's surface area (with another 125,000 French police officers who could be engaged to render assistance with public order, as and when required).

The **entire** S.A. Police force in 1985 consisted of just **48,921** members of all races!

For more detail on this, see ***NONGQAI*** article: South African Police A Case Of So Few Owed So Much Yet Scorned - Nongqai BLOG

I remember well my father's struggle to obtain for the SA Police its own helicopters and air wing – something even municipal police forces abroad possess, because it is an essential policing tool. PW Botha's initial response was that "over his dead body" any other government entity than the SA Air Force would operate any aircraft of any type. Eventually, common sense and my father's persistence prevailed, and it became part of his legacy as SAP-SB CO that my dad was most proud of – the acquisition of the first helicopter to fly in SA Police colours, a German-made MBB. He was given a small, scaled model of this yellow chopper with the blue stripe and SAP decal; it was a desktop memento that he cherished.

We will look in detail in Chapter 11 at the reasons why the ANC came out on top in the contest for political power in the run-up to the 1994 elections. Suffice it to say here, that it was most directly due to two things: firstly, the government **lost the propaganda war** hands-down (remember: one of PW Botha's first steps was to close down the Department of Information). Secondly, the weak **security situation in key metropolitan townships** allowed the ANC/SACP to deploy their "people's war" strategy – exploiting a weak internal security situation overwhelmingly due to the fact that, in terms of PW's priorities, the bulk of the state's scarce resources had been allocated to fighting a non-essential war in Angola, instead of directing those funds at the truly essential internal arena (with the costly conventional warfare armaments and nuclear bombs plus missile capabilities in the end counting for absolutely nothing – the armour rusting up at depots north of Pretoria, and the nuclear bombs and missiles dismantled).

To illustrate with a simple analogy: our strategy was to prepare for a game of golf, in the process blowing our money on expensive fancy golfing equipment, whilst the game to which we had actually been challenged and needed to win, was street soccer…

## 5.3 CHANGE UNDER PW BOTHA: IMPOSED TOP-DOWN, INCREMENTAL, AND COSMETICALLY

PW Botha did indeed make a speech in Upington in October 1979, thus shortly after winning the NP leadership, in which he boldly stated the need for change – that white South Africans needed to understand the reality with which they were confronted, namely that they have to "adapt, or die".

However, the key question was: what did PW Botha understand about the content, goal, and limits of the change he favoured? PW was never willing to divulge his ultimate intent with the change he preached. It is also clear that he was never willing to countenance any possibility of whites losing monopoly control over political power. Consequently, he wasn't ever willing to engage in inclusive negotiations over an open agenda, because he obviously understood that that would necessarily require compromises regarding power which he was not willing ever to make.

In other words, when PW talked about the need for change, and Vorster talked about the need to settle, they were actually talking about quite different concepts. PW Botha thought of "change" as something to be imposed incrementally, from the top down and essentially of a cosmetic nature, to improve the ugly racist aesthetics of Apartheid. He saw it as a mechanism with which to try and defuse, rather than as aimed at achieving fundamental transformation that would change the power equation significantly. Any real transformation that could strip whites of their monopoly hold over political power he was determined to resist – even to the point of "going down hard-arsed".

However, the fate that befell PW's attempts at incremental, top-down change would soon enough underscore the inescapable truth that, like jumping across a canyon, the transition from Apartheid to a non-racial democracy had to be done in one leap, not attempted in the form of a series of baby steps…

This was illuminated by PW's initial proposal to his party regarding how to resolve the conundrum of how to accord political rights to the "Coloureds" and Indians (by means of having three separate entire parliaments for each those two groups plus for the whites, which parliaments would coordinate at the top, with a fixed white veto in place). A draft such constitution was published by the new PW Botha government in 1979, but due to its evident unworkability and thus the unified and vocal opposition it elicited, it didn't make it to parliament. Nevertheless, this "tri-parliament" initiative (as distinct from the later "Tri-cameral" one) was at least the first breach in the Apartheid dogma that there was to be a "white" South African state that would be governed solely by a sovereign, exclusively white parliament.

The matter didn't die there, however. PW Botha wished for a new constitution that would enhance his powers as leader by means of replacing the collegial cabinet decision-making system with an all-powerful executive president. This would have been difficult to get accepted on its own, so it was rolled into the reform regarding "Coloured" and Indian rights and imposed as the Tri-Cameral Parliament Constitution (i.e., not three separate parliaments as initially envisaged, but now ostensibly one parliament with three chambers; furthermore, these chambers were designated on the basis of race, not of ethno-linguistic groups).

The saga of the tricameral parliament is illustrative of PW's bullying, autocratic style. Parliament was to henceforth have three chambers – one each for elected representatives of the "white", "coloured" and Indian communities. Notionally these would exercise power conjointly, but in reality (and quite obviously so) the white chamber would dictate, based on a fixed demographic quota that would not be adapted over time to the rapidly rising populations of "coloureds" and Indians. This was dressed up as supposedly being "consociational democracy", even though it did not in any way meet the essential criteria for consociationalism, namely genuine power-sharing based on checks-and-balances such as mutual veto powers. (All this sham did, was to unfortunately give consociationalism a very bad name in South Africa).

Before its implementation, Botha had instructed the Secretariat of the State Security Council to assess his plan to simply impose such a new constitution without any real consultation (he had obviously understood that consultation would have laid bare the broad and fierce opposition to the Tri-Cameral model). The intelligence community duly informed him that, in their assessment, if this scheme was imposed without any real consultation with all affected groups, including black Africans, and also without a referendum amongst whites, then it was sure to further inflame the already febrile internal situation in the country.

At that time (the early eighties) the metropolitan areas were already very tense, precisely because of the fact that blacks were told that they would not be considered for inclusion in this mooted new tricameral parliament, whilst "Coloureds" and Indians were not to be consulted about its foundation or configuration. This led to the formation in January of 1983 of the UDF – the United Democratic Front – consisting of some 400 public organisations and led by activist clergy, most notably the Rev. Dr. Alan Boesak and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

PW Botha chose to ignore, for the most part, the assessment presented by his own intelligence community. Except for accepting to hold a referendum among white voters, he entirely excluded any notion of involving black South Africans in any consultations about the envisaged new dispensation, and neither was he willing to engage in real consultation – not to speak about negotiation – even with "Coloured" and Indian leaders. As predicted by the

intelligence community, forcing through the “tri-cameral” model soon enough caused the internal resistance to flame up even hotter, especially in the metropolitan areas. For the first time, “Coloured” communities joined in such violent public protest.

The whites-only referendum that was held in 1983 presented those voters wanting change with a difficult choice (those who saw Botha’s “reforms” with alarm as just the thin edge of the wedge leading to eventual black majority rule, of course had it easy – they simply would vote “no”).

For those favouring change, the dilemma was that the new dispensation was clearly just a sham.

I knew, from my days on the “Coloured” and Indian desk at the old Bureau (i.e., before we became the NIS), that the two secondary chambers would be seen by those communities for what the were and would never be accepted as being, in any way, just and equitable. But, on the other hand, it at least notionally represented a first movement away from NP’s earlier Verwoerdian rigid rejection of any, but any, form of conjoint exercise of power whatsoever. So that, with the significant help of traditional opposition voters, the yes-vote garnered around a two-thirds majority in the white referendum. Not because voters felt like blessing the new system as perfect, but at least viewing it as some progress in the right direction.

My own personal assessment – my gut feel, nothing empirically proven – is that PW Botha largely used the tricameral referendum as cover for bringing in what he personally most dearly wanted, in constitutional terms. Namely, to be rid of the system of collegial cabinet governance, and to be made executive president. With, effectively, all power vested in him. This important amendment had been tagged on to the tricameral system, so that – if you voted for that – you willy nilly also voted to give PW these highly centralised executive powers concentrated in his hands alone.

To understand this, one must revert again to that fundamental, though sub-surface strategy debate about “settle” or “shoot” within the securocrat establishment that now held effective sway. PW had won the election for prime minster back in 1978 with a razor-thin majority. Thanks, in most part, to the support in the end lent to him by Pik Botha (who had done so, very much in order to try and advance his own leadership aspirations). An example of PW’s frustration with the system of cabinet governance was that he could not, as prime minister, simply block the moves by Foreign Affairs to initiate negotiations with Mozambique for the Nkomati Accords, because a majority in cabinet had approved of this initiative (which Accord, despite the cabinet decision and having signed it himself, PW Botha promptly told General Constand Viljoen of the SADF to ignore and continue supporting RENAMO in Mozambique – which I will discuss in more detail in the next sub-section).

Be that as it may, the end results of the imposition of the new tricameral constitutional dispensation were further empowerment of the securocrats and PW Botha now as all-powerful executive president, as well as ever-increasing volatility in the country.

PW Botha had no coherent plan for what should ultimately replace the Verwoerdian dream, particularly regarding rights for Black Africans. Just his adherence to the theory of incremental, managed “change” (limited to the petty side of the racist colonial legacy), imposed top-down, in truth conceded in response to opposition and pressure. Of this, the progression from the 1979 concept of three separate parliaments to the 1983 model of one Tri-Cameral parliament was a perfect example – it was self-evidently merely cosmetic (and it was understood as being such by all concerned).

What PW Botha also had lacked, was the insight that – in terms of process – if the political power in the country had to be ostensibly shared (as in the tri-cameral model), then there needed to have been prior, inclusive deliberations about such a new constitutional dispensation, because to have had any hope of it being accepted, the development of such a system had needed to be of a shared nature as well. With genuine, inclusive consultation and negotiation, not simply imposition by the whites. (It is noteworthy that Botha had always strenuously avoided the use of the term “share” in relation to power; he referred to the “division” of power between white, “Coloured” and Indian regarding “own” matters, coupled with “co-responsibility” for matters related to “shared interests”).

PW Botha seemed to be essentially playing for time, with no clear intention other than an absolute determination to hang on to the monopoly over power – or go down "hard-arsed" in the process. In terms of constitutional content, he lacked clarity about what the basic tenets needed to be of a realistic, practical, constitutional end-scheme. About how that would firstly properly differentiate between race and ethnicity (replacing race as criterion with accommodation of ethnic identity and aspirations, as per popular thinking at the time within the NP). As regards seeking peace (to end the "war" he and his "total onslaught" co-believers postulated was being waged), that never entered his lexicon – he was determined to shoot it out and win, so as to be able to impose what he believed best for the whites.

PW had not put forward any developed ideas about how to reconcile his notion of a "constellation of states" (referring to Blacks still needing to be contented with their tribal homelands). Of how such sovereign diversity could be reconciled with the reality of South Africa being one integrated economic whole, within which blacks were a rapidly growing demographic majority also in the supposed "white" area. His references to a so-called "constellation of states" lacked clarity; we know it was based on the black homelands, but the term "constellation" is not part of recognised, defined terminology when talking about constitutions, such as terms like confederation or consociation or even a commonwealth are.

PW Botha's lack of own clarity about the dispensation he wished to establish was further illustrated by him including (under pressure from his cabinet) a phrase in his 1985 Rubican speech announcing that all black South Africans who wish to retain their South African citizenship – as opposed to only being accorded homeland citizenship – would henceforth be allowed to do so. This of course begged the question as to how these Black citizens would be accommodated with regard to basic political rights in so-called "white" South Africa. His statement in this regard thus essentially made a nonsense of PW's own core notion of the homelands being sovereign states in which Blacks had to exercise their rights – which he didn't even attempt to reconcile with this new position of Blacks retaining citizenship of "white" South Africa.

Policy had thus become driven by the need to put out fires, *ad hoc* as and where they occurred, rather than by any overall cohesive plan with a clear end intent. Exactly as one of PW's ministers had in fact observed to Johan Mostert, in the quote that introduced this instalment of my musings ("*And then I ended up in the cabinet. With great anticipation I looked forward to hearing at last about the big plan for the future. And you know what, "ou broer", when I sat there in the PW Botha cabinet and looked around me, you know what I saw? Broken reeds. Not one of them had any idea where we were going...")*

Perhaps most seriously as regards future constitutional content, was the fact that the word salads dished up during the "lost decade" (essentially as attempted compromises between the different NP factions) failed to account for the practical, real-world truth that politics is fundamentally about POWER.

Given the pluralist complexity of South African society, the key question should imho have been: what provisions should constitute the concrete building blocks (as opposed to mere high-sounding phrases on paper) of any new constitutional dispensation? What measures determinant of the actual exercise of real power need be included, that would ensure for minorities sufficient actionable "power to protect themselves" – meaning, the capability and right to project real physical power with which to persuade/dissuade the very large and fast growing demographic majority, so that the latter would in future respect the agreed minority and individual rights included in some form of cohabitating constitutional arrangement?

Instead of looking at the question of how to dissuade the abuse of majority power in the practical, realistic way that the drafters of the U.S. constitution for example had done (where they recognised the right of the citizenry to bear arms, and had set up in each federal state a National Guard under control of that state's governor, so that the citizens and/or the states would be able to physically check an abusive central government, if need be) the constitutional debate in South Africa had always tended to be academic and theoretical, focused on and trusting in legalistic formulae and not questioning, for example, the very high centralisation and concentration of all meaningful sources and expressions of executive power in Pretoria's hands (in terms of the paradigm that Jan Smuts had established during the founding of the Union).

This “tunnel vision” treating constitution-making as an exercise in the application of academic theories, going for the nicest-sounding ones that would be applauded in liberal academic and media circles (rather than looking at their real-world implications for decision-making, governance and a balance of power) was again very much in evidence during the negotiation phase under FW de Klerk.

What PW Botha and the “total onslaught” faction had in truth done, was to merely parrot the obvious truism that the country needed a “political solution”. But this was of course not sufficient. Because it wasn’t only about the WHAT (i.e., the content of such a “political solution”), but also fundamentally about the HOW of arriving at one – such as: imposed, or negotiated? Therefore, merely paying lip service to the idea that a “political solution” was needed, did not advance us towards such a solution if there wasn’t acceptance of the reality that there was only one **process** through which any such a “political solution” could be legitimately achieved – namely, through inclusive negotiations for a broadly agreed settlement.

What PW Botha clearly did understand, was that a genuine process of inclusive negotiation aimed at a legitimate settlement would decidedly not result in the kind of sham arrangement that was the most that he was willing to offer. It would of necessity require real compromise and go hand in hand with, and result in transformation of a truly fundamental kind, because that would be what the other negotiation partners would insist upon. In effect, an entirely new South Africa, stripped of all vestiges of white domination. For him, white rule remained non-negotiable and he therefore absolutely prohibited and denigrated any talks with the liberation movements. He and his small circle of securocrat decision-makers accordingly continued preparing for the “shoot” option, rather than focusing on preparing the ground for negotiations to “settle”; to them, the latter smacked of appeasement and suicide.

As I will show, from the middle eighties on PW Botha and his “Total onslaught” faction were in fact alone in holding their viewpoint, with most of his cabinet, the rest of the intelligence community such as the NIS and Foreign Affairs, plus the civilian Public Service, Afrikaner academics, the Church and the influential Afrikaner-Broederbond all proposing a return to a strategy of seeking a settlement through inclusive negotiation – to no avail, unfortunately.

Till PW Botha suffered a stroke and was forced out in 1989.

## 5.4 NKOMATI ACCORD: CABINET & KEY DEPARTMENTS STILL FAVOUR NEGOTIATIONS

Mainly as a result of preparatory work done by diplomats from the Department of Foreign Affairs, a secret non-aggression pact was concluded with Swaziland in 1982, according to which that kingdom agreed not to permit passage for terrorists or accord them safe harbour.

Following on this success, at the end of 1983 DFA diplomats held talks of the same nature in Swaziland with representatives of the Mozambican government (then embroiled in a fierce battle against Renamo, which was equipped and supported first by the Rhodesians and later by the SADF). These discussions culminated in a similar non-aggression pact (the Nkomati Pact) which had been drafted by the legal division of Foreign Affairs, and which was praised internationally as a model for this type of agreement. It was duly signed by PW Botha in March 1984 (then still as prime minister – he was inaugurated as executive president in September 1984).

However, the SADF was not on board, and General Constand Viljoen went behind the co-ordination structures and the backs of the cabinet to ask PW Botha's personal authorization to continue with arms delivery and support for Renamo – which PW granted without qualms, despite the solemn undertakings that the South African government had given in the Accord, which he himself had signed.

This situation naturally soon became known, among others to the National Intelligence Service (NIS head Dr Niël Barnard personally confronted General Viljoen about it, pointing out to him that he was undermining a cabinet decision) and did serious damage to South Africa's image as a reliable negotiating partner: America's Dr Chester Crocker had the following to say about it: “*How could the government in Pretoria allow one of its most remarkable diplomatic achievements to be discredited so quickly? What short-term or long-term purpose could be served by actions that destroy any confidence people may still have had in your solemn word of honour?*”

Despite the SADF's circumvention of Nkomati, these non-aggression agreements clearly proved (as Vorster and Van den Bergh had foreseen) that South Africa, as the economic giant of the region, indeed would be able to exert enough "soft power" leverage over its neighbouring countries to achieve its security objectives through diplomacy. This regional economic power reality had, objectively seen, rendered unnecessary the military interventions which was costing the country so dearly internationally – yet the SADF continued on their set course...

Similar agreements were then successfully put in place with Zimbabwe, Lesotho, and Botswana. Ironically, one of the costliest consequences of the unabated military interference by the SADF in neighbouring countries was the mandatory international arms embargo that was imposed on South Africa, and which particularly harmed the Air Force.

During the negotiation of the Nkomati Accord an informative article was published by Carlos Cardoso (then head of the Mozambican News Agency, who had ties to their intelligence and to the Soviets). It was entitled: "*The Painful Return to Vorster"* and formed part of the "briefing book" provided to senior members of the South African negotiating team for the Nkomati-agreement (my father had kept his copy and left it to me). In this article, Cardoso pointed out how the PW Botha policy of military interventions had failed and that Nkomati was actually a return to the policy of Vorster and Van den Bergh, both of whom he mentioned by name – as can be seen in the quote below:

*"In South Africa, the most clear-headed individuals will analyse the (Nkomati) Agreement in the light of a policy attempted by the then prime minister, John Vorster. In the press conference at the end of the March 2-3 (1984) meeting in Cape Town, I asked South African Foreign Minister Roelof Botha "now that the Agreement has been concluded, doesn't this remind you of John Vorster? ... By the beginning of the 1970's South Africa's military support for the Portuguese colonial army in Mozambique and Angola, and for Ian Smith's Rhodesian army, had not managed to hold back the advance of the liberation movements. The fall of the Portuguese colonial empire in 1974 gave Vorster the raw material for what would become known as his policy of détente. In alliance with Van den Bergh, the then head of BOSS, Vorster made his famous speech 'give us six months and you will not recognise South Africa'.*

*"At the same time Vorster declared that either South Africa begin a process of change in its racial laws, or the alternative would be "Too ghastly to contemplate…" In the 1974/75 period, Van den Bergh succeeded in sabotaging an attempt to invade Mozambique because he saw in this a danger of guerrilla war spilling over the border into South Africa itself… In the following three years, South Africa experienced a creeping coup in the corridors of power, a coup launched against Vorster and Van den Bergh by P.W. Botha and Magnus Malan. The invasion of Angola in 1975, ordered by Botha and Malan, was the first sign that something very serious was working against (Vorster's) détente… why the eight years of wasted time? Why has it taken eight years to return to the policy begun by Vorster – a policy he was unable to pursue because P.W. Botha and Malan defeated him... The question remains: why did Botha and Malan not see what Vorster gave signs of understanding eight years ago?"*

## 5.5 A HISTORY OF GRAVE PROBLEMS DUE TO SECURITY FORCE RELATED "OWN GOALS"

I have referred before to the disturbing reality that the security/intel-community wasn't by any means the well-coordinated, expertly run monolith with all marching to the same drumbeat, as today still imagined in the public perception – on the contrary, decision-making was marked by grave dysfunction, discord, and often dubious decisions. Probably the largest volume of evidence relating to an apparent almost total lack of command and control on the part of top leadership during particularly the latter half of the "lost decade", can be found in the records of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission – where it appears that no-one high up had ever given even a single order that could or should have led to the many incidents that seemingly misguided officials of lower rank had felt themselves obliged later, to ask amnesty for… (if all of that had indeed happened, as we know it did, but nobody from up high had ever given such orders – as they all subsequently claimed – then how could there have been effective command and control?).

That dysfunction, discord, and dubious decision-making on strategy is not merely a topic of theoretical academic relevance. It had far-reaching real-world consequences for South Africa. To illustrate this point (and to, in a way, set the scene for the more detailed analyses to follow it), I'm now going to list some examples of these "*ligte mistakies*" and their consequences for the country.

### 5.5.1 LISTING SOME "OWN GOALS" AND THEIR GRAVE CONSEQUENCES

The "wasted years" had started in 1975. I had explained in Part Two the disastrous consequences at a strategic level suffered because of Operation Savannah in Angola – firstly, in that it destroyed the psychological perception previously held by most Africans that white South Africa was "invincible" and secondly, how it had killed Vorster's détente initiative (which had been a critical part of the preparatory strengthening of our hand with a view to negotiations on Rhodesia and SWA/N, and eventually South Africa itself).

***RESULT: As a direct consequence of Ops Savannah, on 1 January 1976 the UN Centre Against Apartheid was established.***

I had also pointed out how the Soweto unrest, which started on 16 June 1976, had soon followed the SADF's late March 1976 withdrawal from Angola. This uprising, which proved to be a turning point in the country's history, had been sparked in large measure by the new emboldening of the black masses after the SADF's withdrawal had been portrayed as a defeat (which is not to minimise the trigger role played that fateful day by the disastrous riot control decision-making on the spot by the local SA Police command there in the township). This, together with the equally poorly handled physical altercation with Steve Biko whilst he was in SAP-SB detention and which resulted in his subsequent death on 12 September 1977, had prepared the ground for the first compulsory international punitive measures:

***RESULT: UN Security Council to pass UNSC 418 on 4 November 1977 – the resolution that imposed a mandatory arms embargo against South Africa.***

The lesson that was not learnt, was that security force actions which could be portrayed, propaganda-wise, as extra-legal, and which were committed against well-known activists or across our borders (however morally justified we may have felt it to have been) would likely result in stringent international countermeasures and further feed the propaganda machine – exactly what the ANC/SACP had set out to achieve with their armed provocations.

Under PW Botha and the "total onslaught" mind-set, there was a growing trend to have recourse to covert special operations – as if no-one would divine that South Africa was behind it. These included operations of very dubious strategic benefit (in truth, more likely to cause harm than good) such as the aborted **invasion of the Seychelles**, or the attempt to **blow up American-owned petroleum installations in Cabinda** – both thousands of kilometres to our north. Which time and again resulted in us delivering exactly the kind of propaganda bonuses for the opposition that they had set out to trap us into (because it was not sufficiently appreciated by the "total onslaught" securocrats that the struggle we were engaged in was at heart a political contest, not a military one, in which propaganda would be a deciding factor). Literally dozens of "black ops" were launched that would lead to an ever-escalating spiral of hardened attitudes and always harsher international punitive measures in return.

An example of such totally amateurish knee-jerk decision-making driven by emotion and "*gatkruip*" (brown nosing) rather than by objective analysis and coordinated prior assessment of potential benefit and risk, is the thoughtless reaction to the ANC's symbolic attack on Voortrekkerhoogte with a Grad-P rocket launcher in August 1981. PW Botha was reportedly furious that the large complex outside Pretoria, seen by the public as the locus of the Defence Force, had been brazenly attacked, even though insignificant damage had resulted and it evidently had been a propaganda exercise.

PW aired his ire in a meeting with Louis la Grange (minister of police), asking whether this insult would go un-answered. La Grange, always eager to please the Groot Krokodil above any other consideration, went back to Wachthuis where he relayed PW's sentiments. The *gatkruipers* then in charge there, took it as hint that they could score brownie points by retaliating. The end result was an SA Police SB operation to firebomb the ANC headquarters in London in March 1982. For their success, the very brave and expert underlings who had been

sent there and had carried it out, subsequently received medals (and later had to request amnesty from the TRC). However, the entire top "decision-making process" had been of the hint-hint, nudge-nudge kind, without any proper coordination with other departments in the intelligence community as to likely collateral damage...

What exactly did this operation achieve?

***RESULT***: ***Firstly, it seriously pissed off Margaret Thatcher, then our main international protector. Our audacity (and lack of judgement) in doing something that dumb in her own back-yard – with the U.K. then itself suffering a spate of IRA bombings – meant that setting off bombs in their capital wasn't exactly the best way to endear one to the British public, media, or ruling class. Relations with the British security/intelligence community immediately soured (I know first-hand, because I was then in the UK, ostensibly as a visiting post-grad researcher, but they obviously knew me as NIS officer because of my many earlier briefings to their representatives in Pretoria and because of them having all my bio-data from the BND course I had attended; as a result of the attack on the ANC office, my home phone was cut off, my mail was interfered with, I was put under observation and followed around, even though I had had nothing to do with the bombing…).***

***If there had been any prior consultation with Foreign Affairs on this operation, then most certainly the DFA would have warned the SAP that antagonizing the British, and Thatcher in particular, in this manner would be extremely counter-productive in the broader scope of fundamental strategic considerations…***

***Secondly, as regards the ANC itself, the firebomb exercise by the SAP seriously diminished the hitherto excellent intelligence harvest that the NIS had been reaping from a very successful covert operation which had had that self-same ANC headquarters under thorough technical surveillance.***

***If there had been any prior coordinated assessment with the NIS, then the Service would certainly have warned that endangering the valuable intelligence stream for the sake of a short-lived emotional high, would be totally counter-productive (and the NIS analysts would have been sure to also point out the strategic dumbness of pissing off Thatcher).***

From a legal and structural-functional point of view, a question that should have been asked is: Does this kind of covert action executed abroad even fall within the scope of the SAP's mandate and authority? Why wasn't the SADF's own Special Forces tasked with this (if indeed one wished to be so dumb as to do it)? Was there a proper authorising decision on record from the relevant inter-departmental mandating authority for this kind of operation, namely the State Security Council? Or was this just a case of sycophants seizing upon an opportunity to try and please the boss?

Hard as it may be to admit, it is clearly so that – objectively evaluated – nothing was gained from the London bombing, nor from the letter-bomb that assassinated Ruth First (the wife of the SACP's Joe Slovo) in Maputo on 21 August 1982. It didn't in any way deter the ANC. In an own act of retaliation they soon set off, on 20 May 1983, a car bomb in Church Street, Pretoria, in front of Air Force HQ, killing nineteen. A tit-for-tat spiral of escalating violence had been created, resulting in nothing but defeats for the government in the all-important propaganda arena. Because its actions were increasingly being seen as extra-legal (which is an important topic in its own right, that I will come back to).

Another example of such un-coordinated action is the events around the cross-border raid on suspected ANC-MK cadres in Maseru, Lesotho, conducted by SAP Vlakplaas operatives just before Christmas of 1985. The SAP Security Branch had some weeks earlier become aware of the presence of MK members in Lesotho, who were said to be preparing a terror attack in South Africa over the Christmas season. The matter was duly raised at the KIK (the coordinating intelligence committee) which had immediately initiated an intelligence assessment and the development of a holistic countering strategy. The inter-departmental consensus was that South Africa would be able to persuade the Lesotho government (by exerting economic pressure, if necessary) to put a stop to any such activity, without the need for armed intervention and thus avoiding the negative international fall-out that a raid would bring about. This carefully calculated holistic strategy, supported by the NIS and DFA, was at the very point

of being finally approved and implemented, when the acting Security Branch head at the time took it upon himself to not await the KIK but ordered the armed cross-border raid to be carried out. This i.a. led to a number of civilian deaths and immediate international outcry...

The flimsy pretence offered was that the raid had supposedly been the work of Lesotho rebels opposed to the ANC – which nobody believed, but which DFA diplomats nevertheless had to present at the United Nations when, predictably, all hell broke loose about this breach of a member nation's territorial integrity.

***RESULT: The UN Security Council convened in emergency meeting, and South Africa came dangerously close to being certified as being a threat to international peace and security (which would have justified not only mandatory sanctions, but even coercive military intervention by the international community). Thatcher again saved the day, with her deflective, time-winning initiative of setting up the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group (EPG) to engage with South Africa.***

The respite provided by Thatcher's intervention would prove to be only temporary, though. Again – as we shall soon see when I'll discuss in detail the EPG visit debacle – due to leading members of the South African government working at cross-purposes, actively undermining each other because of there not being consensus on national objectives and strategy, nor any true coordination.

Ironically, when very shortly after the fateful cross-border raid the KIK-approved strategy of economic and diplomatic measures was indeed implemented and pressure was brought to bear on Lesotho, the recalcitrant government of Leabua Jonathan fell literally within days, and was replaced by a government that followed the example of other neighbouring states and denied the ANC the use of their territory for launching terror attacks against South Africa. The armed raid by SAP-SB Vlakplaas operatives and all the negative fall-out from it, had thus been avoidable – just as saner voices within the security/intel community had correctly foreseen. The lingering anger and frustration of the NIS and DFA over this incident were vividly on display years later when their respective then DG's, Niël Barnard and Niel van Heerden, had to give evidence to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on the matter and did not hide their irritation about the SAP-SB's unilateral action at the time.

The major "own goals" were, however, not only scored by over-eager security force leadership. It was at the very top government level – specifically between the two Bothas, PW and Pik – that the most significant damage was done, due to the lack of strategic consensus and their active undermining of each other. This was demonstrated by the chain of events that, within the space of less than a year, had given us the "Rubicon speech" and then the abortion of the Commonwealth EPG initiative, thereby leading directly to the **Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA)** being introduced in the USA on 21 May 1986, as well as to a **Commonwealth mini-summit** being held in early August 1986 which approved stringent sanctions (with Thatcher this time concurring), plus the **European Community** also imposing sanctions.

# 5.6 THE TOP TWO OWN GOALS OF THE "LOST DECADE": A TALE OF TWO BOTHAS AT ODDS

## 5.6.1 THE RUBICON SPEECH

Already during July 1985 the then minister of Constitutional Development and Planning (who was also back then the Cape provincial leader of the NP), Dr Chris Heunis, had conveyed to PW Botha that there was an urgent need to convene a top-level meeting of the extended cabinet to try and obtain consensus about new policy initiatives that Heunis and his department had been pushing for, but about which no agreement had been reached in the SCC, the Special Cabinet Committee on Constitutional Development which Heunis chaired (NB: it is important to note the distinction between the SCC on constitutional matters and the SSC, the State Security Council).

The SCC had reached a stalemate in its internal deliberations, with the senior ministers serving on it unable to agree on a new direction, so that Heunis thus was not able to advance the recommendations for reform that he had received from the constitutional experts in his department. Given the governing National Party's internal rules regarding the making and approval of new policy, these new initiatives had to be put to the four provincial

congresses of the NP for approval. With the annual congress season about to begin in August, it was thus necessary to have such an extended cabinet "*bosberaad*" (brainstorming session) beforehand. PW Botha himself was set to deliver the opening address at the Natal provincial congress on 15 August 1985, which would present a platform from which to introduce and explain the new constitutional initiatives (always still incremental and to be imposed top-down) that were about to be submitted to the provincial congresses for their approval.

Apart from this need of Min Heunis, namely that cabinet-level direction be provided about proposed new policy, the general situation – both internal and external – that confronted the government had during July 1985 rapidly deteriorated. On the one side, this grave intensification related to the economy and the financial situation. The SA Treasury and Foreign Affairs had been warning for some time that ominous signs about South Africa's debt were emanating from leading international banks, particularly in the USA (without, however, these warnings eliciting a timely response from PW Botha).

On the other end of the threat spectrum, the internal security situation was also rapidly deteriorating. To the point where, on 20 July 1985, President Botha had declared a state of emergency in affected parts of the country where the unrest stoked by his decision to impose the tri-cameral parliament had been gaining in intensity. This emergency was placed under the management of the SADF – in itself a legally doubtful decision, since this was a police function.

The fact that PW Botha had deemed it necessary to formally impose an emergency, brought his government's grip on the country into question in the eyes of foreign investors, thus raising serious doubts about the stability and future viability of the country. This, plus shareholder and public pressure, caused Chase Manhattan Bank to decide on 31 July 1985 to no longer roll over its previously granted credit facilities to South African commercial banks (which decision had a snowball effect among other international banks, who rapidly followed suit). So that the SA government was consequently forced to unilaterally declare a debt standstill (in other words, a refusal to honour its debt obligations, on the grounds of temporary inability).

Against this backdrop, PW finally agreed to convene the cabinet, plus the deputy ministers and key advisers at the Military Intelligence training facility at the old Radcliffe Observatory (*Sterrewag* in Afrikaans) in Pretoria on 2 August 1985 for the top-level summit that Heunis had requested. The objective was to reach agreement in principle on proposals for new policy initiatives regarding constitutional development, particularly regarding the rights of black Africans (which initiatives he, PW, would then include in his speech set for 15 August 1985, when opening the Natal NP Congress in Durban). It is important to note again that NP party policy could not be changed by the cabinet – the ministers could only make recommendations to the provincial congresses, for their final approval.

It is common knowledge that PW's notorious "Rubicon" speech was a disaster of the highest order in terms of public and international relations. In fact, it is recognised now as having been another turning point in terms of how the West (both governments and business) would henceforth approach the issue of white rule in South Africa.

With all of that being commonly known today, you as reader may well ask: what need then is there for me to still dwell on this topic? The answer lies in its value as a learning experience about how decision-making within the PW Botha government occurred – what does the truth about what had actually happened (around the drafting and prior promotion of PW's speech), tell us about the seriously dysfunctional nature of strategic decision-making within the then government, and the consequences of that dysfunction?

In brief, much of what has become commonly accepted wisdom about how this critical own goal supposedly was scored **does not accord at all with what we now know had actually happened.** Today's common assumption that a grumpy old president had, in a flash of fury, at the last moment abandoned an agreed marvel of a speech that had reflected fundamental changes pre-approved at the 2 August meeting, and instead delivered a finger-wagging, defiant hectoring to the 200 million international TV audience watching, is simply not correct. The cause went far deeper than personal idiosyncrasy, and in fact reflects devious in-fighting and manipulative manoeuvres to box each other in, all stemming from opposing strategy viewpoints and conflicting personal agendas that had rendered decision-making and co-ordinated execution completely dysfunctional, with near cataclysmic consequences.

Thanks to the recent discovery of the full transcript of the 2 August 1985 Sterrewag meeting, plus original correspondence and documentation about how the drafting of the eventual speech evolved, we now have empirical proof that in fact it was another prime example of seriously dysfunctional, un-coordinated strategic decision-making. Key players (above all, the two Bothas) had quite distinct own agendas and mutually incompatible strategic visions – again, what I've described as one camp preparing to "shoot" versus the other wanting to prepare to "settle". Worst of all, they were actively (and deviously, in the case of Pik) working at cross-purposes, with Pik trying to paint PW and the conservatives in cabinet into a corner, and PW digging his heels in, determined not to allow himself to be so railroaded – no matter the cost to the country, considering the sky-high expectations that Pik had by then already stoked, unilaterally.

It was these internal shenanigans, more than anything else, that actually had caused PW's 15 August 1985 speech to boomerang to the extent that it undeniably did.

Pik's "lone ranger" actions and their disastrous consequences (as you will see from my recounting of it below) remind one very much of the even more calamitous consequences that PW Botha had triggered with that most infamous of his own "lone ranger" decisions as defence minister (namely, to unilaterally launch Operation Savannah in Angola) which itself a decade earlier had proved to have been a watershed moment, fatal to the Vorster team's efforts to prepare the table for early negotiated settlements in Southern Africa.

The learning opportunity in this – when read together with the subsequent repeat performance between the two Bothas regarding the 1986 Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group initiative of Margaret Thatcher – is that the "*ligte mistaaikie*" of the Rubicon speech was not an isolated event, but rather was demonstrable proof of a pervasive pattern of dysfunctional strategic decision-making and often devious pursuit of opposite strategic and personal objectives. Which reality, of course, completely belies the popular belief of a competent, smoothly functioning, well-coordinated monolithic government and national security decision-making apparatus in which all members marched in lockstep and supposedly thought exactly alike…

We will get to the EPG head-butting directly after this section on the Rubicon speech – but first, back now to the *Sterrewag* cabinet meeting and the true saga of PW's "Rubicon" speech.

Prior to the 2 August meeting, PW Botha had prepared his notes for his customary tone-setting opening address, designed to channel the direction of the "bosberaad". These notes were also intended to form the core of his upcoming speech on the 15th in Durban.

According to the recently discovered full transcript of the original tape recording of the meeting, and as described by Prof Fanie Cloete: "*The main discussion during the meeting consisted of consecutive formalistic position statements in the form of political shopping wish lists, first by the president and thereafter by one minister after another. It took place in typical P.W. Botha cabinet 'discussion' style, in strict order of seniority in the cabinet. Furthermore, there was no real debate of the different views expressed, and each speaker only had one opportunity to state his views*".

In his opening remarks, PW Botha had made it very clear that he did not favour a unitary state, nor a federation or a fourth chamber of parliament as possible models for accommodating black African political aspirations. He underscored that the homelands had to be retained and that black Africans living outside of the then-existing homelands should have their "own affairs" managed at local government level (i.e., not at central government level), managing these in such a manner that it linked them to their respective ethnic homelands.

As regards the international situation, PW Botha declared that the outside world was unfair, uninformed, and foolish: "*The Lord alone knows how we are going to live in this world… We will have to make our army and our police as strong as possible, because if they (the world) want to suppress us, we will have to fight like a self-respecting nation*." This notion of preparing to fight heroically to the bitter end was elsewhere echoed by PW Botha to his NIS intelligence chief, Dr Niël Barnard, when he told the latter privately (at round about that time), that he (PW) suspected that the only remaining option for white South Africa was "to go down hard-arsed" – *om hardegat onder te gaan*.

After his opening remarks to the 33 party luminaries gathered there at the *Sterrewag* PW Botha essentially withdrew from the conversation and mostly just listened grimly to what his ministers each had to say. Among them, there was no clear consensus about the way forward. Minister Heunis was the only one to dare push for anything approximating significant reform. Pik Botha was uncharacteristically quiet through-out. Given PW's forbidding posture, and despite the obvious concern about the economic, financial and security situation, the meeting did not reach any kind of agreement regarding significant change, nor was any definitive mandate given regarding the announcing of anything of the sort – despite what Pik Botha was to subsequently claim to the media and to foreign leaders (in fact, it was actually stressed that circumspection was required regarding revelations to the media, out of respect for the reality that the provincial congresses still had to be consulted).

The truth (as revealed in the actual transcript) is that the meeting did not reach any agreement on the SCC proposals put forward by Heunis. There were clear differences of opinion between the conservative wing and the more verligtes. What was also reflected, was a growing divide between those favouring an approach of more top-down incremental reforms to Apartheid, and those who understood that the need now was for fundamental transformation. This divide had also contributed to the stalemate that had been seen in the SCC and again in this *Sterrewag* meeting, since FW de Klerk, for example, had been insisting on looking beyond just a continuation of the sequence of superficial reforms to be made under pressure, wanting to know what was to be the end objective with the changes as proposed by Heunis (which gave FW de Klerk at that time an image of wanting to delay change, where-as what he actually was concerned about, was whether the fundamental challenges were truly being addressed in a timely and comprehensive enough manner).

Not once during the entire *Sterrewag* meeting was any mention made at all of the release of Mr Nelson Mandela – something that Pik Botha would subsequently specifically indicate to foreign government representatives and the international media as having been approved there in principle, subject to conditions, and supposedly to be announced by PW on the 15th.

Unlike his normal custom, PW Botha did not sum up the points he regarded as agreed at the end of the *Sterrewag* meeting either. Instead, he requested that the SCC go back and work up policy guidelines for discussion by the upcoming party congresses. What was agreed, was that publicity about the detail of the personal views that the ministers had aired during their single speaking turns at the "bosberaad" (there had been no real debate) should be avoided, because of the twofold wish expressed by PW Botha that such guidelines firstly also be discussed with "legitimate black leaders" and then submitted to the NP party structures, before any detail be made public.

Leaving the meeting, Minister Pik Botha is said to have put on a show of exuberance. He enthusiastically told the two senior DFA officials who he had shortly afterwards summoned to his office to draft the DFA's proposed text for the 15 August speech (Dr Marc Burger and Deputy DG Carl von Hirschberg) that momentous change had been approved, which he had been given the green light to go and inform the outside world about at the highest level, including alerting the international media of the importance of President Botha's upcoming Durban address.

Ambassador Burger's recollections about that drafting process are revealing, regarding what Pik Botha had told them supposedly had transpired at the 2 August meeting. This is what Burger had been made to understand about what had allegedly transpired at the "bosberaad":

"*The President had evidently confronted his colleagues with harsh realities. Realities which must have been agony to face for several ministers who still suffered from the Apartheid illusion and had, to date, steadfastly shut their eyes to the obvious. Their attitude notwithstanding, their own feelings were subordinated to the dominance of the hand that had fed and reared them. The essence of those days of reckoning was that "Separate Development" had failed, that Black political aspirations could not be accommodated in the "Bantustans", and that the only alternative was common citizenship - with all that implied - for all in South Africa. A new constitutional order was required. It could not be imposed - only negotiated between all parties who would commit to a non-violent solution to the problem of our Gordian knot..."* (Clearly, Pik giving this impression of what had occurred at the meeting to this staff, amounted to none other than blatant, deliberately devious lying intended to serve the own manipulative agenda he had unilaterally decided to execute).

In his book Marc Burger continued as follows: *“Pik Botha had instructed that our draft was to make it clear that the President was announcing that his government was breaking with Apartheid and that .... ‘there was no going back!' …”*

*“I was the one who explained the historical significance of Julius Caesar bringing the legions he commanded in Gaul over the small stream (the Rubicon) that marked the border of Italy into which no Pro-Consul might bring his troops. "Allea iacta est" - the die is cast!*

*“The Minister's reaction to my explanation was vintage Pik Botha: "... Hell!, was it unconstitutional?*

*"Yes Minister.*

*"But did it work?*

*"Yes Minister.*

*"Well OK, leave it in.*

*“The original text (of the DFA draft) ... says break with Apartheid.....negotiations.....no going back – the battle plan of Foreign Affairs”.*

(Burger, Marc. *Not the Whole Truth* (pp. 104-105 Kindle Edition).

The actual *Sterrewag* transcript, on the other hand, shows that there were absolutely no grounds for Pik’s assertions as to what had supposedly happened there. Nevertheless, judging by the subsequent written accounts of Von Hirschberg and Burger (the latter quoted above) Pik Botha had clearly insisted to his staff that important policy adjustments were indeed agreed upon and that these were to be announced on 15 August. He also set in motion arrangements for a whirlwind international trip to brief key governments and to prepare (and enthuse) the world media for what was supposedly to come.

Apart from the Foreign Affairs draft, Minister Heunis’ Department of Constitutional Development and Planning also provided one to PW Botha. In addition, the finance ministry also contributed some paragraphs on the economy.

When Minister Heunis went to personally deliver his department's draft to PW Botha at his official residence at Groote Schuur in Cape Town, he saw that PW was in one of his angry fits – Heunis was not even invited inside and had to hand over the document on the stoep. Soon thereafter, Minister Heunis received an angry phone call from PW who told him in no uncertain terms that he would not deliver his (Heunis') "Prog speech". The draft prepared under Pik Botha’s supervision by Foreign Affairs had gone even further than the Heunis draft, including also reference to Nelson Mandela’s supposed liberation…

A week before PW was to deliver his speech to the Natal NP congress, Pik Botha had flown to Europe. Top-level meetings with SA’s main partner nations had been hastily arranged. On the 8th and the 9th of August in Vienna he briefed (separately) high-level representatives of the UK and the USA, which included Ewan Ferguson for Mrs Thatcher, and for the USA, Robert MacFarlane (National Security Council) and Dr Chet Crocker (Assistant Secretary of State for Africa). That these high-ranking representatives had personally flown to Vienna to be briefed by Pik, illustrates how important the upcoming announcements must have been presented as going to be.

What the Americans claimed Pik had told them PW would be announcing was: "*the political involvement of blacks at the highest level, citizenship for all South Africans and the concept of a single territory for the whole of South Africa*." To Ferguson, he is said to have stated that PW would announce black “*co-responsibility for decisions on the highest level that affect the entire country, one citizenship, and one undivided South African territory*."

Crocker later (in his memoirs) had this to say about Pik’s Vienna presentation: “*Pik Botha was at his Thespian best, walking out on limbs far beyond the zone of safety to persuade us that his president was on the verge of*

*momentous announcements. We learned of plans for bold reform steps, new formulas on constitutional moves, and further thinking relative to the release of Mandela."*

In Vienna Botha also briefed the international media, before flying on to Frankfurt to inform representatives of German Chancellor Kohl. (It should be kept in mind that, at this stage, Pik Botha had had no confirmation at all from PW that the president would use the DFA draft or any part of it as basis for his 15 August speech – quite apart from the fact that the *Sterrewag* transcript clearly shows that precious little of what Pik was proffering as being about to be announced, had in reality come even close to being agreed there).

The international as well as local media had accepted as gospel Pik Botha's assertions (such as that PW's 15 August speech "*was going to be the most important event in South Africa's history since the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck*") and were in turn creating a sense of high anticipation with their prelude reporting. *Time Magazine*'s Peter Hawthorne, for example, duly wrote that the upcoming speech would be the "*most important announcement since the Dutch settlers arrived in South Africa 300 years ago*".

Pik had seen to it that PW be provided with a detailed 11-page report (also recently found, together with the transcript) outlining exactly who and what he had been briefing abroad. PW thus new full well the extent of the anticipation that had been created – not only in media circles, but also at the very highest government level among our key partners.

So, what happened in the intervening days, leading up to the 15th? We know already that PW had bluntly informed Heunis that he would not be delivering his department's "Prog speech". On the 12th of August PW then convened a meeting in his office of the most senior ministers. According to FW de Klerk, PW hurled down the drafts on the desk and loudly stated that he would be delivering his own speech. The draft of which he then proceeded to read out loud, word for word, over the course of 45 minutes to his ministers "seated in front of him like schoolboys" (as Heunis would later recount to his son). After hearing it, not one of those present dared to object to any part of what PW intended to deliver on the 15th.

Of Foreign Affairs' winged words, PW had only included the phrase that we have "crossed the Rubicon", using it as the conclusion of his speech. Thus, he ended it with baffling irony that only heightened the sense of disappointment – if PW's preceding content (or rather, its lack of anything substantive, apart from a disjointed phrase included without context that Black South Africans who wanted to retain their South African citizenship would be allowed to do so) was seen by PW as the extent to which he was willing to "cross the Rubicon", what did that signify about the future ahead?

According to the FW de Klerk Foundation's reference to what then happened on the 15th of August in Durban: "*In the speech, President Botha expressed his rejection of "well-intentioned" proposals for the solution of South Africa's problems (probably a reference to proposals emanating from his more verligte Cabinet colleagues*.)".

Looking at the actual transcript of the "Rubicon" speech as delivered by PW Botha in Durban, it is notable that he started off with the following statement:

"*It is of course a well-known tactic in negotiations to limit the other person's freedom of movement about possible decisions, thus forcing him in a direction where his options are increasingly restricted.*
*"It is called the force of rising expectations.*
*"Firstly, an expectation is raised that a particular announcement is to be made. Then an expectation is raised about what the content of the announcement should be. The tactic has two objectives.*
*Firstly, the target is set so high that, even if an announcement is made, it is almost impossible to fulfil the propagated expectations. Secondly, it is also an attempt to force the one party into negotiations to make the expected decision. If this is not done, public opinion is already conditioned to such an extent that the result is widespread dissatisfaction…*

*"This is what has been happening over recent weeks. I find it unacceptable to be confronted in this manner with an accomplished fact. That is not my way of doing and the sooner these gentlemen accept it, the better".* (In other words, exactly the message to his own colleagues that the De Klerk Foundation referred to).

PW then went on to hector the outside world in his finger-wagging style, even warning them "not to push us too far". Nothing that the outside world would have been able to understand as heralding significant reform was announced.

According to Prof Herman Gilliomee: "*In retirement, PW Botha told a journalist that Pik Botha had deliberately inflated international expectations in order to embarrass him, saying that that was 'his style'*."

The speech was seen live on local and international TV by an audience of 200 million. Given the elevated expectations that Pik Botha had deliberately created, it was received with surprise and general disappointment – severely so. The most immediate impact was in the economic and financial sphere. On 16 August 1985 the Rand fell by 20% and by 27 August it had reached a then historic low, so that the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and all currency trading had to be closed for three days...

The New York Time's report on the speech contained *some dire observations. Under the sub-heading "**Result could be War**" it stated on 17 August: "His talk struck many as a distillation of white intransigence heralding war, not peace, and a sign, if one was needed, that South Africa's leader would not talk to those whom blacks consider leaders of equal or greater stature, such as the imprisoned nationalist Nelson Mandela.*"

Pik Botha was said to have been "devastated" by the consequences unleashed. According to journalist Theresa Papenfus in her book "*Pik Botha and his Times*" Pik had phoned Peter Hawthorne of *Time Magazine* (who had, at Pik's instigation, foreshadowed the speech as going to be the most important event since Van Riebeeck's arrival) to apologize and reportedly said to him:

"*What can I do, Peter? What can I do to get this old bastard to change?".*

***RESULT:*** Within days of the speech, the **Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act** was tabled in the United States Congress and was passed. Ronald Reagan vetoed it, but to no avail – he was overridden. Stringent US sanctions thus became a reality.

Margaret Thatcher also had her leeway to try and protect against punitive measures severely curtailed by the speech and its fall-out, leading eventually to Commonwealth sanctions (which saga we will discuss shortly).

So, what conclusions can one draw about the whole "Rubicon speech" fiasco? Firstly, it is clear that the public perception that PW Botha had had some kind of brain seizure and at the last moment had abandoned a pre-agreed speech and just winged it with his own abrasive version, is an absolute misconception. PW always was going to deliver his own speech, to be based upon his notes for his opening address to the *Sterrewag* meeting – never on the drafts of Heunis or Pik. All of the cabinet knew this, well before the 15th. They even had heard PW's eventual speech read out to them in full already on the 12th. No one then had had the guts to oppose any of it, or to point out that it would not sit well at all with the massive expectations that Pik had been deliberately stoking.

Secondly, it is equally clear that Pik's version of the *Sterrewag* meeting and what supposedly was agreed there (as provided by him to his own staff, to representatives of the main Western powers and to the international media) had borne very little resemblance to the truth.

Just as PW had in 1975 abused Vorster's prior authorization for the SADF to covertly render training assistance to UNITA only to then order unilaterally (based solely on his own authority as Defence Minister) the launch of a full-blown conventional armoured assault towards Luanda (Operation Savannah), Pik here had unilaterally decided, as Foreign Minister, to "expand" PW's authorization for him to travel overseas into a "mandate" to present there his own version of what he would have liked PW to announce in Durban. Did he do it because he genuinely (and probably correctly) believed that the time had come to thus paint PW into a corner and thereby force him (and the conservative ministers) to accept the necessity for fundamental change, for opting to negotiate – to settle

rather than shoot? Or did he do it to cause PW embarrassment so as to improve his own chances of succeeding PW as president? Or a combination of both motives?

Did he, an intelligent and highly experienced diplomat, not foresee the damage that would result for the country, should his ploy fail and PW refuse to play ball? Did he choose to nevertheless proceed? For what personal or political reasons?

I will deal in much more detail with Pik's personality in a later sub-section of this chapter. Suffice it to say here that, assessed from an objective political science perspective, the Rubicon episode was just one more in a litany of own goals that resulted from a clearly dysfunctional system of strategic decision-making and from fundamental discord among those key decision-makers as regards the best road ahead. Thus, it is an excellent example of the sorry reality that the then security/intel-community (including the NP cabinet) was a dysfunctional, un-coordinated, ideologically divided entity marked by deep discord on fundamentals, as well as by personal agendas and underhand methods – definitely not the unified monolith marching in lockstep that it was popularly believed to have been…

We will see now how the Rubicon machinations between PW and Pik were essentially to repeat itself within a year, regarding the visit by the **Commonwealth's Eminent persons Group (EPG).** Essentially with the same calamitous consequences, occurring for the same essential reasons – dysfunctionality, discord, and deviousness.

### 5.6.2 THE PEN VERSUS THE SWORD – THE EPG FIASCO

The 1985 Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) meeting was held in Nassau in the Bahamas during October of that year, just two months after the Rubicon speech and the preceding declaration of a state of emergency. Quite evidently, Margaret Thatcher had immediately come under severe pressure to drop her opposition to punitive sanctions against South Africa. In order to buy some time and see if the SA government could not be moved to initiate negotiations for a political settlement, she instead pushed for the appointment of an "Eminent Persons Group" mandated by the Commonwealth to visit South Africa and engage with the parties (including the government) to try and facilitate the start of negotiations. This EPG was co-chaired by former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser and former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, and had a threefold mission, namely, to try and obtain from the SA Government the release of Mr Nelson Mandela, plus the hand-over of Namibia, and – most importantly – the initiation of settlement negotiations.

The EPG had visited South Africa twice during the first half of 1986 and met repeatedly with government leaders as well as with Mr Mandela. Foreign Affairs had understood the importance of the EPG and had succeeded in convincing a recalcitrant PW Botha to allow the group entry into the country (which he had initially wanted to refuse, as in his view, this was foreign interference in SA's internal affairs).

Although the issue of initiating internal negotiations between the government and black leaders nominally fell under the portfolio of Minster Heunis, it was Pik Botha who effectively took over driving the matter on the government side. He had a good working relationship with General Obasanjo, and obviously Pik was in the "settle" rather than "shoot" camp, dearly wishing for negotiations to be initiated. He thus set out to convince the EPG that the SA Government was indeed ready to embark upon meaningful, inclusive negotiations for moving the country to a new non-racial dispensation.

As part of his cultivation of the EPG, Pik had himself drafted a list of seven points which he assured the EPG that he could get the South African cabinet to approve, if just they would include these points of his in their own recommendations for the launch of negotiations.

Taking Pik at his word, Obasanjo and the EPG therefore drew up, in a copy & paste manner from Pik's text, the following draft of a "Negotiation Concept", for further discussion with a view to arriving at a consensual final version that could then be formally released by the EPG, to in turn be positively responded to by the South African Government.

*"The South African Government has declared its commitment to dismantling the system of* Apartheid*, to ending racial discrimination and to broad-based negotiations leading to new constitutional arrangements for power-sharing by all the people of South Africa. In the light of preliminary and as yet incomplete discussions with representatives of various organisations and groups, within and outside South Africa, we believe that in the context of specific and meaningful steps being taken towards ending* Apartheid*, the following additional action might ensure negotiations and a break in the cycle of violence.*

*"On the part of the Government:*

*a) Removal of the military from the townships, providing for freedom of assembly and discussion and suspension of detention without trial.*

*b) The release of* Nelson Mandela *and other political prisoners and detainees.*

*c) The unbanning of the* ANC *and* PAC *and the permitting of normal political activity.*

*"On the part of the* ANC *and others:*

*Entering negotiations and suspending violence.*

*"It is our view that simultaneous announcements incorporating these ideas might be negotiated if the Government were to be interested in pursuing this broad approach.*

*"In the light of the Government's indication to us that it:*

*1) is not in principle against the release of* Nelson Mandela *and similar prisoners;*

*2) is not opposed in principle to the unbanning of any organisation;*

*3) is prepared to enter into negotiations with the acknowledged leaders of the people of South Africa;*

*4) is committed to the removal of discrimination, not only from the statute books but also from South African society as a whole;*

*5) is committed to the ending of white domination;*

*6) will not prescribe who may represent black communities in negotiations on a new constitution for South Africa;*

*7) is prepared to negotiate on an open agenda.*

*The South African Government may wish to give serious consideration to the approach outlined in this note."*

Professionally speaking, it was quite a diplomatic coup pulled off by Pik Botha that he could convince the EPG to include the seven points that he had drafted, into their proposed declaration.

Nevertheless, the draft had elicited resistance from some on the South African side, essentially on the point of whether the use of violence should merely be suspended by the liberation movements or be entirely foresworn by them. Pik Botha had provisionally responded to Obasanjo in a letter along those lines, and on 19 May 1986 was awaiting the EPG's final version, with the idea that Pik would take it to Cabinet and obtain approval for its implementation. It is a historical fact that this, in the end, did not happen. Pik and Carl von Hirschberg (who had again been very much involved) waited in vain.

Pik explained years later what exactly had occurred on that 19th of May, to sink the entire initiative (so that the EPG immediately packed up and left the country and thereafter issued a statement saying that in their estimation the SA Government was not ready for genuine negotiations – which then caused the Commonwealth to adopt its sanctions packages, without Thatcher being in a position to prevent it).

In an interview with Sue Onslow of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies at the University of London in early 2015, Pik declared: "*The very day that General Obasanjo was going to hand to me – on 19 May 1986 – their final Possible Negotiating Concept, the Director General of my department, Neil Van Heerden, phoned me at about 5.00-6.00 AM to say that he had been phoned about an hour earlier by a senior SA Air Force officer to say they were already on their way to bomb Harare, Gaborone and Lusaka against ANC targets*."

Von Hirschberg later said that he had no doubt that the air raids were "*a deliberate, pre-planned act designed to shipwreck the EPG initiative*". He had described PW's attitude towards the EPG as having been one of "begrudging acquiescence" from the very beginning. Pik himself confirmed to Onslow that Foreign Affairs had not been consulted beforehand about the air raids: "*They kept it from us. To this day, I have a suspicion that they cleared it with PW Botha and that he was beginning to become concerned about the EPG and their proposals*".

FW de Klerk confirmed in a video series recorded shortly before his death, that the SADF attacks on the Frontline Commonwealth capitals had happened without the knowledge or consent of cabinet. According the De Klerk, this action was part of a strategy of PW Botha and the "total onslaught" faction with which to send a message that "we will not allow ourselves to be pressured into negotiations with terrorists because that was their stance at that stage".

It is unimaginable that something as visible and obviously symbolically impactful as launching air raids against the capital cities of two member states of the Commonwealth, plus Mozambique (which was on its way to joining the Commonwealth) could, at that precise moment, just have happened by chance.

This whole episode is further empirical evidence of the level of devious cross-plotting and active sabotage that had marked the dysfunctional national security decision-making during the "lost decade", despite PW's imposed structures intended to drill all into line. It also illustrates the point that the real debate within the security/intel-community was about the options to either "shoot" or to "settle" (via negotiations). Just as they had been under Vorster, the military were still vehemently against negotiating/settling and did not shy away from unilaterally using their hardware to sink any initiative that may actually have led to negotiations.

## 5.7 PW BOTHA's RELATIONSHIP WITH THATCHER AND REAGAN, AND WITH THE EU

During 1986 PW Botha presented a memorandum to a group of visiting US Congressmen, led by William Gray, outlining his administration's preceding reforms. The memo ended with the statement: "*The door is thus wide-open, for the first time in South Africa's history, to the achievement through negotiation of a political dispensation in South Africa which could satisfy the political aspirations of all the country's communities. Negotiation is the key to the solution of South Africa's problems.*"

The trouble was that no-one believed him anymore. Not with his track record of imposing unilaterally the tricameral system, without negotiation. Not after the negotiated terms of the Nkomati Accord had been wilfully broken. Not after the Eminent Persons Group had been sent to Hades by bombing the frontline states as answer to their proposal to initiate negotiations…

This issue of first needing to overcome this legacy of bad faith would in 1990 have very serious consequences when eventually FW de Klerk had no other option but to resort to negotiations. Because he then first had needed to establish the NP Government's good faith and therefore, already at that early stage, had to play what could have been some of his most important negotiation cards…

Given the rapidly deteriorating domestic conditions in South Africa during 1986, South Africa's two main remaining international "patrons", President Ronald Reagan of the USA and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of the UK, threw everything into trying to facilitate a negotiated settlement, as they came under increasing pressure within their own political systems not to oppose sanctions against South Africa any longer.

In July 1986, shortly after the EPG's declaration on 12 June averring no faith in the PW Botha government's intentions, Mrs Thatcher's Foreign Minister, Sir Geoffrey Howe, visited PW Botha at his office. Advocate Jan Heunis (then chief state legal adviser to the presidency), was the only other person present.

Jan Heunis would later describe the course of that meeting as follows: "*PW ... bombards Howe with a report on his government's achievements in terms of the economic upliftment of the country's people, as well as reform measures that have already been taken. Howe was clearly taken aback by the long lecture and tried to convey to Botha that none of these facts were disputed; however, the situation in South Africa is deteriorating by the day, he says, and an internationally acceptable solution to South Africa's political problems has now become imperative*.

"*As could be predicted, Botha lost his temper and lectured Howe that the South African government would not let it be dictated to; he would be guided in his actions by his own insights of what was in the national interest.*

"*The meeting with Howe in Pretoria was followed by one in Cape Town with Herman Nickel, the then US ambassador to South Africa. Once again, I (Adv. Jan Heunis) was the only official witnessing the conversation. On this occasion, Botha actually says that South Africa would rather make war than be dictated to. When he realized he had just brought up the possibility of war with the USA, Botha faintly continued by saying that of course South Africa did not want war at all.*

"*I was painfully embarrassed by this show and Nickel, like Howe, was completely blown away. I must also mention that Botha seemed to have no understanding of the cardinal importance of these two meetings.*"

As a result of the declaration of the state of emergency and the Rubicon speech, the European Union, for its part, sent a three-man "Troika" to South Africa from 30 August to 1 September 1985. It was led by Luxembourg's then foreign minister Jean Poos (Luxembourg at that time held the rotating EU chair) plus the foreign ministers of Italy and the Netherlands. Their meeting with PW Botha soon enough descended into a blazing row between Poos and the president. Pik Botha and his team of Marc Burger and Carl von Hirschberg tried desperately to patch up things by means of drafting a declaration that it was hoped would somewhat mollify the Europeans. Pik could convince PW to sign on to this declaration (the "if what is meant by Apartheid" one, in which the government distanced itself from racial discrimination). Nevertheless, the EU went ahead later in September and imposed economic sanctions against South Africa.

## 5.8 PIK BOTHA, VIA THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ALSO UNILATERALLY LAUNCHED HIS OWN INITIAVES TO PROMOTE CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Even though the Department of Foreign Affairs clearly had no function nor mandate to be actively trying to influence South Africa's internal politics, nor to involve itself with the fostering of constitutional solutions, this did not prevent Pik Botha from setting up (amidst the general dysfunction that reigned in the intel community and decision-making processes in general) two special sections of the DFA for this exact purpose. These functioned under Dr Marc Burger (who was also heading the sanctions-busting operations at the time) and had as task to try and actively steer local politics towards negotiations and to similarly influence the external liberation movements in that direction, reaching out covertly to the movements via their undeclared contacts still residing inside the country.

Ironically, and unbeknownst to each other, the Foreign Affairs outreach squad also referred to theirs as their "Salami Strategy", thus with the same name as I will show in the next section the Constitutional Development and Planning team used to refer to their approach for inducing fundamental change.

The two DFA head office sections, one under Danie Meyer and Mike Basson charged with outreach to persons of influence in the black community, and the other under Dennis Casale responsible for contact with the Islamic and Hindu communities as well as the SA Council of Churches, had been charged to establish covert channels of communication and influence so as to try and get the liberation movements to agree to initiating negotiations.

The term “covert” is here not used loosely – this team was truly operating covertly, being surreptitiously active in the restive townships during the mid-eighties, meeting clandestinely with contacts identified to them as in turn being in contact with the proscribed movements overseas. In Soweto, for example, they travelled to meetings in Red Cross ambulances of Baragwanath hospital made available for the purpose by sympathetic collaborators. For getting around unobtrusively at night in the greater Pretoria area (such as Shoshanguwe) a dilapidated old car without hubcaps had been obtained from the Government Garage – one which blended in with other typical township chariots, but which had been fitted out with a specially “souped-up” engine. This was fondly known as the “getaway car”.

The other side of the coin was, of course, to get the PW Botha government to agree to the kind of pre-conditions that would make credible, inclusive negotiations a realistic possibility. To this end, the DFA would leverage the ever-increasing pressure from South Africa’s traditional partners abroad to insert at every opportunity phraseology sounding of change into the government’s responding declarations, speeches, and replies to correspondence received from foreign leaders – all of which the DFA needed to draft, for PW’s signature. Knowing the international environment and thus what would be required to convince the outside world that the government was indeed genuine about change, the DFA understood full well that the key issues were the liberation of Mr Nelson Mandela, the unbanning of the proscribed organisations, a stated willingness to negotiate with legitimate leaders of the black community on the basis of an open agenda, and the abrogation of all Apartheid measures. This is what it was all about – not the crafting of some clever constitutional models in terms of abstract academic theory.

One of the first acts of this team was to arrange for Mr Nelson Mandela’s first interview with the international press, at Pollsmoor Prison in August 1985. This was with Los Angeles Times journalist Calvin Thomas (who had attended the same school in Maryland in the USA as Marc Burger had in his youth – Marc’s father had also been a senior diplomat). Among the objectives with arranging this interview was to try and find out whether Mr Mandela was still committed to the armed struggle – thus, the same objective as that which had most motivated the later contacts with Mr Mandela conducted by a group of officials under the leadership of Dr. Niël Barnard.

Among the channels established and contacts covertly cultivated by Dr Burger’s DFA team, were Dr Sam Motsuenyane of NAFCOC, Bishop Barnabas Lekgangyane of the Zion Christian Church, Queen Mojaji and leading sangomas, and Sam Mabe (deputy editor of The Sowetan). With Lawrence Mavundla, founder and president of the African Council for Independent Businessmen, it was arranged that Pik Botha be present in front of the JSE munching on a hot dog bought from a hawker, on the day that Mavundla had got wind of that municipal officers would raid informal traders in that area (this had the positive spin-off that PW Botha could be convinced to give impetus to the government’s efforts to de-regulate the economy).

Other “friends of influence” in this circle were the author and women’s rights activist Ellen Kuswayo (post-1994 ANC MP), the Secretary-general of the PAC, Benny Alexander, Colin Keta of the PAC, and a certain “Dr Nkomo”, a clandestine ANC representative in Soshanguve.

The objective with cultivating relationships of confidence with these contacts was not to “turn” them into government agents, but to send via them the message to the external liberation movements that there was indeed movement on the part of (at least some in) the government to truly abolish Apartheid and to enter into negotiations – at least among the *verligtes “New Nats”* in the cabinet, such as Pik Botha.

It is a known fact that Dr Heunis had been irked by the role regularly assumed by Pik Botha and the DFA in the formulation of statements on the evolving government policy regarding constitutional matters – something Constitutional Development and Planning experts had deemed their domain. I wonder what these experts would have thought, had they known that a special DFA team was busy with its own “salami strategy” and covert contact-making in this exact sphere. (To crown it all, the old Bureau for State Security and its successor NIS, also had an own analytical division for constitutional matters, called “K” under the BfSS and “N.23” under the NIS; when Niël Barnard was later appointed DG of Constitutional Development, he brought some of these experts along and placed them in influential positions within his new department).

So much, then, for the much-vaunted inter-departmental coordination in the intel-community under the auspices of the NSMS. As regards the broader public service (i.e., its "civilian" departments) and their efforts at finding solutions to the pressing political challenge, the NSMS itself was blissfully unaware of what these departments, for their part, were proposing. A telling such example (confirmed to me personally by Mr AP Stemmet, the last head of the NSMS), is that Stemmet had never even heard of the "*Skrik vir Niks*" proposals of early 1987 which had been signed off unanimously by each and all of the civilian Public Service departments… (which we will discuss in the next section). Beyond the intel-community and civilian public service, the "total onslaught" strategy was also increasingly being questioned in the broader Afrikaner civil society, such as among the intelligentsia, church and the influential Afrikaner Broederbond from the mid-eighties on.

## 5.9 NOT ONLY WAS THE INTEL-COMMUNITY DEEPLY DIVIDED – PW BOTHA's "TOTAL ONSLAUGHT" FACTION WAS ALSO AT ODDS WITH THE CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, AFRIKANER INTELLIGENTSIA, THE CHURCH, AND BROEDERBOND

I have mentioned above just a few of the more egregious examples of the gravely damaging infighting within the security/intel-community, using information already in the public domain – there were many more such instances of a still sensitive nature, which it would thus not be appropriate to reveal here. Frankly, it is not necessary either, because I believe that the examples cited above, already amply proved the point about the dysfunctionality, discord, deviousness, and lack of coordination among entities operating unilaterally in their own silos, that had dogged this crucially important component of the state's survival apparatus.

### 5.9.1 THE POSITION OF THE CIVILIAN PUBLIC SERVICE DEPARTMENTS – THEIR "*SKRIK VIR NIKS*" MEMO

It is important to also note that it wasn't only a case of the security/intel-community having been internally deeply divided and that (together with their respective political heads) they were actively undercutting each other. The "total onslaught" faction of the securocrats were also seriously at odds with the civilian departments of government, when it came to what the appropriate strategy for resolving the fundamental issues facing the country should be.

By the latter half of the 1980s the situation in South Africa (and in relation to Namibia) had visibly so seriously deteriorated that any person paying attention could grasp the fundamentals – it did not require intelligence expertise to be able to draw the obvious conclusions. Thus, on the part of the civilian departments, there was clarity that the only realistic way forward would be through negotiations. In this regard the civilian departments were therefore of the same opinion as Foreign Affairs, the NIS and those in the SAP-SB that viewed negotiations as the only remaining viable option.

In terms of the functionally defined structures that had been set up within government, the search for political solutions was primarily the domain of the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning (CDP), which did not form part of the security/intel-community. Just as the latter community was grouped together under the SSC (the State Security Council), the civilian departments relevant to constitutional affairs also had their own coordinating mechanism, which was the SCC – the forementioned Special Cabinet Committee on Constitutional Affairs chaired by Minister Heunis, and for which his CDP department provided the secretariat.

The CDP department was manned by expert political scientists and lawyers mostly drawn from academia. Their approach for moving the body politic towards a negotiated settlement, was a somewhat Machiavellian one which they themselves called the "salami strategy". It consisted of carving away at the resistance to change in thin slices, each time moving the Apartheid system fractionally onto new terrain. There it would then stand naturally exposed to its own inherent contradictions, and therefore be forced to adapt further – thus, in effect also a strategy of incremental change.

By 1987, however, this incremental strategy no longer met the urgency of the circumstance. The internal security situation in the country was becoming seriously problematic, international pressure was increasing exponentially,

and plain logic dictated that transition to a fundamentally different new constitutional dispensation was needed – that Apartheid had to be entirely done away with as a failed experiment, not "reformed" piecemeal.

The "salami strategy" was indeed exposing the inherent, untenable policy contradictions in PW Botha's position statements, but this only served to increase the dysfunction in decision-making. For example, in his August 1985 Rubicon speech PW had included, almost as a throwaway line, that Black South Africans who wished to retain their South African citizenship (and not perforce be shunted to homeland citizenship), would henceforth be allowed to do so. Objectively seen, this was something absolutely fundamental, because it ripped the heart out of Grand Apartheid's founding logic of "white" South Africa having no Black citizens who could clamour for voting rights based on citizenship. By having this phrase included in the Rubicon speech, the salami strategists had thus indeed confronted government with a new core contradiction in its own policies, but under PW Botha no attempt was made to provide any constitutional answer as to how this irreconcilable situation was to be resolved. Policy advances thus effectively stagnated from the mid-eighties on, with the focus increasingly switched to security challenges. (This throw-away line is i.a. what allowed FW de Klerk later on to counter PW's attacks on him by pointing out that it had been PW himself who – through this 1985 statement – had sounded the death knell for Apartheid).

On the other side, those within the system opposed to real change (such as the "total onslaught" faction) had by that time also caught on to this "salami strategy" and were starting to actively suppress the input of the CDP's academic experts (same as these hard-liners had in parallel been doing against those in the intel-community who had been favouring negotiations).

Probably the best example of this divide between the views of the civilian departments and the "total onslaught" brigade in the military, is the "***Skrik vir Niks***" project (meaning, "fear nothing") finalised early in 1987. How it later became publicly known, was through a copy of the final "Top Secret" consensus report (that resulted from this exercise in brainstorming about strategy as conducted among the civilian departments, and which 40 senior officials from all of the non-security departments had co-signed), towards the end of 1996 had finally ended up in the hands of the media.

The Mail and Guardian of 11 October of that year provided a good summation:

"*In their final proposal, the civil servants who participated in Operation Skrik Vir Niks criticised the way government was handling reform and political resistance, snubbed the securocrats and the military, and predicted revolutionary conflict if steps were not urgently taken by government to change its attitude to the liberation forces and political change.*

*"In their project document the team said the security forces did not have the resources to hold the liberation movements at bay for much longer and said the economy was suffering as a result of unrest and a lack of political vision.*

*"They rejected the notion that political reform could take place from within the Apartheid framework, and pointed out the government lacked credibility and legitimacy among blacks and some groups of white people.*

*" 'The government projects an image of insensitivity towards black people in particular, and is seen to misunderstand the legitimate aspirations of black people, as well as having only taken steps within a rigid racially defined framework in order to maintain the current domination of whites and keep the status quo," reads a loose translation of the document, which was drafted by a team of 40 top senior civil servants from non-security departments in March 1987.*

*"The team – under the political leadership of Roelf Meyer – was requested to think creatively, not to be limited by government policy and to aim at providing real answers. The 40 civil servants, including former chief director of constitutional development Fanie Cloete and the then director of constitutional planning, "Kobus" Jordaan, met at the Union Buildings for three weeks in February 1987. Meyer was not present at the meetings.*

*"Members of that team have told the Mail & Guardian they canvassed the opinions of liberation struggle leaders who were accessible in South Africa and then worked out a series of proposals which foreshadowed the announcements made by FW De Klerk in 1990, and later positions taken in constitutional negotiations.*

*The project was listed as top secret and all documents were handed in after every meeting. The civil servants decided among themselves they would all sign the document at its conclusion for the sake of solidarity.*

*The team proposed:*

** Initiation of negotiations for a constitutional order in which all South African communities would have a share in decision-making.*

** Giving the vote to all South Africans.*

** Bringing the homelands and TBVC states back into South African territory.*

** Representation for all in constitutional structures on central, regional and local levels.*

** Decentralisation of power and privatisation of a number of government functions.*

** The legitimisation of the judiciary and the confirmation of the independence of the Bench.*

** Protection of human rights.*

** Scrapping of discriminatory laws.*

** Freezing of Parliament for a year and the setting up of an inclusive, transitional Parliament and executive authority to draw up a new constitution, allow temperatures to cool and for black people to have ownership of the process of transition.*

** The withdrawal of troops from the townships and the lifting of states of emergency*."

The views of the civilian departments failed to gain any traction at the time. It was the era when fear of arousing PW Botha's anger still dominated the lower stratum of political leadership at deputy-minister level. The report was thus suppressed. Cloete and Jordaan had served as the secretariat for "*Skrik vir Niks*". For their troubles, they soon found their security clearances revoked, so that they could no longer continue to be employed as senior civil servants…

Indicative of the serious dysfunction and lack of coordination in strategic decision making which is reflected by the censoring of "deviant" (i.e., non "total onslaught") critical thinking that may unleash the fury of PW Botha, is the fact that the "*Skrik vir Niks*" document – even though it had been signed by and on behalf of each and every-one of the civilian departments – had been suppressed and was never fed into the NSMS. This was confirmed to me by its then head, Mr AP Stemmet, who told me that he had never even been made aware of the existence of such a document.

The same fate had befallen my SAP-SB father's memo of that same time, in which he had warned that the government urgently needed to initiate inclusive negotiations while it could still do so from a position of relative strength (more about this latter document in section 7). Mr Stemmet confirmed to me that that memo, too, had never entered the NSMS aggregation and evaluation process. However, being familiar with that environment and anticipating such, General Steenkamp had presciently classified his document as merely Confidential, so that he personally could make it available to key Afrikaner opinion leaders such Prof Johan Heyns of the Dutch Reformed Church.

### 5.9.2 AFRIKANER INTELLIGENTSIA SUPPORTING THE SETTLE OPTION

Several Afrikaner academics emerged prominently in the 1980s as vocal critics of Apartheid, urging fundamental reform or, preferably, its dismantlement by means of negotiating a just political settlement. This shift in political thinking intensified amid economic pressures, the township uprisings, international isolation, and the realization that Apartheid was unsustainable.

Here are the most notable ones, primarily from Stellenbosch University and the University of the Western Cape:

- **Johan Degenaar (Stellenbosch University philosopher)**: Known as the "Socrates of Stellenbosch," he issued a major public call in the 1980s for morally conscious Afrikaners to oppose Apartheid openly, challenging its ideological foundations rooted in Calvinist dogma.
- **Sampie Terreblanche (Stellenbosch University economist)**: In the 1980s, while still in the National Party, he became one of the NP Government's strongest Afrikaans critics, denouncing Apartheid's economic inefficiencies and inhumanity. His later writings highlighted the need for a post-Apartheid transition.
- **Frederik van Zyl Slabbert (former Stellenbosch sociology professor)**: Frustrated with academic silence, he publicly criticized Apartheid from the early 1980s, left parliament in 1986, and co-founded the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA) in 1987, fostering cross-racial dialogue.
- **André du Toit (Stellenbosch University academic)**: In the 1980s, he lambasted Afrikaner intellectuals as "morally bankrupt," entangled in nationalism, and lacking vision for change, thus pushing for ethical opposition to Apartheid.
- **Jaap Durand (University of the Western Cape theologian and vice-rector from 1980)**: An Afrikaans professor who broke ranks by marching with anti-Apartheid student protesters in the 1980s.
- **Hermann Giliomee (Stellenbosch historian)**: Though critical earlier, his 1980s writings and public stances— including interviews highlighting Apartheid's "absurdity"—gained prominence, positioning him as a key Afrikaner voice for reform.
- **Willie Esterhuyse (Stellenbosch philosopher):** In 1981 Prof Esterhuyse published "Apartheid Must Die", which title is self-explanatory. We will learn more about him later (as NIS "agent Gert") in the context of the Mells Park process and his role as intermediary in the setting up of the first "formal" meeting between the NIS and the external ANC in Switzerland in 1989.

Afrikaner business leaders were also becoming increasingly vocal in their opposition to Apartheid during the 1980s. The leading titan, the late Dr Anton Rupert, wrote a letter to PW Botha after the Rubicon Speech fiasco, in which he voiced his opinion about 'that word for which we have been crucified.' He wrote: 'Apartheid is seen by too many as a transgression against humanity − the neo-Nazism of a Herrenvolk.' He made an impassioned appeal to Botha: 'Reaffirm your rejection of Apartheid. It is crucifying us; it is destroying our language; it is degrading a once heroic nation to be the lepers of the world. Remove the burden of the curse of a transgression against mankind from the backs of our children and their children…' Unfortunately, PW Botha's response was negative.

Many Afrikaner opinion leaders in business, academia, the media and organised civil society such as the Broederbond became involved in the growing private initiatives during the latter half of the eighties to meet with the ANC abroad for talks, doing so in places such as Dakar in Senegal and Lusaka in Zambia, as well as in the USA and UK (these private initiatives were launched in response to and in lieu of PW Botha's refusal to initiate negotiations). This included leaders from the Afrikaner-Broederbond and the main Afrikaner church, the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) of South Africa. (More about this later, when I will discuss these initiatives in more detail in sections 7 & 9, in relation to what the NIS eventually set in motion to help facilitate talks – the purpose in this present section is simply to show how **isolated** the "total onslaught" faction with their preference for preparing to shoot rather than settle had in fact become by the latter half of the 1980s, and how dysfunctional the decision-making system was that did not take account of any opinions other than those held by PW Botha and his "total onslaught" faction).

### 5.9.3 THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH'S CHANGED STANCE ON RACE AND MILITARY INTERVENTIONS

The DRC had, during Apartheid's heyday, provided a religious justification for the policy. This had been highly influential at the time, because of general Afrikaner religiosity and the impact that the church had in the community.

However, during the eighties the church's official viewpoint changed radically, back to its strong non-racist roots of the pre-British era (which had, in fact, endured late into the 19th century).

In 1986 the General Synod of the DRC adopted a landmark decision: "*Racism is a grievous sin which no person or church may defend or practice. Whoever in theory or practice, by attitude and deed implies that one race, nation, or group of nations is inherently superior, and another race, nation, or group of nations is inherently inferior, is guilty of racism. Racism is a sin which tends to take on collective and structural forms. As a moral heresy it robs the human person of his dignity, duties, and rights. This leads to oppression and exploitation and must therefore be rejected and fought in all forms*." (*Kerk en Samelewing* – Church and Society 1986:22).

Moreover, the DRC Synod strengthened this decisive and clear break it made with the political and practical system of Apartheid by opting for open membership (i.e., no longer racially defined). Paragraph 270 of the 1986 document reads: "*Die lidmaatskap van die Ned Geref Kerk is oop*" ("The membership of the Dutch Reformed Church is open"). This inclusive ecclesiology was based on the belief that unity exists amongst all members of the "volk van God" (God's people), and that this has a "*hoër binding*" (higher binding) than "*aardse groeperinge en verskeidenheid*" (earthly groupings and diversity) (*Kerk en Samelewing* 1986:42).

Furthermore, the Church also started openly questioning the PW Botha government's military strategy of intervening beyond the country's border, particularly in Angola. In a lead editorial column in the DRC's official mouthpiece "***Die Kerkbode***" on 8 July 1988, the ethics of continued SADF presence and operations in Angola was explicitly questioned, asking if the increasing sacrifices remain justifiable (this was the period of increased conflict between September 1987 and June 1988, during which 63 SADF members had died). Analysts saw this as a significant indication of the fracturing Afrikaner support for PW's bellicose policies, signalling the growing shift in Afrikaner ranks towards favouring negotiation. PW Botha distanced himself from the position taken by the ***Kerkbode***'s editors, but the then moderator of the DRC, Prof Johan Heyns, defended their stance.

### 5.9.4 THE AFRIKANER BROEDERBOND CAME OUT IN SUPPORT OF FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE & NEGOTIATION

Since the 1948 election the new National Party (NP) government and the secretive Afrikaner-Broederbond (AB) had been tightly intertwined, with each NP leader and practically all cabinet ministers AB members. In practice the AB served to "mobilise the troops & and keep them in line", more than directly forming policy for the NP – especially under strong-minded NP leaders such as Verwoerd. Premier John Vorster had the benefit of having his younger brother, Dr Koot Vorster (at the time being moderator of the DRC) as a senior AB member as well. When John Vorster's initial movement away from Verwoerdian rigidity by allowing racial mixing in sport caused a first splintering in Afrikaner ranks (with the small HNP breaking away), the AB could help him solidify his position and reduce the break-away to practical irrelevance.

By 1976, the AB leadership had already come to doubt the workability of "Grand Apartheid" as solution for the challenge of affording Black South Africans rights. This was evidenced in a 1977 discussion document that clearly stated that: *"while economic development is promoted in the homelands and border areas, it must be accepted that there will inevitably be an expansion of Black people into the White area".*

In 1978 Dr Gerrit Viljoen, then AB chair, acknowledged in his annual address to the AB's Federal Council that the homeland policy had not been successful. Viljoen's eventual successor, Prof Pieter de Lange, later explained that the AB had, during its first 45 years of existence (it was founded in 1918) done its utmost best to find an accommodation for Black rights in the system of sovereign homelands functioning together with "white" South Africa as a "constellation of states", because it had been understood that Blacks could not continue to be denied political rights in the manner that had been the norm under the colonial system, but De Lange than roundly admitted that "this (i.e., Grand Apartheid) has failed".

PW Botha's more "in your face" style and policies had led to a schism in Afrikaner political ranks during the early eighties, so that about a third of the AB's membership (politically aligned with the new Conservative Party) left. This schism had somewhat weakened the AB but had also liberated it from having to be accommodative of this erstwhile hard-right element. Together with the concerned mood that increasingly manifested among Afrikaners

by the middle of the eighties, this “liberation” had inspired the AB to be more forthright in its analysis of what Afrikaner survival required, acting as a think-tank generating ideas and having its country-wide network of influential members available as both sounding board and message multipliers.

An interesting analysis of the role and influence of the AB from 1985 on in the seeding of Afrikaner acceptance of fundamental transformation and the imperative need for a negotiated settlement was published by Jan Bosman & André Duvenhage in December 2023 in the *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe, Jaargang 63 No. 4: “**The Afrikaner-Broederbond and the establishment of a negotiated settlement: An historic and politically strategic perspective”.*** In its introduction the authors stated: “*When it became evident in 1985 that the National Party’s reform process was stagnating, the* Afrikaner-Broederbond *took the lead in influencing the Afrikaner mindset, thereby creating an environment within which the nature and extent of reform could gain momentum. During this period various policy documents were circulated. One of the more important, if not the most important, being the* Afrikaner-Broederbond’s *contribution titled* **Basiese Staatkundige Voorwaardes vir die Voortbestaan van die Afrikaner** / Basic Political Conditions for the Continued Survival of the Afrikaner, *which was distributed to branches in November 1986.*

The spade-work for this seminal document (commonly referred to by its Afrikaans acronym BSV) was done at an AB Exco meeting on 2 August 1985, at which a report from the AB’s Committee on the Political Development of the Black Man was presented, which included the following as premise: "*A political model must be found in which **political power-sharing** with black people can be realised in such a way that it eliminates the domination of one group by the other, and which avoids further conflict between black and white*".

The process leading to the BSV was taken forward two months later, after the 1985 Rubicon speech and against the background of the intense public criticism that it had elicited about PW Botha and the National Party’s hesitation regarding further reform, plus the deteriorating domestic and foreign situation.

When the AB held another Federal Council meeting on 11 and 12 October 1985 Prof. Pieter de Lange, the AB chair, remarked: “*The Afrikaner-Broederbond, the government, and the whites cannot hold back these forces with Maginot lines, that is, with outdated strategies*”. He then pleaded that, while Afrikaners could still take the initiative and while Afrikaners still had the power, solutions had to be urgently sought. **The solution would be to <u>negotiate</u>**. In this he saw a task for the AB in the search for freedom and justice for all: “This is obviously a matter full of risks, but **let us be mindful that the greatest risk is to take no risks**”.

At this October 1985 Federal Council meeting it was resolved: “*The Federal Council decides that the UR is requested to pay attention to the development of the new constitutional dispensation by means of continuous study and accompanying action and to provide information and guidance in this regard to sections*”.

The BSV document was circulated among the AB’s components during 1986. Under the heading “Specific Constitutional Conditions” it specifically stated that “*the **exclusion** of black participation in constitutional processes **is seen as a threat to white survival**”*; furthermore, that: “*there must be participation at all levels of decision-making*”.

The document concluded with the recommendations that:
• Afrikaners' creative power be used to establish negotiated structures; if this does not happen "it is inevitable that structures will be imposed on him in which he will have no say."
• "representatives of various power groups participate in the drafting of a new constitution" and finally that
• "the acceptability of such a new order for the majority of the citizens, and of course also for the majority of Afrikaners, is one of the most important conditions for the Afrikaner’s continued existence" (Afrikaner-Broederbond, 1986:1-7

*In discussing this document with the PW Botha cabinet Prof De Lange's impression was that it enjoyed a mixed reception, but that: “Once people discuss the matter, then they tend to come to the conclusion that it needs to be like this, or else there will be a bloodbath”.*

As regards convincing PW Botha himself, however, Prof De Lange lamented in later life to Mr Johan Mostert (who headed FW de Klerk's intelligence coordination office, and who resided in retirement in the same complex as De Lange, to whom he would read on a weekly basis when De Lange went blind) that he (De Lange) simply never could "get through" to Botha, who remained stubborn throughout in his attachment to his own ideas.

During the middle of 1986 in New York, in the context of a broader conference that had been arranged by the Ford Foundation and to which both had been invited, Prof De Lange had a meeting with Thabo Mbeki of the ANC. At that time and given the circumstances in South Africa, it was an unprecedented and unheard-of meeting. The American journalist Patti Waldmeir observed about this meeting: *"In coming to New York both sides had violated the chief political commandment of the day, that the ANC should meet the Afrikaner only on the field of battle."*

After the BSV document was circulated it was followed up by the AB with a Political Science brainstorming session that took place on 7 February 1987. Themes for discussion included the need for a negotiated settlement and practical steps to achieve it.

## 5.10 SSC STRATEGY #44: THE STRATEGY DURING THE LATTER PART OF PW'S REIGN

The Strategy Branch of the Secretariat of the State Security Council was instructed late in 1986 to draw up a national strategy for combating the revolutionary "war" against the country (SSC Directive Number 44: *National Strategy against the Revolutionary War against the RSA*, 2 December 1986). It remained in place as official strategy for the remainder of PW Botha's term as president.

The document's title is noteworthy, because from the outset it framed the problem to be solved as one of **war**, and not politics. It perpetuated the assumption that the RSA was the victim of a communist-inspired proxy revolutionary onslaught (as part of the total onslaught). By definition, "revolution" implied the total overthrow of the existing order by means of popular armed insurrection supported from abroad. (This constant hammering on the country being at war would come back during the negotiations of the early nineties, when on government side the main objective became to reach what participants themselves described as primarily **a peace deal**, rather than being principally focused on drafting a new constitution – the terms of the constitution were thus agreed upon through compromises dictated by the need for peace).

When analysing today the manner in which Strategy #44 was developed, it is notable that it was not predicated upon any attempt to self-critically analyse what was driving the population's discontent, in order that that root cause may be removed – instead, the strategy was required to focus on how to "neutralize" the revolutionary forces perceived to be waging war against the existing system.

A number of government departments were involved in its discussion, which took place after the Afrikaner-Broederbond's BSV document – see above – had become known to those in the upper echelons of the security/intel-establishment and the Public Service, and after the Church's synod decision against the sin of racism. It can be safely assumed that those involved in the process of the formulation of Strategy #44 were well aware of the spectrum of thinking that had been emerging in Afrikaner society questioning the "total onslaught" approach, so that the "strategy" that did emerge ended up being carefully worded in such a manner that it could be interpreted in different ways – depending upon one's basic assumptions. As said, it did not seek to identify and analyse root causes, nor did it attempt to come up with political policy solutions (ostensibly because the latter fell in the domain of the political executive, but likely also because it was understood that attempting to outline appropriate political responses could lead to a clash of views). Accordingly, "Strategy #44" paid lip service to widely interpretable platitudes such as facilitating the "unfolding of a democratic order", again open to interpretation in terms of what basic assumptions the individual reader held dear.

It also tip-toed around anything that may provoke the "Groot Krokodil's" anger, when it came to the strategy's underlying intelligence assessment – at the time not spelling out unambiguously what the real nature of the threat was (as stemming from the government's own policies).

The set goal with developing the strategy was formulated as follows: *To neutralize the revolutionary war against the RSA so that a democratic order can unfold here in which all population groups can be participants in the government of the country without threatening each other's group rights*.

Although it may not have been understood as such at the time, what an objective reading of the wording: "*so that a democratic order can unfold here*" subconsciously admitted, was that the existing order was **not** democratic. However, as conveyed to me by Mr Johan Mostert (a key official in the national coordination of intelligence at that time) the participants in the process were more focussed on the latter part of the goal statement, namely the protection of group rights. According to Mostert: "*The key to understanding this strategy are the words "group rights" that appear in the goal. The SADF, and in fact most other departments, understood this as the protection of the status quo. Change and negotiation, yes – as long as it doesn't lead to jeopardizing the white man's supremacy. (Even after 2 February 1990, I still heard members of the SADF say that the biggest threat to state security is a black majority government*)".

Other evidence bears out the above, specifically in relation to negotiation. Despite much pious talk by the military about the ultimate need for a political solution, they did not deviate from their core "total onslaught" philosophy of the time (for example, the TRC reported that when the military in 1985 had organised a security/intel-community "bosberaad" over negotiation as possible strategy: "…*the general thrust was that some form of settlement was unavoidable in the long term, but that every effort should be made to weaken the ANC and destroy its revolutionary potential. In the words of General Groenewald 'You can thus only negotiate from a position of power. If we negotiate with the ANC with the purpose of eliminating it, that is acceptable. If we negotiate with the purpose of accommodating it, that is unacceptable.' There is nothing to indicate that this view ever changed"* (under PW Botha, that is).

In retrospect, Strategy #44 was the typical hodgepodge of silo-style departmental positions driven by own interests on the part of the line function departments, that in reality were irreconcilable. This was particularly true as regards the intelligence assessment regarding the threat provided by the NIS, versus the action-oriented wishful thinking on the part of the line function departments.

For example, the document listed the following as among the RSA's capabilities in fighting the revolutionary war:

• The goodwill that still exists among Blacks, still offers the opportunity for practical and constructive political reform.

• As long as the reform measures continue at a realistic pace, they will serve as a counter to the revolutionary war.

• The RSA has a political policy that can be presented as an alternative to that of the revolutionary movements (at that stage, the closest to such a policy was still PW Botha's "Constellation of States" concept).

As Johan Mostert observed to me: "*Contrast this with what is included in the intelligence sketch in the document. Some statements (taken from the National Intelligence Assessment, coordinated by the NIS) are:*

- *The political aspirations of Black peoples in the RSA and their exclusion from the current state system form a powerful basis that is exploited by the revolutionaries for mass mobilization against the RSA government.*
- *The UDF as an important domestic threat factor has a comprehensive organizational infrastructure that extends from the national to the community level.*
- *In their opposition to the current state order, the threat elements enjoy the material, moral, political and financial support of the international community.*

*However, there is no reflection on what are seen (by line function departments) as capabilities, weighing these against the reality as outlined by the intelligence community. No attempt was made to determine the feasibility of the strategy's objective by weighing up one's own capabilities against "enemy" intentions.*

*Strategy 44 was clearly based on the assumption that continued reforms according to government policy would be sufficient to combat the revolutionary onslaught.*

*Departmental actions are therefore directed by the assumption that a deployment of the status quo must continue. The strategy was accompanied by an addendum which systematically set out objectives in each area, with an indication of the departments responsible for the implementation. In that respect, the SSSC made a valuable contribution to achieving coordination at grassroots level.*

*But, and this is the important thing, these guidelines and the strategy were of help to deal with the unrest and instability at the ground level, and not to explore the strategic direction. So, it helped one to climb the ladder, which brought temporary relief (it stopped public unrest and rioting activity, but drove it underground).*

*Eventually, however, it turned out that the ladder had been stood up against the wrong wall.*

*The strategy was therefore focused on securing the prevailing order. Following first-hand observation, my impressions were the following:*

- *The SADF was in favour of the removal of petty Apartheid within the framework of a dispensation in which white people retain final say. Dialogue must be held with domestic representatives of the black population with the aim of persuading them to take part in such a future political dispensation. Negotiations with the ANC/SACP were seen as betrayal. The enemy must be destroyed (i.e., the shooting option).*
- *The SAP has also advocated change. It was pertinently brought to the attention of the authorities that policing alone will not be able to combat the threat as long as the root cause, the socio-economic problems, is not addressed. I have never heard that heads of the Police expressed themselves in meetings at all about the nature of a future constitutional dispensation. However, they were adamantly opposed to talks with the ANC. According to the SAP, the ANC/SACP were criminals, and you cannot negotiate with criminals. (i.e., the law enforcement option.)*

*I therefore agree with the general statement that there wasn't a national strategic plan."*

The latter part of PW Botha's reign from 1985 onwards was thus marked by stagnation in achieving any meaningful progress towards finding a political solution, in large measure because of the way his bullying personality suppressed proper political debate, even in his own cabinet.

What strategy there was (such as Strategy #44) was directed at internal security concerns; it failed to adequately address the fundamental political root causes, and amounted to micro-level operational guidelines to line function departments – as the old saying goes, essentially re-arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic…

This situation would not change until the overbearing presence of PW Botha (and, in tandem, also of his "total onslaught" securocrats) was removed from the decision-making arena, allowing the groundswell of proper understanding that had been building in enlightened Afrikaner ranks to bring forth a realistic new policy approach based on the true intelligence picture and thus on radically different assumptions which dictated radically different political solutions.

What the last years of PW's reign did do "positively", was to present further undeniable proof that **his approach did not and could not ever work**, and that the "shoot" option (with which to cling to white supremacy) was as unworkable as Verwoerd's aspirations for "grand Apartheid" had been. (One can argue that, had PW Botha and his "total onslaught" faction not so conclusively demonstrated that the "shoot" option was in reality no option at all, then De Klerk's choice of seeking a settlement may well have elicited another coup – and probably not a "quiet" one at that…).

# 5.11 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE DISCORD ON STRATEGY – ITS REASONS AND SCOPE

In conclusion of this chapter, and reverting to the debate around the "shoot" or "settle" strategic options and its tactical corollary of imposed incremental change versus inclusive negotiations, it is thus clear that those who adhered to the "we must prepare to shoot" (a.k.a. the "total onslaught" viewpoint - essentially limited to some in the Army and DMI) were becoming increasingly isolated within the intelligence community as well as in the broader Public Service, plus in the minds of Afrikaner opinion leaders from academia, the media, business, church and influential Afrikaner civil society entities such as the Broederbond.

Foreign Affairs, the NIS, some within the SAP-SB such as my father, Constitutional Development and all the rest of the civilian departments could clearly see by the mid-eighties (just as Vorster and his team had rightly concluded more than a decade earlier) that the real pressing need was to prepare properly for inevitable settlement negotiations leading to fundamental constitutional transformation. So, what was motivating PW Botha's contrary, solitary view?

The conclusion is unavoidable that PW Botha and those who thought like him were never willing to accept fundamental change that would in any way jeopardize white retention of political power, because losing political power was seen by them as tantamount to the ultimate existential threat.

This was of course a position that, in and of itself, would clearly make armed confrontation inevitable, so that – if fight rather than compromise was your strategic choice – then logically you would propose to arm yourself to the teeth for that eventuality.

It is also true that, from the perspective of the institutional interest of the SADF, directing the lion's share of the national budget to war preparation (thereby providing them with more money, men and means), obviously corresponded to their own "best interest" as entity – thus according very well with the business & Political Science "rational actor" theory of humans being inclined to choose the options that best suit their own particular interest. Whether the SADF interest and the national interest actually coincided, was of course the key question…

On the other side, the rising "New Nats" did not believe that we could win an all-out confrontation against the full array of internal and external forces condemning Apartheid (effectively, white South Africa against the rest of the local population, and against the whole world).

Whereas PW saw loss of white control over political power as THE existential threat to the Afrikaner, the New Nats saw precisely the opposite – that trying to cling on to such power and thereby inviting such a confrontation was the true existential threat likely to result in the destruction of the Afrikaner. As the AB's BSV document explicitly stated, it was increasingly being understood that it was the continued **exclusion** of Blacks from the political processes that constituted the real threat to white survival.

To these New Nats (as they were then becoming known) this fate could only be avoided by abandoning the core cause of conflict, namely Apartheid (which had in any event already been proven to be unworkable economically and demographically). Logically, they therefore also had to accept the need for a fundamentally new constitution to entirely replace it. In other words, Apartheid could not be reformed but needed to be scrapped and replaced – and inclusive negotiations would be the only legitimate process through which such a New South Africa could be achieved.

What the latter half of the eighties did, was to conclusively prove to the NP caucus which faction (shoot or settle) were correct in their respective claims.

Was it the "total onslaught" hawks among the securocrats and their belief that they could indeed militarily win an all-out confrontation and thereby secure white power into perpetuity? Or was it the NIS, CDP, DFA, the civilian departments (and eventually practically all of Afrikaner civil society heavyweights) and their warnings that such a belief in military victory against the whole world with its broad spectrum of stringent coercive measures was

foolhardy? In other words, that the accumulative force of external and internal pressure of an economic, diplomatic, cultural and military nature were likely to be overwhelming and would sooner or later force white South Africa into surrender, which would then leave it with no negotiating leverage (causing us – in PW's apocalyptic words – to go down hard-arsed: *om hardegat onder te gaan*).

The New Nats understood that such forced capitulation would rob whites of any bargaining cards, if the government waited too late to initiate pre-emptive negotiations and that, in the end, trying to tough it out would simply result in having a new dispensation forced upon us on the terms of the opposition forces.

An important determinant of New Nat thinking was the extent to which international communism still presented the principal threat driving internal unrest. What was becoming clearer as events in Eastern Europe were unfolding, was that the erstwhile Soviet-led communist threat would likely not persist, for two reasons: the developments in the USSR and Warsaw Bloc under Gorbachev, as well as due to Pretoria's own (successful) secret efforts to "turn around" Moscow's position on South Africa. It was becoming rather clear that the USSR was no longer willing nor able to pursue its earlier expansionist dreams, and that it in any event was beginning to see more benefit for itself in partnering with Pretoria (such as building MIG engines into our Mirage jet fighters) than with the liberation movements, so that the New Nats realised that the "Red Threat" no longer held water.

However, what had also to be considered was what a collapse of the USSR would mean for any incentive that the West in future would have to continue to surreptitiously arm white South Africa – something they clearly only had done in the past because of feeling threatened by the USSR in the Cold War context.

In Pretoria, some were already understanding that Moscow's fall would be a two-edged sword: yes, on the one hand it would remove the "red threat". But, on the other hand, it would shift the political determinants of Western policy concerning South Africa from the Cold War necessity to keep South Africa out of the hands of Moscow proxies, to considerations informed by their own internal politics around race – particularly so in major nations with large non-white voting blocks, such as the USA, UK, and France, where racism was totally anathema.

What would future Democrat or Labour governments in the USA and UK do to a recalcitrant white government in Pretoria, to demonstrate to their own electorates their own non-racial credentials, if South Africa did not embark on fundamental transformation by means of negotiation?

Last but not least, the conventional military conflict in Namibia/Angola was towards the end of the eighties providing tangible answers to the question of what South Africa's true military capacity was when caught up in an attritional warfare situation such as had evolved in Southern Angola / Namibia with the Cubans opening a second front there, unfolding against the background of debilitating arms and oil embargoes. I believe that PW Botha's eventual acceptance of accords that effectively handed over SWA/Namibia to the UN speaks eloquently enough of the fact that it was finally understood that there were clear limits to what our best efforts at preparing to win a shooting war, could be expected to a chieve under such constraints.

Three important positives did come out of the "shoot" versus "settle" discord during the "lost decade": firstly, it had brought clarity to most white South Africans that "shoot" wasn't a viable option (because of the limitations imposed on us by the arms embargo, and because the conflict was political in nature and internally contested in the townships, not of a military nature threatening us conventionally from abroad).

Secondly, it had demonstrated that the theoretical notion that imposing top-down incremental cosmetic change and that that would somehow work, was a fallacy.

Thirdly, by having actual proof that the "shoot" option was akin to suicide and that imposed incremental change inflames rather than resolves, a strong roughly two-thirds majority consensus had formed among white voters around "settle" as the only realistic option. This likely had contributed greatly to a coup not being attempted by the white right against the De Klerk government – what PW Botha's "lost decade" thus had paradoxically done, was – through its failures – to clear the way for FW de Klerk to prioritise peace, scrap Apartheid and negotiate inclusively

for a majority rule constitution, without those who had still clung to “total onslaught” a short time before, launching a coup.

In other words, had PW Botha not come to power in 1978 and had he and those thinking like him not done their level best to implement their strategy, only to see it publicly fail – as clearly it did – then if Vorster had survived or Pik Botha or Connie Mulder had won and then straight away had continued to develop the settlement option (i.e., without PW Botha first having proven that the “shoot” option in fact was non-viable) then it is imho very likely that those thinking like PW and Magnus Malan would have resorted to a coup to scuttle the kind of peace settlement that FW de Klerk in the end agreed to.

As we delve deeper into the emergence of negotiation as the “only game in town” we will re-visit the impact that the “lost decade” had on the way in which the negotiations unfolded. However. it would be amiss not to address first the other field in which the “lost decade” had also seen discord and dysfunction. Because, apart from the dysfunction regarding national decision-making and strategy, there was also concerning deviation from norms regarding the **duty to respect legality**.

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# CHAPTER 6.
# DISCORD OVER LEGALITY / RESPECT FOR THE LAW AND CONSEQUENT LOSS OF LEGITIMACY

## 6.1 "OLD SCHOOL" VERSUS "TOTAL ONSLAUGHT" VIEWPOINTS

The discord within the security/intel-community wasn't limited to division over strategic objectives (meaning: over whether to focus on preparations for getting ready to be best able to "shoot", or instead on preparations to have the table properly set to "settle" through negotiations). Over the course of the "lost decade" fundamental differences also came to the fore about methods to counter the "revolutionary war" and thus about the need to respect the rule of law – in other words, whether to always adhere to the maxim that the security forces are subject to the law and not above it, and that they thus may not engage in extra-judicial actions.

Those who believed that a no holds barred "total onslaught" (or, in the words of Strategy #44, a "revolutionary war") was being waged against the government of the day, believed in the consequent need for a no holds barred total response. They believed that white South Africa was at war, and that "all is fair in love and war".

On the "settle" side (where the true nature of the contest was correctly comprehended as being a **political** one in which propaganda was the vital instrument), it was well understood that the "armed struggle" was in reality classic communist **armed propaganda**, such as which had won Vietnam for them.

The ANC itself had understood that South Africa's conflict was not a real war aimed at militarily overthrowing the existing government. The reality that such an objective was never realistically achievable was perfectly comprehended by the ANC leaders on all sides of the spectrum, from Nelson Mandela as founder of MK to doves like Roly Arenstein. The political propaganda purpose served by the "armed struggle" was precisely to entrap the security forces into overreacting to provocations – i.e., for the Security Forces themselves to start operating outside of the law and thereby to provide fodder for the ANC/SACP propaganda machine.

SAP-SB commanders of the "old school" such as my father had understood the essentially political, propaganda-driven nature of the conflict. They comprehended that it was, accordingly, imperative to counter it not as "war" (which would only lend status to the other side's operatives as if they were actually soldiers) but by means of strict adherence to the principle that those using violence for political means were criminals who had to be brought before the courts to be judged as such. This principle that the countermeasures had to be seen to be based on the law, and that perpetrators (identified and apprehended through detective skills) had to be publicly brought before the normal courts for judgement (i.e, no special, secret "security courts") was adhered to by Vorster and Van den Bergh, when they successfully countered the sabotage campaign of the 1960s.

General van den Bergh, for example, had stressed to his men the need to strictly maintain legality in all actions when he addressed the 2nd Security Branch divisional commander conference held at Pretoria on 18 & 19 June 1968. He emphasised that the maintenance of the highest moral standards in both private and professional life was imperative. Discipline was to be paramount: meaning, above all, self-discipline. No SAP-SB members guilty of moral transgressions in their private or professional lives would be promoted, and he warned very strongly that superior officers who tried to hide transgressions by their subordinates, would be penalised. As regards reports of assaults on detainees, he appealed for help "*to bring this down to zero; we must build up (the image of) the Police, so that every member of the public can sense that the policeman is truly his friend*."

My father, as then Commanding Officer of the Port Natal division of the SA Police Security Branch, had anticipated the negative fall-out that "third degree" interrogation methods would have (apart from being ineffectual). He had, therefore, circulated a standing order to all under his command already on 29 April 1977 (i.e, well before the death in detention of Steve Biko), laying down very clear guidelines as to how interrogations should be conducted – in strict accordance with the law and respecting human dignity as well as the authority of the courts. He insisted on

this because it was the proven most effective way to extract useable information, as well as being the approach that would best serve and protect the interests of the state. It is worthwhile quoting key sections from this standing order:

*"**Introduction**: …the time has come where we must put our hand in our own bosom and honestly and objectively check whether we have not, in and through our own actions, worked directly into the hands of our enemies and thus that we ourselves are largely responsible for our defeats... We have to make sure, in all our actions, that no or as little opportunity as possible is afforded to attack our conduct. We must restore and rebuild our image in the eyes of the people. If we do not succeed, we will be responsible for infinite and possibly irreversible damage to our country. The field in which we have to do this is wide and covers our every action – on and off duty. …*

*"**Interrogations**: Assign a suspect to two interrogators and they alone must interrogate him until they reach checkmate with him.*

*"Only the investigator / s in charge of the investigation may interrogate the suspect. More damage has been done than good by well-meaning colleagues who enter an interrogation in untimely manner.*

*"Avoid the so-called "relay team interrogation" where interrogators are replaced. There are more disadvantages than advantages: no rapport is established between interrogator and suspect, interrogators contradict each other and so on. The lengthy interrogation undermines the interrogators and their objectives more than it does the suspect; the chances that the astute interrogator will properly utilize his intelligence and ingenuity towards the suspect are less.*

*"Act in a civilized but firm manner towards the suspect, thus will you gain and retain his respect.*

*"Always remember you are a policeman, not a politician; you are investigating a criminal case where the country's laws have been transgressed, and it is not your job or responsibility to defend the right or wrong of the laws.*

*"Think, think and plan constantly. Our enemies are waging this battle against us with their heads and we must fight them in the same way. It is the safest, most effective and most lasting in its long-term effect. A mental, psychological victory evokes respect; A physical, violent 'victory' brings with it a lasting and growing hatred, resistance, and desire for revenge, in any way possible. His respect for you is lost and your respect for yourself is damaged as well."*

From the proceedings of the TRC it is evident that not all in the Security Branch or in the SADF's clandestine units such as the Civil Cooperation Bureau had adhered to the approach outlined by my father. Especially after "old school" commanders like my dad (who had taken early retirement on 31 August 1984) had been succeeded by new PW Botha appointees who then toed the "total onslaught" line.

The TRC's statistics about the number of events for which amnesty applications were received, relative to the year in which the incident that transgressed the law had occurred, are telling:

1960-1969 = 0

1970-1979 = 29

1980-1984 = 86

1985-1989 = 274

I was witness to an event that illustrated the serious discord within security community ranks during the "lost decade" about this need to always respect the rule of law – a need based in morality, legality, and for the sake of efficiently combating the true threat. With as flip side, the imperative need not to engage in extra-judicial actions, because they were more likely than not to boomerang…

Early during my late father's term as SAP-SB CO, in January 1983, the American FBI had arrested then Commodore Dieter Gerhardt of the SA Navy when he was visiting the USA. Gerhardt had been unmasked by a Soviet defector as being a spy for the USSR's military intelligence, the GRU, with code name "Felix". The Americans had informed the South African Police (as the only South African entity that under law had enjoyed powers of arrest) that they were sending Gerhardt back to South Africa by plane, under escort.

This news had immediately set off a flurry of debate in top circles in Pretoria, because clearly the fact of having a military officer of such high rank publicly stand trial for high treason would be a serious blow to the prestige of the SADF. With the plane still on its way, my father was soon enough made to understand that, at the very highest level, there was a preference for Gerhardt to quietly "disappear" (students of history will know that there were indeed some similar figures who had developed sudden fatal health problems, usually leading to quick cremation of their remains – look up the SADF's "Operation Dual": Grisly SADF secret to go down in infamy ).

Frans Steenkamp absolutely refused to be any part of such action. Pushing back, he steadfastly maintained that Gerhardt may indeed be a traitor, but that he was entitled to a fair trial before a court of law. He insisted that, also jurisdictionally, this was a matter for the police alone, not one for the military, and as policeman first and foremost, he would uphold the law.

Matters got heated, to the point that General Steenkamp delegated two of his most senior officers to personally go to Johannesburg airport, board the plane and directly receive Gerhardt from the Americans, with orders then to get him into a secure SAP-SB detention facility asap – thereby effectively challenging anyone to try and take Gerhardt away from such senior police officers.

Needless to say, this did not endear him to the powers-that-be…

The proceedings of the TRC (and newspaper archives around the world) are full of more than enough examples of the negative consequences that such extra-judicial actions had led to – I do not need to elaborate further here to make the point, apart from asking: what did such actions in any event achieve? Did it help us to win the "war"? No. Did it instead contribute greatly to us losing the contest for political power, because of how it provided valuable ammo for the other side's propaganda campaign? Most definitely, YES.

Informed readers will know just how perfectly the deeply negative publicity that had accompanied these events, had played into the hands of the NP Government's political opponents. There's no denying the enormous damage done to the image of not only the security forces, but also that of the government and of white South Africans – Afrikaners, in particular. Exactly as my father had warned in his staff circular.

This pattern of ill-conceived illegal actions that resulted from the "total onslaught" mind-set would later, crucially, lay the psychological foundation (in public perceptions) that enabled Mr Mandela's very effective propaganda campaign during the negotiations to isolate and prevent the National Party from forming viable political alliances (which could have been similar to the DTA in SWA/N, for example). This, Mr Mandela could do by means of his very effective propaganda regarding a so-called Third Force, because he could credibly build that propaganda upon a foundation of well-known prior secret activities of that kind, such as the SADF's Operation Marion (arming and providing military training to the IFP).

These "Third Force" allegations did tremendous harm to the governing party's credibility and its ability to effectively counter, politically, the ANC.

Again, these extra-legal actions were limited to a certain group of like-minded individuals in the SADF and SAP-SB who were "true believers" of the dogma that the country was "at war" (the government against its own citizens?"). The NIS under Dr Niël Barnard was firmly set against this, with strict instructions not to engage in any such actions.

You may well ask: did those political leaders and commanding officers who had brain-washed their staff with "total onslaught" and "we are at war" dogma, then stand up and take responsibility at the TRC for the extra-legal actions committed by lower ranks as a result?

The answer, unfortunately and shamefully, is: No!

## 6.2 AMNESTY AND THE TRC

I vividly recall the fury and frustration of my father, then already long retired, after he had been visited at his home in Lynnwood (in the run-up to the TRC commencing with its amnesty proceedings) by a group of SAP generals – former commissioners who had been fellow former SAP-SB CO's – who were promoting the idea that as many policemen as possible needed to apply post-haste for amnesty, for anything and everything they may conceivably have done, that could in future be held against them.

I saw for myself how intensely this campaign by his former senior colleagues to convince the ranks to go plead *en masse* for amnesty had upset my father (I had arrived at his house just after the generals had left). He was still literally trembling with anger, overcome by a deep sadness. He told me that he had warned strongly against such a strategy and had flatly refused to side with those generals. He himself absolutely rejected the very idea of him applying for amnesty, firstly because he maintained that he had not himself done, or had ever ordered anything be done that he could not fully justify within the law, and secondly because he foresaw what the cumulative effect of so many anxious outpourings of guilt in front of the media would be on the image of the Security Branch and the Police in general – especially if the other former security institutions such as the SADF simply stayed away and the Police were then left, alone, to carry the can in the public spotlight.

Frans Steenkamp was the only former head of the SA Police Security Branch who was never summoned to appear before the TRC.

It is not for me here to make accusations, or to attribute (as if proven fact) devious motives to those generals who had led so many of those they had formerly commanded, to apply for amnesty. However, it is appropriate to face the facts and acknowledge the consequences – and to identify logical questions arising, for further investigation by historians. I believe it is appropriate to apply here the earlier-mentioned theory of "rational action", identifying the personal best interests of those involved as having been the probable motivation for their actions.

Fact number one is that **less than one in eight** out of the 7,112 applications for amnesty were granted. So, how many members of the ranks had actually benefited from their attempted cooperation with the TRC's amnesty process? Or did it all in practice just serve to ease the situation of others, higher up? (doing so by means of the lower ranks "flooding the system" and, in the process, feeding the hungry media more than their fill?).

Secondly, it is evident that the Police, by baring all, had made it possible for all the other "suspects" from other arms of the former security apparatus as well as political circles to remain hiding in the corners, because those on the left and in the media who had been looking for heads, were given those of the lower ranks on a platter, in ample measure.

As Prof Hermann Giliomee wrote: "*It was the police who had to fight the battle on the ground, and some had to carry out political orders and do the dirty work".* As example of this, Giliomee mentioned the order given to the police in 1988 by the then Minister of Police, Adriaan Vlok, who instructed that Khotso House, the headquarters of the SA Council of Churches and a regular meeting place for activists, be destroyed. Vlok had said that the order had come directly from the then president, PW Botha.

With the Police rank-and-file voluntarily stepping into the dock themselves, **politicians** and the other services such as the **Army**'s leadership could quietly disappear into the background – there was now a (self-offered) scapegoat to bear everyone's blame...

Third, with the regular ranks taking up practically all of the commission's time and media attention with their detailed outpourings under intense and often very hostile cross-examination, the focus had been diluted and shifted away from what might otherwise have been expected – namely, that the spotlight would have been on the generals and ministers. Surely the focus (as in Nuremberg and in Tokyo) would have been on the top structure, if the ranks hadn't come to occupy the podium for most of the available time...

As food for thought, here is the spread in rank of those indicted at the two main post-WW2 trials:

**Nuremberg Trials of major war criminals (International Military Tribunal, 1945–1946)**
The Nuremberg IMT indicted 24 major war criminals, primarily high-ranking Nazi officials and military leaders. Based on their roles and ranks:

- Politicians of ministerial rank: 17
- Officers of the rank of general and above: 6
- Officers of the rank of major and colonel: 0
- Junior officers such as lieutenants and captains: 0
- Soldiers below officer rank: 0

## SUBSEQUENT NUREMBERG TRIALS (1946–49, 12 TRIALS, 177 DEFENDANTS)

- Ministers/politicians/senior civil servants: approximately 40 (Ministries Trial, Judges' Trial)
- Generals/admirals: approximately 25 (High Command Trial, Hostages Trial)
- Colonels/majors**:** appr 30–35 (commanders in Hostages, Einsatzgruppen, Medical Trials)
- Junior officers (captains/lieutenants): appr 20 (SS and police officers, Einsatzgruppen)
- Enlisted soldiers: approximately 10 (SS guards, camp staff, rare cases)

**Tokyo Trials (International Military Tribunal for the Far East, 1946–1948)**
The Tokyo IMTFE indicted 28 major war criminals, primarily high-ranking Japanese officials and military leaders. Based on their roles and ranks:

- Politicians of ministerial rank: 9
- Officers of the rank of general and above: 17
- Officers of the rank of major and colonel: 1
- Junior officers such as lieutenants and captains: 0
- Soldiers below officer rank: 0

In South Africa's case, looking at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission amnesty process for self-admitted Apartheid-era crimes, one is led to ponder this question: were the regular ranks perhaps encouraged by their generals to go and apply, precisely with the intention to thereby flood the system from below?

Why did Minister Kobie Coetsee tarry so excruciatingly to agree and finalise a general amnesty, which by all accounts the ANC had been willing to support? Had he somehow just lost the plot, or his enthusiasm for the negotiations? Was it just a consequence of his well-known slothfulness as administrator, or – as some would have it – due to his time and attention being focused on his cattle and his lady friend? (Niël Barnard, for one, was on record as having been puzzled and frustrated by Coetsee's feet-dragging). Or, if we apply "rational actor" theory, did Coetsee **not actually <u>want</u>** there to be a general amnesty for the security forces, out of fear that the spotlight would then of necessity fall extensively on the political leadership?

In the end, with the Police ranks flooding the TRC process, no one who had issued orders for extra-legal actions from above (or hinted at same), nor those even higher up in the political hierarchy who had decided and dictated the "total response" strategy – not political leaders, not the top military structure, not the police's own post-1984 leadership who had set the tone during the final years of the "total onslaught" dogma – was held criminally accountable.

In fact, the senior ranks were heavily over-represented among the small proportion of less than one in eight of the more than seven thousand applicants that were in the end fortunate enough to receive amnesty, with roughly 300 of the amnesties granted being accorded for actions which the upper echelon had applied for.

And today? Who are now again being hauled in front of the criminal courts? Once more, the lower ranks…

Be that as it may – for our purposes here, the important point to make is that the discord that had marked the security/intel-community during the "lost decade" wasn't limited to just the fundamental differences about strategic objectives and policy, but also included equally fundamental differences about permissible methods and positions

of principle that should have been a sacred given – the absolute need to act legally and respect the rule of law. Not only because that was the law, but because it was the morally right thing to do. It was also the professionally right thing to do, in terms of obtaining positive, usable results. And it was the most advantageous course of action, in terms of the real interests of the state and the "white nation" supposedly served – to have done otherwise, was to have played disastrously right into the hands of the opponent, feeding its propaganda war…

In fact, within the context of the propaganda-driven political struggle being waged, it wasn't only essential to respect the strict letter of the law as found printed in the statutes. It had needed to be understood by all that the political contest around public perceptions (both locally and internationally) would be won on the basis of how **legitimate** the actions of the opposing sides are perceived to be – with legitimacy being related to legality, but not identical or limited to it (because legitimacy goes much further than merely the printed letter of the law, through being based on basic notions of fairness and justice for all).

The unfortunate truth is that the "total onslaught" approach paid little heed to the centrality of **perceptions around legitimacy** in the political power struggle. Instead, there was a sense of being at war, with that justifying recourse to all means and methods. Not only were laws broken and the rule of law not adhered to. Even more importantly, by dent of the securocrats not taking into account the impact of their counteractions on perceptions around legitimacy, it ensured that public opinion abroad as well as at home, was fatally alienated.

Johan Mostert, who had been responsible for the daily intelligence briefings to both PW Botha and FW de Klerk, had perfectly summed up the importance of legitimacy (or rather, the lack of it) in bringing the white state to and end. Under the heading "*The Real Defeat: Loss of Legitimacy*" he wrote: "*The crux of the crisis was not military, but political. By the late 1980s Apartheid had lost its legitimacy – both domestically and internationally.*

*"Within black communities, the state no longer held legal or moral authority. Mass resistance, not armed struggle, made South Africa increasingly ungovernable. This resistance was not limited to ideological revolutionaries; it reflected a broad, societal rejection of Apartheid.*

*"Internationally, South Africa was isolated to the bone. There was not a single influential Western decision-maker who openly defended Apartheid. Even sympathetic governments made it clear that any continued support depended on fundamental political change.*

*"A state can survive military setbacks. It rarely survives when it loses its legitimacy.*"

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# CHAPTER 7.

# 1987 – PRESSURE FOR NEGOTIATIONS KEEPS BUILDING RAPIDLY, BOTH INTERNALLY AND FROM ABROAD

## 7.1 AFRIKANER VOICES GO UP IN FAVOUR OF SEEKING A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT

By the mid-eighties, the PW Botha strategy of imposing top-down, incremental changes to the façade of the existing Apartheid system was inevitably met by opponents with cries of "too little, too late" and denouncing it as lacking legitimacy. In truth, however, the entire foundation of Apartheid and the "total onslaught" approach were also increasingly being questioned by powerful voices from within the Afrikaner community itself, such as from the Church, academia, business, and the Afrikaner-Broederbond (as described earlier, in Chapter 4).

By 1987 there had thus emerged a growing understanding among informed segments of the South African public, as well as in the Civil Service at large and within the ranks of those in the security/intel-community who did not share the "total onslaught" vision, that a solution to the country's challenges lay not in a top-down fiddling with Apartheid's façade to try and make it more aesthetically pleasing. In fact, attempts at doing this had just inflamed the situation.

What was needed, was to discard Apartheid completely and to opt instead for but FUNDAMENTAL TRANSFORMATION, to be brought about through evolution and state continuity, rather than the revolution that the ANC/SACP had aspired to. The only manner in which this could conceivably be achieved, was through a POLITICAL PROCESS of inclusive negotiation, instead of PW's top-down PRESCRIPTION.

Why inclusive negotiations (i.e., inclusive, because no stakeholders had been excluded) based on an open agenda (i.e., without any party's preference-based prescription limiting the options to be considered) was both essential and unavoidable, was because only through such a process could there be hope of achieving LEGITIMACY for the end product. Due to the fact that broadly-perceived legitimacy would be the vital determinant of internal and external acceptance or rejection of any new dispensation, no other kind of limited process would or could suffice. Because without legitimacy, there would be no end to the political power struggle. It would mean that the main goal, namely, to establish **peace**, would not be achieved and consequently that there would not be security and stability, nor an end to isolation and to international punitive measures.

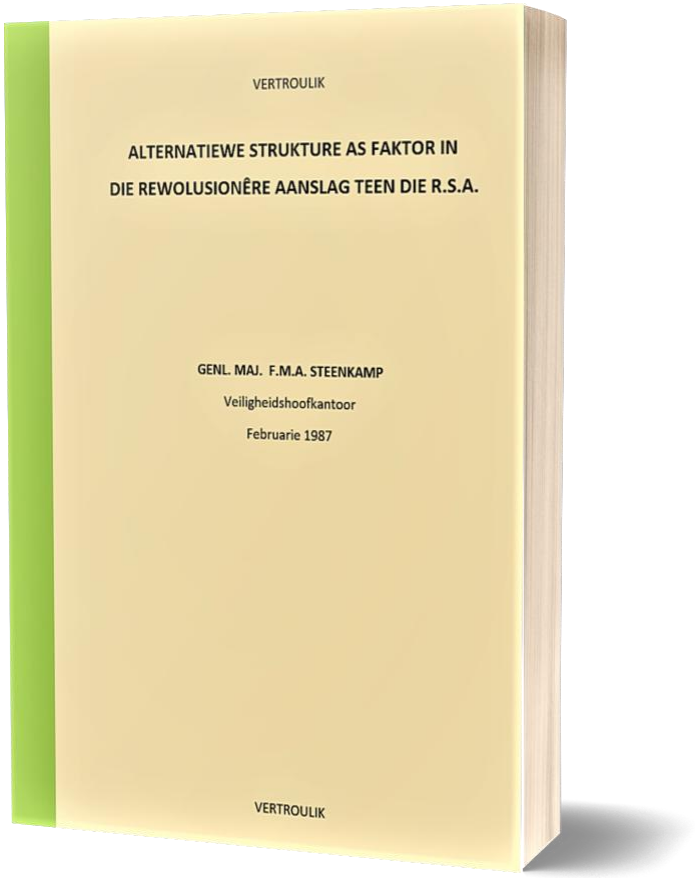
It is undeniable that there was only one means through which such legitimacy could possibly be achieved: a **negotiated settlement** that resulted from a sufficient consensus that had been freely and democratically reached in negotiations in which all significant stakeholders were allowed to participate. Given the country's demographic reality, it had always been a foregone conclusion that the result of such a legitimate process would inevitably be an entirely new non-racial constitutional dispensation for a unitary South Africa.

Therefore, as the internal security situation became exponentially more dire and international punitive measures were escalated, 1987 saw a significant increase in efforts by the business community and opinion leaders in academia, religion, and in the media to initiate negotiations with the ANC in exile, circumventing PW Botha's opposition to any such outreach. Less known is the fact that the need for the government to urgently start engaging in negotiation (whilst it still could do so from a position of relative power) was increasingly being voiced from within the security/intel-community as well – as I will demonstrate in the following chapters.

# 7.2 SOME IN THE SAP-SB SEE TIME RUNNING OUT AND URGE NEGOTIATIONS

Considering how serious the internal situation was becoming, my father was asked in 1986 to come back to Security Police HQ as a consultant. This role actually fitted him perfectly, because it allowed him to truly speak his own mind as advisor, rather than to have to reflect an institutional viewpoint conforming to that held by the government of the day. It would be his own thoughts – motivated and presented his way.

The key project he worked on was a memorandum entitled (translated into English): “Alternative Structures as Factor in the Revolutionary Onslaught against South Africa”, which was completed and entered into the system in February 1987. Although he evidently dealt in detail with the topic he had been assigned, he in reality went very much further, using it as a catch-all to put the entire domestic policy dilemma (regarding how to legitimately accord political rights to the non-White population – which was what was truly driving the turmoil) into detailed historical and practical perspective.




The first point he stressed, was that it was essential to understand what was fundamentally motivating Black activism. It was not, and had never principally been, communist ideology. Rather, it was that universal human aspiration to equal rights in the country of one’s birth, striving for a better future for one’s family – **just what had fuelled Afrikaner nationalism,** he pointedly stated. However much international communism / the Soviet Union had undeniably been trying to piggy-back off this for their own strategic ends, anyone seeing the principal challenge as being to stop communism, or seeking a communist behind every manifestation of resistance, was entirely missing the point. The resistance and agitation were, first and foremost, being inspired by black nationalist aspirations to gain equality with us whites, the descendants of the foreign invaders who had taken their land from them by force, long before we also became sons and daughters of this land.

This being the case, the challenge facing South Africa was not fundamentally a security one, but a political one. One of affording basic human rights to all, in a manner and within a political system perceived as legitimate. Therefore, it had to be understood that **the primary responsibility for solving this challenge rested on the**

**politicians, not on the security forces** (the latter could only strive to provide an environment conducive to the politicians reaching such a political/constitutional solution).

My father then analysed at length the way in which the South African heartland was increasingly becoming ungovernable with the emergence of popular "alternative" structures (such as "peoples' courts") operating in parallel to the formal European-styled structures that had been ordained by successive white governments. These structures may be typified as "alternative" from the government viewpoint, he said, but in reality – when judged in terms of the perceptions of the Black populace – they were in fact the more authentic and "legitimate", because they related much more closely to their traditions, culture and aspirations. The White / Eurocentric colonially inspired structures were thus in reality the "alien" ones, which could therefore only be maintained in place by force, not by innate cultural identification and popular consent.

The question therefore arose – does the State still have, and will it in future possess the coercive means with which to force the acceptance of its structures, or will the country increasingly become ungovernable due to this contest between parallel institutions? Dealing in detail with the history and consequences of years of having the police force suck on the back teat of budget allocations (despite it having been the principal internal law enforcement and stabilization agency), Frans Steenkamp then very clearly explained that neither in terms of the availability of sufficient numbers of trained manpower nor of material means could the Police be expected to prevail forever.

***To put it bluntly, he made it very clear that White politicians should not operate under the illusion that "the thin blue line" could or would be able to hold.***

Yes, in his memorandum he did suggest short-term, stop-gap measures that could temporarily mitigate in part this core problem. But the historical and demographic realities of the country demonstrated a likely irreversible trajectory that did not favour the State. Only the legitimacy that a negotiated, broad-based political solution would bring, could truly address this fundamental issue of governance needing to be based on the consent of the governed, in order for it to be respected as legitimate.

So, what conclusion did he offer? ***Start negotiating NOW with credible representatives of the Black majority, while you can still do so from a position of relative strength***.

Being the sole author of the document, it fell to him to determine its security classification. He classified it at the lowest level, namely merely **confidential** (such documents would otherwise typically have been marked top secret, as was the "*Skrik vir Niks*" report). This low classification he had chosen on purpose, because he had realised that one of the basic problems holding back proper debate in civil society and thus in broader political decision-making circles, was the general lack of such key information and expert insights, to opinion leaders among the Afrikaner intelligentsia. He then himself reached out to influential individuals in civil society – such as DRC moderator Prof. Johan Heyns (of the main Afrikaans church) – to make available and personally discuss the memorandum with them.

What did Frans Steenkamp and like-minded SAP-SB officers fight for / against?

From the Vorster days my father was definitely in the camp of those who saw negotiating a legitimate settlement in a timely manner as the correct strategic option. This, after all, is what his memo of February 1987 had made abundantly clear. What he had understood was that, on the one hand, the intelligence community had to help the White decision-makers to see this necessity, by putting forth an unbiased intelligence picture about the realities of the power equation, warts and all. On the other hand, though, the opposing Struggle forces had also to be made to see reality, namely that they would not be permitted to grab power through the barrel of a gun – because otherwise, they would not be motivated to negotiate.

Frans Steenkamp knew that the past successes of national liberation wars in so many ex-colonies had, together with the perceived might of the Soviet Union, created an expectation that in South Africa as well, the armed struggle would eventually prevail. After all, had not the Vietnamese prevailed over the mighty USA? The Algerians over the

French? As long as this expectation persisted (with its corollary that, upon victory, the Black population would be able to claim all the spoils) there would be no true negotiations.

Explaining how my father (and others like him) had opposed the "total onslaught brigade" must therefore not be read as if he did not labour with all his heart, soul and intellect against all from the radical right or left who were attempting to conduct politics by means of violence. Most prominent among these was the communist-supported effort to gain control of South Africa by fomenting revolution, in which Struggle adherents were terrorizing large parts of the Black population by means of abhorrent tactics such as the fiery necklace. That task he performed with determination but clean, always the detective bound to respect the legal order and to put matters before a court of law, and thus not taking decisions to punish into own hands.

As much as he understood that the government needed urgently to revert to a strategy of negotiation, he also understood that negotiation would not be possible if both of the main parties to the conflict (the NP Government and the ANC/SACP) were not both convinced that they would only be able to achieve their core objectives (the NP: peace, rehabilitation and guarantees for property and individual rights; the ANC: getting their hands finally on the levers of power) by means of peaceful negotiation – NOT through force of arms.

Just as much as the government needed to be made to understand that they would not forever be able to maintain a white monopoly over political power by force of arms, the ANC had to be convinced that there was no realistic prospect of them grabbing power anytime soon by force of arms, either. This latter objective is what made him employ all his skill and means to beat back the ANC's efforts at stoking revolution, because he knew that they also needed to be made to see that "shoot" would get them no-where – only "settle" could. Therefore, they too needed to accept the inevitable necessity of negotiations.

In later years he saw no contradiction between having commanded a force such as the SAP-SB and having simultaneously strived for a peacefully negotiated solution. He was at peace with having opposed both the excesses of the PW Botha government and of those who had violently engaged in the Struggle. Make no mistake: he, I, and those like us in the security / intelligence establishment who realised that negotiation was in fact our best means of NOT becoming a Marxist "people's republic", were not about to permit South Africa to become another Cuba or Belgian Congo. Had there not been an eventual willingness by leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki to abandon revolutionary violence, as well as to let go of earlier-held Marxist concepts of establishing a "people's republic" with a winner-takes-all approach (in other words, had realistic negotiations not begun), then most probably we would still be fighting today and be proud of our stand, no matter how isolated.

It is of course impossible to quantify now, with exactitude, what influence my father's memorandum at the time exerted on the perceptions of White decision-makers and how and to what extent it impacted the later course of events – if at all (in other words, likely the same lot as befell the "*Skrik vir Niks*" document of the civilian Public Service departments, which had also been produced early in 1987). I am referring to it here to show that, although the SAP-SB had as institution been a-political, and although many among my father's successors there had toed the "Total Onslaught" line, also within the SAP-SB there were senior officers who fully understood that negotiation was the only viable way out, and who were pushing for it. Thus the "Total Onslaught" faction was becoming more and more isolated.

The fact that my father had to resort to personal outreach to key figures in the civilian Afrikaner establishment to get the gravity of the real situation across, is just further proof of how dysfunctional national security decision-making had become under the autocratic rule of PW Botha. (He, at least, knew how PW's system worked and had correctly anticipated that he would need to personally reach out).

## 7.3 CIVIL SOCIETY FORCES SEEK SETTLEMENT NEGOTIATIONS AND GO ON "SAFARI"

At this time the clamour among the business community and opinion formers in civil society for negotiations to be started was reaching fever pitch. Thus, the Consultative Business Movement was formed in 1987. Many a "safari" of academics, church leaders and politicians to meet with the ANC in places such as Dakar and Lusaka begun to

be arranged. PW Botha, though, continued to harshly condemn any and all such initiatives. His condemnation was echoed in the Afrikaans press aligned with him – ***Rapport*** in July 1987 published a front-page article ridiculing the academics who participated in the Dakar meeting of that month, under the heading: "*Dom Doktore van Dakar*" (Dumb Doctors of Dakar).

It was during 1987 that the annual National Intelligence Assessment (an inter-departmental document coordinated by the NIS) first stated that negotiations were likely to be the eventual means for bringing stability to the country (the NIS itself had already in 1984 brought forth such an assessment by its analytical branch, then under the leadership of Mr Pieter Swanepoel).

## 7.4 THE MILITARY SITUATION ON THE SWA / ANGOLA BORDER DETERIORATES SHARPLY

On the military front in South-Eastern Angola, 1987 had also seen a serious escalation in conventional combat along the Lomba River, when the SADF decided to once again intervene conventionally to prevent FAPLA from destroying UNITA, when the Angolan forces initiated a huge march upon Jonas Savimbi's main base. In a brilliantly conceived and executed mechanised intervention planned by (now general) Roland de Vries, the Angolan government forces were dealt severe blows at the start of the 2nd half of 1987. This was the last straw for the USSR, who henceforth wanted out. Gorbachev and Fidel Castro met in Moscow on 15 November 1987, where the latter saw the writing on the wall and understood the urgent need (from his perspective) to engineer a situation that would allow Cuba to withdraw from Angola "with honour".

Castro therefore decided to escalate, both militarily and diplomatically. On the 24th of November the crack Cuban 5th division started flying into Angola, for deployment along a new front being opened opposite the Ruacana water scheme on the Kunene River, across the border from Ovambo. The local Cuban forces in the south-east also now for the first time entered the fighting around Cuito Cuanavale and the adjacent Tumpo Triangle, with the goal to block any further South African advances there. Thus, was set up a potentially massive conventional military show-down between the Cubans and the SADF, necessitating the PW Botha government to call up 140,000 Citizen Forces reserves (more detail about the course that the military conflict in Angola took will be provided in the next chapter, when I will discuss the watershed events of 1988/89).

In South Africa itself, during 1987, a total of 234 incidents of terror occurred. These were directly attributable to the ANC/SACP's MK – again, a disturbing increase over the previous year.

## 7.5 BRITISH STAKEHOLDERS FACILITATE TALKS BETWEEN AFRIKANERS AND THE ANC

Probably the most significant event of 1987 came in November of that year, although its importance wasn't then immediately evident.

The British government and British business leaders deeply invested in South Africa had come to the conclusion that the Afrikaner intelligentsia in academia, the media, and business held the key to unlocking real progress towards negotiations. Afrikaners, after all, were ruling the country and the civilian opinion formers that the Afrikaner government would be most likely to listen to, were therefore fellow Afrikaners.

After the rebuffs that their diplomatic efforts to influence the PW Botha government had earlier suffered, the Thatcher government and British business realised that they had to facilitate that Afrikaner opinion formers and ANC representatives sit down together, get to know one another, and so hopefully then become convinced themselves, that there was both a need and a possibility to work together towards a negotiated settlement. Only the Afrikaner intelligentsia would potentially be able to get the NP Government on board because it was only the Afrikaner intellectual and business elite who had the clout to be listened to by the NP Government.

This gave rise to the discreetly Thatcher-backed British "business" project that became known as the "Mells Park Initiative". It consisted of bringing together Afrikaner opinion-formers from civil society and members of the ANC

leadership for a series of confidential discussions held in secluded hotels in the English countryside. It was this initiative that eventually seeded “Operation Flair” of the NIS, eventually leading to the first publicly acknowledged formal top-level meeting between the NIS and the ANC in Switzerland, in September 1989.

## 7.6 THE NIS STARTS PREPARING THE GROUND FOR EVENTUAL OUTREACH TO THE ANC

Operation Flair started out as another of those silo initiatives decided upon and implemented unilaterally by a member entity of the security/intel community – this time the NIS – which again demonstrates the then dysfunction of the national decision-making system as such. Today one may argue that it was justified by urgent necessity, given the dire situation which then existed in the country due to the apparent inability of the politicians (under the constraints of the PW Botha presidency) to themselves initiate the steps required. However, it remains axiomatic that, in principle, intelligence agencies have as task to **observe** events and then **inform** political decision-makers, not to themselves go out in secret and **shape** those events, especially not without a clear prior mandate (just as journalists must report the news and not make it).

Operation Flair was, therefore, further concrete and very significant evidence of the uncoordinated, dysfunctional nature of the PW-era decision-making system, before De Klerk overhauled it (essentially reverting to the statutory system that parliament had put in place under Vorster). Be that as it may – because of the way in which Operation Flair did help in 1989 to further concretise the then-nascent embrace by FW de Klerk and the New Nats of a strategy of fundamental transformation through negotiation and its resultant historical importance, it is necessary that I describe it in much more detail, in a later section dedicated specifically to it.

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# CHAPTER 8.

# 1988/89 – THE "TOTAL ONSLAUGHT" FACTION LOSE CREDIBILITY AND POWER

South Africa's estimated total loss of life as a result of the Border War was of the order of 2,300 men. The financial cost was considerable – by 1989 (the end of the war) the defence budget, measured at fixed prices, had reached about 20 times the size of 1960. Also proportionally, in terms of the portion of the national budget it absorbed, the defence budget had ballooned – in 1960 defence spending had represented an already high 8% of overall government spending. However, by the late 1980s the publicly declared direct defence spending (there was much more in covert and indirect spending) had swallowed about one-fifth of the total annual government budget.

All this investment in lives and money (not to mention loss of international stature plus wasted time as well as bargaining power) could not prevent the historically inevitable – by 1988/89 PW Botha and the SADF were at last forced to accept that South Africa would have to withdraw from Angola and then also from SWA/Namibia (a logical conclusion which Vorster and Van den Bergh had already come to in the mid-seventies, and which they had had the good sense back then to already start preparing for, only for it to be jettisoned when PW Botha came to power).

The situation as it had evolved during 1988 on the battlefield (as later disingenuously presented to the world in highly skewed Cuban propaganda as a Stalingrad-like victory) was what had finally brought the PW Botha government to the realization that a settlement had to be sought. Unfortunately, Castro's posturing and propaganda had made it appear to the public that the SADF had been defeated by the Cubans, with South Africa therefore forced out of Angola and then Namibia as well. Thus, another example of how the "total assault" faction had totally lost the propaganda war.

The undeniable end result was indeed that the MPLA finally took full control of Angola, Unita was defeated, and SWAPO came to power in Windhoek.

Worst of all, the blinkered focus during the "lost decade" on the military dimension and on persisting in fighting in Angola (i.a. as combat experience "training ground" for the Armageddon that the "total onslaught" adherents had seen as inevitable), had absorbed a huge proportion of the state's limited means. Funds that had urgently been needed for other – in fact, higher – strategic priorities such as curbing the internal unrest, ensuring good governance and service delivery, and addressing internal socio-economic needs.

What, then, finally had happened to all that expensive weaponry, acquired for waging conventional war against enemies way up North while the townships back home were burning? Most of the armour would rust away at Wallmansthal (later to be sold at auctions); the nuclear bombs and missiles were decommissioned, and the chemical and biological weapons of Project Coast were also done away with...

How did this come about?

During 1987, the conflict in Angola had begun to move towards a climax. After the initial remarkable South African successes in the battles on the Lomba River (planned by brilliant frontline tacticians such as Roland de Vries), the SADF units in the southeast of Angola were soon to be stalled into a stalemate when the Cubans for the first time during that year's campaign, actively engaged in the combat. Fidel Castro (after a visit to Moscow and a meeting with Gorbachev on 15 November 1987, where he had realized that the USSR was going to disengage from Africa) had come up with a strategic gamble with which to win for himself the opportunity to be able to withdraw his own troops without embarrassment.

This twofold Cuban strategy consisted of Castro, on the one hand, flying his elite 5th Division to Angola, which airlift had started on 24 November 1987. This unit with its modern weaponry was to be deployed in a new front, directly opposite Ovamboland. On the other hand, Castro held out the olive branch of direct negotiations with the

USA and South Africa (In February 1988, the Cuban delegation at the UN in New York had reached out to SA diplomat John Mare at South Africa's UN mission, requesting a meeting at the cocktail bar of the Barclay Intercontinental Hotel in New York, which set the talks in motion).

In its three attempts to take the Tumpo Triangle, the SADF had gone as far as to introduce Olifant main battle tanks into its repeated efforts conducted over a period of some two months. To no avail (it was not ideal terrain for tanks, and the Cubans had laid extensive minefields). As part of its battle-testing programme, the SADF had also introduced the then still experimental Plofadder de-mining system (an explosive-laden "hosepipe" fired ahead to clear a path; it mostly didn't work), plus the first of its newly-received 155mm G6 self-propelled howitzers, as well as units of the SA/French developed Cactus vehicle-mounted ground-to-air missile system.

By the end of February 1988, the SAAF had decisively lost air superiority over the battlefield. The SADF's anti-air capabilities (SAM and AA) had proved inadequate, with the Cactus missile system scoring only one hit (on a MIG's tailpipe; the enemy plane landed safely). The system proved unsuited to the bush, so that it had to be withdrawn. Meanwhile, a Special Forces raid on the Menongue air base had been unable to put it out of action. Thus, MIGs could operate at will over the Tumpo Triangle battlefield. Their constant presence began to severely inhibit SADF armour and artillery, whilst the opposing Cuban & FAPLA artillery – massed, pre-ranged and firing from the west bank – was on the contrary being seriously effective.

After it was finally realised that it was not possible to vanquish the Cuban-led Angolans in this sector, it was decided to systematically withdraw the South African forces from there.

By the 10th of March 1988 the Cuban 5th Division was approaching the SWA/N border region, opposite the Ruacana water scheme (Calueque). Castro's threat was that, if the olive branch of negotiations which he simultaneously was offering to the USA and South Africa would not be accepted, the Cuban forces would invade SWA/Namibia itself. (This was bluntly put to the South African contingent by their Cuban counterparts at the first round of face-to-face negotiations held in London on 3 May).

On 4 May 1988 the Cubans had laid an ambush for the SADF forces some 2km south of the settlement of Donguena (the SADF's 101 Battalion with 20 Casspirs and two trucks had been sent forward to occupy the village). In the resultant skirmish the SADF lost four Casspirs and seven men killed, with one captured (sergeant Johan Papenfus); the Casspirs could not be retrieved, and it was decided to withdraw.

On 26 May of 1988 the SADF publicly announced that the Cuban forces had opened this new front and were 60km north of the Ovamboland border. On 30 May the SADF accordingly started planning Operation Hilti, to consist of Ops Excite and Faction; Hilti i.a. included a proposed assault on the Angolan port of Namibe and the occupation of a large swathe of south-western Angola, to impede the 5th Division's logistics.

On 8 June 1988 some 140,000 Citizen Force soldiers were called up to active duty, demonstrating that the Cuban threat was no joke.

On the 26th of June the Administrator-general of SWA/N informed the public that Soviet-supplied MIG aircraft had begun flying over the Territory. It was later alleged by a usually reliable person that he was told by a top South African security/intelligence official that MIGs had actually flown over the Union Buildings in Pretoria as well (I have no hard proof of this actually happening, but the original source was definitely in a position to have known and wasn't the type to talk nonsense about something this serious).

On the 27th of June the Cuban Air Force attacked the water works at Calueque with 11 MIG-23 aircraft, in three waves. This resulted in the death of 13 South Africans and the destruction of the infrastructure, rendering the water scheme inoperable. The SADF decided to withdraw from there, and a week later the site was occupied by an advancing column of Cuban T-62 tanks.

On the 29th of June the State Security Council decided that Operation Hilti should not proceed further, since the SA Air Force and Logistics had made it very clear that it was simply not physically possible for them to render the support necessary for achieving its ambitious goals (such as capturing the port of Namibe). The SAAF had lost air

superiority (principally because our aging planes lacked the ability to match the “forward shooting” capability of the newer MIGs) and had withdrawn its jets back to Pretoria, believing that the kind of combat that could ensue would likely see attrition rates that would within days deprive South Africa itself of the irreplaceable aircraft needed for its own defence. As regards ground forces, spare parts for artillery and vehicles were running out, and the barrels of the crucial G5 howitzers were worn out with no replacements readily available.

Consequently, Operation Handbag (consisting of Ops Prone and Pact) was developed and approved on 19 July 1988. In terms of this new battle plan, should the Cubans indeed have attempted to invade, they would have been allowed to enter SWA/N and to advance as far south as the farming area south of the Etosha nature reserve, with a killing field to be prepared in the vicinity of Tsumeb.

Fortunately, the NIS had a source in place in the main line of command between Havana and Luanda, who confirmed that Castro was essentially bluffing in order to obtain an honourable way out. If given such an opportunity through the negotiations, then a complete withdrawal of the Cubans from Africa could be achieved. (It is not possible to know what Castro may have felt obliged to do, in order to escalate further, if the South Africans had been unwilling to make the demanded concessions in the negotiations – what is known is that the Cubans were preparing for the possibility of serious escalation; according to Castro himself, they were making contingency plans for the possible use by South Africa of its nuclear weapons against their forces, which weapons the Cubans knew about, via the Soviets).

What the entire episode had brought home, was that there was a real risk that the hitherto limited conflict in Angola could spiral into a full-scale conventional war with communist forces that were better equipped than the SADF (especially the SA Air Force) due to the arms embargo – a war which potentially could escalate even to nuclear level.

What was well understood on the South African government side was that, politically speaking, if it ever became necessary to implement Operation Handbag and allow invaders to actually enter SWA/Namibia as far south as the Tsumeb farming area, then it would have had a devastating impact on white civilian morale and investor confidence. It was also becoming clear that withdrawing 140,000 Citizen Force members from the civilian economy for any length of time, was simply not sustainable. In short – whereas it can safely be assumed that the South Africans would have given a very good account of themselves in battle if the Cubans had indeed tried to invade, and whereas the South Africans very likely would have come out on top in the initial combat, South Africa was not in a position to sustain or survive a drawn-out war of attrition against an enemy that could count on international support and re-supply (while South Africa – and especially its Air Force – had no means of replenishment due to the arms embargo and the country’s political isolation).

On 5 August 1988 the Geneva Protocol was signed, in terms of which South Africa committed to withdrawing the SADF entirely from Angola. This was followed on 22 December 1988 by the formal signing in New York of the Three Powers Accord in terms of which South Africa agreed to at last actually implement UN Security Council Resolution 435 (which the Vorster government had already formally accepted in 1978). In terms of this Accord, South Africa would withdraw its forces from SWA/Namibia, internationally supervised elections would be held, and the Territory would become the independent state of Namibia. Thus, on 1 April 1989 the UN took over.

What the stalemate at the Tumpo Triangle, the following escalation along the Ovamboland border, and especially the problems regarding air superiority and logistics had laid bare, was that the brave pretensions of those who had been advocating the “shoot” option, were divorced from reality and that there was no realistic prospect of success, if we had continued to follow that strategic path.

As Vorster had correctly foreseen, it was past time to now focus on “settle” rather than on “shoot”, since the alternative was indeed “too ghastly to contemplate”. The urgent priority was that some way or another, negotiations had to be prepared for – even if in the face of the “Groot Krokodil” and his “total onslaught” coterie’s continued vehement resistance.

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# CHAPTER 9.
# PW REPLACED BY FW; "SHOOT" REPLACED BY "SETTLE"

## 9.1 NEW LEADERSHIP, NEW DIRECTION: THE ACTORS

### 9.1.1 PW BOTHA'S POLITICAL DEMISE

PW Botha indisputably was still the main actor and sole arbiter of policy at the start of 1989. Because of the fact that he utterly dominated his cabinet through intimidation, and given his stubborn unwillingness to heed the groundswell of support for fundamental transformation through negotiation that had increasingly been coming to the fore from among Afrikaner opinion-leaders from business, church, academia and the Broederbond, (as described in Chapters 4 and 7), it was clearly a prerequisite for progress that he be replaced.

But how?

How could (and eventually did) the NP rid itself of PW Botha?

Just as Dr Verwoerd's grip on his party's policies suddenly and unexpectedly was broken by an event originating from outside his party, PW Botha also was suddenly and unexpectedly weakened not by actions of his fellow party members. On 18 January 1989 it was announced to the public that PW had been hospitalised (due to a stroke) and would be on sick leave for six weeks. Apparently, the stroke had been the latest – and most serious – in a series that had started in 1985.

As a consequence of his health Botha on 2 February 1989 unexpectedly announced by means of a letter to his surprised caucus that he's resigning as NP leader (but not as state president) in order to lessen his workload. The leader that the NP caucus that same day elected to take the reins of the party, then *ipso facto* became the other main actor. It was not PW Botha's man, Finance Minister Barend du Plessis, who won that election by eight votes. Against PW's expectation and preference, it was FW de Klerk.

Who, in his acceptance speech that day, immediately had announced that the time had come for a "**quantum leap**" forward.

To considerable acclaim from his fellow members of parliament, with one enthusiast shouting out: "jump, FW, jump!".

### 9.1.2 FW DE KLERK

The election of De Klerk as new party leader set in motion a six-month period of strained co-habitation between himself and PW Botha, which became increasingly acrimonious as PW realised the extent to which FW was committed to fundamental change. In August, this patently unworkable relationship finally motivated the cabinet to unanimously turn against PW, causing him to resign as state president and FW de Klerk to be sworn in as his successor.

There is nowadays much utter nonsense doing the rounds about what had happened during that exactly one year between FW de Klerk becoming NP party leader on 2 February 1989 and him delivering his epoch-making 2 February 1990 speech to parliament, to motivate him to announce the abolition of Apartheid and his government initiating inclusive negotiations over an open agenda. It is nowadays portrayed by many as having been an unnecessary, voluntary, traitorous sell-out, with some even suggesting that FW's later 2nd wife, Elita (not a born South African), had unduly influenced him to suddenly turn from having been perceived as a conservative, to becoming so "liberal" as to "give the country away".

Because of its obvious importance I will deal with the details of what had actually occurred over that pivotal year in detail, in time-line style, in the next section.

However, before doing so, it is necessary first to look at FW de Klerk's mind-set when he took over as leader on 2 February 1989 – looking at how his assessment of an urgent need for a fundamentally new strategy had been formed by the events that had unfolded over the course of the preceding "lost decade" of ever escalating polarisation, radicalisation, and physical confrontation in the country.

Who was FW de Klerk as political thinker, when he took over the NP leadership on 2 February 1989? What did he believe in? Was he the arch-conservative "verkrampte" that many had then suspected him to be? Was he a turn-coat, "bribed" to treasonously "sell out" the Afrikaner, as some conspiracy theorists want one to believe?

FW de Klerk the politician had grown up in a highly political family. His father, Jan, was a former minister and ultimately president of the senate. His brother, Wimpie, was an influential newspaper editor – the very man who had coined the terms "*Verlig*" and "*Verkramp*" to describe factions in Afrikaner politics.

A lawyer by profession, FW de Klerk was elected to parliament at the age of 36 during the premiership of John Vorster, who six years later promoted FW at age 42 straight from the back benches to full cabinet minister (thus bypassing the customary phase of serving first as deputy minister). In the 1978 leadership election, De Klerk had voted against PW Botha.

De Klerk was close to Vorster, and because of his known good personal relationship with Vorster, was chosen by his fellow cabinet members to be their intermediary to negotiate terms with Vorster (then ceremonial state president) when PW and Pik Botha schemed to remove the former premier entirely from the political scene.

When, as a consequence of PW and Pik's machinations to also remove Dr Connie Mulder from his influential position as Transvaal NP leader, this had led to the arch-conservative Dr Andries Treurnicht being elected as the new Transvaal National Party leader, a potentially disastrous situation for the NP had arisen. This was due to the fact that (in their federal system) each provincial party was in fact autonomous. When Treurnicht and his fellow "verkrampte" followers – who were rebelling against PW Botha's incremental changes to "petty" Apartheid – in 1982 set out to take over the Transvaal NP and have it formally distance itself from the rest of the NP under PW Botha (thus to use the Transvaal party as conservative institutional power-base from where to rein in PW Botha), it was FW de Klerk who was designated by cabinet to go counter this move.

FW was successful in ensuring that Treurnicht did not win the crucial Transvaal NP Executive vote to ideologically secede (but retain the NP banner), which caused Treurnicht to resign from the NP and form the Conservative Party. De Klerk was then elected Transvaal leader, a highly influential position in the NP over-all, given the large number of caucus members who originated from the densely populated Transvaal province.

It subsequently was FW de Klerk who, as Minister of the Interior, had formally introduced and shepherded legislation through parliament to revoke the Apartheid legislation that had prohibited racially mixed marriages, as well as the clauses in the Immorality Act which prohibited sexual relations across the colour line.

Nevertheless, PW Botha always had had a strained relationship with FW. They never quite clicked at a personal level, with PW maintaining his distance and for example always insisting on referring to FW not by name, but as "Mr De Klerk". PW also studiously ensured that FW remained distanced from all security matters (around which PW's interest – and power – revolved). As Transvaal leader, FW could not, however, be excluded from the cabinet committee on constitutional matters, chaired by Cape NP leader and CDP minister Chris Heunis. Nonetheless, FW de Klerk was not informed about the secret talks being conducted during the latter half of the eighties by Niël Barnard and his team with the incarcerated Nelson Mandela, till FW was elected NP leader on 2 February 1989 and minister Kobie Coetsee then arranged for Barnard to brief him.

Because the analytically-minded De Klerk had, in the forementioned constitutional affairs committee of cabinet, regularly questioned many of the incremental reform measures that the CDP were proposing as part of their "Salami strategy", he was assumed by some to be a closet "verkrampte" and a brake on progress. This, however, was proven after 2 February 1989 to have been an entirely wrong reading of FW de Klerk's true inner convictions. His questioning of the incremental type of "reforms" had always taken the form of asking where these initiatives

were headed. What was the end goal? This he had asked, because from the early eighties already he had understood that this strategy of incremental top-down reforms to the ugly aesthetics of Apartheid (instead of fully abolishing it) would never suffice – he had begun to doubt the moral foundation of Apartheid and comprehended that fundamental transformation through legitimate negotiation would be required to solve the country's political challenges.

In his autobiography ***The Last Trek*** FW de Klerk explained the timeline and reasons for the evolution in his thinking: *"By the late 1970s, I had come to the conclusion that Apartheid, as originally conceived, could not work in practice… It was becoming increasingly clear that the policy of separate development was not achieving its goals"* (p.87). This was the first step in the evolution of De Klerk's thinking – the realization that Apartheid as conceived by Verwoerd was not working, and in fact could not be made to work. (In coming to this realization already in the seventies he was of course not alone – as explained earlier, we now know from what Vorster had told personal confidants such as his physician Dr. Scharf, that also Vorster as then premier had by that time also come to that same conclusion).

In ***The Last Trek***, De Klerk continued to explain how his thinking progressed from "Apartheid isn't working" to actually that "Apartheid is wrong". He wrote: *"I did not wake up one morning and say, 'Apartheid is wrong.' I came to the conclusion* ***logically and inexorably*** *that it could not survive."* (p. 110 – emphasis added). *"It was during 1985 and 1986 that I finally concluded that we would have to abandon Apartheid and accept the principle of a unitary South Africa with universal franchise… The only question was* ***how and when"*** (p. 108*)* and "*I realized that we could not continue to govern 25 million black South Africans with the consent of only 5 million whites… The old order was doomed"* (p. 109) followed by: "*By 1987, I was convinced that the only solution was* ***inclusive negotiations*** *with all significant leaders – including the ANC… We had to create a new constitutional dispensation based on* ***one person, one vote in a unitary state****, but with strong protections for minorities"* (p. 124).

Under PW, however, there was no chance of successfully advancing such fundamental reform or a strategy of inclusive negotiation, because of PW Botha's determination to retain white supremacy at all costs by means of superior military force – even at the risk of ending up "going down hard-arsed".

All FW could in reality do at that time, was to observe and analyse, forming his own vision in that process. By the time he took over the leadership of the party, and especially when he became president, De Klerk thus already had clarity in his own mind as to what needed urgently to be done to break the stagnation that PW's recalcitrance had led to and to, in its stead, place the country on the road to a real solution. As he stated in a legacy series of video interviews with Dave Steward (of the FW de Klerk Foundation), when he was asked about what his plans had been when he so unexpectedly became NP leader: "*I didn't have to look for a vision – I had a vision already in my heart and in my mind. A vision of fully inclusive negotiations. Not excluding the ANC ... and I had to work out plans for implementation of that vision. I did not have to start thinking anew*."

In this regard, FW de Klerk was fully in tune with the thinking of the other New Nats as well as with most opinion leaders in Afrikaner civil society – with church, business, academia, and the Broederbond – as earlier described. The military-led "total onslaught" faction had, with FW's election as party leader, lost their hold on the NP. The securocrats embodying that viewpoint were now decidedly no longer the flavour of the moment. However, they still held their grip on the state security apparatus that PW Botha had built, whilst PW still remained as state president (remember that PW only resigned as party leader on 2 February 1989, not yet then as state president).

As PW increasingly came to grasp (over the course of the six-month "co-habitation" between himself and FW) just how fundamental the reforms and strategies were that FW de Klerk was committed to, their relationship quickly soured. PW then began to actively undermine and obstruct De Klerk, to the chagrin of his party – as I will show in the timeline which I will shortly set out.

Taking into account what I've already explained about the evolution in Afrikaner elite thinking during the second half of the eighties, what this timeline will clearly show is that the far-reaching measures which De Klerk announced in his 1990 speech at the opening of parliament, wasn't the product of some sudden "Damascus Road" experience, but instead had its roots in a clearly reasoned, reality driven, and thus entirely logical progression.

What this timeline will also provide, is a context for understanding important events and inputs that were made into that year-long process of increasingly more rapid and more fundamental change (seminal contributions to that process that I will later explain in more detail because of their importance – such as, for example, the role of the NIS with the Project Flair in initiating the first official contact with the external ANC).

## 9.2 THE TIMELINE: FEBRUARY 1989 TO FEBRUARY 1990

On 20 January 1989 the USA's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had published a 70-page assessment of the South African situation, as they then saw it (thus prepared when PW Botha had still been both NP party leader and state President, with no inkling yet that hs political demise was at hand).

On the report's first page the Agency stated: "*The ruling National Party (NP) under President P.W. Both has weathered more than four years of unprecedented domestic and international pressure….Despite toying occasionally with ideas such as federalism or Swiss-style cantons, the NP in recent years has strayed little from its strategy crafted during the 1970's. Elements of the strategy include a tough security posture, modest reforms of social and economic Apartheid, limited black power-sharing at the local and regional levels, a national advisory body to discuss constitutional change with blacks acceptable to the government, privatization and deregulation to boost economic performance and a mixture of coercion and diplomacy in the region….Pretoria appears unwilling to press ahead rapidly on even its very timid reform agenda prior to national parliamentary elections expected later this year*."

In the "Outlook" segment of its report, the CIA had anticipated the following scenario: "*We believe that the NP will probably muddle through at least the next four years in power, but without achieving any lasting solutions to its electoral, black, economic or regional challenges. Although the seriousness of events or crises facing the government may at times appear – or be portrayed by its foes to the left and right – as regime threatening, Pretoria probably will be able to at least cope with the challenges. … Despite its strategy for the next few years, we believe that even the NP accepts the inevitability of fundamental political change in South Africa. Pretoria's policies are aimed at delaying that day as long as possible. The current leadership probably believes its security forces can guarantee continued white privilege well into the next century."*

According to Hermann Giliomee, the Stellenbosch historian who had intensively studied the PW Botha presidency and was not unsympathetic to Botha, this analysis by the CIA "*accurately summarized Botha's thinking*" at the time.

It is now common knowledge that this particular assessment by the CIA would soon be proven to have been fundamentally wrong. However, it may very likely have held true, if PW Botha had remained fully in charge of the South African government. However, what the CIA could not and had not factored into their assessment, was that PW Botha had suffered another, more serious, stroke just 48 hours before the release of their report, and would within days resign as party leader of the NP – setting in motion a chain of events that led to his political demise just six months later…

What the CIA analysis thus serves as proof of, is the truth that PW Botha (and his "total onslaught" faction) had all along been the brake on progress towards inclusive negotiations for a non-racial democratic New South Africa. The time-line now starting below will show how that progress then dramatically accelerated under FW de Klerk as new party leader and subsequently as new state president, culminating in the pivotal events of February 1990.

### 9.2.1 PW RESIGNS AS NP LEADER, FW ELECTED BY CAUCUS (2 FEBRUARY 1989)

On the 2nd of February 1989, just prior to its regular scheduled meeting, the NP caucus received a totally unexpected letter from PW Botha. In it, he proposed that the positions of party leader and state president henceforth be split and announced that he is resigning as party leader. His motivation was to lower his workload, given his age and health. However, he had not consulted or prepared matters beforehand, seemingly anticipating that his preferred candidate, Finance Minister Barend du Plessis, would easily be elected as leader and that the two of them would then continue working together seamlessly.

It was decided by the caucus to immediately elect a new leader. Four candidates participated in the first round – Du Plessis, FW de Klerk, Pik Botha, and Chris Heunis. The latter two were eliminated, leaving De Klerk and the reformist Du Plessis as the two opponents in the final round. De Klerk won by 69 votes to 61, a narrow margin that indicated the strength of the more "enlightened" wing of the party (even though ostensibly they had lost); part of the reason for Du Plessis's loss probably being that most caucus members were sick and tired of the PW Botha style of governance and the dominance of the securocrats riding his coattails and didn't want to risk a continuation of that regime.

FW de Klerk, who later referred to the election as a "nail-biter", evidently took note of the strength of the progress-seeking wing of the party. Given his own already-formed convictions about the urgent need for fundamental transformation through inclusive negotiation, he announced in his acceptance speech that the time had come for making a "quantum leap" forward. He said that the NP had to "get out of the corner" in which it found itself, stating that his goal is "a New South Africa … that's free of domination and oppression in whichever form".

Du Plessis spoke last and congratulated De Klerk. He lauded De Klerk's stated commitment to reform and added that, when De Klerk landed from making his "quantum leap", he'll find Du Plessis and all those who had voted for him already present there, because they had already mentally made that jump.

De Klerk's subsequent success at keeping his party united when he rapidly and drastically started implementing his reform agenda was in large measure due to the trust that the more conservative wing of the party (who had mostly voted for him) had placed in him. It proved once again what had been observed in other fraught conflict situations elsewhere, namely that conservative leaders find it easier than liberal ones to introduce and have significant reforms accepted – as had, for example, been demonstrated when the conservative Menachem Begin of Isreal could muster a majority behind his peace-making with Egypt and Jordan, which a premier from the left would have probably found difficult to achieve (the mathematics in such cases are simple: a conservative leader can count on the support of his own followers, with his more left-leaning opposition also naturally supporting initiatives deemed to represent progress; a liberal leader will likely have the conservatives opposing him if he makes the exact same proposal – even if just as a matter of party political positioning).

### 9.2.2 FW MAKES HIS 1ST SPEECH IN PARLIAMENT AS NEW NP LEADER (8 FEBRUARY 1989)

When FW de Klerk on 8 February 1989 made his first speech in parliament in his new capacity as leader of the NP, he told the country (to general acclaim from the House) that his goal was "A New South Africa, A Totally Changed South Africa…" He did not immediately provide extensive detail, preferring to set a new tone (after all, PW Botha was still the executive state president, effectively holding the reins of real power exclusively in his own hands).

De Klerk comprehended that he had two choices, as regards the road forward. He could keep his party on the same course as PW Botha had set but knew that doing so – apart from the fact that he loathed PW's style and dearly wished to have the securocrats removed from the decision-making process – would then logically lead to the exact same dire results as before (as Einstein had said, doing the same things over and over and expecting different results, is insanity).

The truth was that what the PW Botha experiment over the "lost decade" had emphatically demonstrated, were:

- the clear limits to SA's military might and economic strength, and thereby the unworkability of the "shoot" strategy,
- The practical unworkability of Apartheid plus the broad an deeply-felt extent that it was rejected internally and internationally; and
- the fallaciousness of the tactic of trying to impose cosmetic change incrementally, top-down, as methodology for resolving societal conflict in a manner that would supposedly retain white power.

Thus, PW Botha had already proven that his way did not and cannot work, just as history had already proven that Dr Verwoerd's theoretical model didn't work in practice either.

Which left only one logical strategy for FW to steer his party towards, namely, to scrap Apartheid entirely (as having been proven to be neither workable nor reformable) and to seek to establish a new non-racial democracy through a process of inclusive negotiation over an open agenda – in essence, just as Vorster's team had correctly anticipated, but had not started to implement sufficiently vigorously and openly, nor in timely enough manner...

### 9.2.3 SWAPO INVADES OVAMBOLAND, IGNITING THE "NINE-DAY WAR" (1 APRIL 1989)

On the 1st of April 1989 the UN's administration of SWA/Namibia commenced in terms of UNSC Resolution 435 and the accords reached between South Africa, Angola and Cuba. Which was the moment that SWAPO then seized to launch their version of the ANC's Operation Vula, trying to infiltrate armed PLAN insurgents *en masse* into Ovamboland in order to position themselves favourably, with a "strong man" image, for the upcoming elections. A "nine-day war" then ensued between the police and PLAN, which the police decisively won.

Of significant importance to the future thinking of the South African side regarding the trustworthiness of processes of negotiated transformation, was the reaction of the international community to SWAPO's actions. Not only did the main Western powers such as the USA and the UK publicly back South Africa's protests and obliged the UN to permit the police to go into action against the insurgents, the USSR and Cuba also exerted pressure on SWAPO to respect the accords reached and to immediately stop its unlawful actions. Thus, an important example had been set which reassured South Africans that – if they themselves had done the "right" thing – then the world would indeed insist on negotiated accords being upheld and would no longer (as often had happened in the past) simply turn a blind eye to the outrages committed by the "liberation movements".

More so, it showed that the West would concretely back the South African government's right and duty to intervene with force when a negotiated accord is broken, and that Moscow would also back this – such as happened in this case, with broad international approval for the police to go out and apprehend the PLAN insurgents (and if need be eliminate them, if attacked or resisted).

### 9.2.4 FW DE KLERK VISITS EUROPE, MEETS THATCHER, KÖHL AND OTHER LEADERS (MAY/JUNE 1989)

In May, June, and July 1989 FW de Klerk, accompanied by Pik Botha, undertook a major overseas information campaign to tell the world of the progress he intended to make. There were successful meetings with leaders such as Margaret Thatcher, the Prime Minister of Britain, with Helmuth Köhl, the Chancellor of West Germany, as well as with the presidents of Portugal and Italy, and lastly (on 6 July) with President Joachim Chissano of Mozambique. The message De Klerk conveyed was simple and to the point: all discriminatory laws would be scrapped and every South African would have the vote.

Years later, in a 2016 tribute to Thatcher following her death, De Klerk explicitly recalled the May 1989 meeting with her as a turning point in his own strategic thinking. He described it as part of a sequence of engagements that "made it clear to me that the international community was no longer prepared to tolerate Apartheid." The conversations with Thatcher and Kohl served for De Klerk as a wake-up call which underlined the "downside risk" of continued inaction, including the likelihood of intensified sanctions, which would be seriously damaging amid South Africa's then debt struggles.

It was also on this trip to London that FW de Klerk for the first time met his future 2nd wife, Elita Georgiadis (then married to British/Greek businessman Tony Georgiadis, who had valuable business interests in South Africa and was friendly with then South African ambassador to the UK, Dr Dawie de Villiers). The meeting occurred in a group setting, with the three couples (the De Klerks, De Villiers' and Georgiadis') attending together a theatre production of the play *Les Misérables*. (Because of the conspiracy theory nowadays doing the rounds, falsely suggesting that Elita Georgiadis had been the new "leftist" outside influence in FW's life that supposedly overnight "turned him into a liberal" and thus caused the positions that De Klerk would take in his 2 February 1990 speech and the subsequent negotiations that led to the 1994 transfer of power to a black majority government, I will at the end of this broader timeline deal briefly also with the specific timeline of their relationship, to show empirically that these allegations could not and did not hold water, in terms of the relevant chronology).

## 9.2.5 PW BOTHA MEETS WITH NELSON MANDELA (5 JULY 1989)

Nelson Mandela had been seeking a meeting with President PW Botha since 1986, after Mandela had decided to start exploring with the NP Government a negotiated settlement. It was only in July 1989 that Botha finally consented to this at the behest, in particular, of Dr Niël Barnard of the NIS, who since May 1988 had been heading a committee of four officials (Barnard and his deputy Mike Louw of the NIS, General Willemse of Correctional Services, and Fanie van der Merwe of the CDP) that had been directed by PW Botha (in response to Mandela' outreach) to secretly conduct with Mandela informal exploratory conversations to gauge his true intent and objectives, as well as his amenability to compromise.

As stated by Hermann Giliomee (slightly paraphrased for clarity): "PW Botha had become interested in Mandela's strategic thinking. In the early 1980s, Botha was strongly influenced by the military, but in the latter years of the decade he increasingly turned to the NIS's Barnard for advice … Sometimes the four officials met with Mandela as a group, but in most cases, it was just Mandela and Barnard, with the latter who indeed reported meticulously to the president about each conversation. Between May 1988 and February 11, 1990, when Mandela was released, 48 such talks were conducted."

The meeting between Mandela and PW Botha, held in secret at night in Botha's Cape Town office on 5 July 1989, lasted only half an hour. It was cordial, but nothing of substance was discussed. Mandela had again stressed that he would not accept to be released unless it was granted unconditionally, and only if fellow prisoners such as Walter Sisulu also were released.

The meeting was PW Botha's first major initiative to regain the political spotlight since he had announced his retirement as party leader. Botha is believed to have been angered by his loss of support within the party, with the cabinet and caucus that had fallen in behind FW de Klerk and the latter's reformist vision after Botha's stroke in January. Botha had, for example, the month before snubbed an invitation by the National Party to attend a farewell dinner arranged specifically to honour him. Despite having admonished all participants in the secret nocturnal meeting with Mandela to keep it secret, Botha then within days himself began to braggingly show around a photograph taken of the pair. It caused considerable surprise and annoyance among cabinet ministers who had never been informed about the preceding secret contacts.

The fact that Botha had himself (with some pride, it's said) leaked the meeting, obliged Kobie Coetsee as minister responsible for prisons to issue a public statement on 8 July 1989 confirming the meeting had taken place. Coetsee stated that: *'No policy matters were debated and no negotiations conducted … President Botha and Mr. Mandela, however, availed themselves of the opportunity to confirm their support for peaceful development in South Africa".*

Conservative Party spokesman Clive Derby-Lewis branded the encounter as part of what he saw as PW Botha's plan to *'exact revenge'* on presidential heir-apparent and National Party leader FW de Klerk, who he said had emerged as winner of a power struggle within the NP earlier in the year. *'We think this is part of his (Botha's) plan to further sink F.W. de Klerk … President Botha is now putting the National Party into the situation where it is meeting with the ANC, and the leader of the party is right out of the picture".*

## 9.2.6 PW UNILATERALLY CALLS A SNAP ELECTION WITHOUT CONSULTING FW (27 JULY 1989)

P.W. Botha, in his capacity as State President, called a snap general election to be held on 6 September 1989, primarily to reassert his personal authority over the NP amid a deepening internal crisis about the direction that the NP had begun moving in under De Klerk and the New Nats, with which PW was not in agreement. The decision to call the snap election was entirely Botha's own; he had taken it without consulting F.W. de Klerk, who later remarked: "*"I was not party to the decision… It was a typical PW Botha move — to call an election when he felt cornered."*

Botha had clashed repeatedly with De Klerk and reformist cabinet ministers over the pace of change and his authoritarian style. As said, in July 1989 a cabinet revolt had erupted after it became known that Botha had secretly met Nelson Mandela without informing ministers beforehand. This action was seen as unilateral and destabilizing of what De Klerk and the cabinet were working towards.

PW Botha's motivation in then unilaterally calling the snap election was that he wanted to bypass the caucus and go directly to white voters for a renewed mandate, hoping that a strong NP victory led by him, would silence critics and postpone his replacement as president. He wanted to stall the reformist faction in the party, led by figures like FW de Klerk, Pik Botha, and Barend du Plessis, who were pushing for faster reforms and negotiations with black leaders. Botha feared being pushed out at the NP's federal congress scheduled for August 1989. By calling a snap election, he aimed to lock in his own overall leadership and delay a leadership transition at the presidential level.

### 9.2.7 PW BERATES FW OVER PLANNED MEETING WITH KAUNDA (10 AUGUST 1989)

In August 1989 Pik Botha and the DFA had been making arrangements for FW de Klerk as the new NP leader to meet with the influential President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia. Protocol required that all ministers (such as FW and Pik) who wished to travel abroad, needed to obtain prior permission from the president, PW Botha. Pik Botha had believed (or at least, so he insisted) that he had indeed obtained such approval in principle from PW. However, when Kaunda on 10 August made known the upcoming meeting, PW Botha reacted furiously. He phoned Pik in a rage, threatening to make a damaging public statement, and demanded discipline for the "insubordination."

PW had been experiencing a growing sense of isolation and paranoia about what he perceived as challenges to his authority and powers as state president. He saw the planned meeting of FW de Klerk with Kaunda as undermining his (PW Botha's) control over foreign policy. Botha opposed engaging with Kaunda, whom he saw as an enemy for hosting African National Congress (ANC) exiles in Zambia. As stated by Grok AI: "*Approving the trip would contradict Botha's "total strategy" of confrontation rather than dialogue, and he explicitly refused to endorse it on those grounds*".

De Klerk and the cabinet responded with a mix of de-escalation efforts, firm unity, and strategic manoeuvring to protect the NP's election chances and assert reformist control. The crisis unfolded over four days and directly precipitated PW Botha's resignation as state president.

### 9.2.8 FW DE KLERK AND THE CABINET ACT TO OUST PW BOTHA (11- 15 AUGUST 1989)

Upon learning of Botha's fury late on August 10 (via Defence Minister Magnus Malan), FW de Klerk attempted to calm the situation by personally briefing all available ministers and urging PW Botha to discuss it in a full delegation meeting – which Botha refused.

De Klerk then convened an emergency gathering at his Pretoria residence, attended by all cabinet ministers, the Ministers' Council, and deputy ministers (but not constituted as a formal cabinet session). He briefed them on the facts, his de-escalation attempts, and the risks to party unity and the election. The group unanimously backed De Klerk and Pik Botha, viewing the proposed meeting with Kaunda as legitimate. They brainstormed options for how to deal with PW Botha: a "soft" approach (sick leave until after the election for a dignified handover) or a "hard" one (immediate resignation).

On 11 August De Klerk issued a public statement acknowledging a possible "misunderstanding" about Pik Botha's prior briefing to PW Botha, while emphasizing that the trip served South Africa's interests ahead of the election. De Klerk thus kept the door open for clarification but signalled his intent to prioritize pragmatic foreign policy over personal loyalty to PW Botha.

On August the 13th, senior ministers visited PW Botha at his residence for informal discussions, but he lectured them without committing to a resolution.

On 14 August 1989, in a tense formal cabinet session with PW Botha present, FW de Klerk opened by briefing on the context of the proposed Kaunda visit and then suggesting the sick leave option to avoid humiliating PW Botha, given his health. Ministers spoke in order of seniority, all expressing support for FW's proposal while praising PW Botha's past contributions. PW Botha interrupted angrily once (over a reference to his post-stroke demeanour) and, after adjournment, delivered a bitter 20-minute tirade on his grievances since February, accusing De Klerk and provincial leaders of betrayal. He rejected sick leave as a "lie," insisted on his fitness, and offered to resign effective midnight, on condition that he may make a TV address to air his views. De Klerk accepted the resignation

but reserved the right to block any broadcast that could harm the party. The meeting ended awkwardly with Botha suddenly shaking hands warmly and addressing De Klerk by his initials for the first time ever.

That evening, PW Botha announced his resignation in a muddled, aggressive TV interview set for broadcast on 15 August. He blamed the cabinet for disloyalty, but without backing his accusations with major new revelations. De Klerk and Pik Botha countered in a joint interview, refuting PW Botha's claims (e.g., that they were aiding the ANC) and portraying the split as inevitable.

The cabinet had unanimously elected FW de Klerk as acting state president and he was sworn in on 15 August 1989 by the Chief Justice. Thus, the planned meeting with Kaunda could proceed. The defeat of PW Botha's "last stand" and his subsequent resignation also meant the effective end of the era of "total onslaught" securocrat influence over decision-making and strategy determination.

The British journalist Simon Usborne interviewed FW de Klerk in 2010 for an article that appeared in *The Independent* (2/2/2010). He wrote the following about these events: "*De Klerk's relationship with President Botha, never easy, soon deteriorated as the president became increasingly irascible as well as forgetful. Botha was ill, but stubbornly stayed, making de Klerk's life more and more difficult. 'He was giving me the cold shoulder. I was supposed to be the third minister in the government but I was not kept informed of events: for instance I didn't know there had been secret meetings with Mandela until after I became president. As time went on, and Mr Botha became more ill and difficult, there was crisis after crisis. He began to forget things, agreeing to something in the morning and then saying he hadn't been consulted in the afternoon'."*

*"South Africa was heading for an election in September 1989, its last in the old form, and just three weeks before it, the Botha situation came to a head. The foreign minister Pik Botha, working hard to repair South Africa's desperate image with the rest of the world, asked de Klerk to accompany him on a visit to see Kenneth Kaunda, president of Zambia. He needed his support for the independence discussions on Namibia, which South Africa was about to give up after more than 70 years' rule. Pik believed he had the president's approval for the visit, but when Kaunda announced the date (August 28), PW hit the roof, accusing his two ministers of treason.*

*"PW was furious," says de Klerk ruefully. "He announced he would have to discipline us for doing it without his permission."*

*It was the final straw. De Klerk summoned all the ministers he could find to his house in Pretoria and asked for a united front to force the president to take sick leave. When he went to see Botha in Cape Town to tell him this, "he used the opportunity to give us a long lecture and called a full cabinet". It was to be his last. De Klerk opened the discussion in the cabinet on the part of the ministers, and presented the sick leave option, which he thought would be more palatable than the alternative, which would be a very public sacking (Botha had done much the same to his predecessor, John Vorster, 11 years before). "He went around the table and asked every member of the cabinet for their opinion, and everyone said they supported my proposal," says de Klerk. "He got cross and said he was as healthy as any of us, and many of us were taking more pills than he was. Then he went outside, and when he came back in he said, 'Gentlemen, I am resigning.'"*

### 9.2.9 FW DE KLERK SWORN IN AS ACTING PRESIDENT (15 AUGUST 1989)

With FW de Klerk sworn in as acting state president on 15 August 1989, it was clear that the NP cabinet had turned its back on the "shoot" option and would henceforth pursue "settle" with determination and urgency.

### 9.2.10 FW SETS UP A MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON NEGOTIATIONS, WITH NO CLEAR GOALS

Once bestowed with presidential authority, among the first things that FW de Klerk did was to set up a "ministerial committee on negotiations" with then deputy minister Roelf Meyer as its secretary. In an 2020 interview with Gareth Cliff, Meyer stated that "*The common thesis within the NP at that stage was that we had to start the process of negotiations*".

The NP was thus by now fully convinced that negotiations represented the appropriate trajectory, but in order to negotiate, it would evidently need a credible counterpart to negotiate with. The revelations about the earlier PW

Botha / Mandela meeting and about the talks that had already been held with the latter over the course of more than a year by officials under the leadership of Dr Barnard, had served as the confirmation which the “New Nats” had needed that Mandela could, by his own volition, indeed be their credible interlocutor (it should be remembered that bitter experience in Zimbabwe and SWA/N had shown that it was pointless to try and impose your own choice of interlocutor – such as Rev Sithole or Abel Muzorewa in Zimbabwe, for example – who would, by dent of association, not be accepted as legitimate).

Logically, though, having Mandela as lead counterpart in negotiations would require that he be released and the ANC unbanned. This was understood and accepted by the New Nats – including that it would need to be offered unconditionally, since otherwise it would not be accepted by Mandela and the ANC. The main remaining point of debate within the NP was whether the SACP of necessity also needed to be unbanned at the same time.

As regards the true nature of the conflict (political, not military) and the only viable methodology for achieving legitimacy (i.e., inclusive negotiations over an open agenda) De Klerk and his followers thus had clarity. What was far less clear at that early stage, was what their principal strategic goals needed to be, which they would wish to achieve with and through the process of negotiation. Initially, senior cabinet members such as Dr Gerrit Viljoen (and most of the cabinet and caucus) had been defining as preferred outcome a constitution that would be based on the “protection of group rights”.

**I need to deviate here a bit** from the timeline that I’m unfolding. The reason for now reaching ahead a little bit about the negotiation process, is because it will throughout the next chapters be important to understand the evolution in thinking that would progressively occur across the next five years within the NP negotiation team. This evolution affected particularly the goals and objectives that they strived to achieve with the new “settle through negotiation” strategy (kick-started by this new ministerial committee).

I’m therefore touching on it now, for the same reason that I had highlighted at the very beginning of this e-book the two strategic options that had at that stage been the focus of discord and debate, namely whether to “shoot” or “settle”. Because by highlighting at the outset the essentials of that divisive debate, you could then follow its twists and turns through the chapters that followed with much better understanding of what I was getting at. The same logic, of trying to help you in advance to spot and understand the evolution in strategic thinking that will become evident over the course of the negotiations, will henceforth apply as you work through the chapters to follow, in which I will be detailing how that process unfolded.

With the “total onslaught” strategy of preparing for a showdown to be determined by “shoot” now definitively rejected by the new NP leadership and with preparing for negotiating a settlement now firmly in place as the strategy for the future, the debate within broader Afrikaner ranks, as well as initially within the NP itself, shifted from “shoot” vs “settle” to what the strategic goals should be that should be strived for in the negotiations. Initially there was a broadly shared vision that a new dispensation should ideally be based upon “group rights”, backed by mechanisms such as minority vetoes and enforced power-sharing (with those on the right of the NP favouring taking “group rights” to its ultimate expression, in the form of an own territory or “Volkstaat”).

However, as it steadily would become clearer that majority rule would be the only option that could elicit the necessary “sufficient consensus” around the negotiation table to make it viable, thinking within the NP negotiation team needed to continually evolve. The key questions now became: what would be the essentials that absolutely needed to be achieves under such a non-racial system of majority rule in one undivided state?

What they thus realised was needed – especially from 1992 onward – was to prioritise achieving, in and through the negotiations, above all a PEACE accord, that would end isolation and punitive measures, end conflict and return stability through legitimacy to the country. This would then have as corollary the REHABILITATION of the Afrikaner (themselves as Apartheid-era ministers included). The ancillary goals (regarding the configuration of the eventual constitutional model) that from 1992 onwards came to be seen as essential to achieve, were the protection of individual and property rights within the framework of a “regstaat” (state of laws, meaning, one in which the constitution reigned supreme) based on Western democratic free-market principles.

Thus, the debate that you will see splitting Afrikanerdom over the entire five-year course of the negotiations (and which initially would also dominate thinking within the NP), will be over the concept of “group rights”.

However, what exactly “group rights” meant was not particularly clear – not then, nor even today. Nor was a clear how a future constitution should or could be framed to achieve such a goal. What was meant by “group”, for example? A racial group, such as “whites”? (Which would risk perpetuation of the criticism of inherent racism). Or a linguistic group, such as Afrikaners? But even if the latter option – would “group” mean all those that spoke Afrikaans as mother tongue, irrespective of their skin colour, or only the minority who could pass as “white” (knowing that DNA testing has proven that very few of us actually possess 100% Caucasian DNA). Furthermore, should there be a link between “group rights” and territory?

A Volkstaat?

But there was no clarity at all about how to define “volk”? Nor where to locate such a “state” (knowing that not one single district in the country had a white majority, let alone of white Afrikaners, and that creating such a state would of necessity exclude far more than 90% of Afrikaners of all hues from residing within its borders).

When we will later discuss in more detail the break-down in talks that was tactically engineered by the ANC/SACP in 1992, we will come back to this issue of the NP’s actual underlying goals and how these became clearer and shifted over time, because by then the necessary (inevitable/) compromises between parties and real-world practicalities had enough sharpened understanding of what was feasible and truly essential.

What this means is that the Phase Three I’ve been referring to – the years of the De Klerk NP as now the party seeking and facilitating a settlement – in itself consisted of two sub-parts. The first of these consisted of the initial period from 1989 to 1992, of getting talks going and clarifying goals and positions, when concepts such as group rights still strongly featured in its rhetoric (even if woolly) and a variety of possible alliances were being assessed.

The second sub-phase solidified as and when a marked change away from “group rights” became noticeable in the thinking of the NP team from late 1992 on, because by that time the NP Government had been repeatedly confronted with the political complexities of getting a new constitution actually crafted and adopted with “sufficient consensus”. This process had underscored the inevitable need for compromise in order to achieve a peace settlement (highlighting again Vorster’s wise approach of focussing on PROCESS rather than on positing policy positions that would soon become mere straw dogs, as well as his wise words that the alternative to reaching a settlement would be “too ghastly to contemplate”).

What the learning curve from 1989 to late into 1992 had shown the NP, was which alliances and positions needed to be avoided, so as not to compromise the new refined understanding that had by 1992 crystallised as to which the true strategic goals were that needed to be achieved.

As said, why I am mentioning here already this shift in thinking within the NP from the “group rights” (“GR”) as goal (which had been more of a hope-based woolly theory, rather than a definable, concretely achievable concept) to more clearly-defined, realistic and consequential strategic one of “PRP” (that the process had by 1992 been shown to be the only workable options), is because it will help you as reader to spot the evolution in thinking that you will see unfold in the next chapters, and help you better understand its underlying reasons as you progress with me through the history of that period.

By identifying now already the two strategic options that from here on had deeply divided Afrikanerdom during the negotiations and beyond, it provides a kind of conceptual reference framework that will aid understanding (just as I had at the outset identified and explained the “shoot” vs “settle” conflict that had so marked the Vorster / PW Botha period). With an understanding of the divisive “GR” versus “PRP” debate, it will be easier to understand how the positions evolved and how we got to the kind of Eurocentric constitution with highly centralised powers and functions that we eventually ended up with.

As I had also indicated at the very outset (when I had introduced my admittedly simplistic labels of “shoot” versus “settle”), the use of such labels – such as now the new two of “group rights” (GR) versus “pragmatism” (PRP) –

are not intended to deny the complexity of the actual positions, nor the validity of the thinking behind them (as in the eyes of the respective beholders). These labels simply will help ease the referencing of the respective policy positions of the opposing sides. We will, of course, explore their content and consequences in much more detail as we now progress, so that I will limit myself here to just a basic description.

Since the issues and uncertainties around the concept of "group rights" have already been briefly outlined, what remains to be indicated here is who you'll see will associate themselves with it in the negotiation process. Initially, as I've said, many in the NP also wanted to see GR as basis for the new constitution, but then progressively moved away from insisting on it.

However, within conservative white Afrikaner ranks there was strong insistence through-out on its inclusion, and the issue of protecting group rights became the shared position that eventually brought together the Concerned South Africans Group (COSAG) consisting of the conservative white Afrikaner parties, the Inkatha Freedom Party, and traditionalists in the former homelands such as Lucas Mangope.

Within the NP there had been the evolution I had mentioned, with a pragmatic, peace-focused approach eventually being given higher priority than group rights (although some attachment to the latter wasn't totally abandoned either). This "pragmatic" position was encapsulated in the PRP acronym, which had as overriding strategic goals: Peace, rehabilitation of the Afrikaner image, and protection of individual and property rights. Among these, "peace" was to become the primary priority and as such needs a bit of further clarification – also because it is one of those terms that can mean all things to all men. (It is noticeable in the later speeches and writings of De Klerk and Niël Barnard how often and prominently **peace** is identified as both the principal goal and fruit of the negotiation process; this was also the word stressed by Elita de Klerk when she delivered a eulogy at the state memorial service for De Klerk in December 2021).

Peace here means: not returning to the conflict of the past. Because it was soon enough understood that, should the talks fail for whatever reason – such as the ANC/SACP refusing to continue participating – then the NP Government would be held responsible, whether justified or not. And then the NP's white/Afrikaner constituency would be in exponentially deeper trouble than ever before. In other words: the NP found itself on the back of a tiger, which it would have to ride to the finishing line – a finishing line delineated by achieving peace, to be determined by the reaching of a compromise that could carry sufficient consensus around the negotiation table.

Thus hard reality would prove to be the main motivator why the NP in truth had no other option but to quietly abandon any real attempt at meaningfully accommodating the group rights concept (quite apart from the concept's own inherent inconsistencies and contradictions, as mentioned earlier). Because the group rights concept – if it had been elevated to a non-negotiable by the government - was simply too fraught with risk of derailing the negotiations entirely (as a supposed attempt to re-introduce Apartheid by subterfuge) and also because it risked negating the effort at rehabilitating the image of the Afrikaner (by tarnishing it again with perceived vestiges of racism, a sin with which the most ardent proponents of groups rights such as the Conservative Party, Volksfront, and AWB were clearly associated with in the minds of the general public, locally and abroad).

Lastly, the practical problem that the NP Government faced with regard to group rights, was that its essential elements remained undefined and likely undefinable – which & what group (racially defined, or in terms of language?), and if it was supposed to include a Volkstaat, then which volk, how defined, and where located?

The other practical reality was that, in the ambitions of the vast majority of the population (blacks, "Coloureds", Indians and English-speakers), the concept of group rights did not feature, and in fact was regarded with great suspicion and opposition. For them, the goal needed to be a non-racial unitary state with universal franchise, protecting individual human rights – not group rights.

It is this background context – these realities, which in many ways had been exacerbated by the time lost and the goings-on of the "lost decade" under PW Botha – which in the end severely diminished the NP Government's eventual bargaining position. (As you will see, it was the <u>hand</u> of cards dealt them to play, that was what was sadly weak – not the men obliged to play it).

With this rudimentary conceptual framework for understanding the strategic options that would come to dominate the negotiation process now in place, we can get back to the timeline of that pivotal year between February 1989 and February 1990.

### 9.2.11 FIRST SSC MEETING CHAIRED BY DE KLERK, PASSING RES 13/89 (16 AUGUST 1989)

On 16 August 1989 (the very first day after being sworn in as acting president), FW de Klerk for the first time presided over a meeting of the State Security Council. The NIS had hurriedly slipped a draft resolution into the agenda of the meeting, which in its vague wording stated (translated from the Afrikaans original) that "*It is essential that more information be gathered and processed about the ANC, as well as about the objectives, alliances and potential accessibility of its various leaders and groupings. To achieve this, special additional direct action will be required, in particular with the assistance of the functionaries of the National Intelligence Service*."

This carefully (slyly?) drafted resolution was needed by the NIS as cover (one hesitates to call it authorisation) for their intended secret meeting abroad between senior members of the Service and representatives of the external ANC, arranged to discuss the start of negotiations (the NIS had already months before done the groundwork for this, still under PW Botha's presidency, setting up the necessary communication channel to the ANC's Thabo Mbeki via NIS agent "Gert"). However, PW Botha had never been informed about either these preparations or the plan as such, and the SSC clearly did not realise on 16 August 1989 that, when it approved the resolution as a routine matter without discussion, that it was providing formal approval (at least, so pretended the NIS) for what would in effect be the first official meeting between South African government representatives and the external ANC/SACP (as earlier mentioned, it should for context be kept in mind that this outreach via "agent Gert" wasn't the only such initiative that the NIS had been involved with – without diminishing its huge importance, it was merely the one that would come to be known by the public; evidently, not all the eggs had been entrusted to just one basket…).

Niël Barnard later confessed (in the second part of his autobiography) that: "*I must admit that I did not inform De Klerk at that stage of our hidden but well-intentioned motives*" with this SSC resolution.

(NB: Because of the particular importance of this unilateral move initiated by the NIS to kick-start actual negotiations, I will discuss it in much more detail below, in a separate later section about the role of the NIS in facilitating the start of negotiations).

### 9.2.12 HARARE DECLARATION – ANC ALSO IN FAVOUR OF NEGOTIATIONS (21 AUGUST 1989)

As the saying goes, it takes two to tango – and, also, to negotiate.

Over the years a lot of attention has been paid to the fundamentally changed views within the NP that eventually made the inclusive negotiation of a non-racial Western-style democracy possible. What is not given enough attention, is how an equally significant change of goals and strategy occurred within the SACP/ANC over roughly the same time period in the late eighties. Nor is much attention typically given to the factors that had obliged the introspection on the ANC/SACP's part that gave rise to the liberation movement's abandonment of previously firmly-held policy positions.

As said earlier, it is typical in conflicts where the main parties both have access to arms and are both wedded to retaining/achieving total political power by force (such as both the SA Government under PW Botha and the SACP/ANC at the height of the Cold War) that they do not tend to want to negotiate until such time as both of them realise that they cannot win militarily and therefore need to accept the inevitability of compromise – which then can only be achieved through talking to each other, rather than shooting.

What is also usually required, is leadership willing to face up to that hard reality and publicly take a stand in favour of initiating such negotiations – in other words, an FW de Klerk and a Nelson Mandela.

In this e-book, which is my account of what had happened on "our" (the NP Government's) side, we naturally have been focused on the transformation in thinking within the NP Government, as led from 1989 by FW de Klerk. It is important, though, to also take account of the pressures that had made it sensible for first Nelson Mandela and

then the SACP/ANC leadership to adopt what was in fact as drastically changed a posture as that which the NP in the end adopted under De Klerk.

We have seen that the then still incarcerated Nelson Mandela had, around the mid-eighties, begun an outreach to the PW Botha government, which initiative he was allowed and enabled by the authorities to discuss with his fellow senior detainees such as Walter Sisulu (who supported him) as well as with the ANC external leadership. To this end Mandela had been provided by the government with communications and he was moved to a rather nice little villa within the grounds of the Drakenstein farm prison (then called Victor Verster), replete with own swimming pool and a butler, to facilitate his interviews with the earlier-mentioned four-man team of officials, led by Dr Barnard of the NIS, and with selected outside visitors.

Through these meetings, the government had a relatively clear indication of Mandela's views and objectives. What remained to be clarified was **the official position that the ANC's external leadership would take** (this was vital, because the advances in the liberalisation of both sides' positions happened in tandem, intertwined like a koeksister – each step by the one side, informing and triggering the next step by the other – in addition, of course, to the role played by fierce outside pressure on both to soften their original stances and start talking to each other).

In the case of the SACP/ANC, the effectiveness of government security forces in clamping down on internal instability and the obviously overwhelming military superiority of the SADF had convinced the liberation alliance that there was no realistic possibility of them defeating the white government by means of revolutionary guerilla warfare in the foreseeable future. This realisation was further ingrained when they understood (just as Castro had done after meeting with Gorbachev in Moscow at the end of 1987) that the USSR was fundamentally changing its approach to Southern Africa and would no longer support seeking a military outcome, but would henceforth favour negotiations (we will return to the causes of this in much more detail in a separate section below).

Both the ANC and government were, of course, broadly aware of what was going on, policy-wise, within the other's ranks, through publicly available OSINT (open-source intelligence) and their respective intelligence means, plus the Mandela talks process. Especially after FW de Klerk's election as NP leader and the clear signs that the New Nats were winning the power struggle within the NP against the PW Botha "total onslaught" faction – which would place negotiation four-square on the table and thus allow the SA Government to take the initiative and launch an outreach to the West as well as into Africa, the ANC's external leadership understood that they needed to urgently act from their side to try and retain the initiative and goodwill, and not appear as the recalcitrant "unreformed" side.

It was Oliver Tambo in particular, then the ANC's president, who understood this strategic imperative and who, with his international affairs head Thabo Mbeki, worked to try and stay ahead of the emergent new NP leadership.

Tambo understood the importance of remaining aligned with thinking among the leadership of the Frontline African states (who were increasingly favouring negotiations as strategy) and also understood what influence Africa – through the OAU – could bring to bear on thinking about Southern Africa in Western capitals. He therefore worked hard to have a declaration adopted by the Frontline states that would accommodate the ANC's pre-conditions for talks, and which the ANC could then publicly align itself with.

This declaration was adopted by the Frontline States in Harare on 21 August 1989. The reconciliatory position taken there-in by these states and the ANC, served as important reassurance to the New Nats that both the Frontline States and the SACP/ANC were indeed amenable to a negotiated settlement and that the pre-conditions that they were setting, were in fact not insurmountable.

The Harare Declaration i.a. contained the following points:

*5. We believe that a conjuncture of circumstances exists which, if there is a demonstrable readiness on the part of the Pretoria regime to engage in negotiations genuinely and seriously, could create the possibility to end Apartheid through negotiations.*

*6. We are convinced that the current international climate provides an opportunity for the people of South Africa to achieve their long-cherished goal of a united, non-racial and democratic country.*

*8. We urge the Pretoria regime to take the following measures to create the necessary climate for negotiations:*

- *Lift the state of emergency or any other laws which restrict the political rights of the people;*
- *Release all political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela and other leaders;*
- *Unban all political organisations, including the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress and the South African Communist Party;*
- *Allow all exiles to return home without any hindrance;*
- *End all political trials and release all detainees.*

*11. We believe that such negotiations should be held between the liberation movements, including the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress and other democratic forces, and the representatives of the white community, including the present regime, if it is prepared to accept the democratic principles outlined herein.*

*12. We are of the view that the objective of negotiations should be the establishment of a new constitutional order based on the following principles:*

- *The creation of a united, democratic and non-racial state;*
- *Accountability, equal rights and opportunities for all;*
- *The right of all citizens to vote and be elected to all organs of government;*
- *The protection of minorities;*
- *The separation of powers;*
- *An independent judiciary;*
- *A Bill of Rights;*
- *The recognition of the right to collective bargaining.*

An excellent summation of the situation that the external ANC was confronted with by mid-1989 and the reasons for it shifting from seeking to impose a Marxist "people's republic" in South Africa by means of winning a revolutionary guerilla war (as essentially was achieved by other liberation movements such as in Angola and Mozambique) to them accepting to seek power democratically instead, through a negotiated process intended to lead to a new dispensation that would resemble Western-style democracy, was provided in an article by Mac Maharaj published in the Berghof Transitions Series #2 on Resistance/Liberation Movements and Transition to Politics in 2008.

Maharaj wrote: "*While Mandela was busy engaging government representatives in pre-negotiation talks, other ANC leaders began to pursue similar strategies, and in the post-1986 period, there were whisperings of the possibility of negotiations. In 1987, The NEC of the ANC considered the situation and issued a statement under the title 'Yes to real negotiations, No to bogus negotiations'… In this 'holistic approach', the ANC was juggling two sets of "opposing circumstances that needed to be brought into balance. One the one hand, it believed there was little prospect of 'real' negotiations. On the other, necessity demanded that it pre-empt the mounting pressures to negotiate coming from the Western governments and the Soviet Union before they decided to cut some kind of deal that would also cut the negotiating ground from under the ANC".*

"*By May 1989, Tambo recorded: We are under intense pressure from friends and allies, and also because of MT [Margaret Thatcher]-led drive by the West to evolve a strategy that belongs to period following independence of Namibia. The race for who'll control developments in our country has started in earnest and we should be in the lead. Our friends, no less than we, [urge that we] don't leave the running to MT and other allies of the regime.*

*“To meet this challenge and take the lead, Tambo initiated and steered a process that would culminate in a document, released in August 1989, which has come to be known as the Harare Declaration. It was drafted by the ANC after consultations with some of the leaders within South Africa, with Mandela in prison, and with some leaders in the African states. It was envisaged that the Front Line States would first take the document to the OAU, which would in turn take it to the UN in December 1989. In this way, the ANC ensured that the declaration embodying a strategy for negotiations was received as an African position, and fully supported by the United Nations.*

*“At heart, it was a strategy “which enabled us to control and direct these pressures in the interests of our struggle and to keep the initiatives in our hands” What started as a pre-emptive move developed into a process of consolidating and expanding the support base of the South African liberation struggle throughout the world. At the same time, it helped the ANC to make inroads into the international support base of Apartheid South Africa: the major Western powers. Whatever the reservations some of these powers may have had with regard to the ANC, there was nothing in the Harare Declaration to which they could take exception. This was a remarkable achievement, especially if one takes into account that this was accomplished at the same time as one of the most steadfast allies of the struggle - the Soviet Union and the socialist countries - was crumbling.*

*“The Declaration was a masterstroke by Tambo. In one all-embracing move, he had assembled a concise strategy that defined the objectives and desired outcome of negotiations, The Commonwealth adopted it in October 1991. It set out the critical phases in this process, and provided a simple road map for the internal and external constituencies of the South African liberation struggle. At the same time, it outflanked any manoeuvres seeking to sideline or minimise the role of the ANC in the negotiations.*

*“It was a strategy developed under enormous pressure, and at a time when the need for swift and decisive action was imperative. It staked out a position that enabled all forces to align themselves behind the Harare Declaration, and ipso facto, behind the ANC. It is perhaps also worth noting the remarkable similarity in the way in which Mandela and Tambo reasoned issues at two different critical moments, at the time of the turn to violence and when the need for negotiations arose.*

*“When Mandela confronted the need to turn to violent forms of struggle in the early 1960s, he perceived the need to act swiftly in order keep abreast with the masses and to take control of the movement to violence. When the ANC was confronted in the late eighties with the pressures building up for a negotiated settlement in South Africa, Tambo moved swiftly to draft the Harare Declaration to “pre-empt pressure groups, big and small, who desire to impose their own approach to the South African problem”. In both instances, the steps taken were guided by the intention to ‘control and lead’ the processes and to prevent outcomes that might be undesirable. Tambo had driven this process in a concentrated burst of energy, and a few days before it was adopted formally by the FLS in 1989, he suffered a stroke. Though he was never to return to the centre stage, through the Harare Declaration he had laid the basis the for ANC to gather all its supporters, within and without South Africa, and indeed the entire international community, around a strategy that was to become one of his greatest bequests to Mandela and his colleagues, as they took up the baton in a world and in a country that was in a state of flux, where anything could happen, and one wrong step could turn everything into disaster.”*

### 9.2.13 FW DE KLERK MEETS WITH PRESIDENT MOBUTO OF ZAIRE (25 AUGUST 1989)

The meeting took place just 11 days after FW de Klerk had been sworn in as acting president of South Africa. It was De Klerk's first official diplomatic outreach to a black African leader and was an early step in his efforts to ease South Africa's international isolation. The venue was Mobutu's opulent summer palace on the shores of Lake Kivu in Goma, eastern Zaire (now the DRC).

Mobutu, then an important African ally of the USA, welcomed De Klerk with a red-carpet ceremony, a military honour guard, and a brass band. The leaders spent nearly three hours in discussion. The core focus was on Angola's 14-year civil war, and De Klerk also broadly outlined his ideas around negotiating with South Africa’s black leaders.

A joint statement was issued describing the talks as "positive, opportune, and constructive," emphasizing the "delicate situation" in Angola and committed to follow-up regional discussions.

### 9.2.14 FW DE KLERK MEETS WITH PRESIDENT KAUNDA OF ZAMBIA (28 AUGUST 1989)

FW de Klerk met President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia on 28 August in Livingstone, Zambia for just short of two hours. De Klerk updated Kaunda on the NP Government's commitment to fundamental reform and about South Africa's compliance with UN Resolution 435 (Namibian independence process). Kaunda welcomed the progress and pledged Zambia's cooperation. Kaunda undertook to moderate anti-SA resolutions at the upcoming Non-Aligned Movement summit in Harare (1–7 September) and at the UN General Assembly.

A short, cordial statement issued afterwards emphasized "peaceful solutions" to regional conflicts and expressed mutual interest in reducing tensions. No dramatic concessions, but the tone was conciliatory. The Kaunda meeting became a template for bilateral, low-drama meetings focused on regional de-escalation. Together with De Klerk's earlier meeting with Mobuto Sese-Seko in Zaïre/ Congo, this meeting paved the way for FW de Klerk's later meeting with the President of the Ivory Coast (November 1989).

The US, UK, and the Commonwealth noted the Livingstone meeting positively. It helped to politically facilitate the visit by Chester Crocker (then outgoing US Assistant Secretary of State for Africa) to Pretoria during mid-October 1989, as well as Margaret Thatcher's softening stance on sanctions.

### 9.2.15 NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT SEEKS NO NEW SANCTIONS (1-7 SEPTEMBER 1989)

At the Harare NAM Summit anti-SA resolutions were toned down; no new sanctions were pushed (just as Kenneth Kaunda had promised FW de Klerk when they met the week before). Zimbabwe and Botswana also began quiet backchannel talks with Pretoria.

### 9.2.16 FW DE KLERK AND THE NP WIN THE SNAP GENERAL ELECTION (6 SEPTEMBER 1989)

FW de Klerk and the New Nats fought the snap election that PW Botha had unilaterally called on a platform of emphasizing negotiation, power-sharing, and a dismantling of racial barriers (albeit gradual). The platform was formalized as a five-year action plan adopted at the NP's federal congress in Pretoria in June 1989, just months before the election. It positioned the NP as a moderate force against the hard-right Conservative Party (CP) and the liberal Democratic Party (DP) on the left.

The 5-year plan's overarching vision was to build a society where "each South African could live safely, prosperously, and with dignity as individuals and also in the group context." It sought a mandate from white voters to negotiate an end to Apartheid while preserving elements of group rights and white influence. The NP won 94 of 166 seats in the whites-only House of Assembly (with 48.19% of the vote), which de Klerk interpreted as endorsement for reform.

With the election won, FW de Klerk knew that he had at most five years in which to conclude the envisaged negotiations and achieve the transition to a new, non-racial constitutional dispensation – because he knew that he could not bank on winning another whites-only election when that would fall due at the end of 1994 (if a new constitutional framework had not by then been established).

### 9.2.17 FIRST OFFICIAL MEETING BETWEEN NIS AND EXTERNAL ANC (11-12 SEPTEMBER 1989)

Following on the "authorisation" provided by the State Security Council's Resolution 13/1989 (see section 9.2.11 above) the head of operations at the NIS, Maritz Spaarwater, had contacted Thabo Mbeki on the private phone number that the latter had provided to agent "Gert" and between them they set up the first official meeting between government functionaries and the external ANC. This took place in the Palace Hotel in Lucerne, Switzerland on 11 and 12 September 1989. The NIS was represented by its deputy head, Mike Louw, and Spaarwater. The ANC was represented by Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma. When the ANC pair walked into the hotel room where the NIS men had been waiting for them, Mbeki memorably broke the ice by saying: "*Well, here we are . . . bloody terrorists and for all you know, fucking Communists as well.*"

Because of the importance of this event, I will deal with it in detail in the later section about the NIS initiatives. Suffice it to say that Louw and Spaarwater came back with the view that the external ANC indeed were willing to enter into negotiations on a reasonable basis (just as Nelson Mandela himself had done, and as Oliver Tambo had indicated in the Harare Declaration of which he had been the principal drafter).

### 9.2.18 FIRST PERMITTED PUBLIC PROTEST MARCH (CAPE TOWN, 13 SEPTEMBER 1989)

Protest gatherings and marches were prohibited under the successive States of Emergency that PW Botha had declared from 1985 onwards. FW de Klerk's first big test regarding such marches was when a large Peace March was planned for central Cape Town, to be held on 13 September led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Dr Allan Boesak. De Klerk's decision to override securocrat concerns and allow such marches was motivated by his belief that it would open "the door to a new South Africa" showing there was no need to "batter it down." His aim was to de-escalate violence and signal genuine reform to sceptics.

De Klerk viewed protest bans as a "cul-de-sac" blocking dialogue, betting instead that peaceful protests allowed without visible police presence would build credibility with black leaders and reduce violence. The march (in which an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 protesters participated peacefully) went off without any violence or damage to property. De Klerk's decision was welcomed internationally as well as locally, building trust in the new government's intentions. Boesak called it a "*new spirit of salvation*."

Over a dozen peaceful marches followed, in cities like Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, and Grahamstown. On 14 October it culminated in massive "Release Sisulu" marches in seven major cities which drew more than 150,000 participants in total. Despite the crowds being emotionally charged, the marches were orderly and went off peacefully. This proof that mayhem was not inevitable, was important in strengthening De Klerk's hand to lift the State of Emergency and un-ban the liberation movements in his epoch-making speech to parliament on 2 February 1990.

In a broader historical perspective it strikes one that De Klerk's outlook regarding marches had everything in common with the highly successful manner in which the police in Durban in 1973 had de-fused the potentially extremely volatile marches of the months of labour unrest there, through a situationally aware "hands off" approach (see: THE WIDELY PRAISED POLICE HANDLING OF THE 1973 DURBAN STRIKES - Nonggai BLOG ).

De Klerk's approval of the 1989 marches was therefore not a blind leap but was backed by proof of method from the Vorster era.

### 9.2.19 NP/INKATHA JOINTLY RECOMMEND RELEASE OF MANDELA (15 SEPTEMBER 1989)

The Joint Working Group Between the National Party and Inkatha (which was launched in February 1989 and chaired by Oscar Dhlomo and Roelf Meyer) formed part of the NP's then strategy of seeking cooperation with traditionalist Black parties. On 15 September it issued a press release titled "Joint Statement on Political Developments", the content of which had emerged from the Group's 3rd major meeting. It called for "*urgent normalisation"* of the situation in the country and urged the "*immediate and unconditional release*" of Nelson Mandela and other long-term prisoners as a "*gesture of goodwill*" to enable negotiations, as well as the unbanning the ANC, PAC, and other groups, alongside suspending the state of emergency, so as to allow free political activity.

It further suggested lifting influx control laws, improving black education/housing, and extending economic aid to townships to address the grievances perceived to be fuelling unrest. In the statement a "federal model" with provincial powers (favouring Zulu autonomy) was advocated.

The statement ended with a call for "*all parties to join a national dialogue*."

FW de Klerk welcomed the statement as a "*bridge to the future*" and five days later referenced it in his 20 September formal inauguration speech as president, praising the cooperation that Meyer and Dhlomo could establish. The Joint Working Group met twice more, in October and November 1989, and was seen to have been a significant influence behind De Klerk's subsequent October prisoner release of Walter Sisulu and eight others.

## 9.2.20 THE NIS BRIEFS DE KLERK ON FIRST MEETING WITH THE ANC (16 SEPTEMBER 1989)

FW de Klerk was initially flabbergasted and visibly angry when Mike Louw and Maritz Spaarwater of the NIS on 16 September briefed him in his office in Cape Town on their official meeting with the external ANC in Switzerland four days earlier (see 9.2.17 above). De Klerk wanted to know where and when they had obtained the authorisation for doing this, accusing “you people” of again “doing things in your own self-willed way”.

However, when Louw showed him a copy of SSC Resolution 13/1989, De Klerk immediately calmed down and listened attentively as they described in positive terms their assessment of the external ANC’s willingness to engage in a process of realistic negotiations. As Spaarwater would later write, De Klerk then “ran with the ball”.

The channel established by the NIS to the external ANC would, after De Klerk’s 2 February 1990 speech, become the key initial means for the SA Government through which to facilitate the start of the concrete implementation of what De Klerk had announced, such as the return of exiles and planning the first formal sit-down between the two side’s respective negotiation delegations (which became reality at Groote Schuur on the 2nd of May 1990).

The NIS also would remain the “emergency” channel between the two main protagonists, every time talks publicly collapsed and secretly needed to be resumed – for example (as will be discussed in detail later): after the ANC/SACP had publicly broken off talks in June 1992 over Boipatong, the first secret re-engagement meeting between Cyril Ramaphosa and Roelf Meyer (after Ramaphosa had called with the request to resume talks between the ANC and NP Government) was held on the campus of the National Intelligence Academy east of Pretoria.

## 9.2.21 FW DE KLERK FORMALLY SWORN IN AS STATE PRESIDENT (20 SEPTEMBER 1989)

Having been duly elected by parliament as state president of the Republic of South Africa after the 6 September election, FW de Klerk was formally sworn in on 20 September 1989 in Pretoria. He repeated what he had said on 8 February 1989 in parliament, stating: "In my first public address after my election as leader of the National Party I made the following statement: 'Our goal is a new South Africa; a totally changed South Africa; a South Africa which has rid itself of the antagonism of the past.' In this, my first public address after my inauguration as State President, I repeat that statement."

## 9.2.22 FW ORDERS DISMANTLING OF SA’S NUCLEAR WEAPONS (END SEPTEMBER 1989)

In his former capacity as at one time having been minister of Mineral and Energy Affairs, FW de Klerk had been aware of South Africa’s nuclear arms programme.

Waldo Stumpf, who headed the programme, confirmed that De Klerk convened a meeting “within a week or so of assuming power” and instructed that the programme be rolled back, because his goal was that "*the RSA be accepted back as respectable member of the community of nations*" and because changed circumstances no longer required nuclear deterrence anyway.

This instruction came as a shock to the top brass in the SADF and served as another pointer to them that their former role and influence in national decision-making (as under PW Botha) was about to be drastically curtailed.

(When I later discuss the very real risk of a right wing-inspired coup being launched against the De Klerk government over the course the negotiations took, I will explain in detail how the “nuclear deterrent” had metamorphosed from the Vorster years to the PW-era, and how necessary it also was that there not be nuclear weapons and ICBM’s in existence that coup-plotters could seek to lay their hands on).

## 9.2.23 RELEASE OF WALTER SISULU AND EIGHT OTHERS (15 OCTOBER 1989)

FW de Klerk on 10 October announced the imminent, unconditional release of ANC stalwart Walter Sisulu and eight other long-term prisoners, framing it as a step toward reconciliation. Among those released on Sunday 15 October were Ahmed Kathrada and Raymond Mhlaba of the ANC, as well as one PAC member, Jafta Masemola. The banning order on Sisulu’s wife, Albertina, had been lifted the day before.

It will be recalled that Nelson Mandela had made it very clear that he would not accept being released from prison unless Sisulu and his other incarcerated comrades from the Rivonia Trial be released as well.

The releases (which De Klerk had said was a “gesture of goodwill” on the part of the government aimed at fostering dialogue), caused thousands to participate in “victory marches” in several cities, which passed without any unruly incidents. The message of Sisulu (who was later to be elected as deputy president of the ANC), was one of unity and non-violence (in 1986 he had supported Nelson Mandela in his endeavours to initiate negotiations with the then SA Government).

The releases were also welcomed by Western and African governments, who saw it as further proof that De Klerk was indeed genuinely preparing the ground for meeting one of the strongest demands, namely the release (in the near future) of Nelson Mandela himself.

### 9.2.24 FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL (9 NOVEMBER 1989)

On 9 November 1989, after a prolonged period of popular unrest across the Eastern Bloc, East German security forces stood by without intervening as crowds began dismantling the hated and symbolically highly significant Berlin Wall. The then communist government of East Germany did not seriously attempt to stop it, and neither did Michael Gorbachev’s reformist communist government in the USSR (i.e., unlike Moscow’s military interventions in the 1950s and 1960s in Hungary and Czechoslovakia).

The fall of the Berlin Wall signalled the effective end of the Warsaw Pact, as well as of the Cold War. It also served to re-enforce Gorbachev’s reformist credentials and confirmed as fact that the USSR had committed itself to international cooperation and peaceful coexistence, preferring negotiation over military confrontation and ideological expansion. This had huge implications for the USSR’s erstwhile proxy clients such as the ANC, but also for the West and, very pertinently, for the SA Government itself.

As earlier showed when the ANC’s conversion to negotiations were discussed in relation to the Harare Declaration (see 9.2.12 above) the ANC had come to feel strong pressure from Moscow to negotiate and could clearly sense that the USSR would no longer be backing them with supplies and support for a revolutionary war. Coming on top of what had happened with the Cubans and SWAPO in Angola and SWA/Namibia – who rapidly had to adjust to the reality of Moscow no longer being willing to foot the bill for military adventures in Southern Africa – and who thus had to opt for negotiated settlements, the fact that Moscow had allowed the Berlin Wall to fall, was further proof to the ANC and SACP that the USSR would no longer have their backs if they should persist in attempting to gain power through armed struggle, instead of through negotiations. (Furthermore, as I will soon show, Moscow had in fact been convinced by Pretoria to, in important ways, “change sides”).

For the De Klerk Government and white South Africans in general the Fall of the Berlin Wall was further proof that the “Red Threat” – which had been the main rationale behind and driver of the “total onslaught” dogma – had effectively ceased to exist.

However, the fact that countering communist expansionism no longer dominated geopolitics internationally and the Cold War had ended, was a dangerous double-edged sword, viewed from the perspective of the white South African government. Because the West, who were sensing the same new reality, would lose any incentive to continue to protect and clandestinely support the white government. The principal reason why the West had continued up to that time to surreptitiously support the white SA Government materially, also with arms (despite public posturing, sanctions and arms embargoes) was their Cold War need to counter Soviet expansionism. It was evident that, once the West no longer feared the USSR as it had done during the Cold War era, then the West’s future policies towards South Africa would henceforth be dictated by their own internal political considerations, among which non-racialism was becoming increasingly important – internally, for their own non-white constituents who formed an increasingly influential part of the support base of the Democrat Party in the USA and Labour in the UK, and similarly for the Left in France, and internationally for their allies, such the member states of the British Commonwealth, for example.

The implications were, therefore, firstly that the “Red Threat” (that had been used to justify the “total onslaught” doctrine in South Africa and had by its perceived existence motivated the primacy accorded to the military), no longer was significant – so that the earlier perceived justification for securocrat primacy had, accordingly, visibly fallen away. Secondly, it was clear that there was little time left to secure a negotiated settlement in South Africa,

before the West (freed from fear of the Red Bear) would turn ever more forcefully against the white SA Government, if no significant progress with dismantling Apartheid and negotiating a non-racial state wasn't demonstrated.

More immediately for De Klerk, the Fall of the Berlin Wall (and the public perception that communism as threat was rapidly receding) opened a window of opportunity in white political and psychological terms to put his reforms in motion without being accused of thereby inviting a communist take-over of the country. Accordingly, De Klerk on many later occasions publicly confirmed that he could not (in terms of his own political survival) have presented his 2 February 1990 speech in the manner that he did, had the Berlin Wall not fallen some three months earlier on 9 November 1989 (as will soon be seen, even after the fall of the Berlin Wall the question of unbanning the SACP or not – and its corollary of allowing the likes of communist leader Joe Slovo to be involved in future constitutional negotiations – remained the key sticking point for De Klerk right up to the very last days before the 2nd of February speech, and even beyond).

The background to the changed relationship between Pretoria and Moscow at this time, will be explained in detail in Chapter 10 below.

### 9.2.25 NAMIBIAN PRE-INDEPENDENCE ELECTION GOES SMOOTHLY (7-11 NOVEMBER 1989)

The pre-independence election in SWA/Namibia was held on 7-11 November 1989 and went off peacefully and efficiently.

De Klerk was later to remark about the negotiated Namibian independence: "*This process convinced I think many South Africans that, yes, the right way forward is negotiations, is a new constitutional dispensation. So, what happened in Namibia laid the foundation for what later happened in South Africa, and it built confidence in* ***processes*** *aimed at ending decades and centuries old conflicts*".

In a recent video series of the De Klerk Foundation, FW again had stated that the process in Namibia had been "*of SIGNIFICANT importance*" to the initiation of South Africa's own negotiation process (he had strongly emphasized the word "significant").

It should also be remembered that in 1989/90, Zimbabwe still looked stable and prosperous (white ex-Rhodesians were joking at the time about how and whether they would be able to accommodate white South Africans, if many should flee there). Thus, there existed two seemingly promising models of neighbouring states that transitioned from white minority rule to Black majority rule in a peaceful manner, thanks to negotiation.

(It is noteworthy that this creation of success models had been the strategy that the Vorster team had been hoping to use to pre-dispose white South Africans to accept the need for a new, negotiated constitutional dispensation – in other words, through first setting the scene for such negotiations to succeed in Zimbabwe and Namibia, and then using these examples as references and models).

### 9.2.26 FW DE KLERK ANNOUNCES THE DISSOLUTION OF THE NSMS (21 NOVEMBER 1989)

On 21 November 1989 FW de Klerk announced that he was dissolving the octopus-like and much reviled National Security Management System (NSMS). PW Botha had established this system by executive fiat at the start of his reign, in circumvention of the then existing law. FW reverted intelligence coordination back to what actually was ordained by statute, namely that the NIS (and not the military) should be responsible for intelligence coordination.

Johan Mostert of the NIS was appointed to head the new coordination mechanism located in the president's office. This functioned well, till the new constitutional dispensation entered into force in 1994 (it is therefore not true, as is often alleged, that De Klerk in 1989 simply abolished the NSMS without putting anything in its place – nor did he disband the State Security Council).

In his 1999 autobiography *The Last Trek*, De Klerk reflected: "*The NSMS had served its purpose, but it was time for politics, not soldiers, to lead.*"

In tandem with the dissolution of the NSMS, the State Security Council was effectively reduced back to its original statutory role of advisory body and cabinet regained the final say on security policy. So that, once again, South Africa had a cabinet-led decision-making system with the NIS as the primary intelligence coordination arm supporting it, as actually set out in the 1969 act on security intelligence.

De Klerk moved the Bureau for Information and the NIS back under the President's Office for direct control, and sidelined military intelligence. In functional-structural terms, this was reminiscent of the once close relationship between premier Vorster and his Department of Information under Eschel Rhoodie, and Intelligence under General Hendrik van den Bergh, which then already had correctly understood the reality that South Africa's primary challenge had always been of a political nature, and not of a military one.

*(*For more information on the how and what of the transition from the NSMS back to the statutory system, see: *Nonggai volume 12, nommer 12, Desember 2021: "Nasionale Veiligheidsbestuur: Van die oue na die nuwe"* by Johan Mostert).

### 9.2.27 FW MEETS WITH EXTENDED SADF LEADERSHIP (PHALABORWA, 27 NOVEMBER 1989)

On 27 November 1989 FW de Klerk, accompanied by senior cabinet ministers and top-level intelligence officials, met with senior SADF officers at the Phalaborwa military base. Among those present were then Defence Minister Magnus Malan, Foreign Affairs Minister Pik Botha and Finance Minister Barend du Plessis, with senior generals such as then SADF chief Jannie Geldenhuys and "Witkop" Badenhorst among the 20+ generals and 150+ senior officers attending.

Preceding De Klerk's participation, a telling incident occurred. "Witkop" Badenhorst had requested Johan Mostert, the intelligence coordinator from NIS attached to the presidency (who was to make a presentation), to include in it reference to what the SADF stated was to be a significant future arms build-up in Mozambique. (The SADF at that stage had wanted to ask the Treasury for billions of Rands with which to develop an own jet fighter and a new tank).

This statement about a coming arms build-up in Mozambique was immediately challenged by Minister Barend du Plessis, who asked upon which assumptions this allegation was based? When no concrete answer could be given, Du Plessis said that he believed that this projection about a coming arms build-up was based upon the assumption that Apartheid would persist – which was wrong, because Apartheid is to be abolished.

Johan Mostert told me that, upon hearing this and looking around him at the faces of the military men present, he could see that this categorical statement by Du Plessis had brought home the hard truth about the truly fundamental nature of the changes afoot.

FW de Klerk had already reduced compulsory national service from two years to one, and also had reduced the SADF Permanent Force from a compliment of 75,000 to 55,000, with only 12,000 combat troops to be permanently at the ready.

Addressing the meeting, FW de Klerk structured his message around three pillars: gratitude for the SADF's past service, critique of the militarization of political decision-making that had occurred under PW Botha, and directives for the future. In the latter regard, he informed his audience that he intended to assume personal control over the "political war" to steer South Africa toward negotiations and away from the military-dominated "total strategy" approach of the previous era under PW Botha.

De Klerk wrote in his autobiography *The Last Trek* that he told them: "*I am going to take over to conduct the political war myself*."

As the constitutional commander-in-chief, President de Klerk instructed the SADF to henceforth limit itself to its statutory role, reportedly saying (probably somewhat paraphrased – although De Klerk himself in a later interview used similar language to describe what he had said): "*Your time of running the country is over. From now on, you*

*will stick to your roles as soldiers and policemen—under civilian command. Any reaction against the political process will undermine the very stability you fought for*."

General Jannie Geldenhuys, in his own autobiography, recalled: "*He made it clear: politics, not soldiers, would lead from here*." Geldenhuys later called it a "*watershed moment*" that ended the military's "*adventurism*", but pulled off by FW without a visible backlash (at question time there had been no overt signs of resistance to De Klerk's message).

De Klerk's tone had been firm but amicable. He left no doubt that the "total onslaught" era's strategic choice to prepare for a shooting match in order to retain the white monopoly grip on political power into perpetuity was over and done with.

Apartheid was clearly dead, and henceforth the strategic choice would be to settle the political conflict peacefully, through inclusively negotiating a new non-racial constitutional dispensation for South Africa as a unitary state in which the country would belong to all its citizens and the holding of power would be constitutionally determined.

### 9.2.28 FW'S 3-STATE AFRICAN OUTREACH TRIP (29 NOVEMBER 1989 - 2 DECEMBER 1989)

De Klerk's first trip abroad as now the duly sworn in state president started with a follow-up meeting with President Kenneth Kaunda in Lusaka on 29 November 1989. It was again cordial and was regarded as substantive. Economic ties and the non-aggression pledges given by the De Klerk government were emphasised.

The second meeting was with President Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique, held on 30 November in Maputo. It also was a follow-up on their first encounter that had taken place on July the 6th (see 9.2.4 above). The core agenda items of the 2nd meeting centred on bilateral relations, with Chissano insisting on a complete cessation of all South African logistical, financial and training assistance to RENAMO. De Klerk committed to ending such support and both leaders agreed to the creation of a joint verification mechanism. De Klerk further proposed reviving and updating the Nkomati Accord (which had become a dead letter, due to the SADF ignoring it under PW Botha). As regards economic ties, South Africa's purchase of electricity from the Cahora Bassa hydro-project was discussed (to help ease Mozambique's foreign debt) as well as tariff exemptions on trade. De Klerk also undertook to route more South African rail traffic to the port of Maputo (instead of Durban – again, to help increase Mozambique's revenue stream).

The third and most significant leg of FW de Klerk's African outreach trip was to the Ivory Coast on 1 -2 December, to meet with President Felix Houphouët-Boigny. The *New York Times* of 3 December 1989, in a front-page article, described De Klerk's arrival in Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast on the 1st of December 1989. This was the first time that his visit to an African country had been officially classified by his hosts as **a full formal state visit**, with the discussions extending into the 2nd of December. The *NYT* piece highlighted the unprecedented full honours, including the 21-gun salute and personal airport greeting by Houphouët-Boigny.

This meeting was a diplomatic milestone for De Klerk, demonstrating that African leaders were open to engaging with a potentially reforming South Africa. The endorsement-like state welcome by Houphouët-Boigny (then widely respected as the doyen of Francophone African heads of state) lent credibility to De Klerk's initiatives, paving the way for broader African acceptance. (In recognition of De Klerk's later role in ending Apartheid peacefully, he received the UNESCO Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize in 1991—named after the Ivorian leader).

The trip left De Klerk confident that, if his reforms would be carried through, relations with formerly hostile Black Africa would normalise and that no military threat would be emanating from these countries, who instead would be lending their weight to a peaceful solution arrived at through negotiation (as had already been confirmed in the then unfolding Namibia example).

### 9.2.29 CABINET "BOSBERAAD" APPROVES FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE (3 - 5 DECEMBER 1989)

One of the most formative events in the shaping of the fundamental reforms that De Klerk would publicly announce on 2 February 1990 took place from Sunday the 3rd to Tuesday the 5th of December 1989 at the private game

reserve D'Nyala located in the northern Transvaal bushveld near Lephalale (then named Ellisras) in what is now Limpopo Province.

At this "brainstorming session in the bush" ("*bosberaad*" in Afrikaans) the full cabinet was present, as well the deputy ministers, the administrators of the (then) four provinces and senior "New Nat" caucus members, as well as De Klerk's chief of staff Jannie Roux, Johan Mostert, and Niël Barnard and Mike Louw from the NIS (the discussions and decision-making, however, took place among the politicians, with appropriate officials only called in to present briefings, when their input was required).

The main formal inputs, besides De Klerk's address, were from Constitutional Affairs Minister Gerrit Viljoen (who presented an outline on multi-party negotiations) and the Minister of Finance, Barend du Plessis, who made no bones about the cold economic realities – the stifling effect of sanctions (causing, among other concerns, that the crude oil supplies that were getting through to the country were inadequate and costly) plus that the repayment of foreign debt was dragging the economy into the abyss.

De Klerk recalled in his autobiography: *"We began by asking ourselves how we could promote negotiations... At the end, the whole cabinet—even its most conservative members—were ready for the quantum leap."*

As Grok AI confirms: *"This particular session focused on accelerating South Africa's transition from Apartheid, leveraging the post-Cold War geopolitical shift after the Berlin Wall's fall on 9 November 1989. De Klerk viewed it as a "now or never" moment to negotiate from a position of relative strength before global dynamics shifted further against the regime."*

According to historian Hermann Giliomee: *"De Klerk told the meeting that he was getting conflicting advice from the securocrats about the possible release of Mandela. One faction said: 'Free him and treat him like an important leader.' The other faction said: 'Free him and tell the world he is a terrorist.' Pik Botha responded: 'Forget the latter nonsense. Make sure you appear in a photograph together after his release. The photograph will tell the world the story.' The implication was that the ban on the ANC and other extra-parliamentary movements had to be lifted, but the cabinet did not formally decide to take the big step and release Mandela unconditionally until a day or two before De Klerk was due to open parliament. De Klerk singled out the lifting of the ban on the SACP and Umkhonto weSizwe as his most difficult decision."*

In his *The Last Trek* De Klerk credited the bosberaad with unifying the NP behind "inclusive negotiations," avoiding civil war, and positioning South Africa for global reintegration. It was the "turning point" where ideology yielded to pragmatism.

In his own estimation, some 90% of what would form the core of his 2 February speech was finalised at this summit. The remaining issues to be resolved centred on whether to unban the SACP when the ANC is unbanned, and whether to allow its leadership – such as the white South African public's enemy #1, Joe Slovo – to participate in negotiations.

## 9.2.30 FW DE KLERK MEETS NELSON MANDELA FOR THE FIRST TIME (13 DECEMBER 1989)

De Klerk recalled about his first meeting with Nelson Mandela on the evening of the 13th of December 1989: *"I met Mandela for the first time in '89 when he was brought to my office in Tuynhuys one evening under cover of darkness. He was still a prisoner although he was living in a small house within the grounds of the prison. After brief handshakes, Mandela and I were left alone. The purpose of our meeting was to lay a foundation for future interaction and cooperation between us and to get to know him.*

*"I did not then discuss in any detail Mandela's release from prison. If I remember correctly, I did tell him it is under serious consideration, and there was some sort of a broad discussion on this. But mainly the purpose was to get to know him.*

*"I went away from that meeting feeling that I was dealing with a man whose integrity I could trust. I found him quite an impressive figure."*

Nelson Mandela, for his part, later recalled about his first meeting with De Klerk*: "I had taken the measure of Mr de Klerk, just as I had with new prison commanders when I was on Robben Island".*

To Mandela, De Klerk seemed to represent *"a true departure from the National Party politicians of the past".*

### 9.2.31 DE KLERK MEETS SA POLICE TOP STRUCTURE (PRETORIA, 10 JANUARY 1989)

On 10 January 1990 FW de Klerk addressed some 800 senior officers of the Police at the Police College in Pretoria. He stated that the NP Government had received a mandate for fundamental change in the 1989 election, and that he intends to implement this: "…*along the path of negotiation and discussion with all who are willing to seek a peaceful solution together and work together to find a peaceful way to create a new dispensation".*

Other key quotes from his address (delivered originally mostly in Afrikaans, translated here) were: *"This is a political battleground and we want to take you, the Police, out of that process, out of the political battleground and no longer use you as instruments to achieve political goals. We as politicians must stand up for that ourselves and accept that responsibility ourselves."*

*"We ask you to help with the same dedication as in the past to strengthen law and order in SA to such an extent that decent people can peacefully seek an agreement that can ensure lasting peace for SA… We are therefore trying, as far as it directly affects you, to take you out of the political crossfire – if I may put it that way – in order to free up your hands to carry out the primary assignment (to combat crime) you accepted when you joined the Force even better than you have done in the past."*

*"The Police Force, in the new SA, should ideally be seen as a bastion of security for all the people of this country. As a place to which you can turn and on which you can rely, when you need protection from criminals… You have that image, but that image runs the risk of being compromised as a result of your involvement in the political fight in SA. The direction we are taking is that you will hopefully be able to increasingly play your normal role of the safe haven, thus protecting your good name. One in which you will be relieved of the current burden on your shoulders. If we succeed, you will be relieved of the burden of carrying these additional obligations of ordering the community."*

De Klerk's tone and manner had been firm but conciliatory, and there was no audible dissent from anyone in the audience – the majority of officers seemed to receive his message with a sense of relief and professional acceptance.

### 9.2.32 DE KLERK MEETS WITH TOP EXECUTIVES OF ARMSCOR (PRETORIA, 18 JANUARY 1990)

On 18 January 1990 FW de Klerk, accompanied by Minister of Public Enterprises Wim de Villiers (who at the time was charged with privatization of the state's enterprises such as Armscor, the armaments producer), met with top military brass and the senior executives of Armscor (Krygkor in Afrikaans) in Pretoria. De Klerk gave notice that far-reaching political changes were at hand, of a nature that could bring an end to South Africa's international isolation (which latter had been the driving reason why, under PW Both, it had become necessary to greatly expand Armscor).

FW de Klerk informed the executives that Armscor, hitherto a state corporation, would very soon be privatised (in February 1990 it became the company DENEL). De Klerk reportedly asked: "*How quickly can you retool for civilian production*?"

This meeting was another clear message to the military of fundamental changes in strategy, soon to be announced publicly, where the emphasis would no longer be on the military and its ability to "shoot" as solution, but on politics and economics.

### 9.2.33 PREPARING THE DRAFT OF THE 2 FEBRUARY SPEECH (2ND HALF OF JANUARY 1990)

With the foundation laid by the internal NP consensus reached at the D'Nyala "Bosberaad", FW de Klerk in January was focusing on the draft of his speech for the official opening of the new session of parliament scheduled for 2 February 1990. It was at this event, with this speech, that he wanted to make public the detail of the steps that he

would be taking to facilitate the transformation process to be embarked upon, with the hope of thereby seizing the political initiative.

At his holiday home De Klerk at this time reflected extensively on what he was going to say, holding what he called "inward discussions" with himself. His main concern remained the white public's reaction (after years of conditioning about the "Red Threat"), should he announce the unbanning especially of the SACP. On 25 January 1990 De Klerk was playing golf at Pearl Valley with his old friend Mof Terblanche. After completing their rounds, De Klerk asked Terblanche to be a sounding board for him regarding something very important that must be kept strictly secret – what De Klerk said was that he wasn't looking for Terblanche's personal opinion or advice but wished to know what Terblanche believed the white electorate's reaction would be if he should announce the unconditional unbanning of the SACP in order to facilitate inclusive negotiations.

After consideration Terblanche replied (paraphrased) that the majority of whites would likely accept it, because they all know that the ANC and SACP are "joined at the hip". Because the participation of the ANC in negotiations clearly was essential for its legitimacy (making the ANC's unconditional unbanning essential), it stood to reason that unbanning the SACP was an unavoidable necessity, since the ANC would likely refuse to participate in negotiations if the SACP remained banned and could thus not be at their side.

The assessment given by Terblanche happened to coincide with the intelligence analysis on the issue that De Klerk had been receiving from Niël Barnard and Mike Louw, namely that without the SACP also unconditionally unbanned (i.e., in addition to the ANC itself) the ANC would be unlikely to participate in negotiations, which would make it impossible for Nelson Mandela to participate – so that the entire endeavour would fail before even being born (the importance of this episode lies not in suggesting that Terblanche was a key advisor, but in how it underscores how bothered De Klerk had remained about the communist angle and the white electorate's reaction to it; it also shows that De Klerk's speech on 2 February 1990 did not result from a spur-of-the-moment conversion but reflected careful analysis, consultation, and consideration over a considerable length of time – it was thus not merely one man's sudden, impulsive decision).

As De Klerk himself later remarked in *The Last Trek*: *"The decision to unban the ANC and release Mandela was not taken in a vacuum. It was the culmination of years of strategic thinking… By February 1990, the moment had come to cross the Rubicon."*

### 9.2.34 NAMBIAN CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION GOES WELL (2ND PART OF JANUARY 1990)

By mid-January 1990 already (just two months after the November elections in Namibia), a draft constitution for the new country corresponding to Western democratic free-market norms had been drafted by a panel of experts (many of whom from South Africa, also from Afrikaans universities).

This draft was submitted to the constituent assembly mid-January, which immediately appointed a specialist constitutional committee of 12 to scrutinize it. This committee then in short order unanimously adopted the draft, doing so just one week later on 22 January 1990. It was then referred to the full assembly, where on the eve of 2 February 1990 it was fully anticipated to shortly pass without problem (in fact, it was unanimously adopted on 9 February 1990).

By late January (i.e., the time during which he and his cabinet were putting the final touches to the 2 February speech), FW de Klerk – plus the world at large, more specifically also the white South African electorate – thus knew that the Namibian negotiation process had been going really well**.**

### 9.2.35 PUTTING FINAL TOUCHES TO 2 FEBRUARY 1990 SPEECH

Following on the initial drafting process outlined above in section 9.2.33, on 31 January De Klerk presented the rough draft (focused on the package of reform announcements to be made) to the full cabinet, which unanimously approved it in principle after some two hours of discussion. It was not a line-by-line discussion because no definitive text was yet on the table – rather, it was in principle approval of the underlying package of reforms. The importance of maintaining strict secrecy was stressed, in order to avoid premature leaks that could ruin the impact.

On the 1st of February the process of finalising the text (through multiple revisions, plus translations into English by Chris Rencken) carried on deep into the night.

On the evening of the 1st of February FW de Klerk attended the 60th birthday celebrations of a close friend, where he had been asked to propose the toast. At half-past eleven he excused himself and went back to his office for a final review of the text of the speech. Around midnight he phoned the British Ambassador, Robin Renwick, who would later write about this episode in his memoir about his time in South Africa: "*He (FW) said that I could now inform my Prime Minister that she would not be disappointed*".

De Klerk had also told Renwick that, despite American television having reported that he would simultaneously be releasing Mandela, it could not happen yet because there were practical steps that had to be finalised first, and that Mandela had agreed to this arrangement. (De Klerk had been advised i.a. by Niël Barnard in this regard – the true reason for not releasing Mandela simultaneously with the speech, was that that would have drawn away the media's attention from the speech itself, to focus instead on Mandela).

Copies of the final text were made available on the morning of the 2nd of February to only three ministers who had been pre-selected to be media briefers – Dr Gerrit Viljoen, Dr. Stoffel van der Merwe and Kobie Coetsee – who personally briefed carefully selected media just hours before the actual address, on a strictly embargoed basis. The secrecy held, as illustrated by the fact that, when the speech was being delivered, generals Jannie Geldenhuys and Johann van der Merwe (respectively head of the SADF and Commissioner of the SAP), who – as was customary for the ceremonial opening of parliament – had been sitting together in the public gallery, turned to each other to enquire whether the other had known beforehand of the momentous decisions that were being announced by De Klerk – the answer, in the case of both, was no.

### 9.2.36 EPOCH-MAKING SPEECH OPENING PARLIAMENT AND REACTIONS (2 FEBRUARY 1990)

The key steps announced by FW de Klerk in his 2 February speech, were the following:

- "The prohibition of the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress, the South African Communist Party and a number of subsidiary organisations is hereby lifted."
- "The Government is prepared to release unconditionally all persons who are being detained solely for membership of a banned organisation."
- "I wish to announce that Mr Nelson Mandela will be released… at a time and in a manner to be determined by the Government."
- "The State of Emergency will be lifted as soon as circumstances justify it."
- "The death penalty is suspended with immediate effect."
- "Restrictions imposed on the media… are lifted."
- "The Government will give urgent attention to the socio-economic backlogs… and to the repeal of discriminatory legislation."
- "I extend an earnest invitation to all South Africans, irrespective of race, colour, or creed, to join us in the process of negotiation… No one should be excluded because of ideological conviction, provided they are prepared to accept peaceful solutions…The agenda is open and the overall aims to which we are aspiring should be acceptable to all reasonable South Africans."
- The Government accepts the principle of a multi-party democracy and is prepared to enter into negotiations with all parties committed to peace and democracy. The only precondition is that violence must cease and that the armed struggle must be suspended…
- "The new constitution will provide for a democratic system with a bill of rights, an independent judiciary and universal franchise on a common voters' roll."
- "The present Parliament will continue to function until a new constitution is in place. The Government will table legislation to give effect to these undertakings."

De Klerk closed his address with the following call: "*The step we are taking today is a clear indication that the Government is prepared to take the lead… The season of violence is over. The time for reconstruction and reconciliation has arrived*."

Reaction to the speech was overwhelmingly positive, both locally and abroad (except for the Conservative Party of Dr Andries Treurnicht, whose members had walked out of the Chamber and had called it "*treason*", and Eugene Terre'Blanche of the hard-right AWB, who had said that "*blood will flow*")

The reaction of the NP Caucus (according to historian Hermann Giliomee) was: "*The speech surprised us as much as the rest of the world . . . Yet the caucus, at a special meeting immediately after the speech, unanimously supported De Klerk. There was no criticism of the speech or of the fact that he had not cleared the package with caucus ahead of time. Any leader with less support or lesser capabilities would likely have been torn apart*."

Nelson Mandela (who had been informed hours before): "*I welcome the unbanning… but I remain a member of the ANC and will continue the struggle until majority rule*." The reaction of Oliver Tambo (ANC President in exile) was: "*A victory for the people's struggle… but we need deeds, not words.*" In South Africa's black townships there was jubilation, with church bells ringing and spontaneous street parties in Soweto and Alexandra.

DP leader Dr Zach de Beer called it "*A day of liberation for all South Africans*."

Financial indicators in the South African markets rallied sharply – the JSE All-Share Index rose by 7% within 24 hours and the Rand strengthened by 5%.

Internationally, the reaction was very positive indeed:

- Margaret Thatcher made a personal phone call to De Klerk, telling him: "*You have exceeded our highest hopes*." The UK began lobbying the Commonwealth to ease sanctions.
- From the White House, President George H.W. Bush called it: "*A bold and courageous step.*" Congress started drafting a bill to lift the sanctions contained in the 1986 Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act.
- UN Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar called it: "*A major breakthrough*." The UN Security Council scheduled a debate on lifting the arms embargo.
- Mikhail Gorbachev of the USSR sent a telegram in which he called the speech: "*A turning-point in the struggle against Apartheid*."
- In the international financial markets, the gold price fell by $15/oz, South African bonds rallied, and the IMF signalled its readiness to resume lending to South Africa.

### 9.2.37 WHAT PW SAID ABOUT FW'S SPEECH AND WHAT THAT SAID ABOUT PW'S BELIEFS

As seen in the timeline of the first half of 1989, once PW Botha had understood the direction that FW de Klerk was taking (and, with him, the National Party) PW had immediately set out to obstruct De Klerk and the "New Nats", to the point of calling a snap election and trying to "discipline" FW and Pik Botha for arranging to meet with Kenneth Kaunda. The 2 February 1990 speech just hardened PW's opposition.

Botha accused de Klerk of "capitulating to revolutionary forces" and argued that the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela would embolden the ANC and weaken the government's bargaining position. PW's criticism became louder in subsequent years. He was wont to say that De Klerk had betrayed our armed forces. During the 1992 whites-only referendum on whether to continue negotiations toward a non-racial democracy he actively campaigned for a "No" vote and condemned De Klerk as irresponsible for engaging in talks with what he called communists and terrorists.

The same highly negative attitude was displayed by other true believers in the "total onslaught" dogma, which demonstrates that they never were the "verligtes" that the Afrikaans media had hoped and portrayed them as when PW ruled the roost. A case in point is General Constand Viljoen, former head of the SADF during the first half of the 1980s and who would later (during the transition) help found the Afrikaner Volksfront party, which strongly opposed De Klerk's policies. Viljoen himself had stated that, in February 1990, when FW de Klerk had made his ground-breaking speech and released Mr Mandela "*I thought he was as wrong as he could be, that he was putting the survival of the Afrikaner at great risk and that he was opening the doors to communism and chaos*." (To his credit, Viljoen had later come to the conclusion that De Klerk had been right after all).

## 9.2.38 NIS AGAIN MEET EXTERNAL ANC IN LUCERNE, STARTING WORK (6 FEBRUARY 1990)

Only four days after De Klerk's epoch-making speech, Mike Louw and Maritz Spaarwater of the NIS met again with Thabo Mbeki (this time accompanied by Aziz Pahad) at the self-same Palace Hotel in Switzerland, to start work on the practical modalities of integrating the ANC back into the political process.

As described by Niël Barnard in the 2nd part of his autobiography: *"…the time for getting to know one another was over and serious matters were on the agenda: How to get members of the ANC, the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) and the SA Communist Party (SACP) – until a few days earlier still banned organisations – back into the country; how to prevent the security forces from cracking down on these "terrorists"; how to prevent right-wing whites from taking the law into their own hands… Procedures and structures had to be put in place to manage all these aspects.*"

It was decided to set up four joint working groups, to deal respectively with: the release from prison of Nelson Mandela; the release of other "political" prisoners and detainees; establishing structures for talks between the Government and the ANC; and lastly, structures for communication between the NIS and the ANC's intelligence department.

## 9.2.39 DE KLERK ANNOUNCES COMING RELEASE OF NELSON MANDELA (10 FEBRUARY 1990)

At a press conference in Cape Town on Saturday 10 February 1990, FW de Klerk announced the details of the imminent unconditional release of Nelson Mandela from prison, after 27 years of incarceration. De Klerk told the media that Mandela would be released from Victor Verster Prison (now called Drakenstein prison, located between Paarl and Franschhoek) the following afternoon, i.e., Sunday, 11 February 1990.

FW and key ministers had met with Mr Mandela the previous evening at Tuynhuys in Cape Town, where the logistics of the release were debated and finally agreed. To minimize the risk of massive crowds assembling, the government had wanted to release Mandela with only short notice. Mandela at first resisted this, wanting a week's delay to allow the ANC to prepare, but eventually accepted that his release would be announced by De Klerk on the Saturday, with the actual release then taking place on the Sunday.

## 9.2.40 MANDELA WALKS OUT OF DRAKENSTEIN PRISON A FREE MAN (11 FEBRUARY 1990)

Nelson Mandela walked out of the prison gates at 4.14pm on Sunday 11 February 1990, hand-in-hand with his then-wife, Winnie, both raising their clenched fists as they were met by a large crowd that had gathered.

From the prison gates in the Winelands, Mandela was then driven by car to the Cape Town City Hall. There he addressed an enthusiastic rally of over 50,000 supporters from the balcony. He reaffirmed his commitment to the ANC's struggle against Apartheid. Mandela spent his first night of freedom at the home of Archbishop Desmond Tutu in Bishopscourt, Cape Town.

## 9.2.41 TOP-LEVEL NIS & CDP TEAM MEETS WITH ANC IN BERN (22 FEBRUARY 1990)

With the Government's new policy now public knowledge and Mr Mandela released, the next essential step was to get started on the practical arrangements for the safe homecoming of exiles and the setting up of the first official meeting (in South Africa) between the negotiation teams of the ANC/SACP and the NP Government. To this end, NIS DG Niël Barnard and the CDP's Fanie van der Merwe joined Mike Louw in traveling to Switzerland to meet with the ANC's now expanded contact team, consisting again of Thabo Mbeki, Jacob Zuma, and Aziz Pahad but joined also by the ANC's then head of intelligence, Joe Nhlanhla.

The three government representatives landed in Geneva and then took the train to Bern, where the meeting took place (having been moved there from Lucerne because of better security).

(The next meetings of the actual working groups took place in April 1990, in South Africa in an NIS safe house in the suburb of Pretoria North, where the first returned ANC exiles – Jacob Zuma, Mathews Phosa, and Penuell Maduna – were lodged; it was in that safe house that the arrangements for the first formal meeting at Groote Schuur in Cape Town were thrashed out).

With the aid of the above timeline, we've briefly re-visited the chronology of the events that took place during those pivotal twelve months between FW de Klerk being appointed NP party leader and him making his watershed speech. This served to refresh one's memory, clarifying again (after more than three decades) the context we need today for understanding through which course of events the NP Government had arrived at the actual start of the formal negotiations between principals. You would have noticed that the timeline had made reference, multiple times, to the important role that the NIS had played to motivate for and facilitate this new strategic direction. I therefore believe it is important to dive much deeper into the role that the NIS had played in the process, which will thus form the core of the next chapter.

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# CHAPTER 10.
# THE ROLE OF THE NIS IN FACILITATING THE START OF NEGOTIATIONS

## 10.1 A FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING THE NIS's ROLE DURING THE PRE-NEGOTIATIONS

Ever since the heyday of General Hendrik van den Bergh as head of the BfSS, the Bureau for State Security (the later iteration of which was re-named under PW Botha as the National Intelligence Service – NIS) there had been an understanding in the BfSS that it was going to be an inevitable necessity that the government work towards negotiating a new dispensation and, therefore, needed to be prepared and able to do just that – as Van den Bergh concluded, for having: "a seat at the table".

This strategic vision that the timely negotiation of a settlement would prove to be the best option was back then already shared by the Department of Foreign Affairs and the then Department of Information (under Dr Eschel Rhoodie) as well as by situationally aware senior officers of the SA Police Security Branch (SAP-SB) such as my father. As previously shown, the leadership of the SADF did not share this view.

What would be the role and functions of the intelligence service typically be, in case of negotiations again becoming the strategy of choice of a new South African government? What would the needs then be of its client, the white government? On the part of the then SA Government, preparation for seeking a settlement would, in the pre-negotiation phase, clearly revolve around two main dimensions – effectively two sides of the same coin. In short, strengthening the government's hand and, on the flip side, weakening that of its main adversary.

Given the needs of the NP Government with regard to these two dimensions (i.e., strengthening the own side and weakening the other), the NIS would logically be expected to become engaged through the exercise of its two line functions: on the operational side, its principal one of information gathering as well as its secondary operational function (as the country's secret service) to clandestinely represent government in matters and relationships not convenient to be admitted in public. On the analytical side, to provide to the decision-makers with timely, verified, and objectively interpreted intelligence product relevant to their information needs.

Looked at in a bit more detail, what the NIS needed to be focused on in order to help facilitate negotiations, were:

- Helping the government (with intelligence input and secret outreach), **to prepare and <u>strengthen</u> the government** so that it would be in as favourable a position as possible when it entered into negotiations; and
- on the other hand, providing intelligence and secret outreach with which **the government could seek to <u>weaken</u> the position of the ANC** as the other main protagonist (for instance, bringing into question its claim to being the sole legitimate voice of disenfranchised South Africans, as well as weakening its international support, most importantly from the USSR and Africa – whilst strengthening the SA Government's own credentials particularly in Moscow and in Africa (the latter, because of understanding that the West was increasingly following Africa's lead).

(**Note**: this paradigm applied in the **<u>pre</u>-negotiation** phase, when the ANC/SACP were still outlawed as being committed to the revolutionary overthrow of the government by means of armed struggle; once the negotiations were on track and the ANC had committed to participating in that democratic process, it would no longer be for the NIS to try and help strengthen or weaken any political party that formed part of the negotiations)

As earlier explained (when the strategic choices between preparing to **shoot**, versus preparing to **settle** were discussed), from 1978 on under PW Botha, settling as strategy was supposed to have been off the table. However, as I had also explained (with regard to the dysfunction and discord that reigned in national decision-making under

PW Botha) even during that era – despite the "total onslaught" dogma and structures such as the National Security Management System – other departments outside the military, such as the DFA, Constitutional Development and Planning (CDP), and also the NIS remained convinced that negotiations represented the most appropriate way forward. Therefore, the DFA for example pushed for non-aggression pacts to be negotiated and signed with the neighbouring states (such as the well-known Nkomati Accord, with Mozambique) with the result that such agreements were in fact concluded with all of South Africa's neighbours. From the mid-eighties onwards, the clamour for negotiations to become the strategy of choice came to dominate thinking throughout the Public Service, and Afrikaner civil society.

But how to initiate it?

Because of the opprobrium with which South Africa was increasingly being regarded abroad under PW Botha during the 1980s, it stood to reason that any contact with the NP Government on the part of African states, or by other non-aligned countries and the communist block was (during PW Botha's reign), highly politically sensitive – especially for African countries. Such outreach, therefore, required the cover of secrecy that managing it through the intelligence channel via the NIS would afford, rather than trying to work through overt diplomatic channels via the DFA (although the DFA would find its own work-around to allow it to also establish a representational foothold in Africa, even if not as formal diplomatic missions; it did this under cover of extending development aid, such as running cattle ranching projects near the equator and extending other forms of economic assistance which allowed it a physical presence and regular top-level contact – more about that later).

What was even more true was that, because of the extreme sensitivity within much of white South Africa about any official contact with representatives of the ANC/SACP(after years of the "red threat" demonisation), it was logical that any contact during the **pre-negotiation phase** with the ANC/SACP be conducted in strict secrecy via the NIS. Again, because of the ability to hide what was really going on from the public which the use of this secrecy-shrouded back channel afforded, as well as because of its use offering deniability to the part of politicians (if ever they wished to disavow such contact later).

When assessing in this chapter the key role that the NIS undeniably played in the **pre-negotiation phase** preceding FW de Klerk's 2 February 1990 speech, it is thus important to note at the outset that their prominent role during that era was largely the function of simple structural-functional logic – in other words, due to the need for secrecy, which they had the legal cover and tradecraft to be able to provide – rather than to their prominence having been exclusively due to some singular genius insight emanating from just one brilliant individual at the head of the NIS. (This is not to slight the late Niël Barnard, nor his significant personl contribution, but to keep the record factual and also to honour the enormous contribution that the BfSS/NIS "old hands" had in fact made – brilliant intelligence officers from way back in the HJ van den Bergh era, such as Mike Louw, Cor Bekker, Johan Mostert, George Grewar, Jacob Classen, Mike Kennedy, and many more).

In this regard it is important, I believe, to first of all debunk the myth that the NIS somehow was created as an entirely new entity after HJ van den Bergh's political demise, as if the NIS wasn't in fact just a seamless continuation of the old BfSS – functioning under the same founding law, with the same staff, in the same building, sitting in their self-same offices as before, behind the same computer screens, with still the same mission – just with a new name and a new DG. I have dealt with this issue before (in Part Two) in much detail; suffice it to say here that the key leadership contingent of the NIS through-out had stemmed directly from the BfSS – such as Mike Louw and the vast bulk of his fellow senior analysts, as was the case with the key leadership of the Operations Branch. These BfSS "old hands" were the ones who had soon enough convinced the initially super-conservative new DG (Niël Barnard) that the intelligence picture as understood by the BfSS was indeed correct, whilst the interpretation given to the country's situation by the Military (with their "total onslaught" dogma), was seriously flawed.

Again, this contextualisation is not intended to deny that the talented Dr Barnard had extremely well managed the NIS and had continued to build it into becoming recognised as one of the world's top intelligence services; it just serves to temper the image that Barnard was a bit too wont to propound, namely of an NIS created entirely anew by him, which then – fundamentally due to his leadership, and not to the analytical insights of his senior staff who

had converted him – ended up (in his telling) being uniquely in possession of the necessary understanding and capability to save South Africa from Armageddon. Any such pretension is an unjustified trumpeting of self over many others who had well beforehand come to the same conclusions. This "me, me" tendency of his, unfortunately had caused Barnard to be widely disliked among his peers, to this day. (Lest you as reader may think that I am being unjustly harsh on Barnard by recounting here what is fact, please have a look at the extensive obituary that I wrote for ***NONGQAI*** after Barnard's passing – in which you shall see evidenced the deep respect and appreciation that I had for him as professional, as well as my defence of his legacy against the very vocal and even vicious criticism that had then appeared in the media, from the pens of those who had served in other government departments and had detested him, even in death):

Dr LD (NIëL) BARNARD - AN APPRECIATION - Nongqai BLOG

That said, let us revert to what any pre-negotiation phase of necessity had to entail. Any negotiation process evidently requires that at least two parties participate. Meaning, that the NP Government could not negotiate without having a willing and able counterpart with the necessary substance and legitimacy. For negotiations to make practical sense, it had needed to be conducted essentially between the two main protagonists, namely the white NP Government and the ANC/SACP. Because, if the government had tried to choose its own interlocutor (i.e., other than the ANC/SACP), then the process would have been doomed from the outset – as Ian Smith had, for example, experienced in Rhodesia, when he first chose to negotiate with Bishop Abel Muzorewa instead of Robert Mugabe.

It was thus going to be essential to find out whether the ANC/SACP were even willing to negotiate, and – if so – subject to what terms, plus under which leadership, so that a determination could be made whether such negotiation would in fact be viable and ultimately potentially beneficial. Again, a task as delicate and sensitive as this, of necessity required the secrecy that only the intelligence channel could provide.

Secondly, it would be important to weaken the support that the ANC/SACP were receiving from their international backers – so as to make them more amenable to engaging in negotiations, and doing so with realistic demands. With the ANC/SACP's support deriving principally from the USSR and the African block of nations, it was thus logical for the Soviets and Africans to be prioritised as intelligence and covert outreach targets. Again, this self-evidently had to be approached under cover of secrecy.

But first, the NP Government itself had to be made to understand and accept the strategic necessity of entering into negotiations for a settlement – because, otherwise, there would be no negotiations (as the PW era had demonstrated).

The NIS had by the early eighties already fully understood the two most fundamental realities that the intelligence picture revolved around in terms of white South African interests, namely that:

- it would in the long run not be possible to keep the lid pressed down on the pressure cooker that South Africa was increasingly becoming internally, with as corollary that external pressure was also likely to eventually become unbearable; and
- it was the NP Government's own race-based policies that, more than anything else, was causing the instability in the country through grossly discriminating against and denying meaningful political rights to the non-white majority.

Therefore, the white Government had to be made to see that it had to abandon Apartheid and negotiate a settlement before it was too late, whilst the ANC/SACP needed to be convinced that their best chance of ensconcing themselves in the soft seats of governance within the near future would be through talking compromise, rather than trying to fight.

However, by the late eighties the sad realty still was that the hard-line wings of both the ANC/SACP (their MK hawks in Lusaka) and the NP Government (the securocrats) were still both convinced that they could win/retain the whole cake, through the barrel of a gun.

This is the conceptual framework against which the events that occurred during the **pre-negotiation** phase and which I will relate in the following sections, can best be understood.

(In the next chapter – Number 11 – we will set out a timeline of the key events that had marked the **actual negotiations and transition**; in that phase also, we will see again the key role which the NIS had played in that as well).

## 10.2 BACKGROUND TO THE PRE-NEGOTIATION PHASE

During the middle-eighties it became known that Mr Nelson Mandela was open to negotiating a peaceful settlement in South Africa and was reaching out to the white government. It was also assessed that he would probably be able to persuade the rest of the ANC/SACP to follow his lead.

Already in 1985, the minister who then had responsibility for political development and planning, Dr Chris Heunis, had drawn up a memorandum on the need for negotiation, and in 1984 and 1985 he had written letters to PW Botha about the need for him as appropriate minister to meet with Mr Mandela – letters that remained unanswered.

A special cabinet committee of senior leaders was indeed set up under Minister Heunis's chairmanship to tackle the issue of Black political rights, without this committee ever being allowed by PW Botha to meet with Mr Mandela. Other members of this committee were the Minister of Foreign Affairs Pik Botha, the Minister of Education and Training Gerrit Viljoen (former head of the AB), the Minister of Law and Order Louis le Grange, the Minister of Education and Transvaal leader of the National Party FW de Klerk, and the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services Kobie Coetsee. Given the divisions within the NP about fundamental strategic choices, this committee could not make significant progress. Also, the committee's key members were limited in their understanding of what was then actually going on behind the scenes, since Heunis, De Klerk, and those other senior ministers were, under PW, never informed that there was indeed already an intensive process of discussion with Mandela underway from late May 1988. This was conducted by a four-man team of senior bureaucrats (two each from the NIS and Justice) under the leadership of NIS DG Dr Niël Barnard. They were designated by PW Botha and acted under his authority, maintaining utmost secrecy and reporting exclusively to him.

Advocate Jan Heunis (the chief legal adviser in PW Botha's office and son of Minister Chris Heunis) summarizes PW Botha's strategy as follows: "*What is very clear is that P.W. Botha undermined the work of the special cabinet committee under my father's chairmanship which was responsible for devising a political dispensation where all South Africans would have full participation in the political process, by entrusting negotiations with the ANC to securocrats under his control and keeping his (verligte) political colleagues in the dark*."

It can safely be said that the NIS and the objective analyses it produced, was important in the hawks eventually being marginalised and in permitting the "reasonables" such as FW de Klerk and Nelson Mandela to convince their followers that negotiating a settlement was vastly preferable to continuing with a physical trail of strength – which latter could only lead to massive destruction of the country in a bloody race war.

There were two key prerequisites for negotiations that the NIS with their objective intelligence input helped to achieve (not as political interference, but through helping all sides understand the realities they respectively faced). Firstly, both sides' hawks (and their backers, such as the USSR for the ANC) had fortunately come to understand that neither side would be able to force a military "solution" upon what was essentially a political challenge. Secondly, both sides came to comprehend that the true challenge was to develop, together, an appropriate new constitutional dispensation (which could only gain legitimacy if it had been negotiated and accepted with sufficient consensus by representatives of all South Africans).

In other words, both sides became convinced – despite the years of polarising conflict and seemingly fixed public positions that had ostensibly left them committed in the PW era to slogging it out – that there actually was a realistic possibility for negotiations to be commonly accepted as the preferable alternative, and that there in fact existed a reasonable possibility that such talks would lead to success.

In order for the ANC/SACP to have become amenable to negotiations, it had clearly been necessary for their main supporter and ideological guiding light, the USSR, to first become convinced of the need for pursuing a negotiated settlement in Southern Africa, so that Moscow would stop supplying its erstwhile proxies with weapons, nor continue egging them on to seek the total overthrow of the white government through armed struggle. Instead, that Moscow should start pushing the likes of SWAPO and the ANC towards negotiated settlements. Equally, it was important for the ANC's supporters in Africa to also be moved to start pressing the ANC towards negotiations.

The next sub-section will detail the leading role played by the NIS (with others) in "turning around" the USSR, and in helping move leading African states to also start favouring negotiations.

# 10.3 OUTREACH TO THE USSR AND AFRICA

## 10.3.1 TURNING AROUND THE USSR'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOUTH AFRICA

As the background history briefly recounted above had illustrated, two closely related things (in relation to both of which the USSR was pivotal) had most stood in the way of the white government initiating inclusive negotiations. Firstly, it was the armed struggle, because it was aimed at the revolutionary overthrow of the existing order, with the goal to replace it with a Marxist people's republic – which whites felt would threaten their lives, property and democratic rights. Secondly, there was the threat (which the whites strongly perceived as being existential) of an international communist take-over of South Africa in service of the global aspirations of the Soviet Union.

PW Botha, for example, had flatly refused to release Mr Mandela unless there was a cast-iron commitment to cease the armed struggle (demanding of Mandela to foreswear violence). The SADF "total onslaught" true believers (as well as most in the upper echelons of the SAP) also shared this stance that there could be no negotiation if the armed struggle had not been ceased, because they saw the ANC and its armed wing MK as mere proxies of the USSR, believing (with reason) that the ANC was being effectively steered by the Soviets via the ANC's alliance partner, the SACP through the latter's influential leaders such as Joe Slovo in particular, as well as Ronnie Kasrils and Chris Hani.

So deeply rooted had the dogma of the "*rooi gevaar*" (red threat) as personified by the ANC/SACP become embedded in the white psyche and politics during the Cold War, that it would have been well-neigh impossible for any Afrikaner leader to engage with the ANC/SACP in negotiations if the pre-existing "red threat" paradigm's fundamentals were not to be eliminated beforehand. This was the first dimension that had been blocking negotiations from the white side. There would have been a prohibitive political cost to pay if white political leadership had dared to ignore it (as illustrated by the history of the communist issue featuring to the very end in the process of arriving at FW de Klerk's 2 February 1990 speech, as has earlier been explained in Chapter 9).

An important element of the "Red Threat" was the perception of the existence of an orchestrated, globally powerful communist threat emanating from the dreaded USSR superpower. This perception worked to psychologically justify the "total onslaught" faction's narrative that the entire problem in South Africa derived from these communist proxy agitators fomenting discontent and stoking revolution against the state. This belief that the communists were singularly responsible for all the white state's problems, was therefore negating any appreciation on the white side for what the NIS knew was the true underlying cause of the resistance, namely the role of the NP Government's own discriminatory race policies in causing the unrest and instability (because of it being in such diametrical conflict with the non-white population's own sense of nationalism, dignity, and equality) .

The flip side of the coin (when looking at the aspirations of non-white elites) was that, as long as the USSR was ardently and actively supporting the ANC/SACP, politically and militarily, then there would be little likelihood of the ANC and its sympathisers themselves becoming amenable to entering into negotiations (because it would require compromise – and they would rather then, with USSR support, have held out for revolutionary success that would give them the entire cake, as had happened in Vietnam, Mozambique and Angola).

The most concretely practical dimension of the "Red Threat" was that the ANC's military wing (MK) was, for the logistics of its armed struggle, entirely dependent on the military support given it by the USSR in the form of training and armaments. Therefore, if the USSR could be persuaded to change its stance and stop materially supporting

MK with weapons and training, the latter's "armed struggle" would sooner or later lose whatever teeth it had and would become even more ineffectual. This would then force the politicians in the ANC to be more amenable to recognising that their pursuit of a defeat of the white state through armed revolution was an unrealistic dream that could never succeed – which, in turn, would make them then more inclined to accept the inevitability of having to negotiate and compromise.

The NIS had thus understood the crucial importance of the need for both the NP Government and the ANC to comprehend (based on what the intelligence picture clearly showed) that there was no military "solution" possible for either of them. The NIS also had understood the pivotal role of the USSR in this equation – on the one hand, for the "red threat" to be visibly removed so that white politicians could risk entering into negotiations, and on the other, for the ANC/SACP to be made to understand that they, too, have no other option but to negotiate and accept compromises.

The NIS had, together with their understanding of the strategic importance of "swinging the minds around" in Moscow, also understood that there may indeed be a chance of achieving such a re-orientation in policy towards South Africa on the part of the Soviets. This was because of the evolving global geopolitical situation due to the USSR's internal politics since the mid-eighties, with the arrival in power of Michael Gorbachev, and the growing unrest in Eastern Europe. In this, the economic benefits that the USSR could derive from cooperating with Pretoria would be an important tool with which to persuade Moscow to change their stance (at a time of dire economic stress in the USSR). Rather than them keeping on pouring resources and money into what increasingly appeared to be a hopeless and ultimately unrewarding cause in South Africa (judged i.a. by the fact that earlier rendered such help to the likes of Angola and Mozambique had shown no real returns for Moscow) It could even be imagined that the Soviets might be willing to supply arms to the South African government instead – known to be a client willing and able to pay promptly. There was also the communality of interests that Moscow and Pretoria shared with regard to the harmonised marketing of diamonds, gold, and many key minerals…

Another consideration that could help sway the Soviet leadership was that a changed attitude towards how to solve the South African situation, favouring negotiations instead of revolution, would play well for Moscow with the West, with whom Gorbachev was actively seeking détente.

Thus, the NIS had embarked already at the mid-eighties on a deliberate, though top secret, outreach to the USSR. This section is the tale of the success of that initiative.

Let's look first at the deliberate effort to "turn the heads" of the Soviets under Gorbachev (and let me state up front that I don't know of any other country which had during the Cold War been the target of the USSR, that had actually had the gumption to try and turn around the Soviet policy stance, in addition to fighting them).

This effort to change the Soviet mind-set was so successful that it culminated in very concrete military cooperation between Moscow and Pretoria, as well as economic cooperation extending even to sanctions-busting.

The prime example of this new-found military cooperation was the very consequential joint armaments project aimed at upgrading the South African jet fighters based on the French Mirage F-1's and IIIc's). The novel idea that the South African engineers had come up with, was to replace their original French Snecma-Atar jet engines with the much more powerful Soviet Klimov RD-33 engines used in the USSR's MIG-29's. These Soviet engines were son enough being re-designed and re-engineered by a joint Soviet/South African technical team, so as to fit in and synchronise with the Mirages, whose airframes were suitably adapted – something that the French engineers thought to be utterly impossible from a technological viewpoint...

Surely you're asking: but how is it that the USSR, in the midst of the international arms ban then in force and against the backdrop of its earlier history of committed military, monetary and political support for the ANC and other Southern African liberation movements (culminating in the full-blown war fought in Angola), began collaborating with the "Boers" on the upgrading of White South Africa's fighter jets? Given that those those self-same MIG's and Mirages had battled each other over Southern Angola, just a year before?

The answer is that this armaments project was by no means exceptional by the late eighties, in the context of the evolution of Pretoria/Moscow relations. It had its equivalents in intelligence cooperation, economic synchronization of the marketing of precious metals, diamonds, and other raw materials that the RSA and USSR had in common, and in circumventing the economic sanctions that had been imposed on Apartheid South Africa. (The USSR and South Africa had, at that stage, between them enjoyed control over 95% of the world's vanadium reserves, 94% of its manganese, 90% of all platinum group metals, 84% of its chrome reserves, 70% of its gold and over 59% of its andalusite group minerals).

Yes, to this day it is certainly not widely known, but Pretoria had by the end of the eighties actually succeeded in convincing the USSR (and subsequently the Russian Federation) to rather cooperate with it and, crucially, for Moscow to scale back its ties with and support for the ANC, pushing them away from "armed struggle" towards negotiation and compromise. Very noteworthy is the fact that, in terms of the chronology, it had not been a case of the USSR first disbanding as state and then these projects came into being after that. The RSA/USSR cooperation had started and was concretised well before the fall of communism in Russia. It was the consequence of a logical South African strategy, in the implementation of which the NIS, DFA, the armaments industry and (indirectly) South African business interests played their roles.

It is important to grasp that this turnaround in Moscow's attitude had preceded the collapse of the USSR. It didn't just happen to fall into Pretoria's lap either (although clearly it was very much aided by Gorbachev's broader foreign policy changes). This was a strategic objective that Pretoria actively sought to realise – amongst other reasons, *inter alia* in order to effectively strip the ANC of its main sponsor.

As said, this objective happily coincided with a broader policy shift in Moscow after Gorbachev had taken over, when the USSR started moving away from stoking conflict and propping up communist regimes. It is a known historical fact that in the late eighties the USSR felt compelled to let the countries of Eastern Europe go their own way, as well as to withdraw from Afghanistan (i.e. territories directly adjacent to its own borders) in both cases also because of the severe economic constraints the USSR was then experiencing. The Kremlin had done so, despite the inevitable negative impact on its international "strong man" image and the risk of a possible chain reaction of destabilization of the Soviet Union's Muslim states and the populations of Ukraine and Belarus, as well as the Russian population itself. Therefore, it is logical that it would not have made sense for the then Politburo to have continued expensive adventures in remote parts of the Third World. Costly conflicts such as in Southern Africa...

The increasingly critical views toward these adventures, which became noticeable in academic studies published in Moscow during the eighties – especially about the less-than-rosy prospects for establishing socialist regimes in the Third World – also began to reflect in the Gorbachev government's outlook. For example, the hard experience with the MPLA regime in Angola had been characterised as "disastrous" in Moscow. Due to its economic crisis, Angola was unable to re-pay its debts to the USSR. At the time, the decline in the price of oil and the need for increased arms supply to continue fighting UNITA and the SA Defence Force in parallel, greatly had increased the Angolan debt burden towards the USSR. The Soviets, due to their own deteriorating economic conditions, increasingly experienced difficulties in carrying such non-performing debts.

The Soviet leadership was also particularly interested in reducing the negative impact of disputes over peripheral Third World issues on what had become their main priority – achieving more relaxed East-West relations. They acknowledged that such far-flung conflicts (in which they had engaged competitively and at great cost under Brezhnev), in fact hindered progress on more central issues such as trade with the West and arms control (the latter, essential for pegging back the costly arms race that was bleeding the USSR's economy dry, causing growing unrest among its deprived populations). Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze therefore advocated a non-ideological foreign policy, with a reduced focus on class struggle and emphasis instead on a diplomacy that sought joint conflict resolution, as part of a policy of "universal security". In the Southern African context, the prospects for such cooperation were seen as particularly promising by Moscow, given the mutual interest of the USSR and the USA in avoiding confrontation and further escalation in the region.

During the second Soviet/Africa Conference in Moscow in **June 1986**, this new outlook manifested itself in a speech by the then Deputy Director of their African Institute, Gleb Starushenko, who advocated for "comprehensive guarantees for the White population of South Africa".

On an interstate level, the Soviet Union's new approach towards southern Africa took further shape on **29 March 1987** by the cementing of a mutual decision to establish a high-level clandestine contact channel between South Africa and the USSR, via the then KGB and the National Intelligence Service.

The preference for negotiated solutions was further given impetus by the disaster that the FAPLA/Russian offensive ran into in Angola from **October 1987** (in the fighting on the Lomba River), where the SADF inflicted a series of decisive defeats on the communist forces. The analysis that the Soviet military then presented to Gorbachev was that it was not conceivable that the liberation movements were going to be successful in overthrowing the South African government by force of arms.

This new direction in Moscow forced Fidel Castro of Cuba to actively and urgently plan to withdraw his troops from Angola (as explained earlier). Back in Havana from a sobering visit to Moscow, Castro had immediately called an emergency meeting of his top security advisers on **November 15, 1987**. The Cubans decided on a double-barrelled strategy: on the one hand, to reach out directly to the South African Department of Foreign Affairs as well as to the USA, to urgently get peace negotiations underway, and on the other hand, to actively enter into the then unfolding military struggle in southeastern Angola, in response to FAPLA's Lomba defeats (the Cubans previously had stood on the sidelines during the 1987 campaign season, very critical of Soviet strategy).

The Cubans had belatedly engaged in the fighting in the South-East of Angola with two tactical objectives – firstly to prevent FAPLA from being driven out of their base area at Cuito Cuanavale, and secondly to open a new front further west, opposite the important water scheme at Ruacana (thus to divide South Africa's forces and put the SA Government before the challenge of choosing between negotiating, or engaging in an "actual" war). However, as confirmed by the then Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Anatoli Adamisjien, there was a prior secret agreement between the Russians and the Cubans that the latter would not attempt to cross the SWA/N border, because the USSR had not wished to see such a real escalation.

It is known history that the SADF's Military Intelligence Division, i.a. with information provided by the NIS from their source inside the Havana-Luanda chain of command, correctly interpreted these moves by Castro as posturing for the sake of initiating negotiation with as political objective that the Cubans could withdraw "honourably" and not be left stuck alone carrying the can when the USSR withdrew from Angola (although the SADF obviously had to make contingency plans and take preventive steps, such as calling up a large number of Citizen Force units – as described in Chapter 8 before, in this article).

Since it had consistently been South Africa's intention to get the communist forces out of Africa (with a view to South Africa's internal situation being handled locally, unimpeded by foreign interference), the opportunity to facilitate the Cubans' withdrawal by means of negotiation was exploited. International accords were soon reached, leading to Namibia's independence. For Cuba, it had been important not to be seen to withdraw as a loser – but, withdraw is what they desperately wanted to do. So, Castro artfully fabricated a "defensive victory" in the form of the mythical "Battle of Cuito Cuanavale", spinning the fable of a protracted, brave Stalingrad-type "battle" that supposedly made sure that the village did not fall into UNITA's hands. (The South Africans had never deliberately set out to capture Cuito, aiming rather to just neutralise it and its airfield by means of long-range artillery barrage; the real battle was over the nearby "Tumpo Triangle", where the Cubans indeed orchestrated an effective defence with extensive minefields and arrayed artillery, leading to a stalemate in that sector, which obliged the SADF eventually to withdraw when the new western front opened up).

Further concrete public evidence of the changed Soviet policy towards southern Africa came in **May 1988**, during the 25th anniversary of the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid in New York. The delegate of Ukraine (which then was still just a captive extension of Moscow), Gennady Udawjenko, stated that significant change had already taken place in South Africa, so that circumstances were no longer as they had been 25 years earlier, and that the time had therefore come for a move forward towards a political settlement.

Shortly thereafter, on **May 17, 1988**, the first high-level meeting took place in Vienna, Austria, between senior representatives of the NIS and the KGB. In parallel, the delicate front work for the project to build Soviet engines into Pretoria's fighter jets began in 1988/89. By **November 1989** things on that front had progressed to such an extent that the South African team's lead aeronautical engineer, Kobus de Villiers, was able to fly to Moscow to start executing, in the form of having the first technical sessions with his Soviet engineering counterparts.

At the same time, the ANC's access to Moscow began to decline, to the point of drying up. Oliver Tambo, then the ANC's president, last visited Moscow in **March 1989**, but – unlike before – he was not received by Gorbachev. Vladimir Shubin (who was closely involved in USSR foreign policy at the time, as head of the African section of the CPSU's foreign relations division) explains it this way: "*because it became increasingly difficult to 'mobilise' the Soviet leader to meet Africans.*"

During the night of **November 9, 1989**, a crowd of East Germans began to tear down the Berlin Wall – a barrier that for nearly 30 years symbolized the Cold War partition of Europe. By **October 1990** Germany was reunited, which was followed by the rapid collapse of the other Eastern European regimes.

Shubin's insights into the changed attitude in Moscow towards the respective parties to the Southern African conflicts are instructive, so that it is useful to quote him directly here (from an article of his entitled "***The USSR and Southern Africa during the Cold War***", November 2008): "*However, on the threshold of the 1990s the Soviet Union underwent serious political and institutional changes. Its foreign policy, directed by Gorbachev and Shevardnadze, was rapidly changing as well, and not in favour of the liberation struggle. In a speech to the UN General Assembly in September 1989, Shevardnadze pledged "to oppose ... resolutely all kinds of violence, no matter what had caused or motivated it", and this could be read, in particular, as opposing any resolute action again the racist regime in South Africa.*

*"The release of Nelson Mandela made it possible for him to visit the USSR for the first time. However, rather unexpectedly his visit became a problem in Moscow's relations with the ANC. True, an invitation "on behalf of the USSR leadership" was sent to Mandela in the name of Gorbachev, but up to the end of his administration nothing came of it. On the surface, the reasons for this were purely technical, but beneath the surface these delays reflected far-reaching changes in Gorbachev's policy. Anatoly Chernyaev, then his assistant for international affairs (and a Central Committee member!), who proved to be another turncoat, wrote in his memoirs: Gorbachev had a rather good nose for people who had no prospects and were "useless to us" ... He "froze" his meeting with Mandela, though both academics and Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials (true, with some resistance on my part) more than once argued wordily that it had to be done: that [Mandela] travelled all over the world, everywhere – at the highest level – and yet could not come to Moscow! Gorbachev did not believe that by supporting the ANC and supplying it with arms we were assisting the correct process in South Africa.*"

In **March 1991** two KGB generals visited Pretoria and met with President FW de Klerk. They had a message for him, from Gorbachev: "*We are facing serious difficulties with our national economy in providing the country with feeding stocks and foodstuffs*."

Apart from the intelligence-led and armaments co-operation, economic cooperation between South Africa and the USSR was strengthened throughout the eighties. An important example of this was the sale of Russian diamonds, via De Beers' so-called "single channel" in London. Likewise, it was logical for the Soviets and South Africa to cooperate in the marketing of gold and platinum, of which they were the two major world producers. Allegedly, the Oppenheimers were seen on occasion at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, and Soviet delegates regularly visited Johannesburg around the common interests in platinum, in particular.

Nor was it only the National Intelligence Service and the South African armaments industry that developed ties with leading institutions in the USSR. Dr. Marc Burger, the head of sanctions circumvention at the Department of Foreign Affairs, built increasingly stronger ties with trading houses in the USSR during the 2nd half of the eighties. He related in his book "***Not the Whole Truth***": "*Our approach to the USSR was based upon identifying major actual and potential common interests which would hopefully serve as the foundations for a sound, mutually advantageous relationship that would supersede the distrust and hostility born out of ideological conflict. I believe*

*we got the message across. The first Soviet delegation we brought (discreetly) to SA comprised the heavyweights of all the areas we had chosen as practical priorities. It seems they were equally interested. Neither I, nor the others involved, could recall a single fruitless meeting in the USSR either. This says that homework was being done – after all, there was precious little first-hand experience of the empire with which we had severed relations in 1956. I had some interesting encounters which reminded of earlier days. One official I dealt with in Leningrad (now, once again, St Petersburg) had been born in Pretoria. His father was a Consul in the USSR Consulate-General that we expelled for spying in 1956... Dad was now Chief Director of the First Chief Directorate of the KGB – the next most important job after the Chairman!*"

According to Hennie van Vuuren's ***"Apartheid Guns and Money***", Krygkor was already knee-deep involved in the USSR with arms trade and warcraft development: "*A former senior Armscor official, who asked for his identity not to be disclosed, confirmed that not only were there talks between the parties (USSR & SA), but that it had developed to such an extent by the late 1980s that Armscor had achieved the unthinkable. Armscor had a team of military experts working from within the Soviet Union, including an office in Leningrad. Moreover, a team of Armscor officials, who we should recall received their funding from the Department of Defence, also operated from the Siberian city of Omsk, home to a squadron of MiG-23 and MiG-31 aircraft during the Cold War... The Armscor team in Siberia were involved in jet engine development intended to improve the design of the French-manufactured aircraft which the South African Air Force possessed. In return, the Armscor team taught the Russians how to develop single crystal blade technology for jet engines.* (Van Vuuren clearly had the story somewhat by the tail; the joint technical team for the jet engine re-design actually worked out of the late Soviet leader Brezhnev's former official *dacha* – villa – in the posh outskirts of Moscow itself).

In **July 1991** Dr Niël Barnard as NIS-DG visited Moscow by official invitation. On 10 July Barnard's programme had to be hastily rescheduled because his father had sadly passed away suddenly and he therefore had to return to South Africa prematurely. In response, Mikhail Gorbachev adapted his own programme (i.a. by re-scheduling a Politburo meeting) in order to meet with Dr Barnard for a 40-minute conversation. Still, however, Mr Mandela was not received in Moscow...

Subsequently, things went completely wrong for the communists in Russia, when on **August 18, 1991** a coup d'état was attempted against Gorbachev. However, this culminated in the Russian public occupying the streets and parliament building, with the result that Boris Yeltsen, the President of the Russian Republic, took over authority and the USSR was dissolved in December 1991. Shubin describes its effect on Russian relations with the RSA as follows: *"... during stormy events in Moscow the next month, August 1991, when a 'very strange coup', organised by a group of people from Gorbachev's retinue, was followed by a 'counter-coup' led by Boris Yeltsin, the banning of the CPSU and then the "dissolution" of the USSR in December. The political renegades and sell-outs who controlled the country and its foreign affairs during that period did their best to distance themselves from the ANC (just as from other old friends of Moscow) and embrace Pretoria. While the Umkhonto cadres were sent away, Pik Botha, visiting Moscow, signed a protocol in November 1991 restoring consular relations between the two countries; then in February 1992 Yeltsin's notorious Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrey Kozyrev, signed an agreement on the establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and South Africa in Pretoria. Finally, instead of receiving Mandela, Yeltsin welcomed de Klerk in the Kremlin in late May 1992."*

President De Klerk was therefore received in the Kremlin on a state visit long before Mr. Mandela was.

In **October 1991**, Yevgeni Primakov, the head of the Russian FSB (the successor intelligence service to the KGB), officially visited South Africa. Full diplomatic relations between the two countries, at ambassadorial level, were established, with Professor Gerrit Olivier appointed as the first South African ambassador to Moscow.

The upshot of all of the foregoing was that, for the duration of the constitutional negotiations in South Africa (but essentially from a number of years earlier), the ANC no longer had Moscow as a determined sponsor.

The joint project redesigning and producing Soviet MIG engines to build into modified South African fighter jets is probably one of the most concrete, undeniable pieces of evidence of the magnitude of the Soviet about-face. One could argue that the contact at the intelligence level was merely talk-talk, or that the cooperation between Foreign

Affairs and the Soviets in the economic sphere was just business – there obviously isn't actual photographic evidence available of that sort of contact. But of this mind-blowing warcraft project with its undeniable military and political implications, one can see plenty of photographic evidence – with the most tangible, incontrovertible proof surely being the Mirage-F1 with tail number 216 itself, and its dozens of successful test flights in South Africa and in fact overseas as well – you can see a short YouTube video of it participating in an international air show here:

South African - Russian Super Mirage fighter prototype

The richly illustrated full story of the remarkable Moscow/Pretoria jet engine project (from the pen of the then lead engineer – and now acclaimed author – Kobus de Villiers), can be downloaded **free** from the ***NONGQAI BLOG*** via this link:

HOW PRETORIA AND MOSCOW SECRETLY COOPERATED TO BUILD MIG-29 ENGINES INTO SAAF MIRAGES - Nonggai BLOG

This project could only have been successfully undertaken and carried through if two prerequisites had been met: first, that the USSR deliberately decided that it was in its own best interest to start cooperating with the Pretoria government in this most sensitive, most symbolic of fields, rather than continuing to fight the RSA; and secondly, that Moscow's aviation experts needed to be convinced that the South African aircraft industry and technical expertise were sufficiently up to par to make such joint design projects of a highly advanced nature, feasible in practice.

An extremely important question that can and should be asked with regard to the strategic vision and sound analysis by the NIS regarding the need to actively seek to "turn" the Soviet Union, is: If Pretoria had not succeeded in "turning" the Politburo in the Kremlin in the late eighties, and if Moscow would have continued to, with determination, support the ANC financially, diplomatically and above all militarily in its "armed struggle" – could the negotiated transition in South Africa still have happened? Would the radical hawks in the ANC have abandoned their aspirations, if they still had such a big backer?

Again, I know of no other erstwhile target country of Soviet aggression during the Cold War, that had had the insight and audacity to seek to "turn" Moscow – not even to speak about succeeding in doing so…

### 10.3.2 NIS OUTREACH TO AFRICA, ESTABLISHING COVERT REPRESENTATION IN KEY STATES

Similar to the understanding that the NIS had formed about the importance of establishing clandestine contact with the USSR, by the early eighties already the Service had come to see that: "…it was absolutely essential for the NIS to establish a bridgehead in Africa" (as stated by Barnard himself, in his autobiography about his years as spy chief). In this, Barnard was well aligned with the thinking that more than a decade earlier already had prevailed in the BfSS under Van den Bergh. It was also in sync with the long-held belief within the DFA's Africa Branch, which had pleaded for a focus on Africa as far back as the days of Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd. (It is a little-known but interesting and thought-provoking fact that, on 6 September 1966, in the course of the very morning that had preceded his assassination in parliament later that afternoon, Dr Verwoerd had personally phoned Ambassador Jan Burger – the father of Dr Marc Burger, earlier cited – to invite him (as then the DFA's lead diplomat on Africa) to come take a seat in the parliamentary gallery for Verwoerd's upcoming speech that was tragically never delivered; Verwoerd had told Burger that he must be there, because he (Burger) was sure to like what Verwoerd had intended to announce about a new openness to building relations with Africa – something that Burger had long pressed for, but which Verwoerd had hitherto refused to contemplate…).

In his autobiography Barnard unfortunately and quite inaccurately had portrayed it as if the NIS in 1983 suddenly had this Damascus Road revelation about the strategic importance of Africa, whilst other departments and predecessors had supposedly missed this somewhat self-evident truth. Before we delve into the details of those certainly significant high-level ties that the NIS had established in Africa – ties which definitely helped in getting the message across to the ANC that it should switch to negotiation and could not take African support for granted – it is therefore necessary to place the NIS effort in broader perspective, against what others had been successfully doing in Africa during the same time-frame. It's done because ***NONGQAI*** is a history magazine and contributions thus need historical context and balance; providing this background is certainly not intended to detract from Barnard or from the value of the NIS's outreach efforts into Africa under his leadership.

Fact is that, already during the premiership of John Vorster (during the détente initiative), South Africa had established high-level contact with Botswana, the Central African Republic, Eswatini, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Zaïre/DRC, and Zambia. Much of this had been initiated by the BfSS and Dr Eschel Rhoodie's Department of Information, in conjunction with the DFA (the three departments had functioned effectively together in this regard). Vorster had actually visited quite a few of these states. For Barnard to have suggested that nothing much of consequence had been done by his predecessors with regard to outreach to Africa, is thus factually incorrect.

It is also not accurate to suggest that the NIS during the eighties had single-handedly pioneered outreach to Africa. Even from the early years of PW Botha's reign, just in terms of the division of labours between the different security entities (as agreed between them at the Simonstown Summit), the SAP-SB for one – who had responsibility for liaison with the neighbouring states – maintained excellent relations with Swaziland, Botswana, and even the Mozambican intelligence service (the responsible liaison officer for the latter having been ***NONGQAI'***s own Hennie Heymans, who on instructions of my father had treated his Mozambican counterparts to weekend trips to the Drakensberg and the like). SAP-SB general Christie Zietsman likewise had excellent relations with the Malawians.

It goes without saying that the DFA had always regarded Africa as a top priority (even though Pik Botha as minister had shown less enthusiasm than was needed). As earlier mentioned, the DFA work-around for getting a foot in the door during the difficult eighties was by means of South Africa extending development aid (for the management of which the DFA was the responsible department).

By the beginning of the nineties there were twenty-two countries receiving such aid. This ranged from South African officials establishing and actually running experimental cattle farms in the tropical highlands of Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, to different permutations of technical, infrastructural, training, and financial assistance to almost two dozen others.

In the tropics cattle simply don't do well due to diseases, leading to shortages of red meat and leaving the African attachment to cattle unfulfilled. The South African Drakensberger and Nguni cattle races, however, could thrive in highland conditions in the tropics – these farms were typically manned by brave specialists from the Department of Agriculture, with diplomats from the DFA manning supposedly related offices in the nearby capitals – the diplomats going round in casuals rather than suits, using the projects as public cover for their "non-diplomatic" building and day-to-day maintaining of interstate relations (although, obviously, the host governments knew exactly who they were and dealt with them as South African representatives – this in-country permanence facilitated regular high-level contact via visiting top officials from DFA). If you download the ***NONGQAI*** e-book about my adventures as ambassador in Equatorial Africa, you can read of my experiences on the farm on Bioko Island which my embassy had "inherited" from the previous era of "non-formal" relations. You can download the e-Book here, free: https://tinyurl.com/yt9dvapn

Among the recipients of the DFA-managed technical, infrastructural and training assistance in the run-up to the negotiations / transition, were Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Zaïre and South Africa's three neighbouring BLS countries (by the early nineties, when I headed the forerunner of the diplomatic academy, DFA already had full-fledged residential missions established in Maseru and Mbabane – even though not yet with formal diplomatic status; because of the ease of getting there, we used to send our diplomatic cadets as groups on orientation visits to these "embassies" of ours, for them to go and see what a South African mission abroad actually looks like).

The NIS outreach to Africa under Niël Barnard had started in 1983 with Togo – which may have been tiny and not politically very significant, but which is strategically located near important prime targets such as Nigeria, and which was a good place to begin to learn the ropes of how to operate without diplomatic cover in post-colonial Africa. The NIS also employed "development assistance" as hook, just in their own field of course. In the case of Togo, the NIS played a major role in the planning and funding of a modern intelligence training centre for their service.

Subsequent to establishing that first NIS representative office in Togo's capital, Lomé, the Service then concentrated on what Barnard regarded as the "big five" African countries, namely Nigeria, Egypt, Kenya, Uganda

and Zambia. As Barnard himself put it: "*The aim was to explain to them that South Africa was moving away from Apartheid and that we wanted to work out a new political dispensation in cooperation with all significant political groups.*

*I informed them that I was there with the authorisation and knowledge of Pres. Botha and that from time to time I would bring letters from him to the individual concerned. I cannot make decisions for him, but I speak for him. He sent me. What you tell me, I will convey directly to him."*

Closer to our borders, the NIS also had a well-functioning relationship with Zimbabwe's ZCIO central intelligence organisation.

Barnard himself was actively involved in this African outreach during the 1980s, meeting at the highest level with the likes of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak (and enjoying trips on the Nile with his minister Omar Suleiman), several times with Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda (at his holiday camp on the banks of the Luangwa River), Uganda's president Yoweri Musveni, Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya, Olusegun Obasanjo and Ibrahim Babangida of Nigeria, and Eduardo dos Santos of Angola.

Niël Barnard regarded the contact established via its "Africa Project" as "one of the NIS's greatest successes". As he explained in his autobiography: "*A great advantage of the confidential channels of communication such as these that we created was that we were able to get the message home to the most important African leaders that South Africa was moving away from Apartheid and that we were on our way to working out a new political dispensation in consultation with all the inhabitants of the country. These were candid conversations, because neither they nor we ever feared that the mere fact of the conversations having taken place, let alone their content, would be on the front pages of the newspapers the next day. The fact that we were able to succeed in establishing an additional diplomatic channel of communication in Africa in the midst of international isolation is, in my opinion, a major breakthrough. In addition, we helped to create a less favourable climate for the ANC in these "host countries". By 1988–89, active support for the ANC's terrorist attacks against South Africa had considerably diminished."*

As important as the role of the NIS had been in the outreach to the USSR and Africa (weakening those key players' support for the ANC and thus making the liberation movement more amenable to exchanging armed confrontation for negotiation), by far the most important role that the NIS had played in the pre-negotiation phase was to manage the top secret engagement with the then still incarcerated Mr Nelson Mandela, leading to 48 conversations that took place from 25 May 1988 to his eventual release on the 10th of February 1990. This delicate project – code-named "*Sagte* (gentle) *Neelsie*" by the NIS – was personally entrusted by PW Botha to Barnard and his deputy, the brilliant Mike Louw.

# 10.4 MANAGEMENT BY THE NIS OF THE PRE-NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE STILL IMPRISONED NELSON MANDELA

## 10.4.1 BACKGROUND CONTEXT OF THE PW-MANDATED SECRET TALKS WITH PRISONER #46/664

As I've related in some detail in Part Two of this series, the intelligence community had for many years already been tasked with annually assessing the pros and cons of Mr Mandela's continued incarceration. This task fell to the KIK (the intelligence coordination committee) for which I served as secretary during a period at the start of the 1980s. Regarding one of those annual meetings, I had explained in Part Two that a general consensus had existed then already that it would be hugely harmful if Mr Mandela should die in prison, so that it was accepted that he should at some stage be released. However, there was also clarity in the intel-community that his release would have a very significant political impact – not in the least because the reports from the psychologists of the Prison Service had been unequivocally clear that he was a politician of truly exceptional talent and charisma, who (according to their assessment) would entirely overshadow even the brightest of the then white cabinet ministers.

In the context of the ongoing discord in security/intel-circles about whether to prepare to “shoot” or to “settle”, those in the “prepare to shoot” (or “total onslaught”) camp were not in favour of Mr Mandela being released, except if he agreed to being confined to the territory of Transkei (which offer he refused). Those who saw settlement negotiations as being both essential and inevitable, could visualise Mr Mandela’s release as potentially beneficial to such a process – especially if he would favour talking over shooting, and be willing to moderate the ANC’s desire to establish a Marxist people’s republic and opt for a democrat Western-style model instead.

What was therefore important to ascertain, was what exactly Mr Mandela had in mind (since he had, from the early eighties already, been giving indications that his thinking had begun to shift towards negotiations.

Sources in the intel-community with first-hand knowledge have personally affirmed to me that initial feelers were already secretly put out in 1984.

It became known that Mr Mandela had indeed come to favour a negotiated settlement, instead of a revolutionary take-over via armed struggle (which latter he increasingly regarded as unlikely to succeed anytime soon). For example: in January 1985, in an interview with Lord Bethell for the *Mail on Sunday*, Mr Mandela had called for the unbanning of the ANC and for the government to negotiate with it as a political party.

Faced with a Mandela now publicly proposing negotiation, President Botha on 31 January 1985 made a new offer to release him, discarding the banishment to Transkei condition and in its stead requiring that Mandela should renounce completely the use of violence for political purposes.

This offer advanced two goals, from Botha’s perspective. On the one hand, it made Botha seem reasonable (so that, by refusing the “renounce violence” condition, Mandela could be portrayed as in effect being “his own jailer”). On the other hand, it erected an insurmountable hurdle (rather, a brick wall) that at the time effectively blocked any possibility of negotiation between the ANC and the NP Government presided over by Botha. Because, PW knew full well that the condition he had set was not one that could conceivably be met by Mandela without losing all credibility and thus all relevance. Since Botha was firmly in the “prepare to shoot” camp, viewing settlement negotiations as appeasement and existentially dangerous, this was an indirect yet very effective means of ensuring that demands from within his own Afrikaner support base for settlement negotiations could in practice not progress, while himself appearing “reasonable”.

The first direct contact between Mr Mandela and a senior member of government occurred on 17 November 1985. On 3 November Mandela had been admitted to the Volkshospitaal in Cape Town for prostate surgery. His then wife, Winnie, had accordingly received permission to visit him in hospital, so that she flew from Johannesburg to Cape Town with that purpose. The minister then responsible for prisons, Kobie Coetsee, who was also the leader of the Free State NP, happened to be on the same flight and decided to speak with Winnie, who encouraged him to visit Mandela. Coetsee himself later explained (in interviews and accounts like Allister Sparks' reporting in *The New Yorker*, 1994) that he had an "intuition" not to meet Mandela behind bars for the first time—he wanted the encounter to feel more equal and dignified, treating him as "Mr. Mandela" rather than a prisoner.

Coetsee’s visit to Mandela in hospital had thus been an intuitive seizing of an opportunity, which had not been pre-approved by PW Botha; when Coetsee reported to Botha what had occurred, PW nevertheless accepted and instructed Coetsee to “stay in touch” with Mr Mandela.

Nelson Mandela wrote in “Long Walk to Freedom” that: “*That morning Kobie Coetsee dropped by the hospital unannounced … Though I acted as though this was the most normal thing in the world, I was amazed*.”

The upshot was that the negotiation-inclined ministers in PW cabinet such as Coetsee, Pik Botha and Chris Heunis could prevail upon PW Botha to (reluctantly) permit the Commonwealth’s Eminent Persons Group to meet with Mr Mandela in February 1986, to explore the potential for dialogue, and he was provided with a suit for the occasion.

As explained earlier in Chapter 5, the indications from Mr Mandela that he favoured negotiations and his efforts to bring that to realisation coincided with growing support in white – also Afrikaner – ranks for seeking a negotiated settlement coming from business, academia, the Church, and also the Afrikaner-Broederbond). This had been

given impetus by the highly negative fall-out from PW's "Rubicon" speech the year before, as well as by the growing unrest in the country that led to the declaration of a state of emergency, and by the increasingly painful impact of international sanctions, cultural and sports isolation, and the arms embargo on the South African economy, military capability, and psyche.

Nevertheless, PW Botha persisted in blocking all efforts at initiating negotiations. In the case of the 1986 the Commonwealth EPG mission, it was deliberately derailed by means of conducting simultaneous air strikes on the capitals of neighbouring states (see Chapter 5, section 5.6.2).

Following on Coetsee's courtesy call on him in hospital and his meeting with the Commonwealth EPG, Mandela wrote a short letter to Prisons Commissioner Lt Gen Willie Willemse, requesting a formal meeting with Min Coetsee to discuss "a matter of national importance" (i.e., the negotiation option) which Willemse passed on to Coetsee. When in July 1986 Mandela followed this up with a letter addressed to Coetsee himself, requesting a formal meeting, this led to Mandela being taken to the minister's official residence "Savernake" in Cape Town that same month. During this meeting, Mandela specifically raised the idea of "talks about talks" between the NP Government and the ANC.

At this time, Nelson Mandela was very concerned that his contacts with the government would become known to the external ANC and be misinterpreted by them. He had therefore instructed his lawyer George Bizos (with whom he had regular contact) to convey to the ANC-in-exile the reasons and goals behind his actions. Mandela had two other channels of contact with the outside world, apart from through his lawyers, Bizos and Ismail Ayob. The government had permitted him to communicate over the telephone with Lusaka, although his conversations were listened to. The other was "secret" communication managed by Mac Maharaj who had organised a clandestine electronic channel for messaging via the world-wide web (however, unbeknown to the ANC, this supposedly "secure" clandestine channel of theirs – which they also used for their "Operation Vula" – had from the start been broken into by the NIS).

Probably due to the meetings taking place with Mr Mandela at the end of 1985 and beginning of 1986, the Secretariat of the Sate Security Council had in 1986 prepared a position paper for consideration by the SSC, containing suggested conditions for his possible release from prison. This document is reflective of the ongoing discord in the security/intel-community about which strategy that government should adopt – preparing to shoot, or to settle?

The four conditions that the SSC Secretariat had identified in their position paper, demonstrates that at that stage the hard-line securocrats of the "total onslaught" persuasion still held sway. They had suggested that Mr Mandela could/should only be released under the following conditions:

- Time and the circumstances must be such that it would be in favour of the South African government to release Mandela;
- Mandela must be released outside the Southern African region (which Barnard called "stupid advice" but which clearly had been intended to hamper any possibility that he could serve as catalyst for negotiations between the ANC and Government)
- Mandela must be in a relatively physically bad situation, so that he will not be able to participate in politics for long after his release; and
- There should be a proactive communications action launched to appropriately spin Mandela's release.

From the foregoing it is clear that the hawks still held sway in the Military-dominated Secretariat, and that they saw Mr Mandela's eventual release not as imminent, nor as kindling negotiations, but purely to avoid the uproar that would ensue should he die in prison.

Due to PW Botha and the military's opposition to inclusive negotiations, for some two years no regular, structured contact with Nelson Mandela came about after his July 1986 meeting with Coetsee at the latter's residence. It was around this time that PW Botha said to NIS DG Niël Barnard that he (Botha) was coming to the conclusion that the only option left is to "go down hard-arsed", with Barnard then trying to convince him that there was indeed a better option (talking to Mandela and the ANC).

By May 1988 circumstances had become sufficiently difficult that PW at last accepted that the time had indeed come for regular talks with Mandela to, at a minimum, obtain clarity about what he had in mind regarding negotiations. This is what Barnard told John Carlin of the USA's Public Broadcasting System in an interview for their "*Frontline*" programme, about how Botha gave him the mandate: *"Dr. Barnard, we want you to meet Mr. Mandela now. There will be a team. Try to find out what you have been advocating for some time. Is it possible to find a peaceful settlement with the ANC, with this man Mandela? Try to find out what are his views on communism, and then try to find out – is Mr. Mandela and the ANC interested in a peaceful settlement? For we also have deep suspicions about what they would be interested in."*

In an interview with Padraig O'Malley on 7 September 1998, Barnard expanded somewhat on PW Botha's instructions to him. To Barnard, it had appeared quite logical that he as the head of the country's civilian intelligence agency would have been entrusted with such talks, also because of the close relationship of confidence he had with Botha (unlike what the case would later be, between himself and De Klerk). Furthermore, the NIS could ensure that the talks take place in secrecy, being covered by State Secrets legislation due to being classified as an NIS operation.

Barnard referred again to PW Botha predicating his instruction to Barnard by reminding him that he (Barnard) had been talking a lot about seeking political solutions, as well as about Mr Mandela having a critical role to play in that, so that Botha decided to task him with finding out Mr Mandela's thinking on three main topics: violence, the constitutional model he would favour, and communism. According to Barnard, Botha had said to him: "*Somebody will have to find out – is it possible to find a lasting chord of stability with Mr Mandela? He will have to be involved with somebody, and it will have to be ascertained (with regard to) three points:*

- *what is Mr Mandela's view about the role of so-called violence? How does he see the struggle and the future of the struggle? Is he prepared to accept a kind of cease-fire agreement before one can move into a period of discussion, negotiation?*
- *Secondly, what kind of political future does Mr Mandela see for the country? Is it a democratic one, what kind of a political future does he see? Broadly speaking the kind of model, the constitutional model. And then, coupled to that, the third critical point:*
- *what role does the so-called communist ideology play in his mindset?*

Furthermore, Botha wanted such talks to be held in the utmost secrecy, at the level of officials, without even his cabinet knowing about it. Using my training and experience as intelligence analyst to try and understand Botha's likely motivation for at long last mandating such talks – and this is purely my own personal estimation – one has to look at two factors: firstly, the much aggravated **circumstances** which then had come to prevail (besides the ongoing security situation in South Africa itself, from early 1988 the situation on the SWA/Namibia border with Angola had very seriously deteriorated, as will be shown below). Secondly, the political considerations that PW the politician had to juggle.

Starting with an analysis of the second (i.e., PW's political motivation for in May 1988 mandating secret in-prison talks with Mandela) and working backwards from the proven later-occurring facts, namely that he had heavily criticised FW de Klerk's 2 February 1990 announcement of the NP Government opting for inclusive negotiations over an open agenda, as well as PW later having campaigned for the "NO" side in the all-white referendum of 1992, it seems unlikely that Botha had in 1988 mandated Niël Barnard to lead talks with Mandela with any real, determined intention that his own (PW's) government would imminently initiate full negotiations with the ANC/SACP.

What is much more likely, is that the growing pressure in Afrikaner circles favouring seeking a negotiated settlement as strategic option (including from his own intelligence service, the NIS), had moved PW to want an "insurance policy" in his back pocket, so that – if later needed, through the "pro-settle" faction politically overcoming the "pro-shoot" faction – he could point towards the secret talks led by Barnard and state that: see, he had for some time already been exploring exactly that option.

In part thus fed by his own inquisitiveness about what exactly Mandela had in mind (with the Barnard mission therefore being primarily an intelligence-gathering one in PW's eyes) keeping it secret from even his own cabinet

indicated that PW Botha had not yet (or ever) been ready to be publicly seen, or even within his party, as amenable to true negotiations with the "communists", but wanted to position himself for in case some form of talking would indeed need to become Plan "B". This "insurance policy" interpretation is strengthened by what we will shortly show regarding a carefully worded yet intentionally highly ambiguous resolution that an unsuspecting State Security Council would be manipulated to adopt in July 1988.

### 10.4.2 THE RAPIDLY DETERIORATING MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTHERN ANGOLA AS CONTRIBUTING FACTOR – A TIMELINE

But back now to the rapidly deteriorating military situation in Southern Angola and Northern SWA/Namibia, which I believe played a significant role in persuading PW Botha in May 1988 to at last mandate the talks which Nelson Mandela had for the better part of the eighties been pleading for.

As explained earlier, Cuba's Fidel Castro had realised during a November 1987 meeting in Moscow that the USSR was intent on being rid of the burden of supporting the Angolan government against UNITA and the SADF, after the devastating defeats that the SADF had dealt FAPLA along the Lomba River over the course of the previous months. Castro understood full well that this would leave Cuba carrying the can on its own, which was logistically and financially impossible for Cuba to manage – so that withdrawing from Angola was his only realistic option. However, being seen to abandon the Angolans in perceived defeat would, to Castro's mind, have entailed too heavy a political price, both at home and in Africa. Therefore, he needed a strategy that would allow him to withdraw "with honour".

This strategy was built around two key elements: seeking a propaganda victory in the South-East of Angola by creating a military stalemate there which could then be portrayed as a heroic Stalingrad-type defence, and secondly, by heavily escalating and threatening an invasion of Northern SWA/N through a "surge" of sending in fresh elite Cuban troops and modern materiel to open a second front in South-Western Angola – thereby to force South Africa into a negotiated settlement of the Angolan and SWA/Nambian conflicts, which Castro could then present as a "mission accomplished" victory that made withdrawal simply a logical final homecoming after successfully having accomplished their mission.

From the **27th of November 1987** the Cubans had therefore begun to deploy to Angola a host of modern aircraft, air defence systems, armour, and artillery, plus elite units from their 50th Division (regulars, not conscripts, normally positioned around the American military enclave on the island of Cuba, Guantanamo Bay).

On **11 March 1988** a force of some 40,000 Cuban troops, supported by 30,000 Angolan troops and 3,000 SWAPO fighters began deploying south-westward toward the SWA/Namibian border opposite Ovamboland, creating a second front. They were under the command of Cuban general Leopoldo Cintra Frías (aka "Polo" – a General de División). Polo Cintra was a highly experienced veteran of the Cuban revolution and one of the designers of the highly effective defences that had stopped the three SADF assaults on the Tumpo Triangle.

This force included MIG-23ML fighter-bombers, which enjoyed the advantage of "forward firing" head-to-head capability (whereas the much older SAAF Mirages had to lock on from the rear), plus MIG-21 and Su-22 ground attack aircraft. According to the CIA's estimate at the time, there were between 60 and 70 such fixed-wing aircraft deployed to the new front, plus between 20 – 30 MI-24 Hind attack helicopters, all piloted by Cuba's best pilots. The force furthermore enjoyed an extensive modern air defence capability including SA-2, SA-3, SA-6, SA-8 and SA-13 SAM and ZSU-23-4 AAA systems plus supporting radars (including "Spoon Rest" early warning, the Barlock GC1, and Flat Face target-acquisition systems), so that they could extend cover across the southern Angolan and northern SWA/N air space. They also in record time developed two complete new forward air bases, well defended, at Cahama and Xangongo.

In this way, the SAAF was robbed of the air superiority it was accustomed to enjoy over the theatre of battle.

Polo Cintra also had an estimated 600 – 1,000 tanks at his disposal (CIA estimate: 800 pieces of heavy armour), including modern T-62s, plus some 400 pieces of light armour such as APC's, as well as a very substantial artillery

capacity of some 1,600 pieces including 122 mm D-30 field guns, M-46 130mm howitzers, and 122 mm BM-21 and 240 mm BM-24 multiple rocket launchers.

The Cubans, being aware (via the Soviets) of South Africa's nuclear capability – which had been developed with precisely such a foreign conventional military deployment in Southern Africa in mind as target – did not concentrate but divided their forces into highly mobile "Tactical Groups" (*Grupos Tácticos*), each typically consisting of a tank battalion, motorized infantry, and organic air defence.

On the **23rd of March**, after the third and last failed attempt by the SADF to advance in the east in the Tumpo Triangle (neighbouring Cuito Cuanavale), the SADF began withdrawing from south-eastern Angola, leaving just a small holding contingent.

It is important not to have any illusions about what had really transpired over the previous six months (i.e., from the Lomba battles to the Tumpo Triangle clashes), to understand what the strategic situation was in the immediate run-up to PW Botha's decision to at last permit official talks with Nelson Mandela.

Yes, it is true that the Cuban propaganda spin about their supposed brilliant defence of Quito Cuanavale was completely exaggerated. It is also true that the three battles along the Lomba had been decisive victories for the SADF.

But it is equally true that the assaults on the Tumpo Triangle had gone poorly. As the military historian Dr Leopold Scholtz (who was well disposed to the SADF and had been given full access to SANDF records) wrote in Chapter 10 of his book: "The Battle of Quito Cuanavale: A Tactical and Strategic Analysis": "*In this book we have described six representative battles fought between the SADF and Fapla during Operations Moduler, Hooper and Packer. The first three were won handsomely by the South Africans, while* ***they lost the last three dismally****"* (The last three referring to the Tumpo Triangle). What the lost battles had concretely brought home, were the practically insurmountable logistical problems (due in large measure to the arms embargo) that seriously hampered the SADF in executing long-rage, long term operations, and the equally grave implications of the SAAF having lost air superiority over the theatre of battle, whilst the ground forces lacked effective anti-air defence capability against enemy aircraft.

On **18 April 1988** a SWATF unit, 101 Battalion, was ambushed near Chipeque by Cuban elements from Xangongo. This first clash between the South Africans and Polo Cintra's newly introduced Cuban forces ended with the loss of two SWA/SA soldiers dead and eleven wounded. The opening of the 2nd front had caught the SADF by surprise, and there were only very limited forces immediately available with which to counter such a conventional threat (essentially 101 & 32 battalions, which were lightly equipped, due to being essentially geared towards counterinsurgency). The situation thus made the exploration of a negotiated settlement of the conflict in SWA/Angola all the more urgent.

On **3 May 1988** the first round of tripartite talks between the foreign ministers of South Africa, Angola and Cuba (facilitated by the Americans) took place in London; the Cubans adopted an extremely aggressive stance, directly threatening to invade SWA/Namibia if South Africa refused to accept their proposals – to which the South Africans responded that if the Cubans should try, that would be Cuba's "darkest day". (One can be sure that this Cuban threat to invade was immediately relayed to Pretoria, right up to PW Botha).

On **4 May 1988**, south of Donguena, Cuban units ambushed elements of 101 Battalion, which – with twenty Casspirs and two trucks – had been sent forward to occupy Donguena. The Cubans destroyed or damaged four Casspirs. The South Africans withdrew at dusk having lost seven men and one captured, Sergeant Johan Papenfus. The aggressive posture adopted by the Cubans, the sheer size of their force, plus the advanced type of weaponry that they were deploying ever closer to the SWA/Namibia border, fitted better with an invasion as a possible objective, rather than that it was merely defensive of Angolan territory. It is generally acknowledged today that – given the lack of SADF defensive capability against conventional assault in that sector at that time – had the Cubans then invaded it would have been very difficult to stop them. Which, again, elevated the importance of talking rather than shooting.

On **13 May 1988** an urgent bilateral meeting was held in Brazzaville (Congo) between the governments of Angola and South Africa. During these talks Pik Botha strongly complained to the Angolans about this major Cuban thrust, which he said that the South African Government was deeply concerned about. Pik Botha warned the Angolans that, if the opposing forces came too close to each other, then it would require only a small spark to set off an explosion.

Pik Botha also sent a message to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, via the Bavarian prime minister Franz Josef Strauss, warning that the southward advance of Cuban troops was causing a serious problem just when there was genuine hope for peace in the region.

On **16 May 1988**, two Recce units were respectively airlifted to an area south of Techipa and close to Xangongo. They both found numerous tank tracks and the same extensive, layered trench systems as earlier encountered at Cuito Cuanavale. Consequently, a decision was made to establish a new task force with the specific aim to defend the sector and protect the strategically important water scheme at Calueque. However, this would take some time to implement.

As a result of the worsening military situation, the architect of the SADF victories in the battles along the Lomba River, Roland de Vries, was urgently summoned to SADF HQ in May 1988 and instructed by Maj Gen Klopper (the then Chief of Staff: Operations) to start preparing a battle plan for countering the new conventional military threat. From this emerged Operation Hilti. According to the assessment done by De Vries, from the terrain appreciation perspective it was evident that Cahama and Xangongo would have to be taken, because this was where the main infrastructure and forward airfields of the Cubans lay. Other necessary targets included Lubango and the port of Namibe, to impede Cuban logistics – so that the theatre was roughly defined as extending between the Cunene in the west, the Techamutete high ground in the north and the Kavango River in the east – an area of roughly 250km north-south and 800km east-west. The basic concept of Hilti and its three sub-operations was to destroy the Cubans *in situ* in Southern Angola (pre-empting an invasion of SWA/Namibia) and conquer the designated area in 21 days, to then hand the territory over to UNITA to hold and administer.

If one asks today: what and when was the moment of truth, the moment of ultimate choice between the strategies of “preparing to shoot” and “preparing to settle”, then this was it. Due to it having become decision time about what to do about Cuban 2nd front.

The stakes were as high as could be – both in the potentially positive, or the negative sense. If, on the “positive” side, the SADF could absolutely, visibly and undeniably defeat and destroy "Polo" Cintra’s forces, then that would have had a massive psychological impact across Africa. White South Africa's "bubble of invincibility" would have arisen reinvigorated from the ashes of Operation Savannah. Furthermore, the highly damaging Quito Cuanavale “Stalingrad” myth (of the “Boere” defeated and forced to withdraw), would have been impossible for Castro to spin.

But, achieving such a total victory over the Cuban 2nd front would have required a massive assault, both in terms of the sheer size of land that would have needed to be conquered in order to envelope the Cubans, cut off escape and block their logistics, and in terms of the number of men and materiel that South Africa would have needed to commit.

PW Botha and the SADF brass thus had their opportunity for a "re-match" against the Cubans. If victorious, it could have decisively demonstrated that their "shoot" option was indeed capable of bringing the desired psychological and political results.

But – it would have required a huge escalation and a willingness to run enormous risks. What kind of counter-escalation could result? With what kind of measures would the world react? Would it be possible to get such an operation quickly over and done with, or would it turn into stalemate, similar to what the Tumpo Triangle just had become, leading then to debilitating attrition? If we couldn’t manage Tumpo in three attempts, how would we achieve such a vastly larger and more difficult objective? What effect would it have on the economy and on maintaining internal stability, if that many Citizen Force reserve members had to be kept in Angola for a prolonged period of time? Would we in the end be forced to resort to nuclear weapons, and what would that then unleash?

Most crucially: did we actually have the means to hand with which to execute and sustain such an assault?

It was, therefore, a make-or-break decision for PW to take. Here was the big conventional military show-down that so many in the Army had all along believed was inevitable. Or, at least, a very significant foretaste of it – if PW decided to try and call Castro's bluff. Thereby either re-establishing visibly, undeniably, white South Africa's military dominance for all to see – or, disastrously, achieving the exact opposite...

Fortunately, common sense prevailed.

The offensive-based Operation Hilti planning was shelved, and the defence-focused Operation Handbag was developed, aimed at preparing a killing ground in the vicinity of Tsumeb, to try there to stop the Cubans (if in fact they would invade).

In the end it wasn't the "liberal" New Nats or the "airy-fairy" NIS or the DFA "dandies" who forced this decision – it was the SADF's own Logistics and Air Force who stated unequivocally that they simply did not possess the means with which to provide the essential support that Roland de Vries's well-laid Hiltu plans would have required, as pre-condition for its possible success (which reasoning I will go over in some detail soon, when I will show what the Army and SAAF actually had submitted to the State Security Council, and what the SADF's own assessment working group had found).

This was the moment when it became clear that the only realistic option remaining, was to settle.

One can safely assume that, at the time when PW Botha mandated Niël Barnard in the latter part of May 1988 to lead the small contact team designated to engage secretly with Nelson Mandela, he – as state president and commander-in-chief of the SADF – was fully aware of the seriousness of the security situation on the SWA/Namibian border. He knew that his cabinet had already approved that South Africa joins the Tripartite negotiations. He also would have known that this could have but one logical outcome: that South Africa would need to revert to what a prior cabinet had already approved a decade earlier, in the last days of John Vorster's premiership, namely having accepted the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 435 – with as inevitable result, South Africa's complete withdrawal from Angola and SWA/N, and with the parties in SWA/N negotiating a non-racial, majority rule constitution leading to the independence of the Territory as a unitary state under UN auspices.

There is, unfortunately, still today a lot of myth and wishful thinking around, about white South Africa's military capabilities back then. Yes, we were definitely the most capable force on the continent. Yes, we were often tactically brilliant, and we designed and built some great new weaponry. Our troops were well-trained, disciplined, brave, and inventive. Some of our field commanders are to this day recognised as having been among the best in the world. If ever the Cubans would have tried to invade, our men would certainly have given excellent account of themselves.

However, bravery and tactical brilliance cannot guarantee success in modern war. The strategic competence of your top generals, and the means you possess with which to fight, and keep on fighting, are on the long run more decisive…

Exactly how serious the situation was, became publicly apparent on **26 May 1988** (i.e., the very day after the first conversation between Mandela and Barnard's team), when the chief of the SADF announced that "heavily armed Cuban and SWAPO forces, integrated for the first time, have moved south within 60km of the Namibian border". One day later, on **27 May 1988**, the SWA Administrator-General publicly announced that Cuban Air Force planes were overflying Namibian territory. (On the ***NONGQAI*** "grapevine" we have learnt that Niël Barnard at that time allegedly had told a doctor treating a family member and who had asked him why everybody in high circles seemed so much on edge, that the Cubans actually had overflown the Union Buildings as well).

On **8 June 1988** the SADF called up for active duty, 140,000 men of the Citizen Force reserves – by far the largest call-up ever – giving further indication of just how serious the situation had become. On the **27th of June 1988**, a combined Angolan FAPLA-Cuban force launched an unexpected ground attack against the SADF positions at the

Calueque Water Scheme, followed by an air attack with 11 MIG-23ML fighter-bombers. The first wave of enemy aircraft bombed the bridge and sluice gates, killing a South African soldier. Another wave of MIGs bombed the pump and generator station, while a third wave destroyed the water pipeline to Ovamboland and killed a further 11 South African soldiers alongside their Buffel troop carrier. This obliged the SADF to withdraw from Calueque.

So, what do we know today about the actual state of the military situation in May 1988, when the original offensive plan, Ops Hilti, was conceived? Let us look at what the SADF itself had passed on to the Chief of the Defence Force and to the State Security Council. We know this now, thanks to the extensive research of the renown military historian Dr Leopold Scholtz, who was given full access to the SADF archives. As said before, and as is evidenced by his book: "The SADF in the Border War", Scholtz was sympathetic to the SADF and definitely not a basher of the security forces or the government of the day – but he was objective and analytical, and did not shy away from reporting facts that showed the SADF's weaknesses.

Because of the many myths and wishful thinking about imagined SADF invincibility that still persist today (as if the negotiation option was chosen without reason, unnecessarily – even treasonously – as if white South Africa could militarily have prevailed into the far distant future) I will now quote extensively from the original SADF source documents revealed by Dr. Scholtz's detailed research. Any reader will see from it how objectively impossible the situation had become – not because we "lost at Quito Cuanavale" (as Castro made the world believe), but because of the debilitating impact of the arms embargo on our war-fighting means and capability, for which there was no quick solution and which would – in the eyes of the SADF itself – had spelt doom, if we had further over-extended ourselves…

Dr Scholtz wrote that the then Chief of the SADF (Gen Jannie Geldenhuys) had appointed a high-level working group under the chairmanship of Brigadier General Eddie Webb, to assess the planning done for Ops Hilti. This advisory group in due course reported back to Gen Geldenhuys (HSAW en HOps: Werksdokument 22: Waardering van Situasie waar Onderhandelinge om KTO Afbreek) that "***the military balance of power is at present in the enemy's favour in terms of weaponry and force levels***". The group advised that, in the case of a large-scale SADF invasion of Angola as envisaged in Hilti, South Africa would be branded as the aggressor. It had to be anticipated that heavy losses would be endured, while in the advisory group's assessment there was only a "***limited chance to be successful***".

Which is why, on 29 June 1988, Hilti was replaced by a defensive plan, Operation Handbag, about which Dr Scholtz wrote: "*The new defensive plan, therefore, looked much better. Roland De Vries summarised it: Lure him in, delay his march in the direction of Tsumeb, create space for manoeuvre, make him suffer losses, grind him down logistically and create bigger military-strategic, political and operational freedom of action*."

The reasons why the SADF's own advisory group found as they did, and why the State Security Council did not authorise a pre-emptive strike against the Cubans (as envisaged in Hilti) speak clearly from the submissions made by the Army (informed above all by Logistics) and by the SAAF. It is worth quoting here, fully, from Dr. Scholtz's revealing research (dealing first with the Army, and then the SAAF's submission to the SSC).

"*From top-secret documents in the SANDF Documentation Centre, it is clear that at this stage the South Africans were simply not able to invade Angola with such a big force. They had the numbers, but, beyond that, the army and air force were exhausted. The army reported to the State Security Council (SSC) that there were "knelpunte" (bottlenecks) with regard to tank and G-5 spare parts, fuel tankers, lorries, signal equipment and all sorts of vehicle spares. These would not be solved until well into 1989. Moreover, intensive offensive operations with two brigades could not be logistically supported (and then only for two months) before the beginning of December 1988. To send in three brigades would not be possible before July 1989, and then also for two months only*." (As I had earlier mentioned, part of the problem was that no new gun barrels were available for the in any case limited number of G5 howitzers then at the Army's disposal, which guns had worn out theirs during the preceding operations in south-eastern Angola; also, tank tracks had to be replaced every 1,000 kilometres, with the existing tanks in theatre having already clocked up around 1,500km; plus, the experimental de-mining "plofadders" weren't working effectively, and the ground forces lacked proper anti-air defences due to the Cactus system not being suited to bush operations).

Dr. Scholtz continued: "*The air force was even worse off. The SSC was informed that the SAAF had only meagre forces available: **4** Mirage F1CZ fighters, **7** Mirage F1AZ ground-attack aircraft, **4** Mirage IIICZ fighters, **3** Buccaneer bombers, **3** Canberra bombers, and **10** Impala II light ground-attack aircraft. Of these, the Mirage IIICZ was so obsolete that it could be utilised for base protection only, while the Canberra was also obsolete and too vulnerable. The Impala was not equipped for a high-intensity war. (The new Cheetah fighter would not be operational until 1989.)*

*"The SAAF had no radar-jamming capability to speak of, and the enemy's extensive radar coverage of southern Angola and even northern SWA, made surprise attacks very difficult, if not impossible. Furthermore, only 20 drop tanks were available for the Mirage F1s, severely limiting their range. There were only nine kits for kicking out "chaff" (bundles of aluminium foil designed to confuse radar) and flares (for misleading enemy radar and heat-seeking missiles), leaving the South African aircraft vulnerable.*

*"In addition, there was a shortage of flight personnel. For instance, 3 Squadron (Mirage F1CZs) had only six operational pilots and 2 Squadron (Mirage IIICZs) eight. The cherry on the cake was that these force levels would be available only on D-Day. Battle damage and unserviceability would lessen the levels by 10% per day.*

*"The SAAF bluntly warned: 'The SAAF attack capability is insufficient to neutralise FAPA [the Angolan air force] effectively on the ground.' The final recommendation was not pleasant: 'The small numbers of fighters available, and the dense radar and missile networks which make our aircraft very vulnerable, mean that we cannot neutralise the enemy air force on the ground. **Thus, we should at all cost avoid a confrontation**. If this is not possible, and a confrontation becomes unavoidable, we should go over to the offensive in the knowledge that the Air Force's offensive capability will be neutralised within a short time'*."

In short, our men were good – very good. But again (as with Operation Savannah) we would be far overmatched when it came to critical hardware and logistical support. And to his credit, PW Botha had always insisted that the six war-ready nuclear devices we had available, should never be actually utilised in anger, but must serve uniquely as deterrent. Thus, the harsh reality is that the SADF itself understood that South Africa needed to negotiate a peaceful settlement in SWA/Angola – and, logically, if the SADF couldn't go in and wipe out a Cuban threat to SWA/N, then it was highly unlikely that it could do so for South Africa itself, with its likely far larger challenges.

So that, effectively, the "shoot" option was finally dead, with only the "settle" option remaining – both for SWA/N and South Africa itself (unfortunately, with ten crucial years and much bargaining power now irretrievably lost, as well as funds sorely needed elsewhere, and with no preparation for negotiation as yet put in place).

By May 1988, in parallel with the worsening military situation, the political groundswell in favour of negotiating a settlement was also building strongly. PW Botha was also aware (thanks to regular personal briefings he had been receiving from Jacob "Clasie" Classen of the NIS analytical branch), that the evolving series of British-sponsored talks being held at rural hideaways in the UK – the so-called Mells Park process – was gaining traction and substance. These talks were being held between influential Afrikaners from civil society and top ANC leaders. During the February 1988 meeting in England, Thabo Mbeki for the first time participated on behalf of the ANC and had made it clear to his Afrikaner interlocutors (mostly from academia) that the ANC indeed remained open to the idea of negotiating a political solution to the country's internal conflict.

The type of Afrikaners participating in the Mells Park process would further have demonstrated to PW Botha that there was a growing groundswell building among his own political support base behind seeking a negotiated settlement as preferred strategic option. Which resonated exactly with what Barnard and the NIS had been insistently counselling since the early 1980s – Barnard had opined in his autobiography "*Secret Revolution*" that in his view, the NIS's greatest contribution to strategic insight was that the South African government should negotiate while the balance of power was still such that talks will take place between equals. "*You cannot negotiate with your back against the wall".* If it's no longer a case of more-or-less equal interlocutors, then negotiation often becomes one-sided with in reality only the terms of surrender being discussed. Because the scale was increasingly tilting against white South Africa, the NIS believed that there should therefore be no more delay in seeking a peace

settlement – to prevent, Barnard said, that the Union Buildings in Pretoria eventually be taken by a riotous mob, in the way that the Bastille was taken in Paris two centuries earlier.

Taken cumulatively, one can thus understand why PW Botha at this specific moment in time (May 1988) finally decided to mandate the secret talks between the Barnard team and Mr Mandela – although doing so cannot be taken as proof of Botha (belatedly) having converted entirely from "shoot" to "settle" (from PW's perspective, mandating the talks with Mandela was a tactical, exploratory move, to garner intelligence, and intended also as a personal political insurance policy).

However, as we shall soon see, Barnard and his team would seize the opportunity and would, from the word go, expand and deepen the talks with Mandela well beyond merely intelligence gathering, treating it as **pre-negotiation** in which consensus was reached on a number of "fundamental issues" that would prove determinant when the actual negotiations and transition process started under FW de Klerk.

This will become very evident as we review in the next chapter how the actual negotiations and transition unfolded from 1990 on, but is also clearly encapsulated by this statement of Barnard to Padraig O'Malley in their 7 September 1998 interview: *"…there's another very fundamental point and that is that at the … time when Mr de Klerk took over,* ***the more critical and tough and difficult issues had been settled to a large extent.****" This was repeated in Barnard's interview with John Carlin of PBS: "(at) the time when Mr de Klerk took over, the more critical and tough and difficult issues had been settled to a large extent… The difficult things (were) settled prior to Mr Mandela's release* … (the pre-negotiations phase conducted between Mandela and the Barnard team) ***was a very important phase of almost finalising a lot of these matters, finalising at least the initial stages****.*

In Barnard's mind, the task to conduct "exploratory talks" had clearly from the outset become confabulated with conducting "pre-negotiations", which – by the end of the talks between him and Mandela – had already largely settled fundamental issues (such as majority rule) and also laid foundations for the procedural side of the negotiation process (1-on-1 between the ANC and NP, secretly, via "The Channel"). Thus, both regarding the eventual settlement's content and the manner in which the peace negotiations ended up being conducted, these "pre-negotiations" would prove to have been highly significant, as we shall see in more detail when the actual negotiations and transition are discussed later, in Chapter 11.

### 10.4.3 PW BOTHA ENTRUSTS DR NIËL BARNARD WITH LEADING THE IN-PRISON TALKS WITH MR MANDELA

Due to the ANC's then already decades-old, deep-running internal divisions (broadly speaking, between the moderates such as Thabo Mbeki in London, and the radical, hawkish cadres in Lusaka), it was clear that the only leader of the wider movement who would have sufficient stature to allow him to take the entire movement and its public support base along with him on whichever policy path he would choose, was the incarcerated Mr Nelson Mandela. He was the only one that could conceivably convince the ANC's militant radicals to accept negotiations for a new democratic dispensation (which implicitly would require compromise) as opposed to their long-standing commitment to a "winner takes all" strategy of armed revolution, aimed at establishing a Marxist "people's republic".

Only Mandela, uniquely, would be able to do this, since he actually had been the founder of the "armed struggle" and of the ANC's military wing, MK (Umkhonto We Sizwe – meaning: the spear of the nation). He also enjoyed world-wide credibility thanks to the high-profile "Release Mandela" campaign (replete with huge pop concerts), that had been launched during the 80's by the International Left. This meant that Mandela could not be condemned by the radicals as a "sell-out" for opting to negotiate a constitutional settlement.

When President Botha in May 1988 called in Niël Barnard and told him that he wished Barnard to lead a small team to meet secretly with Mr Mandela and explore with the ANC stalwart the possibility of a negotiated settlement of the conflict that was tearing the country apart, Barnard was very clear to Botha about what he and the NIS believed this would eventually result in. After all, the intelligence that he had seen crossing his desk over the course of a decade, had left him with no illusions about the outcome that had to be anticipated. Accordingly, he told PW Botha that everyone needed to be aware of, and be prepared for, what Barnard then already understood and regarded as the inevitable end result of initiating such secret talks with Mandela – namely, a Black majority

government with Mr Mandela as president of the country. According to Barnard he had told Botha: "*We just have to realise fully what we are in for when we begin to negotiate with Nelson Mandela. The eventual outcome is inevitable and will be a majority government, with him as the President."* To which PW Botha allegedly responded that he understood this very well (according to Barnard, in his memoire).

Botha's instructions were that Barnard should report directly to him (and him alone) on the progress of the talks, which had to be conducted in the strictest secrecy – not even the cabinet ministers were to know about it. The team would consist of Barnard and Louw from the NIS, and from the Justice department its DG Fanie van der Merwe and the head of the prisons service, General Willie Willemse (Prisons then was part of the portfolio of the Ministry of Justice).

### 10.4.4 WHAT WERE BARNARD'S VIEWS ON MANDELA, THE ANC, AND NEGOTIATING A SETTLEMENT?

So, what were Dr Niël Barnard's views about the situation that the country found itself in in May 1988, and what role did he believe that the ANC and Mr Mandela specifically, could (and should) play in finding a political solution?

With what mind-set and assumptions did Barnard approach his task?

In an interview with John Carlin of the American channel PBS on 7 September 1988 Barnard stressed: "*This is a critical and a very fundamental point – we (NIS) were very much convinced that there was, in the long run, only one solution for our country, and that was to find a political settlement within the country. The important point is there was a lot of difference within the South African bureaucracy, between the so-called security establishment. On the one hand, the National Intelligence Service and on the other hand, some people, specifically in the military ... the police as well, who deep down* ***believed that we have to fight it out*** *in some way or another. Which [we] at the NIS believed was the wrong approach and the wrong way to go about that. From very early on, we took the view that a political settlement is the only answer to the problems of this country. …*

"*There was, in our minds, never the slightest doubt. This is the man (Mandela). If you cannot find a settlement with him, then any settlement will be out.*

*"Obviously in our mind, from an intelligence perspective looking at the history, looking at the whole development of Mr. Mandela ... it was quite clear that he had to play a pivotal role. The only way to tackle that was to start talking in some way or another with Mr. Mandela. I cannot recall the exact date ... but I would say as early as 1982-1983, in person, I started discussions at the time with President Botha, the prime minister at the time, that we have to find a negotiated settlement. We have to find a way out of increasing civil conflict...*

"*The historical divide, not only within the country, not only within our bureaucracy, but also within government, was so fundamental at the time ... it would have been almost impossible to have a kind of public knowledge of about what was going on ... At the beginning of the '80s, it was almost impossible in certain circles, in government circles, even to start to discuss the possibility of finding a negotiated settlement.*

*"Obviously, you would have to talk to the real leaders, the real leaders being those who have been arrested in the Rivonia Trial, etc. Obviously, Mr. Mandela playing a very pivotal role."*

Barnard repeated this sentiment in his interview with Padraig O'Malley (on the same day as Carlin's): "…*in the end there is only one solution in this country and that will be a political solution.* ***There is no way to fight it out****. We will have to find a political solution. Inside this country there are a number of people, many of them who don't enjoy fundamental political rights. We will have to change that, and we will have to find a political answer… You will have to find a political answer. There is only one answer in the long run and that's a political one".*

(Question by PO'M): *"Why did you come to that conclusion?"*

Barnard: *"Because quite obviously there is no way in which a minority of people, for endless decades to come, can impose their will on the majority of people in the country. It's as easy as that."*

*"I gradually became more and more convinced that that is the only way out and that's the reason why from as early as 1984/85/86 in interaction between ourselves and the government at the time we (NIS) clearly indicated there is only one way out and that is to find a political settlement. Some way or another we will have to find that and in the long run a final settlement including the leadership core of the strongest political forces, at that moment not represented in government circles, will be of absolute importance. Without that it will never work. And against that background started the whole issue of starting discussions with Mr Mandela when he was in prison."*

*"It was a real conviction that it will not be in the interests of this country to have a wasteland. As a country - who will be interested in inheriting a wasteland, for that matter? Shall we try to fight it out so to speak? One must find another way out of this."*

In my own mind there's no doubt that the assessment by Barnard and the NIS was entirely correct about the historical inevitability – and thus, the urgent necessity – of engaging in settlement negotiations. Modern history after WW2 amply proves this. One can but ask: what were those who had been advocating "shoot" rather than "settle", thinking? Given the historic proof that even the mightiest forces on earth could no longer suppress indigenous nationalist aspirations?

The UK couldn't hold India. The Dutch couldn't hold Indonesia. Neither France nor the mighty USA could hold Vietnam…

Britain and France had to let go of all their African colonies after the Suez debacle of 1956.

In Algeria – probably the best comparison with South Africa, in terms of broadly similar demographic proportions – the 1.1 million French settlers could not resist the aspirations of the some nine million Arab speakers, despite the settlers having the full, unconstrained backing of the French Army, whilst the indigenous nationalists only had Egypt as backer (Russia had not been involved).

Portugal couldn't hold its colonies, Rhodesia couldn't hold, South Africa couldn't hold its "5th province", SWA/Namibia.

Which left only white South Africa as literally the "last man standing" of the previous century's colonial relics. How could it have been imagined by some that white SA would somehow have been able to hold militarily, when no-one else could – and that, with no-one from abroad backing us and most of the world actually being vehemently against the white government and purposely strangling it?

Thus, the key issue became: since we have no other choice but to opt for settlement negotiations, we logically need someone to negotiate with. Someone and some organisation credible, legitimate and substantive (with proper organisational structure, and able to take the masses with it). Otherwise, without such a counterpart, talking about seeking a negotiated settlement would be mere wasted words.

By May 1988, at the end of the "lost decade", it was obvious that the only conceivable such counterpart was the ANC, with Mr Mandela as leader.

### 10.4.5. HOW, WHEN, AND WHERE THE PRE-NEGOTIATIONS WITH MR MANDELA STARTED

Prisoner 46/664, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela (condemned to life imprisonment in June 1964 after the Rivonia Trial) was in May 1988 still incarcerated at Pollsmoor Prison outside Cape Town. Accordingly, the Barnard team's first meeting with him took place in the office of the CO of the prison, on the afternoon of 25 May 1988, with Mandela dressed in standard blue prison overalls.

According to Barnard's later account of that first meeting, he informed Mr Mandela that they were meeting with him at the personal behest of President Botha. As related in Barnard's memoir, he then explained that everyone realises that the country is on the brink of a violent revolution, which they needed to try and stop by means of reaching an understanding. He continued by stating what he said the government saw as the two main premises upon which such a political solution should be based: "*On the one hand,* ***the acceptance of black people's fair***

***and realistic demand for one person, one vote in a unitary state****. On the other hand, the acceptance of white people's legitimate concerns about a majority government with unbridled power in a political dispensation in which the interests of whites, and those of other minority groups, could be trampled*."

Barnard concluded by typifying the discussions to be held with Mandela as being of a clarifying nature, but conducted at the highest level, with the aim of finding out whether the two parties, the Government and the ANC, were capable of reaching an understanding on these cardinal matters.

In less than a week, on the 1st of June 1988, the next meeting took place, in the home of Lt Gen Willemse on the Pollsmoor grounds, where Mrs Elsie Willemse had prepared dinner for them. Barnard tended to speak Afrikaans when addressing Mr Mandela, because he didn't trust his own command of English to be sufficient for ensuring consistent clarity in such high-stakes discussions. Mandela understood Afrikaans perfectly well and also wanted to make clear that he and his movement did know and understand the anti-imperialist history of the Afrikaner – that the two nationalist movements in essence shared the same aspirations. According to Barnard's recollection (the conversations had obviously been recorded by the NIS) Mandela at one stage had asked: "*How can you, who have fought more than one war of liberation yourself, not understand our desire for freedom? Remember, we have great respect for the Boer generals and have all read Gen Christiaan de Wet's book, 'The Battle Between Boer and Brit'. It's almost like a textbook for us*."

Barnard would later identify what he believed had up till then been bedevilling the possibility of the NP and ANC reaching agreement: "*There were three stumbling blocks in the way of a political agreement: the ANC's use of violence; the influence of the Communist Party within the ANC, and fears about the abuse of power and the constitutional guarantees that would be necessary to allay these fears".* Accordingly, he described the objective with the Mandela talks as: *"The plan was to get Mandela talking so we could get a sense of his thinking and what his plan of action was."*

Nelson Mandela, for his part, was initially primarily focused on PW Botha's demand for him to foreswear the use of violence for political ends – in "*Long Walk to Freedom*: Mandela stated: "*The first issue to arise was in many ways the most crucial, and that was the armed struggle. We spent a number of months discussing it. They insisted that the ANC must renounce violence and give up the armed struggle before the government would agree to negotiations – and before I could meet President Botha."* (As we shall see through his later actions, Barnard in fact had from the outset understood full well that demanding that Mandela renounce violence would completely destroy his credibility among his own supporters, and thus that it would make him irrelevant and ineffective in any attempt to kindle negotiations; also, that the same applied to demanding of Mandela and the ANC to de-couple from the SACP).

For the sake of better privacy and convenience, Mr Mandela was soon moved to a small, secluded villa (replete with own swimming pool) on the grounds of the Victor Verster agricultural prison – now called Drakenstein – in the picturesque wine and fruit-growing valley between Paarl and Franschhoek. The NIS completely re-furnished and equipped this house within two days, and the Prison Service provided Mr Mandela with a butler (a white prison officer, who he would later retain as his official butler during his presidency).

In later years Mr Mandela would replicate exactly this house and its furnishings as vacation home for himself at his birthplace in the Eastern Cape, because he said that he had come to know it so well that he could find his way around it in the dark.

Mr Mandela was provided with an own telephone line to facilitate his contact with his comrades, and he could also invite visitors from outside (family, politicians and diplomats of his choice) to come and see him there. Because of his close relationship of trust with the other also then still-imprisoned members of the Rivonia Trial group such as Walter Sisulu, Ahmed Kathrada and Raymond Mhlaba (who were still being held in Pollsmoor Prison) special arrangements were made to allow these inmates to regularly visit Mr Mandela at his villa.

One of Mr Mandela's visitors was Mrs Helen Suzman, the redoubtable progressive member of parliament. When they discussed the violence in Natal province between ANC and IFP supporters, Mr Mandela lamented that his

old comrades of the Rivonia group had approved his idea to invite Prince Buthelezi of the IFP to visit him, but that the ANC in Lusaka had refused to authorise such a meeting.

To prepare Mr Mandela for the world that awaited him (after more than two decades of incarceration) Mr Mandela was taken on anonymous orientation trips across the length and breadth of the Cape Peninsula – walking on beaches, visiting the city centre and suburbs, and seeing how everyday life had evolved.

At the beginning of July 1988 the NIS, with the support and knowledge of PW Botha, piloted a craftily worded formal resolution which the State Security Council routinely adopted on 5 July 1988 (although unaware of its real purpose, nor aware of the talks initiated with Mr Mandela). This resolution served as a bureaucratic "insurance policy" – i.e., as cover for the NIS with regard to the secret discussions with Mandela and the ANC, if they should later be confronted about this by the SSC or cabinet. The resolution read as follows: "*The Security Services and the Prison Service must continuously study the Mandela issue and remain in touch with the situation surrounding the ANC leadership*." (This same stratagem of crafting an innocent-looking resolution was employed in August 1989 to gain a similar "insurance policy" for the first secret NIS meeting with the external ANC; then acting president FW de Klerk was at that meeting for the first time in the SSC chair, but he was not informed by the NIS about their real intentions with the resolution – with lasting negative consequences for the relationship and trust between De Klerk and Barnard).

Mr Mandela had his own "insurance policy". He understood and accepted that the villa and his communications were under NIS surveillance – in a sense it benefited him, because it established a record of what he had been discussing (should he later be accused by some on his own side to have "sold out").

Something that caused some wry mirth (when Barnard and Louw learnt about it through this surveillance) was Mandela's insistence to his comrades that the ANC urgently needed to start preparing for fast-approaching negotiations. Mandela stressed that, in his estimation, the government was well ahead of the ANC in this regard and that it had eager, well-trained, and thoroughly prepared people at the ready. As Barnard later remarked in his memoire: "*If only he had known that this was not the case! Because not even the Cabinet was aware of the secret talks. And, because most of them could not or would not read the signs of the times, there was no question yet of such preparation".*

The objective of the talks between the Barnard-led team and Mr Mandela as stated by PW Botha was not to negotiate in detail the eventual constitutional dispensation for the country – Barnard, in any event, had well understood that any attempt to have done that, would clearly have been undemocratic and thus entirely inappropriate. Constitutional issues such as federalism were therefore not debated.

Nevertheless, what had been mutually agreed was that Mr Mandela could not and would not be released into a political vacuum, so that prior consensus on some of the most fundamental political issues indeed had to be reached with him. One such issue that Mr Mandela had insisted on from the start, was the key principle of full political rights for Black people and thus, explicitly, of majority rule. According to Barnard, their reply to this was: *"We fully understand this and accept it."*

The other fundamental issues that Barnard's team and Mr Mandela reached agreement on, related more to how the coming process of negotiation needed to be conducted, and by whom. As Barnard explained: *"…a clear understanding soon developed between us and Mandela: that the Government and the ANC would be the undisputed main players in the talks about the future of the country. 'I don't care how many parties are included in the negotiations,' was Mandela's response. "I want to negotiate with the NP, and it is clear that the ANC is the thorn in the NP's flesh. What it comes down to is that the NP and the ANC must talk to each other and negotiate."*

The consensus reached between Mandela and Barnard on this point would critically influence the course that the "true" negotiations in fact would procedurally take, in terms of the nature of the process – especially from 1992 on – and we will be coming back to it in the next chapter when we deal with the negotiation phase as such.

Barnard continued: *"Another critical aspect on which consensus was reached was that neither the Government nor the ANC should act in such a way as to undermine each other's role and influence in the negotiation process. This would make the settlement process infinitely more difficult. We also agreed that the leading players in what is by nature a fragile and vulnerable process must work together to ensure that party political opportunists, fifth columnists in the security forces and foreign do-gooders do not hijack the process and ruin it."*

This consensus would become the eventual basis upon which the FW de Klerk government refrained from insisting on Mr Mandela renouncing violence or breaking ties with the SACP and MK – knowing that, doing so, would completely undermine any possibility of him exerting a moderating influence during the negotiation process.

Another procedural aspect about which consensus was reached with Mr Mandela was about the need for secrecy during the negotiations. As Barnard would later emphasize in his interview with Padraig O'Malley: *"**... I firmly believe that if you have such a divided country there is just no way in which you can take the initial steps forward if you don't do that in total secrecy. I am absolutely convinced about that..**. President Botha had members in his Cabinet who were genetically unable to keep news like that for themselves and Mr Pik Botha whom you've interviewed is a very classic example. Can you think that (if) Pik Botha would come to know that secret negotiations were started with Mandela that he will not in two minutes, even if you threaten him with the guillotine, will not start phoning his friends in the Washington Post immediately? And that would immediately have put us under a hell of a lot of pressure, both the old government and obviously the ANC. If you read about old style diplomacy, it's quite clear that the more difficult fundamental issues have been solved behind closed doors. We are taking transparency too far in the modern world, we are going to pay a hell of a price for that…* "

In his interview with John Carlin, Barnard repeated this view: "*I remember many times Mr. P.W. Botha discussing with me, "When should I inform even the state security council, and when should I inform cabinet about this secret negotiations which are taking place." I can remember myself telling Mr. Botha, 'Well, Mr. President, if you inform the state security council, and if you inform cabinet, you can be sure that you have some members in your cabinet who [will talk] ... I can see the headlines of The New York Times and The Washington Post the next morning, 'South African government secretly negotiating with the world's most famous prisoner'.*

"*... You can never, in my view, start real negotiations between people in a situation like we've been in, and from the word go, make it public knowledge. It will just never work ... I wouldn't say from the very first meeting but very early on, Mr. Mandela himself also took the [same] line ... Each and every side had to give so much that you can never do it under the public eye. So there was a very deliberate attempt, not only from our side, but very strongly supported by Mr. Mandela, himself, "'Let's try to solve the main critical difficult issues, at least get a framework within which to take the process forward'..."*

What Barnard and his team had in the end accepted and effectively pre-committed to with Mr Mandela, was:

- A unitary state with majority rule and one person, one vote;
- The details of which to be negotiated within South Africa itself, exclusively among South Africans (i.e., without outside involvement);
- With the key negotiations to be conducted essentially between the ANC and the NP Government, one-on-one (thus effectively marginalizing from the get-go other parties – with Mr Mandela having accepted excluding the outside world, and Barnard in turn accepting the primacy of the ANC and the NP);
- That Mandela and the ANC would not be required to foreswear violence and break with the SACP before Mandela would be released or the ANC un-banned or before negotiations begin; and
- That the real negotiations between the two principal parties (the ANC and NP) be conducted in secret.

A noteworthy remark from Barnard's memoire about these "pre-negotiations" with Mr Mandela, is the quite deprecating one quoted above about most of the cabinet ministers not having been able to "read the signs of the times" and that preparations on the NP politicians' side for negotiations had thus been non-existent. In his interview with Padraig O'Malley, Barnard had similarly emphasized the significant role that civil servants played in reaching the settlement eventually agreed. He referred specifically to "the Channel" between the ANC and NP (about which we will see much more in Chapter 11) naming the key participants in the "Channel" from the government side as having been Minister Roelf Meyer, himself (Barnard) and his team-mate in the Mandela talks, Mr. Fanie van der

Merwe. This is what Barnard told O'Malley in this regard: "*I take it that Meyer and Maharaj and Slovo, before his death, would have informed you about the so-called Channel and what happened there and what didn't happen there and so forth and so on. Even during the most difficult days from 1992 onwards there was a secret confidential group, on the ANC side consisting of Ramaphosa, Maharaj and Slovo, and on the government side consisting of Meyer, Fanie van der Merwe and myself. I think we from time to time managed to pull some difficult issues through, specifically after Boipatong."*

The "pre-negotiations" conducted from May 1988 with Mr Mandela by the team of officials under Barnard's leadership, thus had cemented in place a very important role in the eventual negotiations for a group of key Civil Service officials. They were, most notably, Mr Fanie van der Merwe from the Justice department, with from the side of the NIS, Dr Barnard, Mike Louw, and a group of NIS analysts and operators that Barnard in 1992 took with him when he was made DG of Constitutional Development (such as Maritz Spaarwater, who became minister Roelf Meyer's principal assistant, and a number of analysts from the NIS constitutional and political desks).

Be all that as it may – it is easy to understand that talking 48 times with Nelson Mandela while he was still held captive (and thus under government control) was one thing. Reaching out to the ANC leadership abroad to initiate formal talks with them also, was altogether much more difficult. In the first instance, there would be the challenge to obtain approval from the governing NP politicians to go and "talk with the devil". Secondly, to set up such a meeting in a manner that the external ANC leaders who were to be approached, would not shun it as being likely a clever trap to try and kill or capture them.

## 10.5. INITIATING CONTACT WITH THE EXTERNAL ANC

### 10.5.1 BACKGROUND TO THE FIRST FORMAL MEETING WITH THE EXTERNAL ANC

In the timeline that I earlier provided (in Chapter 9) of the events that led up to President FW de Klerk's historic address to parliament of 2 February 1990, at sections 9.2.17 and 9.2.20, I briefly mentioned the first official meeting between the NIS and external ANC and how "authorisation" had been obtained by the NIS to launch such an operation. We will now go into those events in much more detail, because of their importance in getting the process of negotiations going. However, before we do that, it is important to have some background about what had been going on for a number of years beforehand, so as to better contextualise what followed in 1989.

As we've seen, secret outreach to Mr Mandela had begun already in 1984. Secret outreach by the NIS to the external ANC also began well ahead of the first (now publicly known) meeting in Lucerne, Switzerland, in September 1989 between Mike Louw and Maritz Spaarwater of the NIS and Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma from the ANC. Just as the Government as such had needed reassurance about the ANC before venturing into negotiations with it, the NIS for its part had obviously needed reassurance before itself venturing into that first "official" meeting with the external ANC.

Out of the mouths of the NIS officials who actually had been there on the operational side, I can state that there were more than half-a dozen "toe in the water" clandestine contacts between the NIS and ANC **outside of that associated with agent "Gert" and the Mells Park process**, before the button was finally pushed to meet officially for the first time (in other words, all the eggs weren't in the Mells Park basket – that operation conveniently evolved almost by its own volition into being the public "cover story" that eventually became known, thanks to books being written and even a movie made – so that it then came to serve also to keep concealed the other clandestine contact that had been going on in parallel (in this narrative, we will also focus on "Gert" and his role as already publicly known, because that project does explain all that's needed to know about the general motivation and objectives that had also driven the outreach in the other cases, and thus makes it unnecessary to reveal here the detail of those other clandestine contacts).

The SSC Resolution and the subsequent secret meeting in Lucerne can, from the NIS perspective, best be understood in terms of "rational actor" theory: what the NIS had for its own sake needed was *ex post facto* cover (for the NIS vis-a-viz the new FW government), regarding what had occurred clandestinely beforehand – the NIS could not very well have stood up and blithely told that first FW-presided SSC meeting that: "don't worry, we've for

some time already been secretly in contact with the external ANC (i.e., *sommer* off our own bat and without official authorization), and we're pleased to inform you that they are ready to meet and negotiate with government".

Similarly, there were actually four official NIS/ANC meetings in Switzerland prior to the Groote Schuur minute, not just the three already in the public domain.

The NIS/ANC top-level contact also didn't cease the moment the government politicians became fully engaged with the negotiation process – those backchannels would prove crucially important for getting talks going again whenever in public it appeared that they'd collapsed.

The operational details of how these clandestine contacts were managed by the NIS aren't important for my narrative, because what now uniquely matters, is that the public should understand that these clandestine contacts were of much earlier and longer duration than publicly known and had stretched wider than that which to date has surfaced in autobiographies.

Simply for the sake of credibility, I can say that I happen to know the names of all four of my former NIS colleagues who formed the special team that was directly tasked on the operational side with providing the logistical support and security for these meetings – three men and a woman, all fluent in French – so that what I'm relating here, comes directly from eyewitness accounts confided to me personally, shared with me for the express purpose of ***NONGQAI*** now putting that history in proper perspective – on condition, obviously, that I don't name names or disclose operational procedures.

Let me also make it perfectly clear that I wasn't even remotely involved (even though I was based at the SA Embassy in Paris at the time, but strictly in a diplomatic capacity).

### 10.5.2 NIS PREPARATIONS FOR INITIATING THE FIRST OFFICIAL TALKS WITH THE EXTERNAL ANC LEADERSHIP

Already in 1984 the then head of strategic assessment at the NIS, Mr Pietertjie Swanepoel, had prepared a memorandum about the necessity of initiating discussions with the ANC (Swanepoel was my dad's age, and happened to have been the guy at the NIS who, when I was still there, had had to approve my spy novels for publication – see Part Two – he very much liked them and had given the green light without hesitation).

The first mention in the annual National Intelligence Review (which the NIS coordinated) of a negotiated settlement becoming an unavoidable future necessity, was in the 1987 edition (you will also recall that my dad had, in February of that same year, strongly voiced that same assessment in the memorandum he had prepared for cabinet; it was also around that time that the civilian departments in government had all signed up to the "*Skrik-vir-Niks*" memorandum which strongly advocated negotiations).

This view favouring negotiations with the ANC was anathema to the "total onslaught" securocrats, from the military side especially. However, the NIS through-out remained convinced of the merit of their assessment and stood by it. As Niël Barnard explained, proposing negotiation as the appropriate strategy was meaningless if the government had no credible, substantial party on the other side to negotiate with. In the estimation of the NIS, as expressed by Barnard, "Mandela' binding stature was indispensable for the entire process: "*Contrary to the view of some in the security community, we – who were actually responsible for the management and operation of the early settlement process – did not believe that there would be any lasting value in a divide and rule strategy against the ANC. If we had stuck to that, it would have made no sense to involve the ANC-in-exile in the process. What value would it have for us to divide the ANC? It would be of greater value to work through one central point of authority, namely Mandela, who has control over his people. It would be extremely foolish to try to negotiate with five or ten components of the ANC, plus other smaller struggle parties."*

With clarity achieved about Mr Mandela's views through the talks with him, and with the aim of keeping the ANC united round him (so as to constitute an effective negotiation partner) the key intelligence question confronting the NIS therefore became: how to concretely confirm that the external leadership of the ANC were, from their side,

genuinely amenable towards initiating negotiations on a realistic agenda? (that's to say – no longer for the establishment of a Marxist people's republic?).

Barnard took up this issue with PW Botha as he was providing him with feedback on the talks with Mandela. PW agreed that the NIS should not conduct the secret talks with the ANC abroad behind Mr Mandela's back. He also agreed that, for the sake of confidentiality: *"…we should not involve our own Department of Foreign Affairs in such an exercise or use it as a channel.*

*"The plan to involve the ANC exiles in the talks was discussed in depth with Mandela on three occasions. He was informed that the external wing, through Thabo Mbeki, was reaching out through various confidential channels to hold talks with the Government.*

*"Several secret messengers, who indicated that they were acting on behalf of Mbeki or the ANC, had contacted the NIS and conveyed similar messages. The British and American intelligence services also directly asked us about this. Therefore, if we did not soon begin the talks ourselves in all seriousness and with his (Mandela's) knowledge – and preferably also with his consent – the meddlers will likely mess up the entire process. It was explained to Mandela that Mike Louw, my deputy, would be tasked with opening such a channel of communication with Mbeki. Louw would inform Mbeki first-hand about our discussions* (i.e., between Mandela and the Barnard-led team, of which Louw was a member) *and kindly ask Mbeki to bypass other offers of liaison as he was being given the opportunity to communicate directly with the Government".*

At that time Western governments and business, having themselves so much at stake in Southern Africa – the British in particular – had begun to initiate get-togethers where white and black South African leaders could meet. These showcase events, accompanied by lots of publicity, were public platforms for grandstanding, and as such were rejected by both the Pretoria government and the ANC leadership as totally unsuited to facilitating real negotiations. The ANC and government had both understood that initiating negotiations would have to be handled very confidentially and that it had to be set up between the two actual poles of power: the ANC leadership and the official Afrikaner NP governing elite – not with a bunch of bleeding-heart liberals, however well-meaning.

Desperate to avoid the race war that PW Botha's policies were seen as inevitably headed towards (and its consequences for Britain), the British government, in conjunction with and via the British mining house Consolidated Goldfields (Consgold – which had huge investments in South Africa) set about trying instead to discreetly arrange confidential small-group meetings, to be held upon invitation at secluded establishments in the English countryside. The aim was to identify and reach out to amenable, influential Afrikaner intellectuals and community leaders and try and convince them to participate. For this the Brits turned to a South African journalist based in London, Fleur de Villiers (no friend of the then government!) as intermediary.

Among those that Fleur had contacted by phone around the middle of 1987, was the Stellenbosch University professor, Willie Esterhuyse, who earlier had published a book called "*Apartheid Must Die*", which voiced the growing opposition in informed Afrikaner circles to the policies that PW Botha was then still trying to pursue. Esterhuyse's immediate reaction was non-committal (in the end Fleur de Villiers could convince only three Afrikaner intellectuals – all three from Stellenbosch – to attend the first Consgold meeting).

Shortly after the call from Fleur de Villiers, Esterhuyse received a call from the NIS, asking to meet with him in confidence. When he acceded to this request, he was visited at home by a very senior officer from the Operations branch, Koos Kruger (who had been one of General Lang Hendrik van den Bergh's confidants). What the NIS wanted to know, was whether Esterhuyse would be willing to indeed participate in these events the British were setting up – not primarily to spy on proceedings, but to use these as a channel for clandestine communication with the ANC, with a view to facilitating the start of negotiations.

Esterhuyse, a patriotic and clear-headed man who immediately had grasped the importance of what he was being asked to do, fortunately agreed. He was given the code-name "Gert" and an intensive crash course in clandestine tradecraft – as he wrote in his subsequent book: not to protect himself against harm from the ANC side, but to help

ensure his safety against the “brown shirts” as his NIS handlers had put it (i.e., the military and their “Operation Dual” for eliminating those regarded as traitors).

The first exploratory discussions between this small group of Afrikaners and the ANC took place in Britain in early November of 1987. The second meeting (there were to be some six in total) was held from 21 – 24 February 1988, again in the English countryside. This 2nd meeting was the first to be attended by the ANC’s head of external relations (and later successor to Nelson Mandela as South African president), Mr. Thabo Mbeki.

At an opportune moment during this get-together, when Esterhuyse could talk privately in the estate’s gardens with Mbeki, Willie/“Gert” informed Thabo of his own NIS relationship and his actual brief (i.e., to connect, not to spy), explaining the opportunity for back-channel communication that this was intended to create. Fortunately, Mbeki accepted this explanation and a genuine friendship as well as trust then developed between the two, with Mbeki knowing that Esterhuyse would faithfully convey to NIS headquarters in Concilium whatever Mbeki had to say.

By the beginning of 1989 it was becoming clearer by the day that PW Botha’s time was up. His militarist policies in SWA/Namibia and Angola had failed, and many metropolitan areas inside South Africa were racked by unrest. So, in May 1989 the NIS decided to push the button and initiate direct formal contact between its own senior officers and the external ANC leadership, to be facilitated at first via Esterhuyse’s contact with Mbeki. This is how Esterhuyse described it in his later book “*End Game*” (quote translated by me from the Afrikaans and somewhat shortened here, for the sake of brevity):

*My NIS control contacted me again during May 1989, with a request that I was totally unprepared for: "Get in touch with Thabo Mbeki. Ask him to travel to London where you and he should meet privately. No one else should know what you talked about."*

*“I was literally shaking with excitement. I knew intuitively: ‘Here comes the real thing,’ I even experienced an emotion of anxiety. Should I get involved in something that will compromise me so much that everything that was morally important to me might collapse? But I also said to myself: ‘Oom Koos, Möller, Hanna, Maritz, Niël and the other NIS people I have met and gotten to know are not moral shysters. They are people with integrity who fulfil an important, albeit extremely complex, function.’*

*“Later I would realize why the NIS took the initiative. PW Botha's time was running out… Hanna (part of the control team), who was someone for whom I would have walked through many fences, had remarked with a smile: ‘Prof, we know that you have all kinds of involvements and interests in London. You can think of good reasons why you want to travel to London.’*

*“I made the necessary arrangements and decided with an almost overwhelming emotion that Mbeki and I will meet on Wednesday, May 31, 1989 in London. It's Republic Day, I reasoned. Could there be a more symbolic day to convey an important message to an ANC leader? I already knew what the message was: ‘We (the NIS) want to officially start talking to the ANC. It's obviously exploratory and confidential. We are looking for a phone number.’ The NIS gave me the code name the person would use when contacting Mbeki: John Campbell. Mbeki's code name was John Simelane. It became a big scramble to make all the arrangements for the meeting in London.*

*“Mbeki and I met just after eleven o'clock on the 31st of May in the luxurious lounge of British-American Tobacco company. We exchanged a few commonplaces: ‘How was the trip? What is the weather like in Lusaka? And in Stellenbosch?’ I, in a hurry and excited about the message I wanted to convey, had to practice patience, waiting for our British host and facilitator, Michael Young, to take his leave* (Young later was honoured by the late Queen for his efforts – the OBE for “his contribution to human rights”). *“British silver and a fine porcelain tea service awaited on the table. I am a dedicated coffee drinker. However, this was tea, which Mbeki poured, and I tried to enjoy drinking it. He was obviously at home in this British cultural ritual. I presented the silver plate with cookies and made small talk. Eventually Young departed, leaving us alone. But there was still the chance that our conversation may be recorded…*

*“At one stage during our tea session, I noticed that Mbeki was beginning to become restless and even withdrawn. Somewhat irritated, he asked: ‘What have you come here to do? You are talking about issues that we already discussed during our April meeting.’ I was ready for this moment and said: ‘Yes, that’s true. But there are implications that we still need to clarify further.’*

*“The NIS had advised me not to orally convey the message in a place where it could be overheard. ‘Do it in a bar,’ was the serious advice. ‘And see if you can find a table in a corner.’ Mindful of the NIS's advice, I had two handwritten notes in my bag. The one was short: ‘The walls have ears. And sometimes the ears have ideological walls.’*

*“The other note was longer, stating: ‘A very senior person from the National Intelligence Service would like to make contact with you to explore the possibility of future discussions and agenda items. I am convinced that it is meant honestly. It's approved at a very high level. Only a few people know about it. Strict confidentiality is expected. It's guaranteed as far as Pretoria is concerned. I need a reliable telephone number from you where you can be contacted personally. You will receive a call from a John Campbell. This person will discuss logistics and other issues with you. I don't know when he will call. I have been asked to assure you that the person who will connect with you does not want to play any games. It will also be appreciated if you will respond positively. I would like to emphasize the sensitivity of this issue. And, also, the necessity for confidentiality. I am convinced that you may take this initiative to be serious and well meant, though I was not informed of any detail or objectives. I do suspect that the initiative also has something to do with Nelson's (Mandela) position. And also, with the issue of ‘talks about talks’ and eventual negotiations itself’.*

*“When I saw his irritation, I gave him these notes, got up and said I wanted to quickly visit the bathroom, to give him a chance to read the notes. Back in the lounge we talked in general about our next focus group discussion, agenda items and people we should invite sometime, especially from the business world. Mbeki then said that he also had other business to attend to in London. If there is an opportunity, maybe we can get together again?*

*“We walked out of the building and shook hands to say goodbye.*

*“Sometime later that day, we met in a London pub, The Albert, on which we had agreed. Fortunately, there was a small table open in the corner. While we drank beer, I again conveyed to him the request from the NIS. I emphasized: ‘The hour has come: The door is unlocked. And you have a hand on the latch.’*

*“Mbeki wrote something on a piece of paper and handed it to me. At the very top it said, in Afrikaans: ‘For Willie only.’ Below that was the phone number where he could be reached in person. There was emotion in his voice when he told me: ‘Oliver Tambo once asked: 'Will the ANC correctly understand the signals that the Afrikaner leadership corps sends out for negotiation?' Mbeki then remained silent for a while, before asking: ‘How do I know it's not a trap?’ The old mistrust between the ANC and the Afrikaner regime broke through again, despite the fact that he was informed about the ongoing Barnard-Mandela talks. I half apologized and said that I trust Niël Barnard and his team.*

*“Mbeki said: ‘Let's walk outside.’ There I said to him: ‘It's never too late to talk.’ He then confirmed again that I can give his phone number to the NIS. I repeated the code names. As we said goodbye, he looked at me with humour in his eyes: ‘Perhaps you and I will meet next year on 31 May in Stellenbosch and not London. Do you think we should stick to the name 'Republic Day'?’ And, almost as an afterthought: ‘I trust you’."*

(Niël Barnard’s very able deputy, Mike Louw – who later succeeded Barnard as NIS DG – later admitted that PW Botha had never been specifically informed by the NIS about their outreach via “Gert” to Thabo Mbekiw with a view to make arrangements for the NIS and ANC to formally meet, even though NIS analyst “Clasie” Classen had briefed PW 12 times about the Mells Park process).

## 10.5.2 OBTAINING SSC "AUTHORISATION" FOR A HIGH-LEVEL NIS MEETING WITH THE EXTERNAL ANC

As explained, PW Botha was at last forced by his cabinet colleagues to resign as State President in August 1989. PW's enabler in the 1978 election, Pik Botha, was one of the key messengers who had gone to PW to confront him with his cabinet's decision…

Minister FW de Klerk was elected by the NP caucus as interim president on 15 August 1989. The first meeting of the powerful State Security Council (SSC) which De Klerk was to chair, had been scheduled for the very next day, 16 August. Obviously, FW was on that day still a novice as regards the workings of this body.

It will be recalled that the NIS, with the help and knowledge of PW Botha, had the year before initiated a formal resolution passed by the State Security Council on 5 July 1988, which served for the NIS as a bureaucratic "insurance policy" with regard to the secret discussions with Mandela, of which the SSC members then were unaware. It read as follows: "*The Security Services and the Prison Service must continuously study the Mandela issue and remain in touch with the situation surrounding the ANC leadership.*"

Niël Barnard and Mike Louw in August 1989 (again, as done in July 1985) presented an innocent-looking draft resolution, number 13/1989, for the SSC's consideration, again as a sly "insurance policy" for itself. This carefully composed resolution was quickly approved as a matter of course, with no discussion. It read:

*"It is essential that more information be gathered and processed about the ANC, as well as about the objectives, alliances and potential accessibility of its respective leaders and groupings. To achieve this, special additional direct (collection) action will be required, in particular with the help of the functionaries of the National Intelligence Service."*

What the NIS had wanted, via this deliberately vaguely worded SSC resolution, was something that could serve as a covering mandate for immediately initiating direct formal contact with the top levels of the external ANC. Thus "Project Flair" was set in motion to arrange just such a meeting between NIS-DDG Mike Louw and Maritz Spaarwater (the latter then head of NIS Operations) on the one side, and Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma (then head of ANC intelligence) on the other. So, "John Campbell" (Maritz Spaarwater) duly contacted Mbeki on the private number the latter had given to agent "Gert" (Esterhuyse), setting up a meeting in the Palace Hotel in Lucerne, Switzerland, for 11/12 September 1989.

Niël Barnard would later admit in his memoire that he had not informed FW de Klerk at the time about what the true purpose of this resolution was, namely, to serve as cover for the long-prepared first formal meeting abroad between the NIS and a delegation of the external ANC led by Thabo Mbeki. This sly approach would turn out to have been a mistake, as we shall see…

## 10.5.3 FIRST MEETING BETWEEN GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES AND THE EXTERNAL ANC IN LUCERNE, SWITZERLAND

Thabo Mbeki's first words when he and Zuma walked into the hotel room where Louw and Spaarwater were staying under false identities (uttered with a mock flippancy that alleviated the seriousness of the moment), were: "*Well, here we are. The terrorists! And for all you know, fucking communists as well*".

Everyone laughed and the ice was broken, with the ambiance further enhanced when Louw presented Mbeki with a gift of Boxer and Rum & Maple tobacco, which the NIS knew that he (a chain pipe smoker) favoured. The meeting went well – what remained, was to report back to a still unaware President FW de Klerk…

This is how Spaarwater described that meeting, in his book: "*A Spook's Progress*": *"On returning home, our DG was unavailable and so on 16 September we two had to go down to Cape Town to report directly to President De Klerk. On hearing about our meeting with the ANC, he was livid. Who gave us the right to talk to the ANC? Calling us 'you people', he accused us of again doing things in our own self-willed way, accountable to no one. He really ranted on a bit, but Mike then produced a copy of the SSC resolution – we had anticipated that De Klerk might not have been fully informed of the intended meeting or realised the implications of the SSC resolution adopted under*

*his chairmanship. After all, (we pointed out) we could not have executed our mandate to investigate the feasibility of talking directly to the ANC (their "accessibility") without talking to some of them. De Klerk calmed down in an instant and, as Mike Louw put it, he 'took up the ball and ran with it'* (i.e., readying for releasing Nelson Mandela from prison and initiating the democratic transition.)

As said, Barnard had admitted in his memoire to deliberately not having informed De Klerk at the time about what the true intent with the SSC resolution had been. When Dave Steward of the De Klerk Foundation scathingly reviewed this Barnard memoire after it was published, he i.a. wrote (in reaction to Barnard having written about his less than warm relationship with De Klerk, and the NIS having been relegated to a deputy ministry): "*No doubt Barnard was disappointed because he did not have the same immediate access to De Klerk that he had always had with PW Botha. Their strained relationship probably had its roots in NIS's deliberate failure to inform De Klerk of the first crucial meeting overseas between NIS and the ANC – even though De Klerk had already taken over as Acting President. NIS once again misread De Klerk by thinking that he might have prohibited or interfered with the meeting had he known about it beforehand."*

My own assessment is that the fact that Barnard and De Klerk never had a warm relationship at a personal level, was more due to their incompatible personalities than deep differences on strategy, and thus it did not significantly affect their professional relationship. The simple truth is that Barnard wasn't everybody's cup of tea (as he himself well knew and admitted). Both Barnard and De Klerk were essentially what today's children would call intellectual nerds, not natural alpha males like PW Botha and Nelson Mandela. As Barnard had said of PW, the "Groot Krokodil" wasn't the cleverest or best educated of men, and Botha thus clearly valued and respected Barnard's intellect and academic pedigree. That said, I do not believe for one moment that Barnard would have dared to pull this kind of trick on PW!

De Klerk, on the other hand, was professionally and academically very well qualified, and himself highly intelligent – to my mind, more so than Barnard (whom I knew in both his academic and NIS days). So that De Klerk, the scion of a patrician Afrikaner political family, had no reason to be particularly admiring of Barnard (or anybody else, for that matter) with regard to either intellect or qualifications. Being himself not unfamiliar with political manipulation and intellectual gamesmanship, De Klerk was not impressed when civil servants tried to put one over on him (as with this resolution) and that clearly had affected trust and personal liking, because he felt that Barnard had been both too big for his boots and tried to be too clever by half – effectively having taking him, the acting president, for a fool…

### 10.5.4 WHAT INFLUENCE DID THE NIS EXERT ON THE DE KLERK GOVERNMENT'S THINKING IN THE RUN-UP TO 2 FEBRUARY 1990 AND WAS THE NIS JUSTIFIED IN "UNILATERALLY" INITIATING THEIR "PROJECT FLAIR"?

We know now that FW de Klerk had, by himself in his own mind, also come to the conclusion that Apartheid had to be abandoned, and that a fundamentally new, non-racial democratic order was the only solution to the essentially political (i.e., not military) challenge that South Africa faced – a new dispensation that could only achieve legitimacy if inclusively negotiated over an open agenda.

One should thus beware of over-exaggerating the influence that the actions taken by the NIS had in determining the future course of events that the De Klerk cabinet (with a strong core of like-minded New Nats such as Drs Gerrit Viljoen, Stoffel van der Merwe, and Dawie de Villiers plus Roelf Meyer and Leon Wessels), embarked upon.

That said, there can however be no doubt that the position taken by the NIS on strategy was significant in strengthening the belief among these New Nats that negotiation was the only strategic option that made sense, and that the NIS's analyses in this regard strengthened the case of De Klerk and those who shared his thinking as they made it to their cabinet colleagues and fellow party members in the run-up to the historic announcements made on 2 February 1990.

In a lengthy interview Roelf Meyer did with *Iran Wire* (conducted by journalist Maziar Bahari) at the end of 2024, Meyer talked about the "formidable" role of the NIS in convincing the NP Government of the need for political

change. Meyer ascribed this to the NIS having been seen as objective and fact-based, as well as taking a longer-term view, so that they were therefore "taken more serious":

Meyer explained to Bahari that*: "If you are in a position of authority as a government minister and you are taking your job serious, then you listen to those who are bringing to you the required information upon which final decisions have to be taken. And, of course, the general advice from officials would present the status quo as it is. Intelligence (though) has the ability to look further and deeper and more into the future. And I think their advice, therefore, in my experience was accepted and relied on as more reliable and could be taken more serious, so my own experience was that if they came to us and said there's a problem here, we have to look at it, we have to adjust our policies, we have to adjust our own decisions up to that stage, then it was taken more seriously because they could provide the facts and substantiate their advice."*

Bahari: *"…of course the intelligence agencies of South Africa - they were doing their own analysis, they were doing their own studies of the situation. How important were the intelligence agencies and intelligence agents in convincing the officials that this situation is not tenable and it has to change and we have to do something else?"*

*Meyer: "Very important. I think one can say that the assessments made by the intelligence agencies was first of all more accurate than those that the politicians relied on and liked to rely on because they wanted to ignore most of the facts that were starting to develop and so that the assessments that was done by the intelligence agencies informed themselves first of all but also enabled them to bring forward those analysis to the government and I was part of the receivers on the government side that listened to this and heard it and became more and more convinced that change is inevitable. So, the main point about this, I think, is that the role of intelligence behind the scenes I think is formidable...*"

Bahari then asked: *"So the intelligence agencies, they didn't whitewash their analysis in order to satisfy the government officials - they gave them the facts as they were and that somehow persuaded them to start negotiating with ANC leaders in exile but also with Mandela equally?"*

To which Meyer responded: *"Absolutely. That's spot-on. That's an absolute correct analysis of how it unfolded in our own trajectory in South Africa. And this did not happen over not one day or two days or within a question of a week or two - it happened over a period of years. The first possible advice came around maybe 1987 and Mr Mandela was only released in 1990, just to give the picture of the time that it took. But it was an ongoing process, but it was also enabling them, the intelligence representatives, to start a process of going deeper and further and meeting directly (with the ANC), which is very important, because in a certain way that prepared the ground on both sides for developing trust. Which is critical."*

FW de Klerk, for his part, accorded Niël Barnard and the NIS high recognition and appreciation in his own memoire "*The Last Trek*". On p. 158 one can read that, when Barnard briefed De Klerk about his 48 secret meetings with Mandela, De Klerk's reaction was: *"I realized this was the key to unlocking the future."*

On p. 162 De Klerk wrote: *"Niël Barnard was indispensable. He had the confidence of Mandela and the trust of my government. Without him, the transition would have been impossible."*

And on p. 163 De Klerk concluded**:** *"The NIS did not just provide intelligence. They helped me **build peace**."*

Given the foregoing, one understands why Stephen Ellis, with his penetrating and critical judgment of the SA security forces and his *Africa Confidental* background, mentions in *External Mission* (p. 132): "*Barnard was eventually to become perhaps the most influential political strategist of all on the government side*."

However, speaking normatively, based on book theory, is it ever correct for any intelligence service anywhere to deliberately bamboozle the government it reports to and, in effect (as done by ways of SSC Res 13/1989) to unilaterally initiate actions intended to directly force change by means of a *fait accompli* to prior long-standing official government policy such as the PW-era ban on talking with the ANC?

As lawyer and political scientist, I have to say NO. That would certainly not be the norm. An intelligence service is there to collect, verify and interpret information, converting those bits and pieces into timely intelligence products designed to provide governments with the necessary data and insights to inform **the government's** decision-making (being the sole prerogative of government, in a democratic system).

Just as journalists are bound to report news and not to make or shape it, intelligence line-function officers, whether collectors or analysts, need to stick to their function and maintain their objectivity by not becoming active players in the political game (however great the temptation often may be). They need to respect their structural-functional role in the political system, which is not making decisions, but instead informing them.

That said – are here ever circumstances dire enough to justify breaking with this norm? Was the South African situation at the end of the eighties just such a circumstance, given the dysfunction and discord that had marked the decision-making process up to that time?

I leave you to be the judge of that...

Apart from the role of intelligence in **making** decisions, there is the further one of the role of intelligence in **executing** certain kinds of government decisions. What one can see illustrated by this conundrum of talking on behalf of government to Mandela / to the external ANC, is a difficulty which often arises for governments and intelligence services around the world. That is, that governments – also democratic ones – do need an instrument for executing in secret, certain delicate policy decisions the executive branch of government had taken. Tasks so delicate that it cannot realistically be entrusted to the "open" arms of government (such as, in the case of talking to Mandela, the erstwhile Department of Constitutional Development and Planning, and the case of making contact with the external ANC, the Department of Foreign Affairs).

This kind of requirement (i.e., for secret actions conducted by officials specifically schooled and equipped precisely for working in secret), mostly serves a noble cause, such as protecting by means of secrecy vital outreach from premature disclosure, which may ruin it. Or to provide governments with plausible deniability, when initiatives that had seemed worthwhile turn out otherwise and get exposed.

The dilemma which then confronts most governments, is that their intelligence-gathering service is by its very nature, the principal institutional repository of professional expertise at doing things secretly (if the country has no secret service as such). So that the intelligence service then, willy-nilly, gets tasked with also performing such secret executive missions. Even though these are not intended to collect information, but instead to execute policy decisions in secret.

Is it sensible and affordable, in terms of budgetary cost and efficient organisational structuring, for governments to set up and maintain a separate secret service just for such missions, in order to keep intelligence collection and secret policy implementation structurally completely separate?

In most cases, probably not.

But what must then be fully understood and assiduously adhered to in the minds of all involved, is the clear distinction between, on the one hand, the function of collecting information and producing intelligence to inform decisions still to be taken, and on the other hand, the quite distinct function of secretly executing government decisions already taken, so that the distinct requirements for integrity in terms of ethics and objectivity that apply to each function, be always respected.

A last but very important normative issue (and a common practical one in most societies, as my doctoral research had shown) is the need for the intelligence function not to be viewed as the privileged domain of a select few who practice it behind over-secretive walls. It is best performed as a system-wide function, thus absolutely needing to be integrated with the rest of the institutions making up the political system (such as relevant "civilian" government departments). Otherwise, when intelligence works only "upwards" to the top political decision-makers, it leads to a lack of effective engagement and coordination with the rest of the (much larger) machinery of the political system,

and also leads to members of an elitist intelligence community then often laying claim to their products being of higher value than those produced by experts from civilian departments outside of the secretive intel-bubble.

How should such a range of inputs from respectively intelligence and civilian departments (from, for instance, the NIS and Constitutional Development) have been coordinated, and were they in fact? Was the South African political system really functioning at the time as a truly integrated system, or did it suit egos and silos within the intel-community to dismiss the civilian experts as "ivory tower idealists" who are not fully trustworthy and are lacking in real-world realism, and who thus could (or should) be basically cut out of the loop?

I suspect that the latter view unfortunately prevailed within the then South African intelligence community – as dysfunctional and internally divided as it obviously was. Since the member entities and personalities of that community were patently at odds with each other, and thus were effectively operating in self-isolating silos (often at cross-purposes), how would they have sufficiently appreciated and coordinated with those "civilian" experts in non-intel departments outside? Or did they subconsciously see them as potential competition for the attention of the top political decision-makers? (It is a clear risk that those involved in secret intelligence work may often develop, regarding themselves, a perception of elite status because of their direct lines to the top, as well as of possessing "superior insights" because of the classified information they possess which other civilian experts don't).

Which all again goes to show how difficult the decisions were (normatively, legally, as well as politically) that Barnard and his NIS team felt compelled to make, when they had effectively taken it upon themselves to kick-start the official negotiations by deliberately creating what was undeniably a self-orchestrated, un-authorised *fait accompli* with which to confront the new FW de Klerk government. It also makes it quite understandable why the NIS, and Barnard in particular, were seriously disliked by many in the military and the police who still had their minds set on countering a total onslaught, as well as by some constitutional planning experts who patently had been pushed aside when the NIS started taking matters into their own hands.

Whatever one's own moral and ethical position on what Barnard and his NIS team had done, and especially regarding how they had gone about it, it seems clear in hindsight that the steps they had followed were actually the only viable ones (except of course for not having obtained true prior authorisation). It seems evident that government in any case would at first have needed to reach out to the external ANC secretly, exactly as the NIS had done with their operation Flair, and that the NIS would have been the logical entity to undertake that initial secret contact. One may thus proffer the old saying of "all is well that ends well" as justification (although "the end justifies the means" is obviously frowned upon from a legal and moral perspective).

There evidently also will be those who believe (with reasonable justification) that the gravity of the then circumstances constituted a clear emergency situation, and that in emergencies the usual norms and book theories cannot be insisted upon if it impedes taking action that is clearly urgently needed. That principle is indeed true in common law (such as breaking the window of your neighbour's car without prior permission, in order to urgently save his baby suffocating inside).

I would be personally inclined to support this as long-established principle, but I also need to admit that I do have to ask myself: if they had had time to put a bogus application for authority through the State Security Council, why didn't they simply ask properly and clearly? Were they scared that they may have been turned down by De Klerk? (which, I believe, would have been a serious misjudgement of the man and his intentions). Or, that it may have been decided by the SSC to involve other players?

Or did they genuinely believe that secrecy was of utmost importance, so that the government could enjoy honest deniability if the answer from the external ANC had been "NO" to negotiations?

These are all imponderables, and I strongly believe that it would be utterly presumptuous for anyone now to try and judge, after the fact, the decisions taken by those who actually were there and who were brilliant, patriotic, principled men.

Undeniably they did succeed at last in getting things started – not for their own glory, but because they rightly believed that that was what the country had long needed. It is just sad, however, that it is precisely the manner in which they had chosen to operate (and interact with others) that has led so many to still feel aggrieved and critical of their actions to this day…

# 10.6 KEY INPUTS BY THE NIS HAD INFORMED DECISIONS THAT WERE CRITICAL TO ARRIVING AT NEGOTIATIONS

## 10.6.1 AT CRITICAL MOMENTS DURING THE PRE-NEGOTIATION PHASE THE NIS HAD MADE KEY INPUTS

Apart from its key strategic advice that seeking a negotiated settlement was the only viable option open for the white government, the NIS had given theme-specific advice that fortunately was accepted by government and which then enabled the negotiation process to be launched – even though this NIS advice had run against that given at the time by the other security entities (SAP and SADF) on the same subject.

A case in point was the pivotal issue of whether the SACP should be unbanned when the ANC is unbanned, and whether communist leaders such as Joe Slovo should be allowed to participate in the talks (it will be recalled that this had considerably vexed FW de Klerk, prior to his 2 February 1990 speech).

Regarding the internal debate about this, Barnard had written in his memoire (translated here from the Afrikaans version): "*Of course, the ban on the liberation movement also had to be lifted. Mandela could not be a "free man" while his organization was still banned. The logic of this was inescapable, but there was one problem: the "Red Threat". The "hawks" in the security community, as represented by certain leaders of the Defence Force and the Police in the State Security Council, had practically dedicated their lives to fighting communism. But now they were being asked to accept not only the legalisation of the ANC, PAC and others, but also that of the SA Communist Party (SACP). In light of the decades-long propaganda against the SACP, the resistance of the policemen and soldiers was understandable. At the last SSC meeting before Mandela's release, Magnus Malan, Minister of Defence, and Adriaan Vlok, Minister of Law and Order, kicked things off. "Unchaining the SACP is as good as releasing the devil in South Africa," was roughly their reasoning. De Klerk, now chairman of the SSC, skipped back and forth.*

*"I got agitated by the emotional arguments and the inability to see the implications of such a step – to still ban the SACP – and so I also joined the debate. 'Why do we want to drive the SACP underground again?' I wanted to know. 'Communism has already collapsed elsewhere in the world. Let the SACP participate in open democratic processes and shoot itself in the foot. Then we can see who they all are and what they do' I argued. 'But what is more important: Mandela will never accept it. He will refuse to walk out of prison. What then? We will have no other choice but to unban the SACP after all – but then with red faces'."*

De Klerk, fortunately, understood this.

## 10.6.2 HOW DID THE NIS STRENGTHEN FW'S POSITION FAVOURING "SETTLE" AS STRATEGY?

What role did the NIS play at strategic level in bringing the South African government on the one hand, and the ANC/SACP alliance on the other, to the negotiating table?

First of all, both parties had to be made to understand that the ideologies which they respectively espoused were precisely the other side's most feared threat. In fact, that the fond dreams that each side had cherished, were the other side's worst nightmare. Respectively perceived as constituting existential threats against which each side would continue to fight to the death. Whites against a Marxist People's Republic. Non-Whites against racial discrimination.

The government therefore had to be moved to face the reality that it was their own racial policies that were underlying the unrest among non-whites, as well as leading to outside pressures. To the same extent, the ANC/SACP had to be made to realise that it was precisely their ambition to try to establish a Marxist people's

republic through violent revolution, which made the Whites cling so fiercely to power. This latter point was fortunately grasped by the future president Nelson Mandela, in part thanks to the intense interaction with him by the secret interlocutors who had engaged with him under Niël Barnard's leadership while he was still imprisoned.

Secondly, both parties had to be made aware that neither of them would be able to realise their ideological aspirations by force of arms – not the government, nor the ANC/SACP. Also, that such a conflict between them could only result in widespread destruction, and was bound to gravely harm the entire population, with no plausible winner in the end.

So, how did the NIS get the National Party government to understand that it was the government's own ideology that primarily endangered national security? Here, Barnard and his team had pulled off another semantic sleight of hand. They needed to arm themselves with a plausible "mandate" or justification for them as intelligence service to point out to the elected government of the day that their own policies actually lay at the root of the unrest – because it does not normally behove bureaucrats anywhere to so critically take on the fundamental policies of governments in this way.

The "paradigm shift" (as it became known) that the NIS made in order to justify such a stance, was to emphasise the name change that the Service had undergone – from State Security to National Intelligence. The term "national" was interpreted to mean that the NIS was obliged to look unbiased at anything and everything that threatened the stability and prosperity of the entire **nation**. Thus, no longer just focusing on threats to the security of the **organs of state** ... Seen against the broad national perspective, it was evident that institutionalised racial discrimination was what was providing the fuel to the fire.

The analogy used to put this across (depicted graphically with drawings, at PowerPoint briefings to political decision-makers) was that of a pot of porridge that was boiling over – just as the situation in the country was visibly boiling ever fiercer, for all to see. If the fire under the pot was not extinguished, then sooner or later the lid would no longer be able to be kept down on it, even with force of arms...

Developments such as those in the conflict in Angola (when Castro began to make the porridge thicker with his second front) obviously also contributed to demonstrating to everyone in government decision-making circles the limits of the SADF's physical abilities, especially as international punitive measures in the area of arms purchases began to seriously bite – particularly as regards the Air Force.

At the same time, the ANC/SACP's belief in their model of a Marxist People's Republic suffered a blow due to the way in which the Soviet Union was on the wane during the second half of the eighties. More importantly, however, was that the South African security forces clearly had held the upper hand over Umkhonto weSizwe (MK) in the "armed struggle", partly thanks to the NIS's penetration of their internal communications as well as their decision-making inner circles.

It's not an exaggeration to say that, in military terms, MK never amounted to very much. Their actions constituted at most "armed propaganda" and definitely was not a full-scale guerrilla war (such as in Namibia and Zimbabwe). They had no real hope of ever achieving anything near a military overthrow of the white state. Numerous studies and declarations that can today be found on websites such as that of the Mandela Foundation confirm this truth, from the mouths of ANC leadership figures themselves.

Apart from effectively countering MK in the security sense, the other means to bring the ANC to the negotiation table and to get them to abandon their demand for a Marxist People's Republic, was the powerful lure dangled in front of them of at last achieving political power (albeit in exchange for a constitutional dispensation sufficiently acceptable to whites in order for the latter to agree to peacefully hand over that power). Last but not least, was to deprive the ANC of the support of its main international sponsor, and to get that sponsor (the USSR) to also exert pressure in favour of negotiations rather than for continued conflict – a "head-turn" that was indeed successfully achieved, as described earlier.

As regards confirming to the New Nat government under FW de Klerk that his instinct to negotiate an inclusive settlement was valid, it is my read that the NIS under Barnard's leadership had worked to ensure that they were in a position, in the latter half of 1989 (i.e., after FW de Klerk had fully taken over from PW Botha) to go to him and brief him and his government, presenting an intelligence estimation based on insights that broadly can be paraphrased in the following terms.

Mr President:

- you cannot hope to forever contain the growing internal unrest by force, nor forever resist the ever-increasing foreign pressure; a political problem cannot be solved by military means.
- Incremental change imposed top-down weakens rather than strengthens the government because it is perceived as concessions being made under pressure and is thus seen as a sign of weakness that emboldens the opposition; accordingly, it has been proven over the last ten years not to be a realistic option.
- The only way to avoid a bloody and ultimately unwinnable fight to the finish, which could result in a racial bloodbath destroying the Afrikaner people and South African whites in general, is to inclusively and unconditionally negotiate for a new, non-racial constitution, the result of which we have to accept would inevitably be majority rule.
- There is no strategic benefit in further delaying negotiating, because the internal situation is only likely to become more polarised and difficult to contain, resulting in wider and more lasting societal damage as well as in further punitive measures from abroad which are likely to be ever sharper and further weaken the economy, plus the international climate within which to negotiate can furthermore take a serious turn for the worse, if the currently relatively friendly governments in the USA and UK are replaced by Democrats and Labour;
- Should the government opt for a strategy of negotiation, then we believe that the West will thoroughly support such a move and from their side will work towards ensuring an outcome preserving their economic interests as well as values, meaning that foreign pressure on us will immediately start abating and that their pressure will instead then shift to be exerted on the likes of the ANC to accept a constitution based upon Western democratic and free market values.
- We believe that the USSR will also encourage a process of negotiation, to lead to a constitution that will guarantee basic huma rights of all – this we say, on the basis of secret contact with the USSR over a number of years, through which it has been possible to help turn the Soviet leaders away from continued support for the ANC, leading to the Soviets now actively cooperating with us in important areas such as busting economic sanctions, upgrading our key weapons systems such as the SAAF's jet fighters with their MIG-29 engines, and openly supporting negotiations rather than violent revolution at places such as the United Nations.
- Another reason for it being an opportune moment to turn to negotiation is because the ANC is historically weak now, given the fact that the USSR as their former main sponsor has been weakened lately and has furthermore undergone a change of heart, plus the fact that MK has been severely debilitated militarily, with their nearest base areas now in Uganda.
- When the government opts for negotiations, then there will be a need for a principal interlocutor in order to give structure and some discipline to the negotiations; the experience in Zimbabwe, for example, has shown that no white government can select its negotiation partner – only the liberation movements will enjoy the necessary legitimacy to take the masses with them and, through their participation, bestow legitimacy upon the entire process.
- It should furthermore be comprehended that the internal UDM is incapable of being an effective negotiation partner because of being an amorphous, poorly structured and disorganised group of loosely associated celebrity individuals with whom it will be very difficult to conduct effective negotiations; they will in any case likely not agree to participate unless under the auspices of the ANC.
- Because of the foregoing, as well as the PAC and Black Consciousness Movement being, for their part, too radical to be likely to be converted, it needs to be accepted that the ANC headed by Nelson Mandela is the only viable interlocutor, both in terms of ensuring structure for the process and bestowing upon it internal as well as international legitimacy.

- As to what would be the attitude of the ANC/SACP regarding joining such negotiations, it is our analysis, based on 48 detailed personal meetings with Mr Mandela and also based on our extensive penetration of the ANC's communications and decision-making circles, as well as having met directly with Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma abroad, that they would indeed be willing to abandon their failed armed struggle and to enter into such negotiations, if lured by the prospect of thereby acquiring political power at last (which they know they would otherwise not be able to achieve militarily).
- As regards which faction within the ANC would prevail and thus eventually be ruling the country, it is our analysis that – on condition that Mr Mandela be released – the moderate wing of the ANC will prevail over their radical wing, at least at the outset. We believe that Mr Mandela and the moderates such as Thabo Mbeki will accept that the new constitution be based on Western norms, abandoning their erstwhile dream of a Marxist people's republic in exchange for the chance to hold political power (which will only ever be possible because of the whites, as *quid pro quo*, being willing to relinquish it to them, under such an exchange).
- It is likely that the SACP will play a positive role in negotiations, on the side of the ANC moderates.
- We believe it to be inevitable that Mr Mandela will, as a result of such negotiations, be elected as the new president because he will enjoy the support of the overwhelming demographic majority; furthermore, we assess that he can be trusted to govern in a responsible way that will respect existing rights and values and not seek vengeance against the white minority in general, and the Afrikaner in particular.
- Given the importance of Mr Mandela and his already advanced age, the time for initiating negotiations with him is now, before he perhaps passes away.
- We believe in conclusion that an ANC government under Mr Mandela is not to be feared, but that it actually would be in the best interest of white South Africans for that result to come about, because it can bring peace, stability, legitimacy, rehabilitation of our image and re-integration into the international community, protection of individual and property rights in a Western-style democracy based on the concept of a "State of Laws" (*Regstaat*), and the opportunity for significant economic growth.
- Is there an alternative to this? Can we fight it out and conceivably win? Fact is that white South Africa is the last man standing, the last relic of race-based colonial rule in the world. Not even the greatest powers have been able to overcome indigenous nationalistic aspirations. We have just experienced what ten years of dedicated building of our armed forces came to, when difficult decisions on the future of SWA/Namibia had to be taken. We were forced to negotiate there – and there is no reason to believe that the outcome will be different in the case of South Africa itself. Therefore better negotiate now, from a position still of relative strength, than to have to do so when our backs are truly against the wall and we then have to negotiate terms of surrender, instead of the terms of a peace deal.

It is history that such a broad assessment (even if here framed in very hypothetical, journalistic phraseology) was indeed subsequently proven by the events then to unfold, as having been entirely correct. Lest you may think that the foregoing is mere hypothesis on my part, it needs to be pointed out that the NIS had indeed arranged a special comprehensive intelligence briefing session for FW de Klerk, which took place on a secluded island in the Vaal Dam where the NIS operated its own highly secure "bosberaad" style conference facilities. I have been told by participants that this was a "warts and all" briefing, where truth was spoken to power and where the seriousness of the situation was conveyed in no uncertain manner.

Why could the NIS at that time succeed in convincing the NP Government that it was imperative to embark straight away on negotiating such fundamental change, abandoning the policies that they had clung to so steadfastly up to that point? Why couldn't Constitutional Development achieve that breakthrough, given what they had recommended two years before in the "*Skrik vir Niks*" report? Obviously, the fact that the obstinate and domineering PW Botha had been replaced as president by FW de Klerk played a pivotal role.

My own analysis is that the NIS could achieve success because the NIS was, due to its nature as analytical institution, better able (or, at least, more credibly so – from the point of view of the politicians) to answer the fear-driven questions that had been uppermost in the minds of the political decision-makers. As Roelf Meyer had said in the Bahari interview quoted above, politicians attached more value to what an intelligence agency told them than to what they heard from "civilian" experts with their more narrowly-defined functional fields of expertise and parochial institutional interests.

This concerned in particular those vital questions – for the politicians – that went way beyond which constitutional models or strategies would theoretically be most apt. Questions going to the core of what they had understood as an existential threat, to their people but also to themselves, such as: “Can we hold on by force?”; “If we do this, what would be the reaction of the ANC/SACP, of Mandela, of the USSR, of the West?”; “Would we be able to obtain from such a process a constitutional system based on Western democratic and capitalist values?”; and, importantly: “Are the new powers-that-be, likely to seek vengeance against us?” (in other words, the answers listed above in my paraphrased position paper).

It was because of these reasons, and the evident cogency of its arguments, that the NIS played a pivotal role in facilitating that FW de Klerk announced his historic break with Apartheid and acceptance of inclusive negotiations on 2 February 1990. However, it should be noted that the influence of the NIS did not stop when the “pre-negotiation” phase was in 1990 converted into the actual negotiations and transition. As we shall see in Chapter 11, Barnard and the NIS also played a crucial role in keeping the negotiations on track when it often threatened to derail.

But before we get to that, it is important to look at one more key question that will help complete one’s perspective on the decision to accept the negotiation of a settlement as the new government strategy. We all know now that De Klerk did indeed opt to negotiate, and we also all know what came of it. But in order to truly evaluate that decision, we also need to ask: what if he had NOT chosen negotiations? What would have resulted, if FW de Klerk and the NP Government had chosen instead to reject the advice of the NIS? (and all the others that had also advocated negotiation). If they had opted to persist with the policies of PW Botha, investing even more in re-enforcing our military (which evidently would then have been vital, given what had just been experienced at the Tumpo Triangle and the Cuban 2nd front) and trusting in miracles to be wrought by “*wunderwaffen*” such as an expanding arsenal of ICBM’s and nuclear bombs…

## 10.7 WHAT COULD HAVE RESULTED, HAD FW DE KLERK NOT CHOSEN TO START NEGOTIATIONS?

It is clear from the evidence presented in this chapter, that FW de Klerk’s view of the country’s situation that he was confronted with when he took over (and which moved him to make his 2 February 1990 speech in which he shifted policy towards seeking a negotiated political settlement) corresponded closely to the intelligence picture that the NIS had been presenting. Therefore, because of this correlation and the influence and role of the NIS in facilitating the shift to negotiations, when people now say that FW de Klerk simply “surrendered” without reason, they are effectively saying the same of the NIS.

However, there is a world of difference between “surrendering” and pre-emptively negotiating a settlement precisely to avoid going down in defeat and then being obliged to surrender, with no leverage then left. The key question, therefore, is whether De Klerk objectively needed to enter into such pre-emptive settlement negotiations when he did. Could he (as some still wish to believe – a bit like the delusional Germans who after WW1 had clung to the notion that they could have won, had they not been “betrayed”) simply have hanged in there, counting on the security forces – the military, in particular – to maintain white South Africa’s monopoly on political power? What would have resulted, had he tried to do so?

Let us look at how actual intelligence experts assessed the situation.

### 10.7.1 HOW THE CIA HAD IN 1986 ASSESSED SOUTH AFRICA’S LIKELY FUTURE TO THE END OF THE CENTURY

In 2011 a sanitized copy was released of a CIA assessment of future scenarios for South Africa, based on the intelligence picture as they saw it in March 1986. (This assessment was much more prescient than the earlier mentioned one released in 1989, and which had not foreseen at all the pivotal changes that would start manifesting within weeks of its publication, when FW de Klerk was elected to lead the NP).

Since this assessment looks at what could have been expected to result if the NP Government had chosen to continue along the “PW Path” of top-down incremental reforms imposed by security force power, with no

meaningful attempt at negotiating a political settlement being made, it gives an authoritative independent insight into what could have happened (meaning, that it is not just me presenting my opinion).

The full (redacted) report, dated 1 April 1986, can be read here:

SOUTH AFRICA IN THE 1990S: DECADE OF DRAMATIC CHANGE

Reading the report in its entirety leads one to the conclusion that its authors in truth had very good insight into what was likely to transpire in South Africa in the decade and a half that then remained before the century would turn – the actual events of the late eighties (under PW Botha), for example, were pretty well predicted, which lends credence to their further predictions for the 1990s, had FW de Klerk not set a new, negotiation-based course. The document is too long to quote here in full, so I will present here the Executive Summary with which it kicked off, and then just selected extracts where they discuss what the majority of their analysts had then already visualised as inevitable.

***"South Africa in the 1990s: Decade of Dramatic Change***

*Summary:*

*Dramatic political change is already taking place in South Africa and* ***by the end of this century we believe the transition to black majority rule in Pretoria will be well under way, if not complete****.*

*Nevertheless, we believe there will not be a convulsive violent revolution because blacks will not have the capacity to overthrow the government by force given Pretoria's overwhelming security apparatus. The specific nature of a new black majority government, that is, whether it is a federal system or based solely on the principle of one man one vote and of the guarantees provided whites will depend in large part on the circumstances and events preceding that government's formation.*

***We believe, however, that black willingness to compromise will diminish over time, and that the rights and privileges retained by whites will depend upon how quickly whites agree to negotiate with blacks on a solution to the country's racial crisis****. In our judgment, current political, social, and economic trends in South Africa work against the program of incremental reform pursued by the white regime: The South African economy is unlikely to grow vigorously during the coming years, undermining government efforts to assuage black frustrations through the provision of economic benefits. The inability of the South African economy to provide an improved standard of living for the country's rapidly growing black population is, in our view, the fundamental reason why the government's incremental reforms will fail to meet black expectations and reduce racial tensions.*

*In the absence of economic solutions, blacks will seek political answers to their problems. Black unrest will continue and will impact more directly on whites. Blacks will become increasingly radical in their political views and less likely to settle for political reforms short of black majority rule.* ***The (PW Botha) government reform program will continue to appear inconsistent, undercutting Pretoria's efforts to attract moderate black support.*** *International economic pressure on South Africa, including sanctions, is likely to increase.*

*As these trends become more acute during the 1990s,* ***we believe that the strategy of managed reform will be discredited not only in black eyes but for whites as well. Whites probably will then have to choose between two stark options: either impose a massive security crackdown involving the deaths of thousands of blacks and the complete suspension of many civil liberties, or agree to negotiations with black leaders to develop a new political system for the country****.*

*Given the determination of South African whites, particularly Afrikaners, and their fears concerning black majority rule, we believe it more likely that Pretoria will first try to use force to quash black unrest. Such a development, in our view, could easily lead to bloody racial conflict. Racial strife claiming thousands of white and black lives could last for many years, given the resources of the white security establishment, but* ***it is our judgment that whites could not endure indefinitely the political, economic, and human costs of a state of siege****.*

*Pretoria would eventually seek a negotiated end to the conflict, but with a black population willing to* ***accept little less than white surrender****.*

*A less destructive transition to black-white power sharing is possible, in our view,* ***only if a courageous and visionary Afrikaner leader emerges who is willing to drag whites into negotiations with blacks even in the absence of white consensus and before violence exhausts white determination*** *to remain in power.*

*During the 1990s, the future of South Africa will be the key African issue for the United States because of the strong influence that events there have on US domestic politics and because of southern Africa's strategic and economic importance.*

*As the crisis in South Africa continues into the 1990s, we expect that the chances will increase that one event or a series of seemingly unrelated events could start a process that culminates in fundamental political change. While analysts disagree on many of the specifics of change (the where, what, when, why, and how) most believe that* ***South Africa by the year 2000 either will have decided to negotiate the transition to black majority rule before suffering a full-scale race war, or will have already plunged into a conflict that can only end, in our view, with black rule.***

*Some analysts believe, however, that the whites can muddle through and that South Africa by the year 2000 will look much as it does today. It is also possible that South African whites (much like the political elites in Iran during the late 1970s) will suddenly lose their will and capitulate rapidly and without much violence. These latter two scenarios … the majority of analysts believe are unlikely…"*

*The analysis that follows reflects the majority view that* ***by the end of the century the transition to black majority rule in South Africa will be well under way, if not complete****."*

The main body of the report that followed the Summary, then started off with the heading: "*Before the Choice: The Failure of Managed Reform*"). The report goes on to substantiate in considerable detail precisely why the CIA analysts in early 1986 already assessed that PW Botha's top-down "managed change" was not working and could not work, with reference to ever-growing unrest, weakening security force capacity to contain it, a weakening economy incapable of meeting growth needs, and increased international isolation and punitive measures which South African whites would in the end not be able to sustain, leading to the prediction that, either way (through whites opting for negotiation, or choosing not to cede) the 1990s would inevitably see a transition to black majority rule.

In my own opinion, when FW came to power in 1989 he was faced by essentially two choices: he could keep on doing the same thing as PW – but then, logically, the result would be merely the same (knowing that, as Einstein allegedly said: keeping on doing the same thing but hoping for a different result, is madness). Or he could opt for inclusively negotiating a peace settlement, in the knowledge that the canyon to cross in order to get to a political solution was wide, but of necessity had to be attempted in one sufficiently big leap.

Truth is that what the PW experiment had empirically demonstrated – and emphatically so, at that that – were:

- the clear limits to SA's military might as well as to its broader strength (i.e., the economy) and thus the unworkability of the "shoot" strategy, and secondly
- the fallaciousness of the tactic of trying to incrementally impose cosmetic change top-down in a manner that retains (white) power, as a methodology for resolving societal conflict.

Thus, PW had proven that his way doesn't work, just as history had already proven that Verwoerd's theory didn't work in practice either.

Which left only one logical strategy for the FW government to opt for, namely, to scrap Apartheid entirely and seek to establish a new non-racial democracy through a process of inclusive negotiation – just as Vorster's team had anticipated would be needed.

To understand what would have happened if FW de Klerk had not on 2 February 1990 announced the complete about-face in strategy that he did, one only needs to ask oneself: what if he had instead announced to parliament, to the country's non-white majority and to the world that he and the NP will remain loyal to PW's vision, that the whites will never voluntarily cede their monopoly on political power, and that the security forces would receive his government's full backing to maintain "law and order" at all cost. I don't think it is necessary for me to expand too much here on the likely result – especially when Margaret Thatcher soon stepped down, Bill Clinton was elected in 1992 thanks to the Afro-American vote, and the West lost all reason to continue supporting covertly the NP Government when the USSR came tumbling down…

Remember how the Americans, the British and their allies had relentlessly bombed the Serbs in the Balkans during the mid-nineties, to force them to recognise the rights of the Muslims there – doing so over the course of not one, but two intense and very destructive air wars...

Given the lessons we had just learned again in Angola in 1988 about the viability of putting our eggs in the "shoot" basket, you own imagination would probably suffice (in terms of visualising what likely would have happened) if we, the "last man standing" of race-based colonial relics, had not opted for negotiation, but instead had tried to continue facing down the world.

As PW himself had foreseen, the result would inevitably have been that we would have gone down. Hard-arsed or the not – but go down we in the end would have, with then no hope of anything else but surrender… (It is interesting to note how the views of Gen Constand Viljoen – he who had initially so strongly differed from FW's 2 February 1990 speech – had subsequently changed. As reported in the *Los Angeles Times*, he had said in an interview in 1994 that: "*Today, I have to say that (President) F.W. de Klerk was right. When he freed Nelson Mandela in 1990 and made that speech (on ending Apartheid), I thought he was as wrong as he could be, that he was putting the survival of the Afrikaner at great risk and that he was opening the doors to communism and chaos*." (Viljoen would continue, though, to be very critical about how De Klerk and the NP had conducted the subsequent negotiations).

## 10.7.2 JOHAN MOSTERT'S WELL-REASONED ASSESSMENT

The myth that FW de Klerk had simply "surrendered" without reason or justification, has recently be addressed (in a letter to a newspaper), by someone who had been as intimately involved as possible, at the highest level possible, with the intelligence picture that had informed De Klerk's decisions. I'm referring to Johan Mostert, the man responsible for the daily intelligence briefings to first PW Botha and then FW de Klerk, and the last head of the intelligence coordination structure that had replaced the NSMS. It is apt to quote Mr Mostert's letter, in which he addresses what he had seen regarding what the intelligence picture unavoidably had been dictating (letter translated from Afrikaans).

***A Myth that Persists in Debates***

*"There is still a persistent assumption that FW de Klerk "surrendered" on 2 February 1990 – whether to the ANC, the SACP, or to a so-called international liberal conspiracy. This narrative is often emotionally driven, morally charged, and historically simplified. This is understandable: it offers an easy explanation for loss, humiliation, and uprooting.*

*But from a security and intelligence perspective, this representation is fundamentally flawed. De Klerk did not surrender after defeat. He acted when it became clear that Apartheid itself had become the primary threat to the survival of the South African state.*

***What "Surrender" Really Means***

*In strategic terms, surrender means that a state has lost its ability to use force or maintain order: military defeat, collapse of command structures, or total administrative paralysis.*

*None of these conditions applied in 1989–1990.*

*The SA Defence Force was still conventionally dominant in Southern Africa. MK was militarily incapable of overthrowing the state. The so-called Frontline States had no realistic ability to impose a decisive military solution. Within the country, the state of emergency still made it possible to suppress unrest by force – at least for a time.*

*If De Klerk had simply wanted to "hold on", it was technically possible. The real question, however, was not whether the state could still use force, but at what cost, and for how long.*

***The Real Loss: That of Legitimacy***
*The crux of the crisis was not military, but political. By the late 1980s Apartheid had lost its legitimacy – both domestically and internationally.*

*Within black communities, the state no longer held legal or moral authority. Mass resistance, not armed struggle, made South Africa increasingly ungovernable. This resistance was not limited to ideological revolutionaries; it reflected a broad, societal rejection of Apartheid.*

*Internationally, South Africa was isolated to the bone. There was not a single influential Western decision-maker who openly defended Apartheid. Even sympathetic governments made it clear that any continued support depended on fundamental political change.*

*A state can survive military setbacks. It rarely survives when it loses its legitimacy.*

***The Misunderstanding of the "Communist Takeover"***
*In Afrikaans circles, the "surrender" narrative is often linked to the idea that South Africa had succumbed to a purely communist onslaught. This view ignores the intelligence analysis of the time.*

*Yes, the ANC–SACP alliance had a revolutionary agenda. But intelligence assessments found that communism was not the root cause of the crisis. Apartheid itself – its exclusion, its economic distortions and its moral unsustainability – was the core problem.*

*The anti-Apartheid front was ideologically extremely diverse: churches, businessmen, trade unions, liberal academics, Western governments and civil society organisations. Many of them were avowedly anti-communist. What united communists and anti-communists was not Marxist ideology, but the conviction that Apartheid had to end.*

***The Role of Afrikaans Institutions and Thinkers***
*Another inconvenient truth for Afrikaans critics is that resistance to Apartheid did not only come from outside. It also grew within Afrikaans ranks: academics, writers, journalists, business people and young people increasingly questioned Apartheid.*

*The National Party's power base had eroded long before 1990 arrived. The choice was no longer between "victory" and "negotiation", but between a controlled transition and a chaotic collapse.*

***A Strategic Choice, Not Capitulation***
*De Klerk's decision was therefore neither emotional nor naive, but calculated. Intelligence assessments showed that the combination of mass resistance, economic decline, and international isolation created an unsustainable security situation.*

*By acting early, De Klerk succeeded in turning a looming collapse into a negotiated process in which state institutions continued to exist. This is a critical distinction that is often overlooked.*

*South Africa did not descend into full-blown civil war – not because the inevitable was avoided, but because political intervention occurred in time."*

***Conclusion: Losing Power or Saving the State?***

*To describe 2 February 1990 as a surrender is to misunderstand the nature of state power. De Klerk did not lose a war; he decided to prevent one. What he did surrender was that which would inevitably lead South Africa over the edge, namely Apartheid.*

*The NP Government lost its ability to legally and sustainably maintain Apartheid. But by abandoning it in time, it contributed to the preservation of the state itself.*

*For critics, this is a painful conclusion. But strategically it was not weakness. It was a rational recognition of reality – and the only path that spared South Africa a much bloodier end."*

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# CHAPTER 11.

# SOUTH AFRICA'S NEGOTIATIATED TRANSITION: BACKGROUND AND TIMELINE

## 11.1 A QUICK CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING THE HISTORICAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND STRATEGIC DETERMINANTS BEHIND THE NEGOTIATIONS.

### 11.1.1 MY GENERATION'S REALITY: LEADING A LIFE IN WHICH THE ONLY CONSTANT HAS BEEN CHANGE…

On a calendar, South Africa's momentous transition from white minority rule to black majority rule seems to have been quick. It occurred between 2 February 1990 (President FW de Klerk's rightly famous speech) and 10 May 1994, when President Nelson Mandela was sworn in as the country's first-ever Black president.

Seemingly, over and done with in little more than four years…

For anyone of my age, though, the feeling then was (and still is) that our entire lives have been caught up in a seemingly endless chain of transitions so radical that it would probably have left the average European or North American of our age cohort with their heads spinning, if it had happened to them.

Take my own case as example: I was born with her Britannic Majesty as my head of state, at a time when no African country had yet escaped from colonialism. In fact, when I was born my parents didn't yet possess a motor car…

When I started school, we still used the Imperial system of measurements (inches, gallons, ounces). The currency was still pounds and pennies and only switched to the decimal system and the Rand in February 1961, three months before the country became a republic. In my youth, if you needed to go overseas, you had to board a mail ship because commercial jets were not yet commonly in service on the South Africa route.

South Africa had no TV until I was well into my twenties…

Politically, the 12 years I spent on the school benches were marked by rapid, radical change. In short order, during the late fifties and early sixties, a host of African countries had received their independence. Which naturally inflamed the aspirations of South Africa's disenfranchised non-whites. I remember vividly as child in Durban in 1960 standing on our stoep and watching the Centurion tanks going by atop their transporter low-beds in the street in front of our house – a reassurance for whites, in that time of unrest following on the Sharpeville tragedy. In those turbulent sixties I remember watching with horror the Italian documentary film about Africa's violent Uhuru called "*Afrika Addio*" and following on the radio the news about the carnage and destruction that had plagued many of the newly independent African states.

Then in the mid-seventies (as a university student majoring in Political Science and Law) I could with apprehension grasp the fundamental geo-strategic shift in the regional power equation brought about by the fall of the Portuguese Empire. Followed soon by the shock of seeing images of South African soldiers in combat in Angola. Uhuru was steadily creeping nearer, ever further south – just as British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan had warned, in his 3 February 1960 "Winds of Change" speech to the South African Parliament…

By the time that my own children were born with me in my mid-twenties Rhodesia had become Zimbabwe, and the SA Government had accepted the UN Security Council's Resolution 435 for Namibia's coming independence…

By the dawn of the nineties the Cold War – which we had all just blindly assumed would carry on and on – had abruptly ended. Our erstwhile "fifth province", SWA/Namibia, had indeed also become independent, and President FW de Klerk had on 2 February 1990 announced the liberation of Nelson Mandela and the un-banning of the ANC and PAC liberation movements as well as the SA Communist Party (SACP).

In fact, everything that we had in our youth blithely imagined to be fixed features of our world, our country, and even our professional careers, had been turned on its head…

Meaning that, yes, it's true that the formal negotiation phase in our country's long-gestating chain of change (which we now call our national transition to a non-racial democracy) had indeed very belatedly entered its terminal phase on 2 February 1990 and culminated in President Mandela's inauguration on 10 May 1994. However, as I have pointed out in the previous chapters, the historical determinants that had over time shaped that outcome had commenced impacting us well before, from the founding of the Union and escalating in intensity decade after decade. Additionally, there had been the eighteen months of pre-negotiations in the run-up to 2 February 1990 that had been decisive in how the negotiations were in the end really conducted, as well as in terms of moulding the system that resulted from it.

Overall, therefore, the typifying reality of my generation's entire life experience – in both the broader world and the local contexts – had been one of constant change. So that what I came to see in my fellow countrymen of that age cohort in the 1990s (as reflected also in my own feelings), had been a generalised state of weariness, of almost numb acceptance of what we all could sense was historically inevitable. In this, cautious hope alternated with latent concern fed by our people's often harsh historical experience.

Of course, in our minds we mulled over the key question: what does the future hold for us Afrikaners, who had sacrificed so much blood for our place on Africa's face? We, our continent's deep-rooted yet awkwardly different white/beige/brown tribe… We, who had "no ships in the harbour" (as Lang Hendrik van den Bergh was wont to say).

Our situation was definitely distinct from European settler communities who, when earlier they had to face Uhuru rolling over them, could rush to harbours and airports in their thousands to embark on voyages back to colder climes, to what many had still called "home"…

Considering our complex and conflicting reality, ours was a constant vacillation between optimism and deep worry. Yet interspersed also with a sense that at least we were now at last facing up to that reality, no longer chasing impractical ideological and strategic "fever dreams". Understanding that, what had been decided and done, was in truth also our "liberation". Freeing us from opprobrium, enforced isolation, and debilitating endless conflict…

Yes, indeed, when the transition's immediate fruits quickly came, we were of course happy to be accepted back into the family of humankind. We were very pleased that the Border War had stopped, and that we could instead now take the fight to the All Blacks on the rugby field. We were enthusiastic about the prospects for an economic revival – but deep down we were also concerned about the longer-term imponderables: what if, over time, things did not work out as wished for?

Because, make no mistake, what we were doing was unique in human history: a complete transfer to our erstwhile sworn enemy of the entirety of the real, hard political power to govern the country and determine not only theirs but also our own future destiny (that power to dominate and dictate, which we had held in monopoly control for three centuries, having developed it to the point of possessing an own nuclear arsenal).

Doing so in a dangerous neighbourhood, at that.

All on the strength of a piece of paper, rushed to completion over a few short months at the end of 1993…

And, to this day (as we increasingly realise) without much clarity among ourselves, about <u>how</u> this all actually had happened? And <u>why,</u> in that particular manner? With what long-term outcome?

## 11.1.2 THE KEY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NEGOTIATIONS/TRANSITION THAT WE'LL BE LOOKING AT

Who were the true key players, and what had been the real behind-the-scenes process through which the eventual settlement was actually negotiated? Were the NP Government negotiators themselves weak and inexpert (as many now contend), or was it the hand that that they held to play, that was weak?

Had the NP Government under De Klerk started the negotiations on the wrong theoretical footing? Were the basic principles underpinning successful negotiating taken into consideration and adhered to by both main protagonists – or by only one side, the ANC/SACP?

Did we again (as so many times in our history) fall into the trap of chasing short-term tactical gains, but at punishing long-term strategic cost? (In other words, that the dysfunctional strategic decision-making that we earlier noted under Vorster and PW Botha and which had cost us a "lost decade" under the latter, in truth still reign chaotically supreme during the negotiations and transition under FW de Klerk?).

What had been the actual (as opposed to the supposed) objectives that the main protagonists – the NP Government and the ANC/SACP – in the end had pursued, and what were the respective strategic considerations underpinning that?

Were the negotiations and transition in essence an exercise in the legal-theoretical formulation of a new constitution around a multi-party conference table, or was there much more at stake: from the NP Government side, first and foremost a Peace Accord to end the ruinous conflict and thereby bring back stability and security, with as their ancillary objectives the rehabilitation of the image of the Afrikaner and the protection of individual and property rights? From the ANC/SACP side, first and foremost to break the white monopoly hold on power as round one, whilst visualising a second round – a second revolution – at some opportune later stage?

Were the real-world socio-political dynamics that the particular type of constitution as adopted would lead to in practice, fully understood at the time? Such as the fact that it would greatly strengthen the role and power of political parties (through the proportional, list-based voting system) as well as result in their proliferation, due to the ease and attraction of forming new parties?

Equally important: was it comprehended at the time that the failure to timeously finalise in the interim constitution, provision for a directly elected presidency would in real-world terms create a dynamic where in practice it would not be parliament, but the majority faction within the majority party that would be in effective control of and appoint the head of state and executive branch, as well as simultaneously being in control of the legislature? Thereby ending up being centrally in control of all the levers of political power, because of South Africa having been bequeathed a rushed, mellifluously worded constitution with however no real division between the executive and legislative branches? (Which then led directly to the radical wing of the ANC/SACP being able to appoint Jacob Zuma as president and capture the state).

Was it understood that the country's complex demographic reality of a multitude of interest groups (many tribally defined) would inevitably come to assert itself politically – despite it not having been group rights, but individual rights that formed the foundation of the agreed constitution? A resurgent reality due to human nature and the exploitation of the opportunity and power given to political parties in the new system… So that the reality now coming back to the fore, is that a plethora of political parties are being formed around this plethora of group interests Which means in practice that it is going to become ever more difficult to muster a governing majority in the form of a single party – at any level of government: national, provincial, and local…

These questions, together with the many-varied conspiracy theories that nowadays abound around the negotiations and transition, serve as proof that there isn't clear and complete understanding about what had actually happened, nor about what were the real driving influences.

Undeniably, arriving at a peace accord (in the form of the new constitution) was a hugely complex challenge, which had to be accomplished in a relatively short space of time. Of necessity, it required fundamental change in what

had hitherto been core policy positions of the two main protagonists (NP vs ANC). They had to starkly and fundamentally shift their "political religion" from what it had for decades historically been. Nothing less than a 180-degree about-face in government policy had occurred, from Apartheid to non-racial majority rule within a unitary state, which the NP's support base had to absorb and accept. In truth, exactly the same also happened for ANC supporters – the same *volte-face* in core policy, from seeking the violent revolutionary overthrow of the existing order (so as to install a Marxist people's republic), to peacefully negotiating a compromise deal based on evolution, accepting state continuity and a Western-style democratic, capitalist model of governance.

Much of the current incomprehension – on all sides – as to what had really happened (and, most importantly: why), is therefore understandable.

### 11.1.3 MY GOAL WITH RECORDING/ANALYSING WHAT HAD REALLY HAPPENED DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS

It is not going to be an easy task, trying to cast some light on a complex past about which so many have invested so much emotional attachment – into often long-ossified perceptions, prejudices, and political preferences, at that. To have a chance of making some contribution to better understanding, my main goal needs to be clear from the outset. Furthermore, this segment has to have a logic internal structure, and it needs to start out with a brief conceptual framework of its own, defining the terminological labels to be used and stating my basic hypotheses up front (so that readers can test their validity for themselves as they read along – in the same way that we did before with labels such as "shoot vs settle").

To give proper direction to this last part of my saga (to ensure that it will help clarify, rather than further confuse) it is necessary to make very clear **what my goal is**: it is not to point fingers and allocate blame, because that will be entirely pointless – since not one comma or semicolon of the settlement reached can be retro-actively changed, and most of those directly involved are already dead.

My entire purpose will be to highlight the **lessons** that can (and urgently should) be learnt from the 1990s process, because huge challenges regarding inter-party coalition negotiation, governability, appropriate political strategy, and constitutional configuration are looming on the near horizon…

### 11.1.4 THE ORGANISATION OF, AND METHOD BEHIND THIS LAST SET OF CHAPTERS ON THE NEGOTIATIONS/TRANSITION

In addition to making very clear my overriding objective (i.e., learning lessons) it is also important to give a logical structure to this last part of my saga. Like in any post mortem, there first has to be a dissection, establishing factually what had actually happened. As before, I will do this by means of a time-line of key events, which will serve as basis for analysis and interpretation, always aimed at identifying lessons. Lastly, I will test what I propose to be the principal lessons against other comparable examples – one taken from within South Africa itself, subsequent to our transition, and the other example from broader international experience. This will serve as proof of concept, to demonstrate the validity of my reasoning.

This last part will, therefore, consist of three chapters. Since we want to learn from re-visiting what had actually happened, in this **Chapter 11** we first of all have to factually establish exactly what had really occurred under President De Klerk (as opposed to our now already vague recollections of what had happened so long ago, which have been further compounded by conspiracy theories and a considerable degree of "buyer's remorse" among many, on both sides). This need for factual exactitude about what really had happened behind the scenes requires that, in this first of the three chapters, we detail the **timeline** of how the negotiations and transition in truth had happened. This timeline will make up the bulk of this current Chapter 11.

With the facts established, we **will in Chapter 12 analyse the De Klerk negotiation strategy** as it had come to the fore in his 2 February 1990 speech. We will weigh to what extent the NP Government had given heed to the generally recognised basic principles of standard negotiation theory which should have underpinned the formulation of an effective negotiation strategy. We will also analyse the then NP Government's respective choices

of courses of action and the decision-making that had given rise to De Klerk and his cabinet selecting these strategic options.

From the perspective of the white community, we will look at whether there could have been other strategies that would better have suited the circumstance, leading potentially to more optimal outcomes. For example, should the NP have approached the negotiation process as being by nature adversarial (i.e., in typical Westminster parliamentary fashion), accordingly focusing on the politics of **opposition**? Or could they have benefitted more from adopting a "politics of **partnership**" approach? (Which is probably the key question, with a view to lessons for the future).

Again, it needs to be stressed that looking at possible alternative negotiation strategies that could conceivably have been employed (and what these could have brought about in terms of perhaps somewhat different outcomes) will serve here not to criticise what had historically transpired, nor those who had back then been burdened with the immensely difficult responsibility to have made those choices. Rather, its purpose will be to concretely illustrate principles, with the intention to learn from that with a view to what a future marked by coalition likely will demand (obviously hindsight is 20/20, so please don't think that I underestimate for one moment how difficult the negotiation process had actually been to manage and "get right").

You can also rest assured that, to keep matters real and concrete, we will not give ourselves over to imaginative flights of fancy, when identifying these possible alternative strategies: we will take **the same actual strategies and positions** that the NP Government had in the end in fact adopted (mostly under duress, after having tried other approaches first) and see what the outcomes could have been if our politicians had instead **started out** with those same "end positions" of theirs from the very outset.

Why this is important in terms of learning, is that it will illustrate the absolute need for acute situational awareness from the word go about your side's real strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Only through such awareness can you put yourself in a position to "make a virtue of necessity". This awareness must serve as basis for realistic, real-world goal definition and strategy determination. It can only be derived from a comprehensive, coldly realistic SWOT analysis and then exhaustive "war gaming" of scenarios and strategies well before negotiations are initiated. What this part will illustrate, is failure on the part of the NP Government to have done that adequately, whilst the ANC/SACP had clearly done their homework...

Basic principles of negotiation strategy show that failure to fully appreciate at the start what is going to be realistically achievable is usually highly detrimental. Because it typically leads to publicly formulating goals based not on power realities but on what in the initial stage are deemed desirable or acceptable goals in terms of party-political considerations (instead of national existential considerations). This lack of realism and situational awareness almost inevitably leads to those early articulated goals needing then to be back-tracked upon and substituted with more achievable ones – which is publicly viewed as back-sliding stemming from weakness. Which is why negotiation theory as expounded from Sun Tzu down to modern-day experts such as Henry Kissinger and William Ury of Harvard, stresses the need for situationally aware, coldly realistic strategy planning and goal setting – the latter, both in terms of viably defining your objectives and knowing the strength or weakness of your fallback options (what Ury called your BATNA – "best alternative to a negotiated agreement" – so that you can assess whether you can afford to walk away, or not).

In other words, what needs to be front and centre (for the sake of realistically meeting the challenges of a future that's likely to be dominated by multi-party coalition governments arrived at by means of effective negotiation), is the requirement that negotiation strategies must be firmly based on full awareness and understanding of the true power realities and real-world political dynamics. Decision-making needs to be strategic, not just tactical, and be based on an a-political, dispassionately objective analysis of the multivarious forces at play, as well as of the real national interest, as seen holistically. Furthermore, due consideration must be given to the principles of effective negotiation as developed over the ages in negotiation theory. This is of cardinal importance, to help ensure that decision-making and strategic planning not be based on what any given political party thinks will at any given moment best please its particular constituent base, or provide it with short-term tactical advantage. Especially if such tactics in fact are going to harm its long-term strategic interests.

It will, for example, be noticed that the positions that the NP Government signed up to **at the end** of the negotiations, in fact corresponded well with the preferred start positions that the NP Government team of experts eventually working under Roelf Meyer in the "Bilateral Channel" from mid-1992 on, had actually been advocating from the very beginning of the process in 1990 (positions regarding both content substance and negotiation format, about which Niël Barnard and Nelson Mandela had in reality already reached a "meeting of minds" in 1988/89 during their in-prison talks).

However, the leading NP politicians in 1989 (under the new FW de Klerk leadership) asserted – as they had every right to do – that they as cabinet will "start running the country themselves again" (after the PW Botha Securocrat era). This led to them (as party politicians at heart), discussing plans of action among themselves at brief "bush summit" gatherings such as at D'Nyala in December 1989 and developing there their own strongly tactical, very much party-political approach as to how to conduct the coming negotiations (which effectively ignored the pre-negotiation consensus reached between Mandela and Barnard).

As you will see, the NP Government did score some early tactical gains in terms of initially somewhat wrong-footing the ANC and gaining the political initiative "out of the blocks" with De Klerk's 2 February 1990 speech, but by early 1992 the negotiations had completely stalled. Then the NP leadership had no other viable option other than to revert back to that bilateral "Channel" format and acceptance of majority rule (about which consensus had been reached during the pre-negotiations). However, doing so at that stage, caused them a tremendous loss of face and of leverage, as well as of precious time…

Because the 2 February speech had, when assessed in terms of the basic principles of negotiation theory, been strategically weak and ill-advised. It resulted in the NP Government being effectively held hostage by the standards of "normalisation" that they themselves had set, and by the fact that they had put the cart before the horse by promising normalisation and inclusion <u>before</u> a definitive accord had been agreed, signed and guaranteed. As one AI model had stated, upon having analysed what had happened: it was like allowing a prospective purchaser to take occupation of the house and change the locks, well before a deed of sale had been signed and a bank-guaranteed check handed over...

To illustrate these key points a hypothetical alternative text for that speech will be offered at the conclusion of Chapter 12 – one that will enhance the mediatic impact (which had been De Klerk's main goal) while also strengthening his government and party's leverage. This draft will be based on the actual positions that the NP were over the course of the negotiations obliged to adopt – thus, on their own end positions – and not on flights of fancy.

In **Chapter 13** I will analyse the reasons why the NP Government lost all political power. How had the ANC/SACP (which had been decidedly weak and severely challenged by world geostrategic developments at the beginning of the nineties) succeeded in accumulating all power within the space of just a few years, centralising it in their own hands? This chapter will thus supplement the preceding more-or-less theoretical chapter about the negotiation and constitution-drafting phase, focusing on the actual contest for real political power which was fought out in parallel (and which had always been the ANC/SACP's top priority). In this chapter we will analyse aspects such as the actual use of the levers of power (for example, the security forces), the nowadays under-estimated threat from the militant Right, and the ANC/SACP's use of their "people's war" strategy to gain dominance amongst the numerically vastly superior black voting bloc.

Moving towards a conclusion to my admittedly very long saga, the last two chapters will be learning-focused: looking at what is possible in the future by understanding the past, as well as by providing examples – South African as well as overseas – of success stories where race had been overcome. Because it would be easy to dismiss the alterative de-politicised, de-racialised strategic partnership scenarios that I've presented as just naïve theoretical imaginings with no real possibility of actual application within South African reality. In **Chapter 14** I will, therefore, present and discuss a tangible example of the alternative (alternative to what De Klerk had initially adopted, that is) which was successfully employed in the post-transition era in Franschhoek in the Western Cape. In the second half of that chapter, I will then look at international examples in ex-colonies where race is a demographic reality but no longer a powerful political determinant.

The purpose with briefly outlining such a concrete, real-world example from South Africa itself, is to illustrate that the theoretical approach based on a-political community cooperation discussed in Chapter 12 indeed was fully capable of being successfully applied in a South African context. The history of Franschhoek's transformation – from a conflict-ridden model Apartheid-era *dorp* into a successful and harmonious community – is one that I had personally been closely acquainted with (thus not airy-fairy theorising cooked up hypothetically in some academic ivory tower).

Recounting the transformative history of this local example will, therefore, also serve to broadly fill readers in about the course that my life took after I had taken a severance package from the Foreign Service in early 1997. However, the chapter's first part will mostly focus on the Franschhoek Social Accord and the tangible progress that that community achieved thanks to having adopted a partnership approach that de-politicised the key challenges in favour of a business-like "Franschhoek Incorporated" stance.

In the second part of Chapter 14 I will look beyond South Africa, at the reasons why the former Anglo colonies to this day remain plagued by issues of race (whether they be in Africa, Australasia, or North America) while – on the contrary – in the Spanish-speaking, Catholic ex-colonies of Central America race generally is not a deciding factor in elections. Here statistically minute "white" minorities are appreciated for their skills and as a rule are elected by the overwhelming "non-white" indigenous majorities to govern… (not that the latter reality is in itself either good or bad; it serves merely to show that race needn't necessarily be the absolute determinant of election results). Again, I will recount to you my own personal *in situ* observations here in Central America (where my Guatemalan wife and I live), not stuff that I've merely read about.

Based on these two tangible examples I believe that the present high instance of racial polarisation in South Africa need not be a given, and that the reality of failed service delivery may indeed create opportunities (and support) for merit-based multi-party governance – if negotiated effectively by partnership-focused parties that set aside petty politics and see their community's interests in businesslike terms – even if these parties each grew out of and are centred on representing group interests.

**Chapter 15** will focus on the self-evident truth that the De Klerk Government's short tenure at the very end of what had been nearly a century of steady evolution towards the outcome we saw in 1994, cannot be alone, or even primarily, blamed for what had resulted. However, nowadays practically all blame (on the part of those with "buyer's remorse") is heaped on De Klerk and Roelf Meyer, no matter that the die had been essentially cast decades before – through political leaders letting the hourglass run out, due to not having had De Klerk's guts to at last face up to reality.

That chapter will look at lessons from the entire history of colonisation and the de-colonisation of South Africa. In particular, we will look at historical "forks in the road" that had regularly cropped up, and what later reality could have been like if on those occasions a different direction had been chosen – because if different strategic choices had back then been made, then it could conceivably have enabled a somewhat different end outcome.

Again, this 15th and last Chapter will serve to put the march of history holistically into perspective, beyond just what occurred under the last three NP leaders that I myself had been witness of. Again, with the objective to learn the core lessons from our past, for the sake of future decision-making.

### 11.1.5 THE STRUCTURE, NATURE, AND PURPOSE OF THIS CURRENT CHAPTER (#11)

Coming back now to this **Chapter 11**: before diving into the negotiation/transition timeline, I will first do here what I've done at the start of the other main parts of this e-book. I will start with a brief conceptual framework – just as I, for example, did when I explained at the very outset the labels "**shoot** vs **settle**" which we used for tagging the different options that fundamentally marked the discord and dysfunction that we saw during the 1970s and 1980s in the debate about national strategy.

In similar manner, I will briefly explain at the outset of this chapter the theoretical framework and basic "labels" which I will be using to aid understanding of the negotiation/transition phase in our history. Because, by the end of 1989, the previous debate about appropriate strategy had been definitively concluded in favour of aiming

henceforth to “settle”. I will also set out, up front, the basic hypotheses that I will present to explain why – in my opinion – the negotiations/transition happened the way they did (again, to allow you to check for yourself the validity of my opinions as you reading along through this Chapter 11).

Secondly, this chapter will then refresh our memories on what the “negotiating environment” looked like in the 1990s – what was by that time the main power equation, plus the principal factors that had determined it.

The timeline of key events will then follow as this chapter’s third section, running from February 1990 to the acceptance of the final constitution and the NP’s leaving of the Government of National Unity in 1996 (which effectively ended the transition and rang in “normal” majoritarian rule).

Subsequently, still with the aid of a timeline, I will illustrate on the factual chronology of the relationship between FW de Klerk and his second wife, Elita Georgiadis (because of the latter-day theory that she somehow had “turned his head”, politically speaking – a notion which the actual timeline, from their first meeting up to De Klerk handing over power to Mandela, easily disproves).

I will also briefly set out how I myself had experienced the negotiations and transition: first at the SA embassy in Paris, then as head of diplomatic training in Pretoria, followed by my time as the “New South Africa’s” first ambassador to previously hostile Black Africa – thereby to illustrate the diplomatic dimension of the transition.

With the facts thus established of what had happened when during the negotiations/transition, I will then – in Chapter 12 – turn to interpreting those facts. The objective there will be to try and explain the <u>why</u> behind what had happened, to result in the outcomes that we are all too familiar with.

### 11.1.6 THE NEED FOR ALWAYS BEING SITUATIONALLY AWARE OF THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT AND ITS EVOLUTION

I’ve said before that one can just imagine what a Verwoerd, a Vorster, and even PW Botha might have done differently, if they each had, during their reign, been miraculously permitted a glimpse at the proverbial crystal ball showing them what the future held – i.e., permitting them back then to have known what in the end was to come about in 1994, due to the course of action (or inaction) that they had chosen. It doesn’t take a genius to realise that they as intelligent people would, with such foreknowledge, probably have acted drastically differently – particularly as regards to <u>when</u> to have started preparing for, and initiating negotiations…

Alas, politicians do not have such crystal balls (and often not any, for that matter – preferring to be led by what they believe their party faithful will tolerate, rather than themselves bravely leading from the front).

This lack of a magic crystal ball is where an independent and objective national intelligence service comes into play, together with a proper theoretical and analytical framework with which to help correctly understand opportunities and threats. A service and a framework that both are clinically realistic and coldly objective. Speaking truth to power and helping leaders to understand the realities and likely consequences that they (and the nation) face.

The entity within the modern state which is designed and tasked to collect all relevant data and apply such a theoretical framework for analysing and interpreting it (thereby to provide a timely reality check to political decision-makers), is the state’s civilian national or central intelligence service.

What needs to be kept in mind throughout one’s reading of this chapter on the negotiations and transition, are the five key intelligence “reality checks” (as detailed already in previous chapters) that the intelligence service had actually provided to successive NP Governments, from well before the start of negotiations were announced by De Klerk on 2 February 1990. These were intelligence assessments that were pertinent and to the point, resulting from objective and diligent processing of all available intelligence input, without any in-built departmental bias – thus: “*not what politicians wanted to hear, but what they had needed to hear*”.

These five points are essential to remember through-out, especially when we want to understand what in the end had come to pass:

- from the BfSS days of Lang Hendrik van den Bergh the NP Government had been warned that they needed to move away from race-based policies (which he equated to "national suicide" as per the earlier mentioned report in the *New York Times*), warning that the Government had urgently as strategic priority to prepare for having a "seat at the table" for negotiating a settlement of what was essentially a political problem and not a military one.
- Already by the early eighties the intelligence community had assessed in the KIK that, when Nelson Mandela is released from prison, he would dominate the political scene and run rings around any and all of the then serving NP cabinet ministers, thus including Dr Gerrit Viljoen and FW de Klerk.
- The NIS had been increasingly clear and insistent throughout the 1980s that the fundamental cause of the growing unrest then gripping the country, was the government's own race policy – the denial of basic political rights to the non-white population through the racially-discriminatory Apartheid policy designed to retain in white hands, an effective monopoly over political power.
- In May 1988 PW Botha had called to his presidential office NIS-DG Dr Niël Barnard and said to him that since he (Barnard) had for so long had so much to say about the need for negotiations and for talking to Nelson Mandela, he is henceforth tasked with leading a small team to secretly start doing exactly that. At that meeting with Botha, Barnard had very explicitly warned PW that he must understand that engaging thus with Mandela would inevitably lead to majority rule and Mandela as president.
- After 48 pre-negotiation meetings with Mandela, Barnard had concluded (and his small team had actually reached "in-principle" consensus with Mandela) that the coming constitutional negotiations can only function if based on acceptance of majority rule within a unitary state, and with the talks needing to be conducted bi-laterally and confidentially between the NP Government and the ANC/SACP via a discreet direct channel between the two of them.

As we shall see, these five key assessments all proved to be totally correct, as demonstrated by what subsequently happened in practice, in the real world…

### 11.1.7 MAJORITY RULE IN A NON-RACIAL UNITARY STATE WAS BY THE 1990S UNAVOIDABLE

Let me also state here at the very start of this three-chapter concluding part of my saga, that one fundamental reality needs to be recognised – by the time that De Klerk's NP Government in late 1989 got "converted" to seeking a negotiated settlement, **there was just one viable constitutional option then still realistically achievable, namely majority rule within a non-racial unitary state**.

No matter what stratagems could have been tried, by whichever NP negotiation team, however it was made up (irrespective of how clever, tough, expert, "militarist" and experienced at negotiation) the fundamental outcome would still have ended up being essentially the same: **majority rule within a non-racial unitary state**. No matter if such an alternative NP negotiation team (i.e., not Roelf Meyer and company) would have tried to play the so-called "military card", or any other conceivable card.. Because the world and the non-white majority simply would not have accepted anything less than unfettered majority rule in a non-racial unitary state. When we in the latter part of this chapter will indicate how the negotiations could have been better handled (especially at the outset) that does not mean that such "better handling" could or would have resulted in a fundamentally different outcome.

The IFP of Prince Buthelezi and Freedom Front of General Viljoen had in fact tried to engineer a significantly different outcome, employing different tactics and "cards". They both failed, just as much as the NP did. They also in the end had to accept the historically inevitable and join the elections. All because they – like the NP Government – simply **did not hold strong enough cards** at the time that negotiations belatedly came round.

FW de Klerk and the NP had initially nailed their flag to group rights and power sharing and had tried to obtain these through a typical parliamentary approach of tactical manoeuvring, debating and compromising. All he got was the fig leaf of a brief, time-limited GNU and "sunset clause".

Constand Viljoen and the AVF indeed tried to play the white "military" card, to try and get a Volkstaat through threats of armed insurrection and secession – all they got was the fig leaf of the Volkstaat Council, quickly discarded after the elections.

Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi and the IFP tried to play the disruptor card ("no peace unless") to get recognition for secession of the Zulu kingdom – all they got was the fig leaf of lofty words about the special stature of the Zulu king inscribed in the constitution, plus the Ingonyama Trust.

Thus, talking hard or soft, even trying to play the so-called military card, all still in the end resulted in the objectively inevitable outcome of majority rule in a non-racial unitary state.

I have no doubt that the last time that something (slightly) different could conceivably have been negotiated was before 1974 (i.e., before the Portuguese Empire fell). Ideally, a new dispensation should have been negotiated no later than 1960, for it to conceivably have been significantly different.

When negotiation and partnership politics really would have worked, was in the late nineteen-twenties (when then Prime Minister Hertzog tried to move South Africa away from a race-defined system to an ethnically defined one, by including the so-called “Coloureds” in the “white” system). By the early eighties, if negotiations had started then, it would already only have been possible to somewhat tweak the modalities of the “majority rule within a non-racial unitary state” model.

Which is not to say that important constitutional features of that inevitable "majority rule in a non-racial unitary state" model could not in the 1990-1994 timeframe have been better negotiated. Especially regarding more devolution, a directly elected president and a general amnesty, to ensure that the majority rule model take a form more appropriate to South African realities and needs. This could conceivably have been achieved, if the NP government had from the outset prepared better and employed a different strategic approach to the negotiations (essentially, that on which consensus had been reached in the pre-negotiations and to which the NP perforce reverted in 1992).

Also, if the NP Government had shown a better grasp of what then already had been well known about the basic principles upon which negotiation theory rests.

By initially resisting the only viable model (i.e., majority rule in a non-racial unitary state) through an adversarial approach, committing themselves to politics of opposition to almost the end, the NP had forfeited the opportunity (and the time) to focus instead on tweaking that inevitable model to best advantage.

Such optimisation of the basic model could have been achieved, not by means of a different NP team of "stronger" negotiators, nor by means of a more “hard-arsed” stance – rather, by having started out with a different psychological approach, a better thought-through negotiation strategy, and a more appropriate format for the negotiation process (actually, the same positions and process that they in the end had, perforce, to adopt anyway). In short, the NP’s starting strategy was not weak, but fundamentally **wrong**, in terms of basic principles of negotiation theory.

What they had needed from the start was a properly researched, extensively war-gamed, workable plan for conducting the negotiations, for the purpose of which they had needed to beforehand determine six key things:

- a clearly defined set of viable goals that the negotiators would be tasked to try and achieve (based on advancing and protecting real fundamental interests, as distinct from and opposed to policy positions based on emotional desires);
- a realistically assessed and properly defined fall-back position (BATNA – meaning: Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement)), against which they would be able to objectively judge whether “walking away” would ever be feasible, once the negotiations were embarked upon (i.e., that bailing out and falling back on the BATNA being less damaging than agreeing a less than perfect deal – as we will discuss in detail at the end of this Chapter);

- the optimal format in which to conduct the negotiations as process, and with whom as negotiation team (i.e., aspects such as confidentially or publicly, bilaterally or multilaterally, with or without mediation, inside or outside South Africa);
- the appropriate psychological approach to adopt (adversarial as opponents, or consensually as partners, constructively or disruptive, etc);
- from the foregoing, developing an integrated negotiation strategy that operationalises theory and leverage in an inter-related manner; and
- developing a related strategy for contesting for political power (since the negotiations were actually a prelude, being by definition aimed at holding elections in future; the ball on which the eyes had always to be held – as the ANC/SACP did – was thus political power, not fancily worded constitutional compromise clauses).

All decision-making within the party and government concerning the foregoing needed first and foremost to have been based on a proper initial SWOT analysis followed by dispassionate "war-gaming" of potential scenarios, process formats, and strategies (as distinct from day-to-day tactics). Were these essential preparations fully and thoroughly done on the NP Government side? (I found little evidence of it in the political sphere).

As we will develop in the final, interpretative section of this chapter, such thorough preparations would likely have led to the NP's eventual "end positions" having been adopted by it as its start positions. Then the objective would likely have been to strategically obtain – as end outcome best serving the national interest – the most advantageously configured "majority rule in a non-racial unitary state" model. Using a "politics of partnership" approach, instead of an adversarial one of opposition (the latter, as typical of the traditional Anglo-Saxon two-party system). A strategy of de-politicising the debate and focusing instead on the practical needs of "**SA Inc**" as our common enterprise.

In other words, doing what the ANC/SACP in fact did, namely "**making a virtue out of necessity**", when the ANC/SACP had from the word go simply walked away entirely from what had for decades been their policy of fomenting revolution through armed struggle in order to overthrow the state and establish a Marxist "people's republic". Instead, they accepted the liberal democratic Western-style democracy based on the Rule of Law, protection of individual rights, and Free Market principles.

As regards the format of the negotiation process, we shall see in the timeline that the NP Government had initially insisted on negotiating in public in a multilateral format but limiting participation to political parties. The stalemate than then transpired (as will be demonstrated in the timeline) was in practice inefficient as well as highly detrimental to the image of the NP. Shouldn't they rather have accepted from the start (and not only from 1992) the incontestable reality there always were just two significant parties, namely the NP and the ANC? Logically, then, these two were therefore bound to thrash out a deal bilaterally. Furthermore, to negotiate not in public (as done multilaterally at the World Trade Centre), but rather doing so privately, bilaterally via a "Track-Two" back channel – because trying to do so in the public domain (considering the bias and role of the media, and the susceptibility of such an "open" process to be manipulated for propaganda), was actually to try and play against the ANC on the terrain where they had enjoyed their greatest advantage.

On the other hand, should the NP government not have planned from the start to involve the whole of society – i.e., beyond just parties – because of the imperative need to accommodate economic and cultural interests, and also to benefit from the broadest possible input?

Perhaps most critically: should the NP have started the negotiations with their undertaking to "normalise" the country first, as means of enticing the ANC/SACP to the negotiation table? Should they not have based their strategy on presenting at the outset (in the 2 February 1990 speech) a clear and binding promise to do all that was necessary to facilitate negotiations – but with implementation contingent on a comprehensive deal needing first to be signed?

In other words, not having allowed the implementation of the transition and the contestation for political power to have begun long before the deal was even broadly outlined, let alone inked in final form. This effort to, from the

outset, first “normalise” had trapped the NP Government in an “easy to stall” stalemate and a series of concessions that allowed the ANC/SACP to contest for power by using their intimidatory “people’s war” doctrine whilst harvesting every propaganda opportunity. Because what the NP had inadvertently done, was to set a bar (over which they themselves alone had to jump), of which the height wasn’t defined by themselves, but by their opponents. This approach was putting the cart before the horse in terms of negotiation theory, and was the opposite to the standard practice adopted in the case of the negotiations such as Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Northern Ireland, where it was insisted that the deal first be fully concluded before the envisaged political process to give effect to it was permitted to kick off.

In brief, should the distinct processes of negotiating a settlement, and that of transitioning from the old to the new, have been allowed to so significantly overlap, as it did in South Africa?

These are key questions that should be kept in mind as we will set out the timeline later in this chapter, and then when in its concluding sections we will analyse the negotiation process and – as illustration of principles – construct and test an alternative text for the pivotal 2 February 1990 speech…

With all that said, one should still understand that the fundamental outcome nevertheless would not have been significantly different. And one should give their due to the much maligned “second half” negotiation team under Roelf Meyer, which only came onto the field when the game had effectively already been decided. At least they succeeded in resurrecting the stalled process and ensured that the ANC/SACP – although the latter indeed went on to win political power at the hustings – had to accept that South Africa would see evolutionary state continuity (with the “old” parliament enacting the new non-racial constitution providing for a Western-stye democracy and free market capitalism). This outcome was the very antithesis of the armed revolution and a Marxist “people’s republic” model that the ANC/SACP Alliance had fought for, for decades…

Very often our critical nature gets fixated on all that we can see today is patently wrong with the new system, while ignoring the enormous achievement of Roelf Meyer and his excellent team who had inherited a collapsed, poorly planned process during 1992 and who, against all odds, saved the negotiations, averting a “Leipzig Option” power grab by the ANC/SACP radicals. Meyer and his team adjusted the NP’s goals on both constitutional content and format of the process (going back to what Barnard and Mandela had identified, namely majority rule and bilaterally talking via the confidential “Channel”, and focusing on fundamental interests rather than on party-political policy positions). They revived the talks and bequeathed us a constitution that, despite some rushed imperfections, gave us a return to peace, the end of isolation and the rehabilitation of the image of especially the Afrikaner, plus protection of individual as well as property rights – all ensconced in a “State of Laws” that’s firmly a Western, free market democracy.

If that outcome had been negotiated at the height of the Cold War (with the Marxists back then having had their tails up after Vietnam), then the Meyer team would have been rightly lauded as miracle-working heroes. Now, however, they are denigrated by some as supposedly “weak and inexpert” for having predictably failed to achieve the objectively impossible aspirations of the fantasists in the NP Government (who undeniably had started a complex process without proper analysis or planning). To understand what Meyer and his team achieved, let us not forget the conditions that South Africans had lived through in the 1980s and 1990s – till Nelson Mandela was sworn in as president.

A central hypothesis underpinning my analysis is therefore that both protagonists (NP and ANC) had made effectively 180-degree about-faces on policy, but that the scoreboard (the one on the content of the constitution) shows a clear win for the model in the end favoured by the NP Government. On the other hand, the scoreboard regarding who holds political power showed an equally clear win for the ANC/SACP. Which means that the broader NP Government and cabinet lost the political battle, but that the NP’s 1992 negotiation team as such nevertheless had held their own as regards the type of system eventually agreed.

Fault can certainly be found with the eventual constitution, but to blame it on the negotiators is in my humble opinion to miss the point – decisions and omissions on the part of the NP Government’s senior politicians at the outset (in what should have been a thorough, analytical, and game-tested planning and preparation phase) had in

my opinion much more significantly shaped the eventual outcome than the personal communication style of someone like Roelf Meyer. Neither did FW de Klerk's supposed dislike of his security forces and his alleged lapse in not "using them as a card to play" in the negotiations have any real relevance (as I will demonstrate). Not to mention frankly ridiculous notions of the two of them having been "traitors" who "sold out" or "gave away" the country.

Keeping in mind the learning objective, my main aim will therefore be to identify and explain the real weaknesses in the strategies and processes – which were much more closely related to errors in preparation, planning, and strategic decision making, than to personality traits of the key NP negotiators.

Why, how, because of what, and by whose hand did this all happen? We'll find out, right after completing this initial conceptual orientation.

## 11.1.8 THE NEW "LABELS" FOR THE NEGOTIATION/TRANSITION PHASE

### *11.1.8.1 The term "Negotiation/transition":*

The first "label" that needs explanation, is why I use the term "**negotiation/transition**" together. The reason for this is that these were not the usual separate, sequential phases. There was a significant overlap, in that the implementation of the transition started within days after the 2 February 1990 speech (because of De Klerk's overriding wish to rapidly "normalise", for image-building purposes and to get sanctions lifted). The "transition had, therefore, in reality begun even before the formal negotiations had kicked off, and the two processes had continued in parallel till the final constitution was agreed in 1996, ending the negotiation phase. The transition, for its part, can be said to have come to an end when the NP walked out of the Government of National Unity when the new (final) constitution was adopted.

Clearly the mere fact of shutting down the old order (for example, by scrapping legislation and allowing the "new" forces to commence politicking) while simultaneously embarking upon negotiations had in and of itself already started the transition from the old to the new – there wasn't a given moment when the negotiations concluded and the transition began (as would typically be the case, to preserve leverage regarding the future dispensation for those of whom it is expected to give up the privileges of the old).

Thus, in the case of South Africa, the **negotiations** (i.e., the talking between the key protagonists about the terms of the political settlement) and the **transition** (the legal process of switching from one constitutional dispensation to another) essentially shared the same actors and were like two sides of the same coin, in terms of the issues being struggled with. Because of the NP Government's decision to do things this way (not keeping the two processes separate and sequential), it therefore makes sense to deal with them both together, as two parts of the same, inter-related whole. However, with the benefit of hindsight, this does not suggest that the manner in which the NP Government had chosen to run both in parallel was necessarily the most advantageous way to have done it – as we will discuss more fully at the end of this chapter, when we will compare the NP Government's approach to the negotiations with standard negotiation theory as developed and proven over millennia. Suffice it to say here that the NP's initial approach did much harm to its than already limited leverage…

### *11.1.8.2 "Group Rights" and "Power Sharing" vs "PEACE, Rehabilitated Image, and Protection of Individual and Property Rights"*

We had earlier applied two labels to the strategic choices that had dominated debate within Afrikaner security circles during the PW Botha "total onslaught" era, namely were whether to "shoot" or to "settle". Once that earlier choice had been finally and firmly made in favour of "settle" (as announced in De Klerk's 2 February 1990 speech), a new debate then emerged within Afrikaner circles. This again revolved around two main strategic options. Which again divided the Volk into two camps, regarding what should be defined as the overriding objective to achieve with the negotiations. The one option was to strive for tangible recognition of the notion of "Group Rights" (hereafter: GR), implying a system of "power sharing" between group representatives. The other option was that priority should be given to achieving "Peace, Rehabilitation and Protection of Individual and Property Rights" (hereafter shortened to PRP). This latter option was supported by those who did not see the first option as viable,

due to anticipated resistance from the rest of the population who would see “Group Rights” as Apartheid Light, in camouflage.

What should be understood from the outset about this debate, is that very few Afrikaners at the time had comprehended that the underlying power paradigm within which these heated debates about strategy had up to then taken place within Afrikaner ranks, had completely changed. This happened the moment that FW de Klerk committed to inclusively negotiating a settlement with representatives of the entire population, and doings so over an open agenda.

Before that commitment, practical reality was that the “in-built” Afrikaner majority in tye (white) parliament meant that strategy debates were in reality conducted within and among the Afrikaner community only. Which is why “shoot” or “settle” could in practice dominate the discourse within the security/intel-community during the 1970s and 80s, despite there having been many other options advocated by other groups and communities, but which simply could not find any practical relevance because of the Afrikaner monopoly on power.

The moment that De Klerk committed to open and inclusive negotiations with all stakeholders, the luxury hitherto enjoyed by the Afrikaner community (i.e., of they themselves, alone, effectively deciding the course of the country) logically fell away – abruptly and completely. The paradigm of Afrikaners determining the main themes of discourse fell by the wayside, being replaced by topics of debate reflecting the wishes of the entire nation.

The practical consequence of this slow grappling with the reality of a new and completely different political power paradigm in the country, was that the first two years of the negotiations were still marked in Afrikaner circles mostly by debate over “GR” versus “PRP”. Never mind that it bore no relationship to the immutable demand on the part of the vast bulk of the population for majority rule. Nor that it had no clear answer to the conundrum of how to define “group” (whether it would be based on shared skin colour, or on shared language and culture, irrespective of race). Neither was there clear parameters for defining where the “*Volkstaat*”, the “own territory” favoured by many who held an absolutist approach to “Group Rights”, could conceivably be geographically located, nor about who would be allowed to settle there (or, for that matter, what would happen to the vast majority of Afrikaners living in other parts of the country).

However, by the second half of 1992 it had become patently clear to the NP Government’s newly-installed replacement negotiation team under Roelf Meyer that the mere notion of Group Rights and its corollary of permanently institutionalised “power sharing” was anathema to the rest of South African society, because it was seen as Apartheid by another name. Meaning that the intra-Afrikaner debate about “Group Rights” had effectively become an expensive hobby, a theoretical pass-time that in truth merely functioned to waste precious time and divide Afrikanerdom when it had most needed to have been united.

It was therefore expensive in terms of costing Afrikaner leverage at the negotiations, but also because it swallowed up a lot of energy and time which could and should have been focused on assuring key constitutional criteria such as a proper separation of powers between the executive and legislature by means of a directly elected presidency. Not to mention the amnesty issue that had not been resolved in timely manner either. All that, whilst the “Group Rights” (GR) notion had no realistic prospect of ever being substantially achieved, in the face of the vast majority’s insistence on majority rule in a unitary state based on individual rather than group rights (as real-world experience would soon confirm). So that the NP leadership quietly abandoned their initial attached to “GR” by means of morphing it into what instead became their ostensible policy platform from 1992 on: “**power sharing**” (propounded especially by De Klerk himself, practically to the end, but which as a seriously-held position in the scrum around the negotiation table only enjoyed brief tenure, until there was no denying anymore that accepting majority rule in a non-racial unitary state was the only viable option).

A tactical consideration which from 1992 on had then come to outweigh the rhetoric (for public consumption) about “power sharing” – especially among the government representatives in the “Channel Bilateral” confidential negotiations between the NP and ANC, was: which election outcome would be most likely to ensure future stability? In other words: judged in terms of national security and stability, which party would best be able to govern effectively? This self-evidently was the ANC under Mandela, so that many reconciled themselves with that

outcome as being actually the best in terms of national interest. Mike Louw (who had succeeded Niël Barnard in 1992 as DG of the NIS), for instance kept a sign on his desk that read "*In search of stability, not enemies*".

This complex evolution in strategic and tactical vision on the part of the NP Government, which led to a succession of changing negotiating goals was thus a classic example of what the Harvard expert on negotiations, William Ury, had warned against – publicly setting objectives that you will aim to achieve through the negotiations in terms of preferred policy positions, instead of in terms of first defining, and then protecting and advancing real fundamental interests.

It is true that "Group Rights" as such did not explicitly find effective accommodation in the constitution (reference to it was included as Section 235, but that has never been substantively utilised). Which is not to suggest that distinctive group identity isn't a very real factor in South Africa's complex demographics and thus in its politics.

However, the lack of effective constitutional provision for building own ethnically representative structures of self-governance upon a foundation of "Group Rights" does not mean that the very real existence of distinctive group interests will not or did not subsequently find a way of making itself felt in the body politic – as we shall see with reference to the plethora of new political parties emerging, which at their core revolve around representing the interests of specific groups. This natural trend (which was not adequately foreseen at the time of the negotiations) will have huge relevance for the future governability of the country because of the difficulties this phenomenon will increasingly pose for forming a governing majority in parliament and at every other level of government. Indeed, as Helen Zille has stated: the time of a single majority party ruling the roost is probably gone for good.

What was initially thought of as a typically Westminster two-party system, is therefore now reverting to its group-related multitude of ethnic roots, reflected in a multitude of group-based parties – with unpredictable consequences…

### *11.1.8.3 PEACE and Stability became the NP team's real priority, despite publicly still ostensibly debating Power Sharing vs Majority Rule*

From 1993 the real objective shared by the two main protagonists (the New Nat dominated Government and the ANC/SACP), which was based on the real interests of their constituents rather than on ideological policy preferences, converged on achieving PEACE. Which of course was the precondition for stability.

Why peace, above all else?

Because without a peace settlement on terms that was acceptable to the NP Government, the ANC would not receive the keys to the Union Buildings.

Equally, without a peace deal acceptable to the ANC, the conflict and its accompanying insecurity, internal instability and international isolation would have continued, to the detriment of the real interests of especially the white community.

It's notable how many times in their speeches, interviews and writings subsequent to the negotiations/transition, key figures like FW de Klerk himself, Roelf Meyer, and senior participants such as Niël Barnard, stressed that what they were actually busy with **was first and foremost negotiating peace** (rather than them having, in their own minds, been principally engaged in merely formulating an improved new constitution for the country).

What still had divided FW de Klerk and Nelson Mandela in 1993, was what the composition and working procedures of the future executive branch (i.e., cabinet) should be. Particularly in terms of membership of the new cabinet, and what the manner of participation and interaction should be between more parties than just the parliamentary majority (which latter was expected by all to be the ANC). Differing on these niceties must be distinguished from the earlier fundamental ideological conflict that had existed between the NO Government and the ANC/SACP prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall. That had been about what type of state (a Marxist people's republic, or a Western capitalist democracy) the New South Africa should be – which fell away because the ANC/SACP had come to accept the liberal democratic free market model.

What was in dispute between most specifically De Klerk and the ANC/SACP till virtually the end of the negotiation process, was whether there should be **unfettered majority rule** allowing the parliamentary majority alone to appoint the cabinet and thus monopolise the governing executive, or that there should be a **permanent form of obligatory, continuous institutionalised Power Sharing** at executive level (i.e., beyond a limited "sunset" period), with the majority being obliged to permanently accept in cabinet also representatives as ministers and deputy ministers from other political parties.

De Klerk's initial thinking had thus evolved from Group Rights to the idea of constitutionally-ordained and regulated **Power Sharing** between the main political parties (i.e., not ethnic groups), because he had rightly come to understand that the vehicle through which group interests would in future find natural expression, was going to be the **political party** – in other words, not through some form of ethnically-based self-governing institutions. Mandela and the ANC, on the other hand, stuck firmly to insisting upon eventual untrammelled majority rule and were only willing to countenance power sharing for a limited time, in the form of an initial Government of National Unity (GNU) of five years' duration. In the end, the NO Government's fundamental interest in peace and stability obliged them set aside their demands for power sharing and they signed up to the new, clearly majority rule constitution.

When it became clear that the ANC/SACP would not accord the NP permanent participation in government (through them rejecting any constitutional provision for long-term Power Sharing), with the NP forced to accept the new constitution or not achieve peace, this left the role that FW de Klerk and the NP could play in the GNU and beyond largely undefined. In fact, it seems that it was not sufficiently understood at the time of drafting the interim constitution that the way in which the GNU was framed would prove untenable in terms of the dynamics of practical politics. This was because FW de Klerk would at one moment be a deputy president and thus a senior member of cabinet who would in that capacity be bound (through Westminster tradition) by the rule that cabinet decisions are consensual and must be abided by as such by all cabinet ministers. The very next moment, however, he would find himself on the other side of the aisle in parliament, holding the formal title of "Leader of the Official Opposition" and as such be expected to robustly criticise what that same cabinet of which he was a leading part, had been up to…

This inherent contradiction then led to a clash of cultures and traditions of governance, between the old Westminster model of confrontational politics centred on active and vocal opposition, versus the much more consensual African tradition of indaba and its emphasis on outward unity, where all the indunas had full and free speaking rights in the king's council (including to freely criticise) but where they were afterwards expected to accept and to abide by the ruling handed down by the king after having heard all the inputs.

What resulted was heated clashes between President Mandela and Deputy President De Klerk during the existence of the first GNU. It gave rise to one of the key post-1994 debates still enduring in South African politics, namely whether political parties should opt for "politics of partnership" or instead aim to oppose outright the governing party, with the hope to in future replace it in the pound seats via the ballot box (something that we now see playing out again, with the internal strife in the DA resulting from its participation in the post-2024 GNU).

As we see the "group interest" dynamic manifest ever more strongly in the birth and identity of a plethora of essentially group-representing political parties, the question becomes the stability-determining one of whether any single party in future will likely be able to garner a parliamentary majority on its own (keeping in mind that the ANC/SACP/COSATU alliance of old, with Malema and Zuma then still in the fold, had at the time been a natural but temporary union of forces which then was driven by the overriding desire to be rid of the last white government).

#### *11.1.8.4 "Politics of Partnership" versus "Politics of Opposition"*

As the negotiations increasingly folded into the actual transition of power from 1993 onwards, the new key strategic choice that came to dominate debate within the NP itself – and which ultimately fatally divided it – was:

- whether to opt for "**politics of partnership**" so as to be able to exert at least some influence (as favoured by the likes of Roelf Meyer and subsequently by Marthinus van Schalkwyk); or
- for the NNP to instead still perceive of itself as being the "**principal party of opposition"**, supposedly a "government in waiting" there to fulfil the traditional Westminster parliamentary role of criticising

government as the “Official Opposition” (even though this latter approach had for decades proven ineffectual, also under the old parliament).

As we shall see, FW de Klerk had opted for “politics of opposition” but in the process lost some of his party’s brightest leaders – till eventually a new generation so fully embraced the “politics of partnership” that they disbanded what remained of their party and folded the once-mighty NP into the ANC…

Again, if De Klerk had had a crystal ball in 1993/94 which would have shown him that his then choice to reject Mandela and Mbeki’s pleas for cooperation would soon enough lead to the rapid demise of his party, would he have swallowed his pride and chosen otherwise? Would he then have opted instead (with the benefit of such “crystal ball” insight), to rather partner the moderates in the ANC? Doing so, among other reasons, in order to strengthen the moderate wing of the ANC against what was for whites the most serious threat – the one that most gravely would endanger their real interests – namely, the take-over of the ANC by its radical Africanist left-wing? (By types like Malema and Zuma, with their aims of dispossessing and redistributing wealth).

Opting thus for the politics of partnership in order to try and avoid the disaster of the radical “National Democratic Revolution” faction taking over the ANC, as they would succeed in doing in 2007 – which then allowed them to subsequently capture the full power and privilege of government. With the disastrous consequences which then resulted…

I know first-hand that the major concern all along in intelligence circles (and which we had explicitly shared with all and sundry) had been that there was – despite Mr Mandela’s dominance and allure – still within the ANC/SACP a substantial radical faction that had approached the transition in typical Marxist “two-revolution” manner, and who therefore were still very much intent on eventually launching their second revolution – Dave Steward’s subsequent criticism of Niël Barnard’s autobiography as if De Klerk had never been informed of this fundamental concern, does not concord with what I had known and lived).

(Another personal observation: to what extent was the rapid unravelling of the NP after 1994 due to the fact that they no longer enjoyed the benefit of wise counsel from the intelligence community?).

#### *11.1.8.5 Ensuring stability after the election and transition*

As the focus of the policy debate within the NP Government evolved from **Group Rights** through power sharing to the end goal of achieving Peace, Rehabilitation and the Protection of Individual and Property Rights, a key question started occupying the minds of many, especially in the intelligence community: what electoral outcome to the negotiations and the transition would be most likely to ensure stable government and public security after the election?

The answer to this had become increasingly evident over the course of the black-on-black power struggle that had heavily impacted KwaZulu-Natal and parts of the Witwatersrand in the run-up to the elections. Only a strong ANC government which had won a strong electoral mandate, would be able to legitimately bring an end to civil strife and ensure the stability and security that the economy and all parts of the populace wished for.

As briefly mentioned earlier, this realisation further compounded the thinking on policy and strategic choices within the ranks of the NP Government and its associated elites (although it wasn’t articulated out loud in public). The conundrum was that within the ranks of the NP – as then the ANC’s strongest opponent – there was growing understanding that their own interests and that of the country (and particularly the interests of their own constituency of Afrikaners / whites, who had by far the most to lose materially) actually required a strong government which in truth only the ANC and its allies could conceivably provide.

It was with this mind-set that an NIS representative had informally said to members of the Secretariat of the State Security Council (as I wrote about earlier) that it was in the interest of all that Nelson Mandela become president and that the ANC be able to form a strong government with clear majority backing at the ballot box – sweetening this truth (which he knew was unpalatable to some) with the remark that: “*then at least we will be able to play rugby against the All Blacks again*.”

This view wasn't limited to South African intelligence experts – the American CIA was of the same opinion. In a recently declassified assessment originally dated 1 January 1994 and titled "*Prospects for the South African Transition*," the opening subheading was: "*ANC Headed for Big Electoral Win*". However, the U.S. Agency warned that, should the ANC somehow lose the election (the chances of which they estimated at only 5%) then that "…***would push South Africa to the brink of anarchy***."

On the other hand, though – if the ANC won the election with more than a two-thirds majority, then it would have been in a position to draft the final constitution entirely in accordance with their own desires…

To many – also on the government side – the ideal "sweet spot" outcome therefore appeared to be that the ANC should win such a clear majority that it would be able to govern effectively and bring stability to the conflict-riven areas, but that it should not gain a "super-majority" of two-thirds, because that could tempt the radicals in the ANC's ranks to discard the principles agreed to in the interim constitution.

Right to the end there were still some in the NP Government who had not fully overcome their inherent longing for a system at least somewhat based on group rights. Simultaneously, there were others who were striving for power sharing at cabinet level, whilst yet others wanted to be primarily focused on peace, rehabilitation and the protection of individual and property rights by means of a "State of Laws" (among which latter group, many understood that the post-electoral stability of the country would require strong government, which only the ANC under Mr Mandela could conceivably provide). It is therefore easy to comprehend that the NP Government negotiation team did not enjoy the luxury of having been provided with a clear and definitive set of instructions, especially as regards immutable goals and outcomes to negotiate for.

Being an evolving situation with an unavoidable ongoing need to continuously adapt to changing circumstances and pressures, internally from left and right and externally from changed political realities abroad, it would probably have been wishful thinking to imagine that the NP Government could have set out to achieve fixed goals that would have required of it as minority to enforce its will upon the majority (i.e., the exact reason why the conflict had erupted in the first place). Especially since they had not founded their initial approach to the negotiations on standard theory nor on a proper prior SWOT analysis to help them clearly define their goals and strategies (as based on their real strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats).

Today, most seem to be interested in South Africa's negotiations from a simple binary perspective of who won, and who had lost. Negotiation is, of necessity, the art of compromise – of trying to balance competing interests by means of exploring together different permutations and developing mutually-acceptable solutions. Realistically speaking, the NP Government could not have done anything other than to seek the best possible compromise. Which was exactly what the ANC was in fact obliged to do. Which is why there is today buyers' remorse on both sides, heavily criticising the process and outcome. The NP Government indeed had to make very significant concessions, as we shall see when we look at the timeline – but the ANC also had to compromise and make equally significant concessions, in order to together develop appropriate solutions that all sides could live with. The NP Government had to give up any vestige of Apartheid, and the ANC had to abandon their dream of a Marxist people's republic. The difference, in terms of conforming to negotiation theory, is that the ANC had made a clean break right at the start, making a virtue of necessity. The NP Government, on the other hand, did not – and was forced into a succession of public turnarounds and concessions which damaged its leverage (as we shall discuss in detail at the end of this chapter – remember, I'm foreshadowing it now, so that you can check for the evidence as you consider the upcoming time-line of the negotiations/transition).

### *11.1.8.6 What constitutes "win", and what "lose"?*

Among the most difficult labels to define – despite being among the most important, in terms of understanding real-world political outcomes – would be "win" and "lose". Can you win the battles fought with guns, and yet lose the political war?

Modern history is replete with examples of militarily superior powers, undefeated on the battlefield, still decisively losing the political war. Working back from the present, we can think of the USA in Afghanistan and Vietnam, the French in Algeria, the Dutch in Indonesia, the British in Ireland, and again the British in the Anglo-Boer War. This

latter is a very good example, right here at home, of how the U.K. as the militarily superior power could indeed raise the Union Jack over the Raadsaal in Pretoria, yet still effectively lose the greater "war" for political control over South Africa. In many ways, this conflict between Boer and Brit foreshadowed what was to happen in the later conflict over political power between white and non-white, illustrating how difficult it is to define "win" or "lose". What it also illustrates, is that "calling the score" as to who won or lost, lies very much in the eye of the beholder…

Which is why there is still today, three decades after the transition, so much internal dispute in the ranks of both of the erstwhile opposing sides – conservatives as well as revolutionaries – about who really had gained the upper hand. With revolutionaries looking around themselves, seeing white economic privilege still manifest, and saying that "Mandela had given away far too much". While on the white side, many saying that De Klerk had given away too much, because our security forces were never defeated in battle… (apropos to which, when an American officer had said to a Vietnamese counterpart after the war over there had ended that "*we've beaten you in every battle*", the latter had answered: "*Yes, that's absolutely true – but it's also absolutely irrelevant*").

To understand this, one has to go back to Von Clausewitz's famous definition of war (famous precisely because it is so widely regarded as being correct). What he pointed out, is that war is merely politics conducted by "other means", meaning that military might and its use, always is subordinate to political goals and outcomes. Accordingly, the extent to which those political goals were achieved, determines whether the military force employed had been a failure or a success.

In the case of "calling the score" on the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, it is often overlooked that both sets of elites back then (both the British and the Afrikaner intellectuals of the time) had seen the necessity of South Africa being united into one new state – the key question was: which side would hold political power in that unified entity?

The British Army did raise the Union Jack in Bloemfontein and Pretoria, doing so already in 1900 – but that was, by far, not the end of it. Because, that key political question (of who was to hold effective power) had not yet been decided.

Hostilities would only end once the modalities for determining who would hold the reigns were agreed, in a compromise that satisfied both sides enough to no longer merit the cost of continuing fighting. The Peace Treaty of Vereeniging, which captured this compromise, was only signed two years and 28,000 dead Boer women and children later.

Yet still the political contest between Boer and Brit over who would hold power in South Africa wasn't fully over and done with. It continued, through the formation of the Union in 1910, the Balfour Declaration of the late 1920s that gave the Union co-equal status with the UK within the Commonwealth, then it reverberated around the decision to enter the 2nd World War in 1939, followed by the 1948 election (which saw unfettered Afrikaner nationalism come to power), and ultimately the referendum on a republic held in October 1960.

Which signifies that the Peace Treaty of 1994, just as its 1902 counterpart, is not the end of the contest, with much more jockeying and "fine tuning" still likely to come…

What the Anglo-Boer War showed, was that overwhelming military force can become politically counter-productive. There was firstly the vast financial cost of sending to South Africa the biggest army that Britain had ever sent abroad (resulting in Britain's costliest war ever, outside of Europe). Then there was the cost in prestige and image, with the scorched earth and concentration camp strategies that Kitchener resorted to, earning for Britain the moral opprobrium of the world. Thirdly, it destroyed the pre-existing perception of British military invincibility, which many observers believe sowed the seeds of the two World Wars and the subsequent demise of the British Empire. Lastly, there was the political cost in Britain itself for the party that had precipitated and presided over the Anglo-Boer War – the Tories – who went on to lose the next election in a landslide.

Thus, the Anglo-Boer War did not have a clear political "winner" or "loser". Hostilities had ended in a compromise that both sides could live with: what had mattered most for the U.K. as global hegemon focused on its international position, was that the map of world power would show geo-strategically important South Africa as part of its global

empire. What had mattered most to the Afrikaners (who couldn't care less about global power politics), was that the formula agreed at Vereeniging would allow them to locally hold the political power over a unified South Africa. Which is exactly what happened: the Union / Republic, till 1994, only ever had Afrikaners as prime ministers and presidents – satisfying that part of Afrikaner pioneer DNA that longs to be "*baas op eie plaas*" (master of own destiny).

It was also the only war that I know of, where the "winners" agreed to pay compensation to the "losers", just to get them to sign on the dotted line (which we will see reflected again in the analysis about negotiation theory and tactics).

However, peace treaties are always merely steps along the way – they do not and cannot cast the future into concrete. The Boer general Barry Hertzog (as South African prime minister) in 1926 played a key role in the Imperial Conference of that year, which issued the Balfour Declaration which was later enacted by the British Parliament as the Statute of Westminster of 1931. This granted full legislative independence to the Dominions, emphasizing that no Dominion was subordinate to Britain in domestic or foreign affairs.

As we shall see, the same evolving dynamic is now at play, following the 1994 "Peace Treaty of Kempton Park". The ANC, as representative of the black majority, had won there a settlement that set it up for winning the subsequent election and thus gaining political power (but constrained by the constitution). The whites, for their part, had "won" with regard to what had mattered most for them at the personal level: the protection of their individual and property rights, the rehabilitation of their image, the end of isolation and a cessation of the violent conflict. Unlike the French in Algeria, the Belgians in the Congo, the British in Kenia and Zimbabwe, and the Portuguese in their former African colonies, white South Africa's peaceful "decolonization" of the territories it had controlled (Namibia and the Republic) had not led to a helter-skelter exit of whites as refugees; on the contrary, whites still enjoy the benefit of their pensions and their investments, and economically are still, in general, far better off than most non-whites.

What lies for the future to determine, is whether the interest groups of which the "rainbow nation" is composed can form effective partnerships to progress the country for the benefit of all, in a new more Afro-centric cooperative political paradigm. Or, whether we will remain trapped in the British-based tradition of confrontational politics – of parties competing against each other for power on a "winner takes all" basis (if there is still to be clear winners), playing out within the old Westminster-style "government versus opposition" paradigm where the aisle running down the centre of the lower chamber in the Houses of Parliament was wide enough to keep apart two political adversaries armed with swords...

In the case that we remain stuck in the old Westminster paradigm of opposition and criticism, then all of us will end up being losers…

### *11.1.8.7 ANC negotiation tactics – were they typically "communist" or that of "have nots"?*

In considering "labels" that we'll encounter in this chapter, it is lastly necessary to consider whether (as is nowadays often suggested, after the fact and with clear "buyers' remorse") the NP Government negotiation team were ignorant of typical "communist" negotiation tactics and didn't know how to counter these. Which begs the question: did the ANC/SACP apply patented **communist** Cold War negotiation tactics, or were they in fact employing the basic tactics that "**have nots**" for practical reasons typically have had to resort to when negotiating with "haves"?

In other words, did the ANC/SACP employ "rocket science" level negotiating techniques, signifying that their side's negotiation team consisted of consummate masters, while the other was made up of ignorant, malleable weaklings?

We will be dissecting this question in much more detail later, but it's good to already keep in mind that "have nots" most often have only one tactic at their disposal. However, it's one which is then always very effective – not because it is so genius, but because it goes to the fundamental core of what is at stake for the "haves", exploiting their key weakness: their material self-interest.

That technique is based on this reality: the “haves” usually have by far the most to lose if things go wrong (or don’t come right quite quickly) whilst the “have nots” typically have little further to lose and can thus afford to string out talks and threaten to walk out, thereby elevating the actual and potential losses for the “haves”. Consider now that the elites who form the most important “haves” in any society usually enjoy much more clout with the political class than do their rank-and-file supporters, then one can understand that the pressure on government negotiators will not only come from the obstinacy of the “have nots” who are withholding the peace that is sought, but also from the elites who want – above all – that stability and security returns asap and holds government ultimately responsible for that.

What the “have nots” (and communists) thus use as leverage – whether it be in trade union talks or the Korean War – is the passage of time as such, plus the fact that without their buy-in, the “haves” don’t stand any chance of getting what they most desire, namely peace and stability. This leverage is strengthened if the other party is a government that is subject to election cycles and need to conclude an accord before the next election falls due (as would normally have been the case in the 2nd half of 1994, for the then NP Government).

The value of the time lever is also heightened in favour of the “have nots” if the “haves” find themselves confronted by an inherently highly volatile situation that could – through unpredictable “black swan” events such as the assassination of Chris Hani or Nelson Mandela, or a right-wing coup attempt – have spun out of control at any moment, if strung out too long. This is merely classic negotiation theory – which the NP Government should have foreseen – and should not have attempted to counter in theoretically the exact most wrong-headed way possible (as we will illustrate later). In brief, they should not have committed to “normalising” the country before a peace accord and a new constitutional dispensation had been agreed, signed and guaranteed. And, they should have ensured that the negotiations and transition run sequentially, not concurrently…

The other critical issue to look out for, is that all the negotiations were in truth nothing more than the scene-setting, the definition of parameters for the real contest for political power that would culminate at the ballot box. How effectively did the NP Government prepare and plan for that? All along, the ANC/SACP had a clear plan for how to capture the vote of the masses in the eventual electoral contest – a plan evidently based on North Vietnamese communist doctrine (as per the “Green Book”) and which entailed decidedly undemocratic communist “people’s war” tactics in its battle against the IFP, for example. This we will also be discussing in detail.

However, stating that the NP Government negotiation team (which after all had won us a Western-style free market democracy on the model of a “state of laws”) were naïve and ineffectual because they supposedly “didn’t know how to negotiate with communists” is an unjustified simplification. There were enough other grave mistakes that NP Governments had made over many preceding years and which much more directly caused the eventual outcome that we now live with – and which, therefore, far better merit the sharp criticism that nowadays is often directed at the actual negotiators who had to salvage the talks from mid-1992 on...

To re-state again what should be an obvious truth: the Roelf Meyer led negotiators weren’t weak – the hand which they perforce had to play indeed was (mostly due to critical time that had been stupidly lost by their predecessors, plus exceedingly weak, theoretically ill-informed initial preparation, planning, and choice of negotiation strategy in 1989/90).

### 11.1.9 AFRIKANER POLITICAL-HISTORICAL DNA AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE NEGOTIATIONS/TRANSITION

Having looked briefly at some of the theoretical and terminological issues that will feature in this chapter on the negotiations/transition, it is also important to note key historical determinants that influenced the way that this phase was approached, especially from the Afrikaner side. What I’m referring to here, are certain deep-rooted mind-sets that are commonly held and which were shaped by the Afrikaner people’s history.

Afrikaners came to the African continent from far away, leaving behind “civilisation” and accepting the risks inherent in establishing themselves in a new land. A land which – in the common European perception of the time – was “open” for the taking, if you were willing and able to carve out and hold your own piece of it. The kind of person disposed to assuming such risks was therefore typically independent-minded and self-sufficient – valuing,

above all, the fact that he would be "*baas van sy eie plaas*" (king of his own castle), ruling over the frontier farm he established. By the end of the 1700s the American Revolution, followed by the French Revolution, had had a significant impact upon the political thinking of these frontiersmen, leading them to establish the republics of Swellendam and Graaf-Reinet. When the British conquered the Cape, these Afrikaner pioneers preferred to *trek* inland and establish for themselves their own republics – so as to be masters of their own land (and destiny).

The notion of the nation-state that had swept Europe in the 1800s, leading to the unification of Germany, Italy and the like, also resonated in Afrikaner thinking, giving rise to the idea that a people can only truly find peace and self-expression if it is master over its own, defined parcel of land – its own Afrikaner republic – thus, for the "*Volk*" to have its own "*Staat*". When Britain in 1843 annexed the then newly established Afrikaner republic of Natalia, the Voortrekkers preferred to trek away again, to the interior of the subcontinent, to establish new republics there in order again to be their own masters. When in 1902 these republics (Orange Free State and ZAR/Transvaal) fell to another round of British annexation there was no more "open land" to trek to – which meant that the Afrikaners had to fight to gain political control over the newly-formed Union of South Africa and to have it be granted full legislative independence on internal and international matters (the Balfour Declaration achieved by Hertzog) so as to again be fully "masters over their own land".

When Verwoerd realised that the "Winds of Change" spelling the end of white supremacist colonial rule was blowing ever harder towards South Africa, he opted to try and cut the traditional black lands out of the territory of the Union/Republic – not primarily to banish blacks to the bundu, but fundamentally to try and retain the remainder as a "white" homeland that the Afrikaners could remain masters of.

What FW de Klerk's 2 February 1990 speech spelled out, was the official end to the NP Government pursuing this dream. But this did not mean that a substantial number of Afrikaners didn't still feel this deep longing for a land of their own (which was encapsulated in the aspiration for a "*Volkstaat*"). This age-old desire continued to incite powerful emotions among many Afrikaners – also among the equally proud and independent Zulu nation – which, at the time of the negotiations and transition, had led to very real threats of a coup or secession, that would have scuttled the negotiations.

Such agitation could therefore not be ignored as being merely unrealistic idealism - not by the NP Government nor by the ANC.

Which explains much of what we saw happen during the latter months of the negotiations, impacting the wording of the interim constitution as there was an urgent search for suitably framed "fig leaf" clauses that could provide cover for the IFP and FF to participate in the elections – in reality, though, having been "much ado about nothing" because these "concessions" would go on to have no significant consequences in terms of the fundamental end result.

Let me also be clear: the longing of peoples for an own land in which to govern themselves is very natural. There is nothing morally or legally wrong with it – that is, in an ideal world (i.e., in one where there is "open" land available for that, which is not also already inhabited and rightfully claimed by others).

Since time immemorial, ownership of land was regarded as temporal, not fixed, because of the Law of Conquest (which basically implied that the land you occupied was yours, but only if and for as long as you could keep it). Might was right, and if your people were conquered physically, then legal ownership over your land was *ipso facto* deemed to have passed to your conqueror. This rule of International Law was not based on morality, but on recognising reality and thus on practical necessity (there was no international "police force" that could constrain such behaviour – and, in any event, it suited the strong of the time to enjoy the freedom to advance their own interests in this manner).

The Law of Conquest simply gave legal recognition to the dominant power equation that had applied in both the animal and human worlds prior to the very recent advent (after WW2) of the so-called "rules-based world order". That old norm entailed that the powerful did what they wanted, and the weak suffered what they must.

Together with the mobility brought by the Age of Exploration and the superiority in military might that Europeans enjoyed (thanks to their better technological prowess at the time), this resulted in half-a-millennium of European imperial conquest of the globe and the parallel institution of race-based colonialism. What it also resulted in (in conquered continents such as Africa), was the carve-up of the land in terms of European interests, with frontiers defined artificially in foreign capitals such as Berlin in accordance with European convenience, without regard to local ethnic demographic distribution.

Together with European skill at economic exploitation and resource development (which saw the birth of metropolitan areas that drew in populations of mixed tribal origin to these points of economic growth and employment opportunities) population distribution in the Southern African subcontinent changed drastically in a short space of time, resulting in the bulk of the population no longer living in what a century before had been the tribal homelands of their ancestors.

In other words, it became a practical impossibility to "unscramble" the original ethnic "eggs" so thoroughly scrambled by 20th century British colonial conquest and economic exploitation. Those "eggs" simply could no longer be put back into their original individual geographical "shells".

Furthermore, because the fruits of colonial conquest are in our post-WW2 world no longer regarded as having been legitimately acquired (in fact, now actually being rejected as immoral and illegal), the claims of long-established European "settler communities" such as the French "Pied Noir" in Algeria or white Afrikaans-speakers to African land, no longer are deemed valid. Whereas the Boer Republics valiantly resisting the rapacious British during the Anglo-Boer Wars were in that era still deemed by most of the then "developed" peoples of the world as legally Boer land, the aspirations of the descendants of those self-same Boers now enjoy no such recognition or sympathy – just as with the claims of French "Pied-Noir" in Algeria to land that they and their forebears had developed with sweat and toil. And, ironically, the same applies also to the claims of the Zulu Kingdom…

Whether the new morality is totally just – or entirely realistic – is certainly open to debate (more than likely, ethnic identity and aspirations will remain a key factor in determining political conduct in Africa, with border disputes and inter-ethnic power struggles likely to continue). What is undeniable, though, is that the new norm holds total sway. It is what it is: namely that these ex-colonial territories (as defined in Berlin or London) constitute states consisting of shared land that must be governed together as such. No matter that, by quirk of history, next door to the KwaZulu kingdom exists eSwatini and Lesotho as independent, sovereign kingdoms recognised as such by the international community. South African and world reality in the 1990s was and still is, rightly or wrongly, that for it no other model than a unitary state under majority rule would be accepted as legitimate by the majority of the population as well as by the international community.

Which set up, during the negotiations, a volatile reality of competing foundational concepts and emotional attachments regarding nation and statehood, particularly between white Afrikaans-speakers and traditionalist Zulus on the one side (who wished to form reality to their liking), and unitarian idealists such as the ANC/SACP on the other side – with the pragmatist NP Government in many ways in the middle, recognising the inevitability of having to accept the dominant reality of the "shared land" paradigm whilst simultaneously trying to keep its eye on its main goals, namely ensuring peace, rehabilitation of the Afrikaner image and protection of individual and property rights.

What In practice had come to dominate in Afrikaner minds about the land issue, wasn't so much the somewhat theoretical longing for an own country, but rather the concrete and practical question of the protection of their personal right to the plots of land they individually owned title to, whether it be their own urban home or business, or rural agricultural property investments (constituting for most people the bulk of their personal wealth). These properties were, like the Afrikaners themselves, geographically spread out across all parts of the country (therefore, with the vast majority falling well outside the conceivable boundaries of some hypothetical "*Volkstaat*").

For the wealthy property-owning elite especially, but also for the common homeowner, protecting this individual right to existing title to property was much more real and immediate than the notion of an own *Volkstaat* that was

seemingly impossible to geographically define – which furthermore was to be created as ethnic "home" for a group that would be equally difficult to define in terms of who could or should belong to it…

Why this long theoretical treatise, here at the start, about land and tribe? Because – as will be shown – it is not today generally realised how explosive the situation in the country actually was, in 1993 and 1994. How very real the threat of Zulu secession was, as well as that of a right-wing inspired coup. Up to practically the last minute, General Constand Viljoen and the fistful of generals leading right-wing Afrikaners aspirations had very explicitly and directly threatened a military coup, demanding that the City of Pretoria and essentially everything east of it be given to them as "Volkstaat", whilst the Zulu king demanded the whole of Natal plus the preponderantly Zulu-speaking parts of the south-eastern Transvaal and Witwatersrand.

The legacy of the Great Trek experience is not only to be seen in the longing for an own self-governing country. It was marked as well by a deep-seated distrust of negotiated treaties. I remember well how my history teacher at school had drilled into us the lesson he saw in the murder of Piet Retief and his companions by Zulu king Dingane on 6 February 1838, when Retief had perhaps naively trusted in the treaty that he and Dingane had earlier accorded. Treaties with Blacks cannot be trusted, our History teacher had thundered – and those concluded subsequently with the perfidious British even less, the moment some new source of wealth that they coveted was discovered on our land…

For most of their history the Afrikaners had felt themselves under constant threat, with the only recourse being self-reliance – uniting and drawing up the wagons into a circle (laager) as was done at Blood River – and ultimately relying on your own military capability. This is what had brought peace with the Zulus. Similarly, it was the ability of the Boer forces to persist and attrition the British militarily and government, that had brought the Empire to the point of accepting to hand political control over its unified Southern African domains to the Afrikaners.

Thus, a longing for an own country, a willingness to fight for it (even against seemingly overwhelming odds), and a distrust in negotiated accords had become part of Afrikaner political DNA the hard way – and what FW de Klerk and the New Nats were attempting to achieve by means of the settlement negotiations seemed to run directly opposite to this ingrained conditioning…

So that the fierceness and danger of the opposition that De Klerk had encountered among the ranks of his own people, should not be under-estimated.

The Great Trek legacy had imprinted two further strands into Afrikaner political-historical DNA: this time contradictory. The first conflicting strand can be summed up as "*eenheid*" (unity) versus "*eiesinnigheid*" (follow you own head). As much as the *laager* legacy emphasised the need for "*eenheid*", so too did the longing to be "*baas op eie plaas*" (to be master of your own destiny) cultivate a pre-disposition to "*eiesinnigheid*" (to follow one's own head), with every Afrikaner wanting to lead his own Trek in his own chosen direction. Knowing this inclination to easily fall into discord and disarray, Afrikaner political elites in the post-WW2 years had ruthlessly enforced "group think" by means of social ostracization – which turned out to be in its own right as damaging, through suppressing critical thinking (and without really ending fundamental discord on strategy, as shown in the earlier chapters).

The second conflicting strand of braided DNA relates to, on the one hand, the Afrikaner's proud insistence on an own African identity, but then – on the other hand – clinging to race as overriding identifying attribute, professing to being European in terms of skin colour and cultural value system. Not only does this emphasis on race divide Afrikaans-speakers into "whites" and so-called "Coloureds", thereby weakening their ability to promote what is a shared linguistic and cultural heritage. It seriously hampers real attempts at partnership politics.

All of the above traits combined, ensured that at the precise moment that the Afrikaans-speakers had probably needed to be at their most united and creatively thinking (after all, negotiating for the very future of themselves and their children) the white Afrikaans-speakers were in truth more deeply politically divided than they likely had ever been – and yet, also less creatively thinking, on both sides of their internal political divide. With a resultant loss of leverage and waste of precious time and energy. So that what was meekly reverted to at the somewhat

hasty end of the negotiations, was the known Westminster model – now just smucked up and in effect worsened by further enhancing party control via the proportional system.

Should Afrikaners not instead have focused on evolving a new Afrocentric model of governance responsive to local realities and capable of giving life to effective and harmonious partnership politics?

The consequence of the foregoing has been "state capture" plus what increasingly is looking like a failed state in terms of collapsing service delivery. Furthermore, South Africa is clearly now faced with the real possibility of soon becoming in effect ungovernable at national, provincial, as well as local levels when elections for parliament, provincial legislatures, and municipal councils (conducted in terms of what had always been thought of as a "two-party" model) in future do not produce workable governing majorities among the plethora of political parties now dotting the political landscape.

Whence we will then run headlong into the reality that the existing constitution wasn't configured to optimise partnership politics, nor designed to facilitate the necessity of forming of coalitions or governments of national / provincial unity…

### 11.1.10 HOW THE BEHAVIOURALIST REALITIES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT SHAPED THE NEGOTIATIONS

Just as much as the above history helped to shape the unfolding of the negotiations, so too did the realities of the socio-political, economic, geostrategic and demographic environment within which the negotiations were being held, help determine its form and outcome. For the sake of understanding the leeway that the main protagonists in the negotiations enjoyed (or did not have), it is useful to remind oneself of the key considerations originating in the socio-political and economic environments, that fundamentally impacted the negotiations.

Whereas the historical traits we described above were formed in the heyday of European imperialism and race-based colonial rule, the mores of the globalised world of the 1990s were already radically different. Racism was out. Conquering and taking possession of the land of indigenous peoples was very out. As the other side of the coin, Soviet-style communism had ignominiously collapsed in failure. Accordingly, any party at the negotiations who tried to swim against this globalised "thought stream" supporting non-racial, liberal democracy based on individual rights and free markets, would find the world united against it. Therefore, with the world economy increasingly globalised (and with South Africa's economy particularly open to and dependent on international trade) anyone propounding policies and constitutional models contrary to the world consensus would in effect be courting international opposition – as first the ANC in 1990 and eventually the New Nats in 1992 came to understand.

In terms of the country's internal realities, what was increasingly apparent was that the overwhelming demographic superiority in numbers of the non-white population would keep growing exponentially. Furthermore, that the economic integration of the country meant that participation of the non-white majority was increasingly essential to growth and development, which latter would geographically be centred on the industrialised metropolitan areas. These economic heartland areas would thus become increasingly ethnically mixed, making spatial separation of racial and tribal groups into separate geographical locations entirely impractical.

As an integrated economic whole, South Africa had of necessity to be governed as a unitary state.

The rights and wishes of its huge demographic majority had to be respected.

As this majority increasingly unified behind the ANC and Nelson Mandela over the convoluted course of the negotiations, the "masses" became a virtually unstoppable force that could be weaponised to bring the economy to a halt and to force acceptance of their demands, if these were perceived by them to being unreasonably blocked at the negotiation table…

Geo-strategically, the end of the Cold War had entirely transformed Western strategic priorities. Gone was fear of the "Red Threat". Meaning, that the white government could no longer invoke it to obtain Western support. Equally,

the fall of the USSR had meant that the ANC/SACP had lost the main sponsor for its “armed struggle” and that persisting in seeking to establish a Marxist people’s republic would gain no international support – on the contrary, would be strongly counter-productive to their core cause of seeking political power based on equal rights for all South Africans.

In reality, though, by the time that the negotiations really took form in 1993, the international scene had titled even more markedly in favour of the ANC. Margaret Thatcher no longer ruled in the UK, and in the USA Bill Clinton had come to power on the back of the African-American vote. It had become a foregone conclusion that any hiccups in the negotiations and the transitional process of transfer of power to the Black majority, would rightly or wrongly be laid at the feet of the NP Government. The world had come to accept that Nelson Mandela will inevitably be president and were intent on currying favour with him and the ANC – also for their own internal political ends.

The power realities manifesting internally in South Africa as well as internationally, meant that the NP Government found itself on the back of a tiger. There was no way that they could get off the tiger without being devoured by it, unless they first reached a peace agreement with the tiger – and for the tiger to be contented, the tiger’s preferences would need to take precedence.

The NP Government, having waited so long – decades too long – to initiate settlement negotiations, had caused itself to slip inexorably into a moment in history when the ANC enjoyed an effective veto power (a benefit the ANC/SACP would definitely not have enjoyed twenty years earlier in 1974, nor even in 1984).

That said, when FW de Klerk had begun initiating his radical distancing from traditional NP Government policies in 1989, the situation had not yet been so dire for the NP as it would become by 1993. At the outset of the process there had indeed been scope for the NP to have better positioned itself for the coming negotiations, the transition, and the eventual contest for political power at the ballot box – if only it had better prepared and planned for it.

Let us now look at the South African political scene in 1990, in more detail.

## 11.2 A LOOK AT THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL CANVAS AT THE BEGINNING OF NEGOTIATIONS

To better understand the way in which the negotiations unfolded (as we will see in the timeline, which will be presented in the following section), it is necessary to first take cognisance of the home front politics of the negotiation/transition era, as one of the key determinants of what happened, and why.

### 11.2.1 PUBLIC OPINION AS IT MANIFESTED AT THE OUTSET OF THE TRANSITION

I’ve explained in the previous chapter that in 1989 things had started well for the De Klerk government on the international front. Margaret Thatcher was strongly supportive of his initiatives, and so was President George Bush Snr in the White House. Even with Moscow relations were on the up-and-up.

Initially, that was also the case on the home front.

Surveys done by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in the late 1980s and 1990, commissioned by the SA Communication Service, indicated that among urban blacks the ANC enjoyed around 58-62% notional backing (meaning, as based upon urban blacks’ broad perception of the ANC, and not specific to any of its policies). Considering that urban blacks formed about one quarter of the overall South African population at the time, or about 48% of the total Black African population, plus the fact that the ANC enjoyed its strongest support in urban areas rather than in the countryside, with no significant support among non-black population groups, the survey data signify that there had been scope for other parties such as the New Nats to have made inroads, especially if in partnership/alliance with other parties opposed to the ANC/SACP.

Other surveys done at that time (i.e., at the beginning of the negotiation process) had indicated that nearly four in ten Black South Africans said that they trusted President de Klerk – more than any single non-white leader could then muster.

Once surveys delved deeper into black perceptions on issues, the ANC's initial position was revealed as even more fragile – for example, a number of independent surveys (by the likes of Prof Lawrence Schlemmer, and even done for COSATU itself) had shown that a majority of urban blacks were opposed to the boycotts and divestment that the ANC/SACP had been promoting abroad – according to Schlemmer, up to 75% against.

It should also be remembered that, thanks to the successes of the Security Forces, South Africans in general had not been as touched by the preceding years of unrest as media reporting may have led one to believe (as we will demonstrate with data from the Red Cross, in the next sub-section).

However, by 1994 the balance of electoral support in the Black community had shifted decisively in favour of the ANC and Mr Mandela. The success of the ANC's propaganda campaign, as well as of their "people's war" tactics of intimidation and of playing on fears of the Zulu IFP among non-Zulus, by 1994 had seen the ANC support among the overall Black population rise to around 75%, which helped ensure them more than 62% of the overall vote in 1994's first non-racial general election.

### 11.2.2 ICRC REPORT ON THE IMPACT OF THE PRE-ELECTION UNREST

The **International Committee of the Red Cross** (ICRC) had undertaken a detailed investigation, after the transition. This important study, titled: *Country Report South Africa (1999),* provides significant data that helps one to better understand the true nature of the prior conflict and its (rather limited) scope, both geographically and in terms of numbers of South Africans actually directly affected by it.

The ICRC study showed, for example, that only 34% of the black population had in their own minds taken one side or the other in the conflict between the white government and the liberation movements prior to 1990. There, at the outset of the transition, two-thirds of Black voters had thus not committed themselves yet and were thus "up for grabs" by party organisers.

Furthermore, only 3% of blacks had before 1990 regarded themselves as having been actively involved as actual "combatants".

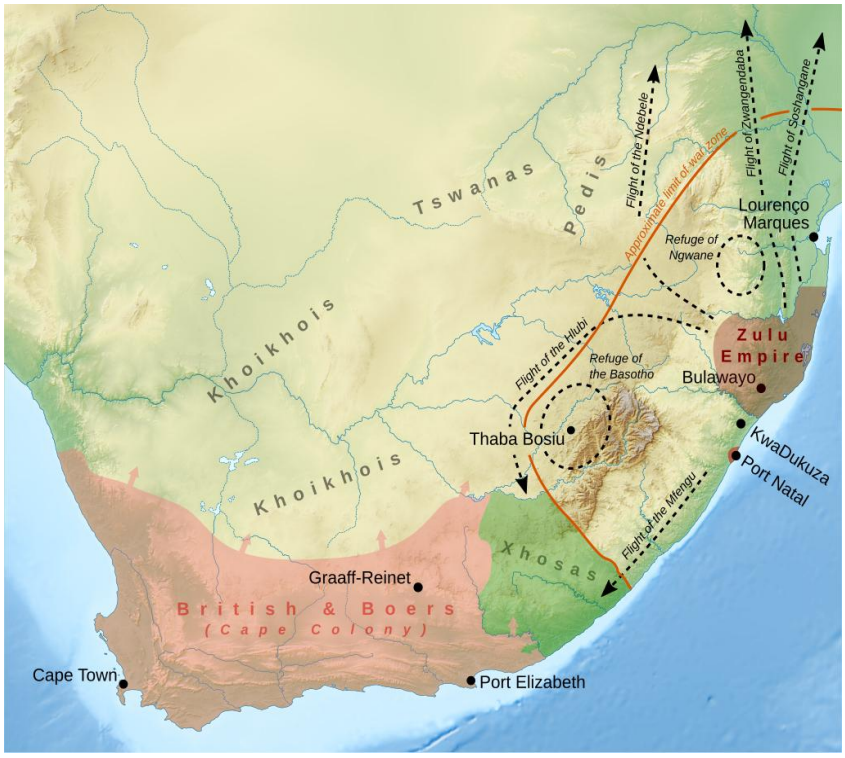
As regards the geographical spread of the preceding unrest, only 33% of the total South African black population reported living near to an area where conflict had actually occurred (note also that this level was only reached during the transition – that is to say, at the time of the black-on-black phase of the struggle for political power). Again, therefore, two-thirds of black voters had not been directly exposed to, nor had they been personally impacted by political violence.

What the ICRC investigation did show was that those blacks living in conflict areas, did indeed experience a marked increase in violence when the power struggle shifted to black-on-black during the transitional negotiations, when the ANC/SACP dramatically stepped up their "people's war" for political power: "*For a large number of the participants in the consultation, the political violence among black South Africans was even more vividly horrifying than the struggle against the white regime. Participants in the consultation, many of whom were active in this later stage of the conflict, recall that this violence often included the shooting of women and children, rape, burning or bulldozing of buildings with civilians inside, and the infamous "necklacings" – placing a tyre around the neck of an opponent, filling it with gasoline (petrol), and setting it on fire. The comments of participants in the focus groups and in-depth interviews suggest that in these and other ways the limits broke down in the township clashes in a way that was both horrifying and bewildering*."

To a significant extent the black population in general had, at the outset of the transition, understood and feared the potential for black-on-black violence as the struggle for political dominance was obviously going to heat up. In this regard, they had hoped for the (predominantly white) security forces to serve as a kind of neutral guarantor of stability. This was especially true in the multi-tribal melting pot of the Witwatersrand. Underlying this was the ethnic composition of the two main rivals competing intensely for black support, namely Inkatha (almost exclusively traditionalist Zulu) and the ANC/SACP (essentially made up of the rest, and at that time mostly led by Xhosas).

## 11.2.3 SOCIAL DISTANCE STUDIES FOR ZULUS VS THE REST

A deeply embedded common memory was contributing to this growing polarisation and violent radicalisation among blacks – the suspicion and fear of the traditionalist Zulus felt by members of other tribes due to the lingering legacy of the *Mfecane*. The term, meaning "the crushing" in Zulu, refers to the traumatic and enduring psychological impact that king Shaka Zulu's scorched earth policy of extermination (conducted in the areas outside of the Zulu tribal heartland during the 1820s and early 1830s) had left on other tribes that were driven out, such as the Mfengu (Fingo) into the Cape Colony, the Matabele into present-day Zimbabwe, the Shangaan into Mozambique and the Basotho and the Ngwane (Swazis) driven into their respective mountain retreats.




*Map of the Mfecane's impact (credit: Discott, Wikimedia Commons)*

I mentioned elsewhere how "social distance" studies (showing the sentiments among tribes, towards other tribes) that we had access to at the BfSS, had borne out how these sentiments of fear and suspicion had persisted over time. It was kept alive in no small measure by the Zulu traditionalist's fierce pride in and maintenance of their militarist traditions, such as men always carrying their "cultural weapons" and still being assigned at birth to their Zulu regiment (a reality which my father – who had grown up in Zululand and who spoke the language fluently – loved to demonstrate by randomly asking filling station attendants about their regimental affiliation whenever he filled his car; invariably they could immediately and proudly state their regiment).

Apartheid practices such as the establishment of large hostel compounds for unmarried migrant workers (many of them from the traditionalist Zulu heartland and supporting Inkatha) contributed to febrile socio-political interaction in the restive urban areas of especially the Witwatersrand. Relations between the hostel dwellers, commanded by their indunas, and the residents of the surrounding townships had always been prone to social friction, and everyone could see that this could be exacerbated if the political contest should overheat.

To many in the townships, the question was whether the Security Forces would be able and willing to impartially maintain stability, or whether they would identify and ally with Inkatha. Had the former been the case, then the NP Government would have stood to gain. If, however, the perception could be planted that the Security Forces (or elements within it: an alleged "third force") were actually fanning the flames in order to benefit Inkatha, then the ANC/SACP would be benefited. (This naturally became the focal point of the latter's vastly superior propaganda campaign, expertly fronted by Mr Mandela and facilitated by a sympathetic media – as we will soon see).

Going back to the initial period after President De Klerk's 2 February 1990 speech, the surveys and studies cited above support the conclusion that an opportunity had indeed existed then, at the start of the transition, for the governing NP to have reached out to the (at that time) still largely uncommitted non-white community, to build common positions in the negotiations and be accepted as a force for good, for stability and security – for example, in the manner very effectively done in SWA/Namibia with the broad-based Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (thanks to what the very competent and insightful Mr Dirk Mudge had achieved there, uniting representatives of all the ethnic groups – with the covert support of Hendrik van den Bergh and the BfSS, as well as the DFA).

This need not necessarily have been to form an opposition block against the ANC – it could also have been aimed at engaging with Mr Mandela as partners for the development of the country as "SA Inc" and his "rainbow nation" (the moderation seen in the views of Black South Africans before the black-on-black violence had polarised opinions, and the credibility accorded to FW de Klerk in particular, could have seen such an option of seeking to engage in "politics of partnership" rather than outright opposition, then result in a stronger position for the NP to engage constructively in the later GNU).

However, in South Africa itself no such effort to prepare the "*seat at the table*" (to borrow phraseology from Van den Bergh's unpublished manuscript) had materialised in timely manner from the NP side – definitely not before, nor even during South Africa's transition. As we shall see, discord about appropriate strategy again resulted in paralysis, with one group wanting to focus on enhancing group rights, another group aiming to strengthen mechanisms for obligatory power sharing among political parties, and a third faction – concerned, above all, about peace and stable government after the elections – seeing (but not saying aloud) that the ANC was the only possible guarantor of stability and security after the elections, and thus believing it to be in the country's interest for the ANC to win a strong, workable majority (but not a supermajority)…

### 11.2.4 WHITE POLITICAL ATTITUDES

In the whites-only referendum held on 17 March 1992, more than 68% responded "yes" to the question: "*Do you support the continuation of the reform process that the state president started on 2 February 1990 and which is aimed at a new constitution through negotiation*?" (There had been a very high level of participation, with 86% of eligible voters having gone to the polls).

In Afrikaans communities the "yes" vote had been less strong (in Pretoria and Bloemfontein the "yes" had respectively obtained 57% and 58%, with the "no" vote having actually won in Pietersburg, with nearly 59% - the only place where it had won). It was thus evident that De Klerk increasingly needed to take into consideration English-speaking opinion, whose support he began to require in order to maintain majority white support for his initiatives; in Cape Town with its large English-speaking population, the "yes" vote had won with a resounding 85% majority in the 1992 referendum.

Analysts who had dissected how the white part of the electorate had voted in 1994, estimated that the NP had won between 70% and 80% of the white vote, with General Constand Viljoen's Freedom Front between 15-20% and the Democratic Party a modest percentage of the balance remaining. It should be remembered that right-wing parties other than the FF had boycotted the 1994 election; the total number of white votes in 1994 were therefore around 450,000 less than that cast in the 1992 whites-only referendum – which may conceivably have gone to the Conservative Party and the HNP, had they participated. The general assumption among observers was that, since the 1992 referendum, Afrikaans voters had become more concerned and less supportive of the NP Government's negotiations stance as that process slowly advanced and the NP had to make more concessions, with more deviations from its earlier platforms.

No hard data or public opinion polling exist that's exactly to point for answering the hypothetical question regarding what would have happened in 1994 if it had been necessary for the NP Government to hold again the 5-yearly white National Assembly elections that last were held in September 1989 (the new constitution and the first non-racial elections held in April 1994 in terms thereof, had of course pre-empted the need for such white elections). However, an AI analysis suggests that there would have been a 40% - 60% chance that the NP would have lost its overall majority in the white House of Assembly, if such a hypothetical election indeed would have needed to have been held late in 1994 (if the negotiations had not yet by then delivered the new constitution). Such an

hypothetical white election result would have been mainly due to the fragmentation of the Afrikaner vote, which before had been a solid base for the NP.

In terms of Afrikaner tribal characteristics (as discussed earlier) the negotiations phase had demonstrated again the Afrikaner trait of each wanting to lead his own trek in his own chosen direction, in his own manner. What cannot be denied is that NP Government politicians had always been highly sensitive about not getting too far out ahead of their voters, with leaders mostly following what they perceived voter preferences to be, rather than to decisively lead from the front and taking their voters with them.

FW de Klerk had come closest to being such a decisive leader when he unabashedly adopted the strategy of inclusively negotiating a non-racial settlement. However, even he had been wary of strongly insisting to his voters from the outset that majority rule would inevitably need to be accepted as model. Thus, the NP slowly transitioned from the previous era's "total onslaught" psychological conditioning of the "Red Threat" (which had promoted the "*laager*" mentality), to first toying with "group rights" and then with "power sharing" – before in the end signing up to majority rule in a unitary state.

This evolution wasn't, however, reflected across the full Afrikaner opinion spectrum. The powerful psychological conditioning and "group think" that had characterised previous decades still persisted, with a large segment still believing – as the "total onslaught" faction in the SADF had done – that ultimate salvation lay in the gun; in a strategy of shoot rather than settle (evolving eventually under the AVF into a strategy of threatening to shoot, to try and thereby enforce a settlement to their liking). The old thinking thus persisted dangerously, amply illustrated by the substantial number of retired SADF and SAP generals who were indeed actively planning a coup, acting as the DvG (Directorate of Generals) of the "Volksleër (People's army) of the BKA (Boere Krisis Aksie) of the umbrella AVF (Afrikaner Volksfront). They in fact reckoned that they had the potential support of up to 60% of the Citizen Force members (Commandos), particularly in the rural areas.

As we will discuss in much more detail in the next chapter, the very real threat of an Afrikaner right-wing insurrection that had existed in the lead-up to the first non-racial elections is nowadays seriously under-estimated. The NP Government as well as the ANC/SACP both very definitely had to take it into account (and very much did). This in part has fed much of the present-day speculation (un-informed) about De Klerk not having played the so-called "military card". On the other hand, it has also contributed to people not appreciating today the pressure under which Mandela and De Klerk unavoidably had to agree to compromises, leading nowadays to recriminations from their respective supporters who had unrealistically expected more than what was feasibly attainable…

Which is not to suggest that a majority (or even a large minority) of Afrikaners were inclined to support a coup. As had happened in the 1914 Rebellion and during WW2, a majority of Afrikaners, also in the SADF and Police, always remained loyal to the constitutional order. In the SADF among the Permanent Force, as well as in the SAP-SB, most of the ranks and practically the entire officer corps stood ready to execute the legitimate orders of the Government. They actively, professionally and very quickly rooted out perpetrators of political violence of any stripe or skin colour, and – where necessary, as in Mmabatho – confronted and brought to order such self-proclaimed "troops" of the AWB and the BKA, decisively showing them where the real balance of power still lay. In the intelligence sphere, the Government could also unreservedly count on the professionalism and loyalty to country and the constitutional order, of their agents and analysts.

## 11.3 A TIMELINE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS AND TRANSITION

As promised, we'll now present a detailed timeline of the negotiations/transition, stretching from March 1990 to May 1996. This timeline is intended to serve as memory jogger of what actually had happened. In this *post mortem* chapter on the passing of white-ruled South Africa, the timeline forms the factual "dissection" part laying bare the facts, before we'll proceed (at the end of the chapter) to analysing and interpreting the dissection's findings, so as to ascertain why's and wherefores of the negotiations/transition as white-ruled South Africa's *coup de grace*.

## 11.3.1 PREPARATIONS FOR 1ST FORMAL MEETING BETWEEN THE NP CABINET AND ANC/SACP LEADERS

In the previous chapter, we ended the timeline presented there of the one-year **pre-negotiation phase** in February 1990 (which had seen FW de Klerk's 2 February speech, and the release of Nelson Mandela on 11 February, plus a further flurry of meetings between the NIS and ANC in Switzerland, to organise the return of exiles and the start of negotiations on South African soil).

After a core group of ANC organisers flew in from Lusaka on 21 March 1990, facilitated by the NIS (which provided entry escort, and initial transport, accommodation and security), the responsibility for the housing and protection of the group was handed over by the NIS to a team from the SAP-SB under (then) Colonel André Beukes. The ANC delegates were henceforth accommodated at the secure covert lodging that the SAP-SB used at Daisy Farm/Hertford Hotel near Lanseria, which was more conveniently located in relation to Johannesburg, Alexandra, and Soweto. Thus, the high representatives of the "terrorists and communists" were being lodged and secured by their erstwhile nemesis, the SAP-SB (the value of whose protection was concretely demonstrated when one of the members of the ANC advance group – who had gone visiting in Soweto on his own, without escort – was promptly mugged there in the township…).

Further planning meetings were held in an NIS safe house in the north-east of Pretoria. Here they together organised what was to be the first formal meeting of ANC leaders and NP Government politicians, which originally was scheduled for 11 April 1990, but which in the end took place on the 2nd till the 4th of May 1990 in Cape Town. This became known as the "Groote Schuur talks".

These confidential planning meetings for those first formal talks took place in earnest in April 1990. Already during that early phase of high anticipation and basking in the warm afterglow of De Klerk's speech, plus the release of Mr Mandela, realities on the ground emerged that pointed to the difficulties and delays that would come to mark the entire negotiation/transition process…

## 11.3.2 MARCH 26TH, 1990: THE "SEBOKENG MASSACRE"

On 26 March 1990 the police opened fire on a crowd of some 50,000 who were protesting against high rents and were marching from Sebokeng Township to nearby Vereeniging, south of Johannesburg. Fourteen were killed and 380 wounded. This led the ANC to postpone the first talks between the Government and the ANC (which had earlier been set for 11 April).

President De Klerk responded rapidly to the situation and appointed Judge Richard Goldstone to head an investigation into what had occurred. Goldstone's report recommended that the policemen involved (who had not received prior training in riot control) be prosecuted, finding that their use of force was: "*quite immoderate and disproportionate to any lawful object sought to be attained*".

The heightened political fervour in the country after De Klerk's speech and Mandela's release resulted in increased jockeying for position among parties seeking to strengthen both their bargaining leverage as well as their chances in the promised non-racial elections. Out of this a pattern soon enough emerged, namely of progress towards a settlement being intermingled with heightened violence – to the extent that the four-year period from February 1990 to the 1994 elections would see four-fifths of the some 15,000 fatalities that had occurred over the entire duration of South Africa's internal conflict from 1960 to 1994…

The role played (or not) by the Security Forces in the violence would become a huge bone of contention in the negotiations and a headache for the NP Government in terms of governance and image, because of the fodder it provided – whether real or embellished – for that most crucial of all the key elements in the political contest, namely its propaganda dimension.

## 11.3.3 APRIL 28TH, 1990: THABO MBEKI ARRIVES IN SOUTH AFRICA

After 27 years in exile, future president and then head of ANC external relations Thabo Mbeki arrived back in South Africa, with a view to the upcoming first high-level talks between the ANC and the NP Government. The

ANC team stayed at the Lord Charles Hotel in Somerset West, and for their caucus meetings they made use of the nearby Vergelegen Estate – made available to them by the Anglo-American Corporation.

### 11.3.4 MAY 2-4, 1990: THE "GROOTE SCHUUR" TALKS AND MINUTE

The first high-level formal meeting between the NP Government and the ANC-alliance was held in the stately presidential residence, Groote Schuur ("Big Barn"), and resulted in what became known as the Groote Schuur Minute. De Klerk's team included Pik Botha, Gerrit Viljoen, Dawie de Villiers, Kobie Coetsee, Barend du Plessis, Adriaan Vlok, Stoffel van der Merwe and Roelf Meyer at ministerial level, with Niël Barnard and Mike Louw from the NIS in attendance as organisational support. It is noteworthy that the then minister of defence, Magnus Malan, was not present. Nelson Mandela's team consisted of SACP leader Joe Slovo, Reverend Beyers Naudé, Thabo Mbeki, Alfred Nzo, Walter Sisulu, Ahmed Kathrada, Joe Modise, Ruth Mompati, Archie Gumede and Cheryl Carolus.

The Minute signed by both parties focused on creating conditions for peaceful negotiations by addressing obstacles like the ongoing political violence in the country, plus how to deal with political prisoners and repressive laws:

- Both parties expressed a shared commitment to resolving the climate of violence and intimidation irrespective of source, promoting stability, and pursuing a peaceful process of negotiations.
- A joint working group was set up to define political offences and recommend norms and mechanisms for the release of political prisoners as well as for the granting of indemnity and immunity from prosecution – as first step, the government agreed to provide temporary immunity to members of the ANC's National Executive, to enable their safe return.
- The government also undertook to review existing security laws to align them with the emerging new political dynamic in South Africa, ensuring normal and free political activities, as part of the "normalisation" that FW de Klerk had promised in his 2 February 1990 speech.

This first meeting already gave an inkling of the structural-functional issues that would complicate the conduct of the coming negotiations on the "Afrikaner" side. It was evident that the NP leadership-in-government were intent on both governing the country and conducting the negotiations themselves, simultaneously. There was no real attempt to involve expertise from Afrikaner civil society, nor was there any true notion of splitting the functions of governing and of negotiating and setting up dedicated teams for each. Cabinet would, in terms of actual decision-making, do it all.

There was furthermore no clear comprehension evident on the NP side, about what proper planning and preparation for something as complex and crucial as the coming negotiations would entail. After all, no preparation for negotiating a settlement had been allowed under PW Botha, and the NP Government had had no experience whatever of negotiating with non-white leadership (other than the beholden kind from the homelands).

There was conceptual uncertainty on the part of cabinet members as to the extent that the civil service, for example, could and should be involved in the negotiation process, which was perceived by the NP politicians as "politics" and thus henceforth to be their own exclusive domain. A good example of this is the "raised eyebrows" that Niël Barnard had noted on the NP cabinet side about the NIS's "involvement in politics" due to the fact that the NIS had beforehand provided the government delegates with something as basic and typical as negotiation briefing books containing profiles on the members of the ANC delegation.

The decision by the NP Government to not involve expertise from outside of their own party-political ranks (not even from cultural, academic, or business think-tanks aligned with itself) and to frown upon Civil Service involvement in anything more than administrative arrangements, would soon enough have serious consequences. Because it necessarily meant that the expert knowledge of negotiation theory as well as the "political intelligence" that would have enabled the NP Government negotiators under Minister Gerrit Viljoen to benefit from critically important foundational SWOT-type analysis and the gaming out of likely scenarios and outcomes (so as to develop realistic goals and strategies) was absent. Accordingly, the first two years of the negotiation process would be marked still by wishful thinking regarding goals and a reactive, trial-and-error "feeling the way forward" approach to the art of negotiation, plus a "putting out fires" style of governance. This attempt by the NP politicians to manage

the process also led to fundamental errors in terms of the procedure favoured, and especially regarding committing to "normalisation" before a deal was signed, sacrificing what leverage they had in the process… (in the last section of this chapter, after completing this timeline, we shall analyse in depth the efficiency of the initial NP negotiation team and the procedures adopted at the outset by the De Klerk government, measuring it against standard negotiation theory).

As the Groote Schuur Minute clearly records (with its main focus on the NP Government needing to review security legislation so as to ensure "normal and free political activity" from the word go, and the setting up of a joint working committee on the release of prisoners and return of exiles) the negotiation process kicked off outside of the normal pattern (as seen in SWA/Namibia, and later in Northern Ireland) where the Government would **promise** to faithfully implement a settlement, but having to do so only **once a comprehensive deal had been signed**.

This rather novel concurrent running of the negotiations and the transition represented a fundamental strategic choice with significant implications for the government's future leverage, and I personally question whether it was adequately thought through and gamed out beforehand, in terms of consequences on the ground (I have seen no evidence of such preparation). What was happening, was that the NP Government's desire to gain a **tactical** advantage on 2 February 1990 with what was set in motion then in terms of immediately implementing measures that hopefully would be perceived abroad as "normalising", had very fundamental strategic implications for how the balance of power would evolve on the ground (for example: thereby enabling the ANC/SACP to start conducting its "people's war" in the townships and use "rolling mass action" as leverage to influence the course of the negotiations).

Would the impact and tactical gain of 2 February 1990 have been significantly less, if Mandela was released but the future "normalisation" was packaged as a **promise** contingent on an acceptable settlement being negotiated? Was it really crucial that the negotiations be conducted within South Africa's borders, without outside facilitation or mediation, and with the ANC/SACP in its broadest revolutionary embodiment being fully present and active on the ground?

For the sake of learning we will assess an alternative 2 February 1990 speech scenario at the end of this chapter, more aligned with standard negotiation theory. Suffice it to say here that the argument that's currently often raised, namely that the NP Government didn't know how to deal with the ANC/SACP's supposed "communist negotiation tactics" misses the main strategic issue, namely that in the end it was all about a contest for political power, more than about negotiating a constitution. It was not so much the ANC/SACP's negotiation tactics as their Vietnamese communist "Green Book" revolutionary tactics for "people's war" (as **means to win actual political power** on the ground among the populace) that was far more fundamental to the eventual outcome of the contest for power than any tactics employed around the negotiation table. Which "people's war" tactics is precisely what the NP Government's choice to try and run the negotiations and transition concurrently, instead of sequentially and conditionally, had enabled.

The other future constant that this first formal high-level meeting at Groote Schuur already had brought to the fore, was the role that the contentious issue of violence would increasingly play in the negotiations/transition – again, clearly associated with the fundamental strategic choices made at the get-go.

### 11.3.5 MAY 9TH, 1990: FW DE KLERK'S 18-DAY, NINE-NATION EUROPEAN TOUR

Capitalising on the goodwill created by his 2 February 1990 speech and the (on the face of it) successful Groote Schuur meeting, F.W. de Klerk embarked on a nine-nation tour to Europe with France as first stop. I witnessed this part of the trip, having been stationed at the Paris Embassy at this time – he was very well received by the French public as well as by France's socialist president François Mitterrand (who initially was stiff, but who markedly warmed to the De Klerks when he learnt about their personal interest in French art). De Klerk also met with prime minister Michel Roccard and the then opposition leader (later president) Jacques Chirac.

Upon landing and departure at Orly Airport FW de Klerk was accorded full military honours with the Republican Guard in ceremonial dress uniform on parade. The French public, normally annoyed by the street closures and traffic disruption caused by visiting dignitaries, waved and cheered his motorcade, while African students at the

Sorbonne of their own accord arranged a large pop concert in his honour at the emblematic Trocadero square overlooking the Eiffel Tower. I was personally struck by the extensive awareness among the French about what was happening in South Africa, and by their overwhelmingly positive response. This was evident also among the leftist media (who were my liaison responsibility at the embassy). For example, for the first time leftist journalists such as Stephen Smith of "***Libération***" subsequently accepted invitations to our 31st of May national day celebrations and became regulars at our "pub" on the embassy chancery's ground floor.

From Paris, President De Klerk flew to Greece, and then to Portugal where his positive meeting with Socialist president Mario Soares demonstrated (as with the Socialist Mitterrand and later with Spain's Felipe González), that it wasn't only conservative governments opening up. As could be expected, De Klerk was warmly welcomed by Margaret Thatcher. German chancellor Helmut Kohl was equally welcoming and supportive. De Klerk found his meeting in Spain with prime minister González very helpful, because of the explanation that the latter gave him about the kind of negotiation tactics to expect from the ANC as (ex?)revolutionaries. Other countries visited were Belgium, Switzerland and Italy, all with positive results.

### 11.3.6 JUNE - JULY 1990: NELSON MANDELA'S WORLD TOUR

Early in June 1990 Nelson Mandela attended the OAU summit in Abuja, Nigeria, and then embarked on a six-week world tour to Europe, North America and Africa. Highlights included receiving in person the Sakharov Prize from the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 13 June, as well as meetings in the UK with prime minister Thatcher. Other European countries visited were Germany, Sweden, Belgium, and Switzerland, as well as Ireland.

In mid-June Mr Mandela embarked on an extensive visit to North America, starting with Canada. On 20 June he was honoured with one of the largest-ever ticker-tape parades through the streets of New York, with reportedly more than one million people participating. While in that city, he addressed the UN General Assembly/Committee against Apartheid, as well as public gatherings in Harlem and in Yankee Stadium. Mr Mandela's visit to the USA consisted of an eight-city tour (New York, Boston, Washington D.C., Atlanta, Miami, Detroit, Los Angeles, Oakland).

In Washington DC Mr Mandela met with President Bush at the White House, and he addressed a joint sitting of the US Congress – only the third private citizen (as he then was) to be accorded that honour.

### 11.3.7 JUNE 7TH, 1990: FW DE KLERK ANNOUNCES LIFTING OF STATE OF EMERGENCY, EXCEPT IN NATAL.

In an address to parliament on 7 June 1990, in keeping with the "normalisation" commitment he had made in his 2 February speech, FW de Klerk announced the lifting of the state of emergency (that PW Botha had decreed). The lifting was applicable in all parts of the country except Natal (where the increasing levels of political violence still made it a necessity). De Klerk also announced the release of 48 ANC prisoners who had been convicted of politically-related crimes, plus temporary indemnity for returning exiles, in accordance with the Groote Schuur Minute – all in an effort to accelerate the negotiations.

### 11.3.8 JULY 6TH – 26TH, 1990: SAP-SB ARREST ANC OPERATION VULA OPERATIVES IN NATAL

In 1986, as part of its armed struggle, the ANC/SACP's armed wing, MK, had developed an operational plan to infiltrate operatives and arms into the country to stoke armed insurrection at a time when the internal protest movements such as the UDF had come to dominate township activism and the ANC exiles had little impact inside the country. This project was known as Operation Vulindlela ("open the way") or "Vula" for short.

The operation had been spotted by, and its communications compromised by the NIS from the outset, with the Service having allowed it to run its somewhat desultory course in order to identify arms caches, local contacts and networks of the ANC/MK (the Vula operation was in Mr Mandela's own words essentially moribund by the time negotiations started; however, hardliners in the ANC/MK then set out to revive it in 1990 – especially with regard to Natal – because they wished to strengthen their physical capabilities in that region with a view to their "people's war" strategy in the local contest for power with the IFP).

The SACP held a top-secret meeting on 7 May 1990 at Tongaat in Natal, with leaders such as Ronnie Kasrils and Joe Slovo present. They were determined to exploit the "space" for intensified action created by the announcements of 2 February and the "normalisation". Kasrils himself later wrote in his autobiography "*Armed and Dangerous*" that: "*Taking the thesis seriously, we should be wary that we do not think that now with negotiations, we have arrived in Babylon. The legal space now creates the possibility of this kind of uprising much more than ever before…*"

In July 1990 the SAP Security Branch in Natal became aware of Vula due to the MK activities then surfacing there. Over the weekend of 6-8 July, in KwaMashu township, Durban, MK commander Charles Ndaba and Mbuso Tshabalala were arrested. Later testimony before the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) revealed that they were killed after interrogation and their bodies secretly disposed of.

On 13 July 1990 Siphiwe Nyanda, a key Vula commander and MK military head, was arrested. This was followed on 25-26 July 1990 by the main wave of detentions of around 40 ANC and SACP members accused of plotting to violently overthrow the government. Mac Maharaj (then the in-country commander of Vula) was arrested in Johannesburg at that time. Other key ANC/SACP operatives arrested were Pravin Gordhan, Billy Nair, Raymond Lala, Catherine Mvelesa, Susanna Tshabalala, Dipak Patel, and Amnesh Sankar (Maharaj would, after the inauguration of Mr Mandela as president, be appointed minister of transport, Nyanda became chief of the SANDF, and Gordhan headed the parliamentary committee overseeing the implementation of the new constitution).

The detainees were held under Section 29 of the Internal Security Act. On 29 October 1990 eight of them appeared in court, charged with terrorism. During this appearance the prosecution revealed details about Vula's plans, plus activities such as arms running and encrypted communications. Media coverage amplified this, creating public distrust among especially the white community.

The arrests occurred just weeks before the planned second high-level meeting between the NP Government and the ANC (which had earlier been scheduled for 6 August 1990). The ANC leadership initially tried to publicly distance itself from Vula but later admitted that the operation had, at its birth, enjoyed high-level sanctioning from then ANC president Oliver Tambo himself. Nelson Mandela, however, was not aware of its re-launch and it seems doubtful whether the ANC's "Lusaka faction" and MK had brought their intention to "re-animate" it in 1990 to the attention of the likes of Thabo Mbeki.

FW de Klerk, who had been informed by the NIS that Vula was in fact an old MK legacy project intended as a kind of "insurance policy" on the part of the ANC-MK (should negotiations not pan out), wrote about Vula as follows: "*I again discussed Operation Vula with Mr Mandela on 1 August 1990. I told him bluntly that recent developments had caused an imminent breach of trust between the government and the ANC. I referred to statements and actions by prominent ANC and SACP members, which I said were irreconcilable with the spirit and letter of the Groote Schuur Minute. I warned him that this situation seriously jeopardized the continuation of discussions and the creation of a climate conducive to negotiations. The talks could continue fruitfully only if trust were re-established and all those involved kept to the letter and spirit of the Groote Schuur Minute. In the light of Mandela's assurances, I agreed to proceed with the next round of talks which culminated in the signing of the Pretoria Minute. At the same time, I applied unrelenting pressure on the ANC to suspend the armed struggle and accused them of vacillating about violence. I said that the time had come for it to state unequivocally where it stood, and by its actions and statements give proof of its adherence to the principles of the Groote Schuur Minute. I asked how the ANC's continuing support for the armed struggle could possibly be reconciled with all the positive developments of the preceding months.*"

Niël Barnard would later write about Operation Vula that, if the police had acted with the full weight of the then laws and without appropriate situational awareness, then that "*could have derailed the negotiations before they even began in earnest. It is to the credit of Pres. De Klerk and the security forces that they realized that the ANC was trying to take double precautions to prevent "the Boers" from outwitting them*."

To keep the negotiations on track and clean up its image (which had been tarnished abroad and locally by the Vula revelations), the ANC needed to publicly demonstrate good faith and distance itself from political violence. It

therefore agreed to suspend its armed struggle "with immediate effect" in the Pretoria Minute signed on 6 August 1990, in exchange for government commitments on further prisoner releases and indemnity. All charged Vula operatives were indemnified and released by mid-1991 as part of broader amnesties tied to the transition process.

Operation Vula did have later political consequences within the ANC itself, due to the personal animosity Maharaj developed towards Thabo Mbeki in particular, because of Maharaj's belief that Mbeki had not done enough, nor quick enough, to get him released from prison (it is known that Mbeki had at the time been deeply perturbed about the impact of the Vula revelations on the negotiations and on perceptions about the ANC, locally and abroad, and had doubted the wisdom of continued military preparations and actions on the part of MK). In the run-up to the ANC's 2007 elective conference at Polokwane, Maharaj emerged as the brains and main organisational driver behind the successful effort to unseat Thabo Mbeki as ANC leader and replace him with Jacob Zuma.

### 11.3.9 AUGUST 6TH, 1990: 2ND ROUND OF BILATERAL TALKS – "PRETORIA MINUTE" SIGNED & ANC ARMED STRUGGLE SUSPENDED, BUT A GENERAL AMNESTY SUNK BY KOBIE COETSEE

On 6 August 1990, the second meeting between the government and the ANC took place in the Old Presidency in Pretoria, resulting in the Pretoria Minute being signed. This meeting was noteworthy for five important things:

- the sense of progress that was achieved;
- the visible manifestation of adversarial personal tension between FW de Klerk and Nelson Mandela;
- the accord reached about the ANC's suspension of its "armed struggle";
- the lack of strategic appreciation on the NP Government side for the need for a bilateral, partnership approach to the procedural side of the coming negotiations, instead trying to engineer a public multilateral process (the latter, with which to try and isolate the ANC as "just another party" and deny it the standing of the "other main protagonist"); in other words, a strategy in direct contradiction to the consensus on a confidential bilateral format that Mandela and Niël Barnard had reached in their talks during the pre-negotiation phase; and
- the missed opportunity to include a general amnesty in the Pretoria Minute, due to the stubborn resistance of then minister of justice Kobie Coetsee.

FW de Klerk wrote in his autobiography "*The Last Trek*" that: "*The meeting of 6 August took place at the Presidency in Pretoria. This time there were seven members on each delegation... It was much more a nuts and bolts meeting on the ending of the ANC's armed struggle, violence and the creation of a climate for negotiations. We agreed on target dates for the implementation of our agreement and for the removal of what the ANC regarded as obstacles in the path of negotiations. These included the release of prisoners, amnesty for crimes committed with political objectives, the continued revision of security legislation with a view to the normalization of the political process, etc. The Pretoria Minute concluded on a very optimistic note and proclaimed that exploratory talks would soon be held to open the way to full constitutional negotiations. But the 'soon' did not materialize. It would take a full sixteen months before CODESA (the Convention for a Democratic South Africa), the first structured multiparty negotiations, would begin*".

Different knowledgeable observers / participants noted that there was personal tension between De Klerk and Mandela from the outset. Willie Esterhuyse wrote: "*They were different personality types with distinctive histories. There were also other, more fundamental political-ideological differences. One was the issue of group rights and the ANC's unwavering commitment to simple majority rule in a non-racial unitary state. The two were sworn political opponents on this point, who had to find a way to work together. Mandela later wrote in his autobiography (p. 604), with his memories of his interaction with De Klerk during the long and difficult negotiation phase fresh in his mind: 'To make peace with an enemy, one must work with that enemy, and that enemy becomes your partner'. Meaningful peace processes between historical enemies are indeed related to forms of cooperation that were previously considered 'impossible' because there were good and urgent reasons for it. De Klerk and Mandela needed each other*."

As De Klerk wrote in the earlier quote, the fundamental differences on both substance and procedure that had still separated the ANC/SACP and the NP Government in August 1990 would lead to the negotiations treading water for some sixteen months till CODEASA 1 at the end of 1991. But (because the multilateral CODESA 1 & 2 exercise

in itself proved abortive) there was effectively a hiatus of two years – during which the NP Government's bargaining position kept weakening – till the "Channel" format of confidential bilateral talks between the ANC and NP Government, centred on Roelf Meyer and Cyril Ramaphosa and their respective expert teams, was implemented in August 1992.

As we will discuss later in more detail when we will analyse how the negotiation process actually functioned as process – particularly from 1992 on – this initial NP unwillingness to follow the bilateral format about which consensus had been reached during the pre-negotiations, as well as the NP's initial unwillingness to accept the reality of majority rule (upon which there also had been consensus during the pre-negotiations), plus the NP's stance till the end of FW de Klerk's leadership of opting for traditionalist Westminster **opposition** politics instead of adopting an own Afrocentric **partnership** approach, would turn out to be among the key take-aways about why the NP failed to fully optimise its opportunities (and in the end literally ceased to exist, so soon after its many decades of dominance).

In short, the NP Government under De Klerk had indeed shown situational awareness and political bravery when it at last understood the need to ditch Apartheid and opted for seeking a negotiated settlement, but it then showed once again a lack of theoretical and practical awareness (ultimately fatal for itself) regarding how to prepare for and approach the negotiations and then, about how to engage with the new political reality that inevitably flowed from it.

On the issue of violence and the ANC's "armed struggle" there was indeed – at least on paper – positive developments at the Pretoria meeting, in the form of the ANC's formal suspension of its armed activities. However, looking at it from a real-world perspective, what the ANC had needed to do, and achieved, was to enable itself to pursue two goals: on the one hand (for public consumption, in terms of its image in the media, among white South Africans, and in the West) it had to be seen to distance itself from the use of violence for political ends. On the other hand, the ANC's "people's war" doctrine – which was central to its struggle to undermine the IFP and unite the non-Zulu black population behind itself – necessitated that the ANC be able to court confrontation (also to generate propaganda fodder) and to project a "strong man" image, for which its "armed struggle" credentials and its SDU's (Self-Defence Units – MK under another name) were essential…

Niël Barnard (who attended the meeting and played a central role in formulating the Minute, together with Fanie van der Merwe, Joe Slovo, and Thabo Mbeki) gave an insightful analysis of the dilemma the two parties had earlier faced over the issue of violence, to the extent that it had created a stalemate that the Minute provided an escape from (translated from the Afrikaans version of his biography):

*"The issue of the use of violence as means to achieving political ends had placed the Government and the ANC in a checkmate situation.*

*"The Government, which is endowed with the "power of the sword" to maintain law and order, had been accused by the ANC of abusing that power to deny the black population their legitimate claim to full democratic political rights. The ANC's dilemma, on the other hand, was that it could not simultaneously, on the one hand negotiate a peaceful political settlement in peaceful manner to conclude a settlement process that had already begun and to which it had committed itself morally and contractually at Groote Schuur, yet on the other hand also continue its war of terror.*

*"On the other hand, the ANC did not trust the Government and regarded the end of the armed struggle as the abrogation of their only leverage over the negotiations. For them, negotiation without the maintenance of the armed struggle would be a case of 'peace at any price', which could lead to them losing both the negotiations and the peace. One must understand their fear that the formidable South African Defence Force, supported by other sympathizers in the security forces and far-right white reactionaries, could carry out a "coup" against an unarmed ANC. It cannot be denied that there was fierce resistance to the negotiations in parts of the security forces and among the far-right and that talk of a coup was sometimes widespread. After incisive and prolonged debates, it was agreed at Pretoria that the ANC's armed struggle would be immediately suspended, note: not ended. This was cardinal progress and a win-win situation for both parties. The Government could point out that it had obtained*

*an important concession from the ANC and that people could go on with their lives with greater peace of mind. The ANC, in turn, could point out to its followers that it had not given up the fight and could fall back on armed violence if necessary. This decision, which formed a core part of the Pretoria Minute, was a brilliant move to get the Government and the ANC out of a suffocating checkmate".*

But was it really? Did this "peace" translate to the situation on the ground? Or was it just the first of the phenomenon that the drafting process during the negotiations would largely turn into, namely finding nice-sounding phraseology as "fig leave" formulations behind which to fudge reality, without it really addressing core issues?

According to Esterhuyse the ANC/SACP leader who came up with the "suspension" solution was Joe Slovo, who had the credibility to convince the others in favour of this compromise because of his leading role in MK and his closeness to the Vula conspirators. As Esterhuyse said, the Pretoria Minute brought hope, but not peace.

As regards the question of a general amnesty, Niël Barnard's recollections about what had transpired in the back rooms of the Pretoria meeting are revealing: "*During the formulation and drafting of the Pretoria Minute, another event occurred that would have a huge effect on the settlement process and public life thereafter. Thabo Mbeki and Joe Slovo were delegated from the ANC to help write the minute, while Fanie van der Merwe and I were appointed to represent the Government in this process. We went straight to the snooker room of the Old Presidency. Between puffs of smoke, Fanie wrote down the outcome of the negotiations in his scratchy handwriting, while we all argued and helped with the formulation.*

*"The issue of amnesty for all those involved in acts of political violence had formed part of the discussions during the "main summit" after which it was referred to a working committee – the four of us – with a view to consensus-building and formulation. We had a penetrating discussion and convinced each other that it was absolutely essential that we close the book of the past and turn over a new leaf. This meant that general amnesty would be granted to everyone on both sides of the proverbial trenches. We were convinced that ranting about the violence and terror of the past would get us nowhere. It was not difficult to see that Mbeki and Slovo saw this as a quid-pro-quo for MK, with which to pacify the radicals in the ANC about the agreed concession that the ANC would suspend the armed struggle.*

*"We were very excited about what we saw as a breakthrough and agreed that we would present it as a proposal to our respective principals.*

*"At that very moment, ministers Kobie Coetsee and Gerrit Viljoen turned up at our group to inquire about progress and apparently to ensure that us two officials did not sell out the Government. Coetsee immediately vehemently opposed general amnesty. Fanie and I took him aside and a heated debate ensued during which we tried to convince him of the merits of amnesty for everyone. We pointed out that if we miss this opportunity, a protracted witch hunt will follow that will cripple the security forces and drive Umkhonto even further underground. But Coetsee remained adamant and as immovably stubborn as a donkey.*

*"During a penetrating conversation with De Klerk, Fanie and I tried to convince him of the unintended and fatal consequences of selective amnesty, but he too could not or would not see it. Coetsee apparently believed that by granting general amnesty the opportunity to hold the ANC accountable for its human rights abuses would be lost. In the end, it backfired tragically and exactly the opposite of what he had foreseen happened. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established, during whose sessions the sins of mainly the security forces were month after month hung out in public, extracted in minute detail. Coetsee shone in his absence at the TRC, where he could have fully explained his brave stance*."

Barnard's version is confirmed by Mac Maharaj, who told historian Padraig O'Malley: "*Early in the process, back in 1990, we had offered an unconditional amnesty for everyone. The NP team had agreed, until Kobie got wind of it and kiboshed the whole thing. Kobie thought he could use the issue as a bargaining chip with us, but as we got to the endgame, power had shifted. Clearly, we were going to be in charge, and the security forces and the NP were out on a limb, not knowing what would happen.*"

However, the reality was that the pardons and indemnifications that had been accorded to the imprisoned and exiled ANC operatives already in year one as part of the "normalisation", effectively had meant that only the Security Forces were left dangling – making a nonsense of any alleged hope on Coetsee's part to use amnesty as leverage against the ANC and putting a question mark over his true motivation for continuing to stall this very important issue throughout the negotiations...

### 11.3.10 SEPTEMBER 19TH, 1990 – THE NP BECOMES A NON-RACIAL PARTY

An early sign that the NP and FW de Klerk himself were moving away from their original focus on ethnic group identity and rights came when the party's provincial congresses adopted open, non-racial membership. De Klerk had raised the issue within the party in August 1990, and the process of amending its rules was completed on 19 September 1990.

De Klerk explained his rationale as follows: "*My motivation was not only the practical mathematical realities of politics. A racially based party, as the National Party then was, would simply not be in step with the new South Africa. If racial discrimination and differentiation were removed from the statute book, then the National Party would have to remove them from its own constitution so that it could become a political home for everyone who supported its policy and principles. If we wished to present an effective counterbalance to the ANC, with its Communist allies and socialist tendencies, we would have to find a way of allowing moderate South Africans to join hands in a new non-racial political movement*."

What is also apparent from the above quote – apart from the new non-racial dimension – is that De Klerk continued to visualise the NP as a political force **in opposition** to the ANC, and not as following a partnership approach in order to secure at least some future stake in the governing of the country.

### 11.3.11 SEPTEMBER 24TH, 1990: DE KLERK VISITS WASHINGTON, MEETS WITH PRES BUSH SR

On 7 September 1990 it was announced that FW de Klerk would meet President George Bush Sr in Washington DC on 24 September. De Klerk and his entourage (which included his wife Marike, Foreign Minister Pik Botha and NIS DG Niël Barnard) landed at Joint Base Andrews where he was received with full military honours, from where they were then flown by helicopter to the National Mall. South African flags decorated lamp posts along Pennsylvania Avenue outside the White House. The first official engagement was the laying of a wreath at the tomb of the unknown soldier at Arlington National Cemetery. An honour guard lined both sides of the shrine. A full programme then followed, including public appearances, media interviews and meetings with politicians, the private sector, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

De Klerk's meeting with President Bush went well. The two presidents and their wives became friends, a personal relationship that lasted well beyond them leaving office.

During their talks, President Bush described the progress in South Africa as "irreversible" – a key word in terms of the stipulations of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, because that finding made it legally possible to start reversing sanctions.

### 11.3.12 OCTOBER 2ND, 1990: PRES BUSH INFORMS CONGRESS SA CHANGES "IRREVERSIBLE"

On 2 October 1990 President Bush reported to the American Congress that he had determined that the process of reform in South Africa was "irreversible, dramatic and remarkable" and that, accordingly, the continued application of stringent sanctions was fast becoming irrelevant.

### 11.3.13 OCTOBER 24TH, 1990: STATE VISIT BY FW DE KLERK TO THE NETHERLANDS

At the end of October 1990 FW and Marike de Klerk paid an official visit to the Netherlands, which was deemed significant because of the Dutch ancestry of many Afrikaners. De Klerk held constructive talks with Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers and addressed the standing committees on foreign affairs of the two houses of the Dutch Parliament, where his message of change was met with a standing ovation.

## 11.3.14 NOVEMBER 13TH, 1990: HARMS COMMISSION SCATHING ABOUT SADF'S CCB

During De Klerk's summer holiday at the presidential residence Botha House on the Natal South Coast early in January 1990, FW received an urgent visit from then defence minister Magnus Malan who had flown in to discuss a very sensitive matter – the activities of the SADF's "Civil Cooperation Bureau" (CCB). Malan claimed that he had no prior knowledge of the "unacceptable methods and strategies" employed by the CCB against the ANC and assured De Klerk that he had taken immediate steps to investigate and disband the unit (De Klerk himself had no knowledge of the existence of such a unit, despite having supposedly been fully briefed by the SADF on the defence force's composition when he assumed the presidency).

In "*The Last Trek*" De Klerk related that: "*I realized that despite all the assurances that I had been given about the bona fides of the SADF's covert operations, something was seriously amiss. After I returned to my office in Pretoria I consulted some of my colleagues on the steps that I should take in the light of media speculation and General Malan's revelations. I concluded that the plethora of allegations, accusations and rumours regarding the involvement of elements of the security forces in violence could no longer be dealt with adequately by the normal legal processes. Accordingly, towards the end of January 1990, I appointed a highly respected judge, Louis Harms, as chairman of a one-man commission to investigate alleged incidents of murder and other unlawful acts committed in South Africa and in the homelands…*"

Judge Harms presented his report to De Klerk on 13 November 1990. In it he was scathing about the CCB, revealing that he had found evidence that linked the CCB with bombings and attempted murders, at the minimum. Harms furthermore stated that the evasive actions of the CCB, such as the destruction of files or hiding them – disobeying clear orders from the chief of the SADF and the minister to cooperate with and make available to the commission the documentation it needed – created the suspicion that the CCB had actually been involved in more crimes of violence than the collected evidence had thus far shown. De Klerk himself afterwards concluded that: "…*it is clear that the truth was not established by the Harms Commission and that we failed at that stage to get to the root of the totally unacceptable covert activities in which some elements of the security forces were involved*".

The deceitful and disobedient actions of some in the Security Forces (SADF & SAP) as reported by Judge Harms to De Klerk, would over time prove to have been just the first of such wilful ignoring of instructions that the President would learn about – as we shall see being evidenced repeatedly, later in this timeline. The whole issue of an alleged "Third Force" that supposedly was operated secretly by members of the Security Forces was to become an enormous negative for the NP Government and for its standing over the entire course of the negotiations, seriously harming its credibility and leverage – not necessarily because of all of the propagandistic allegations being actually true, but because the media lapped it up and presented it as truth, allowing the ANC/SACP cover for their own part in the township violence through which they were establishing political hegemony over non-Zulu black voters.

It is a truism that one's leverage at any negotiation table is only as strong as one's fall-back position (BATNA – "best alternative to a negotiated agreement" as William Ury, the world's leading theoretician on negotiations at the time, had called it). Ury stresses the principle that your BATNA is not something to overtly flout, but it should be kept as strong as possible – especially in the eyes of the other party, but also not least in your own. Quite evidently, if negotiations had completely failed, then the Security Forces would have been a key component of the NP Government's BATNA (i.e., the physical ability to maintain the *status quo ante* if the other side wasn't willing to compromise). Therefore, the fact that the relationship between De Klerk and his security force leadership had been deteriorating because of lack of mutual trust, was concerning – certainly they weren't together presenting a united front. Furthermore, the steps that the NP Government had been taking to pro-actively "normalise" politics, meant that that BATNA was being systemically weakened through empowering the ANC/SACP on the ground and depriving the Security Forces of legislation and backing that would be essential if the NP Government ever had to resort to its fall-back of walking away.

Because of the initial strategic choices made by the NP Government at the outset to "normalise" pro-actively (in order to tactically gain brownie points in the image stakes and to entice through such concessions the ANC/SACP into talks) plus the less than hearty relationship with the Security Forces, in the end the NP Government reached the point where its only conceivable BATNA had become so weak that it was unthinkable that the De Klerk team

could walk away, because the consequences would clearly have been far worse than anything that had gone before. With that, away went any real leverage that the NP Government had, leaving their post-1992 negotiation team under Roelf Meyer with a very weak hand to try and play…

### 11.3.15 NOVEMBER 28TH, 1990: MARGARET THATCHER RESIGNS AS UK PRIME MINISTER

The resignation of the strong-willed and firmly pro-South African Margaret Thatcher as British prime minister at the end of November 1990 led to her replacement by the milksop new premier John Major, who allowed his thinking to be shaped by then UK ambassador Robin Renwick (who was of the opinion that an ANC victory was inevitable and that the UK had thus to position itself on the side of Mandela for the sake of future influence). This obviously had significantly lessened the leverage that the NP Government had in the negotiations, due to the loss of Thatcher's willingness to address ANC excesses.

(One can imagine how the negotiations could conceivably have gone, if the NP Government had initiated the process even just five years earlier when Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher were firmly at the helm, and when the "Red Threat" of the USSR still dominated Western strategic thinking – illustrating further the harm done by the critical loss of opportunity and leverage as a consequence of the waste of critical time during the "lost decade" under PW Botha).

### 11.3.16 JANUARY 30TH, 1991: 15,000 PROTESTING FARMERS "OCCUPY" PRETORIA

On January 30, 1991, protest erupted in Pretoria, often referred to as the "tractor blockade" or farmers' march. It was a significant display of white Afrikaner resistance during South Africa's transition. Organized primarily by right-wing farming groups from the Transvaal region, the protest action was finalised at a planning meeting held in Potgietersrus on 23 December 1990 by the BKA (Boer Crisis Action). Older leaders of the Transvaal Agricultural Union had their work cut out to dampen down the ardour of some of their younger members, some of whom had threatened to take their bulldozers to Jan Smuts Airport (now O.R. Tambo International) to dig up the runways if De Klerk did not agree to talk with them in Pretoria. In the end it was decided by the protest planners that the goal would be that only emergency vehicles be able to move in Pretoria's streets on the day of the action.

On 30 January 1991 around 15,000 farmers converged on the city centre, parking hundreds of tractors, bakkies (pickup trucks), and other vehicles to create massive traffic jams and effectively blockade key streets near government buildings. Once their day of action had started, the protesting farmers ignored a high court interdict ordering them to disperse, turning the event into a defiant "occupation" that disrupted business and demonstrated the right-wingers' willingness to engage in direct action to further their cause.

Banners and speeches decried FW de Klerk's reform initiatives as a betrayal of the National Party's (NP's) historical promises, with protesters chanting slogans like "Hands off our land" and accusing De Klerk of "selling out" to the ANC/SACP. It was framed not just as an economic grievance but as a defence against the perceived dismantling of white supremacy in the countryside, amid broader anxieties following the ANC's unbanning in February 1990. The protest action was actively supported by the Conservative Party and its leader Dr Andries Treurnicht, as well as by the AWB.

Niël Barnard said about the incident that the political message sent was clear: "*don't ignore the right-wing in white politics*". According to him, not in the least because of: "*the high number of farmers who formed part of the SADF's commando system, which elevated the potential for right-wing violence.*"

### 11.3.17 FEBRUARY 12TH, 1991: THE D.F. MALAN AIRPORT ACCORD IS SIGNED

More than a year had gone by since FW de Klerk's epoch-making 2 February 1990 speech. Six months had elapsed since the last meeting between the NP Government and the ANC at the Old Presidency in Pretoria, before the third such meeting took place on 12 February 1991 – this time at Cape Town Airport (then called DF Malan).

Again, it still was no more than "talks about talks" – about how to get the multilateral talks (which the De Klerk-led NP wanted as format) between some two dozen political parties in the country off the ground. Plus, again, how to bring the spiralling political violence under control.

The entire situation was a prime indicator of the NP politicians' lack of situational awareness: not comprehending what the fact signified that, in order just to get to multi-party talks, they had to first obtain the assent of the ANC/SACP – which they of necessity had to obtain by ways of bilateral talks. If the bi-lateral format was essential for getting going, why was it thought that it would it be any different in the debate on the key issues of substance to follow?

The NP Government at that stage tried to ignore the underlying reality that a multi-party format of public negotiation in front of TV cameras would inevitably be a soap-box show of preening politicians, leading nowhere. Because such a spectacle – even though heart-warming in terms of perceived "inclusivity" – would not make one iota of difference to the underlying power reality, which by its nature necessitated a bilateral format between the two clearly-evident actual powers (the NP and ANC). In fact, it was more likely that the other parties would gang up against the NP, than against the ANC. And trying to negotiate publicly rather than confidentially was another recipe for disaster, guaranteed to cause greater polarisation and limiting options for fear of negative reaction on the part of certain sections of the public. Which was precisely why, already during the pre-negotiation meetings between Mandela and Barnard, there had been consensus that the talks needed to be bilateral and confidential…

As with the Groote Schuur and Pretoria Minutes, the Cape Town airport meeting was also concluded with the issuing of a joint declaration, this time called the DF Malan Accord. This once again focused primarily on countering the ongoing (and escalating) political violence, clarifying some terms of the Pretoria Minute and reaffirming the ANC's "suspension" of armed activities whilst outlining steps for allowing peaceful protests. (What was apparent was that the ANC-as-MK had largely suspended attacks on the state's forces, but that MK-as-SDU's was ever more heavily engaged in the black-on-black contest for political power in KZN and the townships of the Witwatersrand).

What the ANC/SACP clearly had been doing, was to seize the opportunity that the NP Government's efforts at "normalisation" had afforded them to establish themselves organisationally and logistically on the ground and start implementing their "Green Book" based "people's war" strategy to gain the upper hand among the future Black electorate…

### 11.3.18 MARCH 25TH, 1991: TWO KGB GENERALS MEET WITH FW DE KLERK IN CAPE TOWN

As part of the outreach by the NIS to the USSR (as discussed earlier, to "turn around" what had before been the ANC/SACP's main sponsor) two senior KGB generals arrived in South Africa in March 1991 on an extended visit. This included a meeting with President De Klerk in Tuynhuys, Cape Town. Their message was that Soviet leader Michael Gorbachev had officially approved the establishing of a formal channel of contact between the NIS and KGB, so that there would in future be no obstacles to cooperation. They also conveyed Gorbachev's congratulations to De Klerk with his reform initiatives; Gorbachev had expressed the hope that the respective efforts of the USSR and South Africa (both then engaged in internal political reforms) would be met with success. The KGB delegation indicated that a personal meeting between the two leaders wasn't outside the realm of possibility. They then handed over Gorbachev's official message, which included a request for South African assistance in terms of supply of grains: "*We are facing serious difficulties with our national economy in providing the country with feeding stocks and foodstuffs*."

### 11.3.19 APRIL 5TH, 1991: ANC'S OPEN LETTER TO GOVERNMENT THREATENS WALK-OUT

On the 5th of April the ANC/SACP published an open letter to Government, in which it threatened to suspend constitutional negotiations if the government did not by 9 May 1991 meet seven demands. These demands included the dismissal of the ministers of law and order and defence, Mr Adriaan Vlok and General Magnus Malan; the outlawing of traditional weapons (the spears and clubs carried by IFP supporters at ceremonial functions); the dismantling of counter-insurgency units; the appointment of an independent commission of inquiry to investigate the security forces; and the phasing out of IFP hostels in the urban areas.

FW de Klerk rejected these demands, noting that the NP Government had been actively working to convene a broad-based meeting of political parties, business, and churches to counter the violence plaguing parts of the country – but which the ANC/SACP had refused to join.

## 11.3.20 MAY 24TH, 1991: THE FIRST MEETING OF THE NATIONAL PEACE INITIATIVE IS HELD

On the 24-25th of May a conference on violence and intimidation initiated by the NP Government went ahead in Pretoria, but without the ANC and its allies. It was attended by some 200 delegates representing a wide range of political parties and organizations – trade unions, community organizations and churches – including some of the anti-government churches that had boycotted the church conference the previous year. Participants ranged across the political spectrum, including the AWB's Eugene Terre'Blanche and Zulu king Goodwill Zwelithini, with an equally wide range of church and business leaders involved, including the secretary-general of the SA Council of Churches, Dr Frank Chikane, the moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church, Dr Johan Heyns, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Mr Bobby Godsell of the Chamber of Mines.

It set up a facilitating committee in which Dr Louw Alberts and Mr John Hall worked hard to maintain the momentum of the peace initiative and to convince parties that had boycotted the conference to participate in future. In June 1991 they succeeded in transforming the facilitating committee into a preparatory committee for the National Peace Accord (which included three nominees each from the government, the ANC and the IFP). This committee then prepared the way for the eventual signing of the National Peace Accord, three months later in September 1991.

## 11.3.21 AUTUMN/WINTER 1991: POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS NOT GETTING OFF THE GROUND

The autumn and winter of 1991 were marked by little progress in getting formal multi-party talks on a new constitutional dispensation off the ground. Even the peace initiative was evidence of discord rather than consensus. The ANC, in the meanwhile, was focused on getting its own organisation up to scratch for the coming contests at the ballot box. Nevertheless, key ANC figures such as future president Thabo Mbeki remained very much intent on getting talks with the NP Government going.

Willie Esterhuyse (NIS code-name: "Gert") who had served as intermediary between Mbeki and the NIS during the Mells Park process that we discussed earlier, wrote about this period (translated from Afrikaans): "*Thabo Mbeki and I kept in touch during the political winter of 1991. In Britain he spoke to me repeatedly about the issue of a* ***general amnesty****. I regularly conveyed this message to the NIS. Back in South Africa he kept hammering on it. It was something that Minister Kobie Coetsee should have paid attention to on behalf of the government but did little about. What was happening, says Mbeki, could seriously mess up things like amnesty.*

*"Aziz Pahad later called me and asked if he, Mbeki, and someone else from the business sector could get together to discuss the way forward, with a possible role for the business sector. …*

*"My mind was racing: "We are dancing like madmen on the edge of the abyss again." It became a long and penetrating conversation: How can the process of settlement get going again?*

*"Mbeki was relentless: 'There is no other way out than negotiations.' He looked at me: '****Talk to Niël Barnard. We will talk within our own ranks. Informal and unofficial contact is needed first****. We need to keep the informal and unofficial conversation about negotiation going'*."

## 11.3.22 JULY 2-7TH, 1991: ANC HOLDS ITS 1ST CONFERENCE IN THREE DECADES ON SA SOIL

The 48th National Conference of the ANC – the organization's first on South African soil since its 32nd conference in 1959 – took place from July 2 to 7, 1991, at the University of Durban-Westville. It drew 2,244 delegates representing about 760,000 ANC members from branches, underground structures, Umkhonto weSizwe (MK, the ANC's armed wing), the Women's and Youth Leagues, and overseas missions, plus around 450 international guests from 57 countries. Nelson Mandela, in his opening address, emphasized the ANC's role in forging a non-racial democracy and called for intensified mass mobilization. Delegates divided into commissions to thrash out policies. A major focus was reconciling the ANC's commitment to peaceful talks with what were seen as the "realities of state-sponsored violence"; one commission report noted that "underground activities and Umkhonto weSizwe remain essential" for self-defence. Mass action was prioritized to hasten a settlement.

Nelson Mandela was elected as ANC president and Cyril Ramaphosa as its secretary-general. Overall, the main focus of the conference was on improving the ANC's organization with a view to compete effectively for political power at the coming elections.

## 11.3.23 JULY 6TH, 1991: RIGHT-WINGERS BLOW UP OLD HILLVIEW HIGH SCHOOL, PRETORIA

As part of the integration of the returning ANC-exiles, the old (then empty) Hillview High School in Pretoria was made available to them as school for their children. The building needed extensive renovation before it could be put to use. Days before it would open, right-wing bombmaker Dries Kriel destroyed it with a bomb containing 25kg of the commercial explosive Tovex, laced with aluminium powder to increase its heat and destructive power.

## 11.3.24 JULY 10TH, 1991: NIËL BARNARD MEETS IN KREMLIN WITH MICHAEL GORBACHEV

In July 1991 NIS DG Niël Barnard visited Moscow at the invitation of the USSR authorities. As described earlier in more detail when the efforts by the NIS to reach out to the Soviets was discussed, this visit was cut short due to the sudden passing of Barnard's father. In the light of the change in schedule that this required, Soviet leader Michael Gorbachev agreed to interrupt a Politburo meeting in order to still be able to meet with Barnard that same day (July 10th). The constructive and friendly talks in the Kremlin lasted 40 minutes. Gorbachev was complimentary and supportive about the South African settlement process. He undertook to speak directly to the ANC leadership about their responsibility to genuinely seek a political solution.

Three months after Barnard's visit to Russia, in October 1991, the head of the FSB (successor to the KGB) Yevgeny Primakov, visited South Africa and the following year Moscow opened an embassy in Pretoria.

## 11.3.25 JULY 30TH, 1991: "INKATHAGATE" LEADS TO KAHN COMMITTEE AND GOLDSTONE COMMISSION BEING APPOINTED

In July 1991 the media started reporting that government entities had been providing clandestine assistance to the Inkatha Freedom Party, which saga was soon labelled "Inkathagate". The ANC/SACP naturally seized upon this propaganda opportunity, with Nelson Mandela blaming the NP Government for the violence witnessed in regions with a strong IFP presence such as the KwaZulu homeland, Natal, and the Witwatersrand. He again demanded the dismissal of Ministers Adriaan Vlok and Magnus Malan, plus the appointment of an independent judicial commission of inquiry to investigate the security forces, as well as the verifiable disbanding of the special counter-insurgency units of the SAP and the SADF.

According to FW de Klerk, he soon enough realized that he needed to take drastic action to try and control the political damage being caused by Inkathagate. With three cabinet ministers in any event retiring at the end of July that year, De Klerk used that opportunity to move ministers Magnus Malan and Adriaan Vlok (Defence and Police) to less sensitive portfolios and to replace them with less controversial figures in the persons of Roelf Meyer and Hernus Kriel, respectively.

De Klerk then convened a press conference for 30 July to deal specifically with the Inkathagate crisis – a conference that FW De Klerk described as one of his most difficult ever. He announced the forming of an advisory committee (the Kahn Committee) appointed from the private sector to advise on the necessity or not of continuing existing secret projects and on the adequacy of control mechanisms. He emphasized that it had always been the norm that secret projects should be conducted within the law, but the media reacted with scepticism. De Klerk later wrote: "*I was angry and frustrated by the tardy and ineffective implementation of my repeated instructions (to the Security Forces) to eliminate all questionable activities. I also began to suspect that some elements in the security forces might be dragging their feet or wilfully undermining my initiatives. I was determined to ensure, once and for all, that any remaining unacceptable secret projects should be brought to an end as soon as possible.*"

At this press conference De Klerk also announced the establishment of the commission of inquiry regarding the prevention of public violence and intimidation, to get to the bottom of all the accusations and counteraccusations regarding who was responsible for the violence that was convulsing the country and undermining the negotiations. Earlier in 1991, Parliament had adopted legislation – the Prevention of Public Violence and Intimidation Act of 1991 – to enable the appointment of a standing commission to investigate violence. After consultation with other parties De Klerk appointed Judge Richard Goldstone (who had earlier investigated the Sebokeng incident) as the chairman of this commission, which then became widely known as the Goldstone Commission.

## 11.3.26 JULY 22/23RD, 1991: CABINET HOLDS ITS WINTER 1991 D'NYALA "BUSH SUMMIT"

This cabinet brainstorming session, held again at the D'Nyala retreat, was focused on getting constitutional negotiations underway as soon as possible.

FW de Klerk stressed that the NP urgently needed new strategies for how to deal with the ANC. He described the government's position vis-a-viz the ANC as dualistic – meaning that the NP needed to oppose the ANC, but also inevitably cooperate with it. De Klerk stated that: "*The government must go on the attack, but not in such a way that it undermines or destroys the negotiation process*". He continued that pressure had to be put on the ANC to agree to a multi-party conference as soon as possible and in speeches the ANC had to be presented as the "delaying factor".

The as yet unresolved "dualism" that De Klerk referred to was, in reality, a revealing admission about the insufficiencies in the NP's initial strategic planning, because almost 18 months had already passed since De Klerk's 2 February 1990 speech, and almost two-and-a-half years since he had assumed the party's leadership when he had promised a "quantum leap" forward.

The lack of progress and the obstacles encountered proved that the process had been embarked upon with insufficient prior analysis and preparation. The NP Government had initiated it in a tactical and not a strategic manner – not based on negotiation theory bur rather aimed at a short-term gaining of the party-political initiative with the 2 February speech. Clearly, without the politicians having sufficiently grasped the underlying power realities, nor the core theoretical principles of how to structure and conduct such negotiations.

Yes, indeed – the New Nats had at the outset come to the right conclusion about the earlier "shoot vs settle" debate, namely that negotiation was the only viable option remaining.

But regarding <u>how</u> to negotiate, they had not – before embarking on the negotiation path – sufficiently analysed and gamed the range of potential future scenarios, alternatives, and consequences when, before launching, they logically had had to decide first on how to approach the negotiations.

At the July 1991 cabinet "bush summit" FW de Klerk furthermore asked that the NP at its upcoming provincial congresses significantly adjust its 1989 election policy platform (which these congresses then duly did, in September 1991).

The changes De Klerk wanted entailed a move away from using language emphasizing group rights, to rather underlining <u>voluntary association</u> – the same principle that Lang Hendrik van den Bergh had pushed for two decades earlier, when the general had also warned that persisting with race-based policies would be tantamount to "suicide". De Klerk's new approach was that people who felt themselves to be a group should organize themselves as political parties, which would then represent their group interests (the emphasis was therefore no longer on protecting ethnic group rights as such, but on ensuring participation in government by minority parties, through obligatory power sharing).

The NP's new policy platform thus contained two main planks: firstly, striving for a "constitutional state" (*regstaat*) in which the constitution would be supreme and be enforced by independent courts, with the emphasis on individual rights and voluntary association as indirect means of accommodating group interests.

Secondly, on "participatory democracy" (a nicer-sounding term for power sharing) with a two-chamber parliament: one elected on the basis of universal suffrage, and the other consisting of representatives of the nine development regions (what Joe Slovo immediately called the "house of losers"). The NP also began to promote the idea of a Swiss-stye rotating presidency.

All of the NP's new "participatory democracy" positions on power sharing were concepts that clashed with the Westminster "winner takes all" model that South Africans had come to regard as the norm under British rule. Such power sharing was also very much at odds with ANC/SACP's ex-Marxist attachment to the notion of "democratic centralization" which favoured a highly centralised unitary state typical of communist regimes.

These new policy planks showed that the NP Government still lacked situational awareness and had not yet learnt two essentials for effective negotiation: firstly that goals had to be defined in terms of real fundamental interests, not policy positions; and secondly, the necessity for prior realistic assessment of the likelihood of achieving desired outcomes – doing so before the party publicly binds itself to such ideas.

Unlike the ANC, the NP Government had also not learnt the value of the adage that in negotiations it's best to "make a virtue out of necessity" (i.e., by accepting as basis that which is shown to be inevitable, such as some form of majority rule) and then focus your leverage and political capital on influencing the configuration of that basic model as best you can to accommodate as much as possible your fundamental needs, rather than to chase fundamentally different but unachievable dreams incapable of forming the basis for compromise.

I will discuss this later in more detail, when we assess the negotiations as such. What, in brief, is meant by the foregoing can best be illustrated by reference to the concrete example of what had in reality transpired: The ANC/SACP had assessed before the start of negotiations that their long-cherished ideal of a Marxist people's republic simply wouldn't fly – not with the majority of South Africans, nor with the West. Therefore, rather than flogging a dead horse, they straight away accepted as a strategic necessity the very antithesis of the Marxist model, namely a liberal Western free-market system and made it a plank of virtue in their platform, thus avoiding being tarnished by their ideological past.

They also had set as overriding goal to achieve, their core interest of replacing the white NP as the party in power in South Africa, rather than focusing on ideological policy positions (which could have split their own alliance).

The NP Government, for its part, did indeed state that they were abandoning Apartheid, but they did not immediately accept and commit themselves to what they were clearly told by their own intelligence service and constitutional experts that the vast majority of South Africans desired, namely majority rule within a unitary state. If they had done so, such a public commitment would then have allowed them to focus all their negotiation leverage on making that model as best suited as possible to South African reality regarding decentralisation, devolution and separation of power (this lack of foresight is why we have the problems so manifest today).

Inevitably, in the end the NP had no choice but to accept the unavoidability of majority rule in a unitary state, but because they had first proposed the non-starter of "group rights" (feared by others as being Apartheid, just differently dressed up), and then switched to proposing "power sharing" (also still seen by others as aimed at securing for the white minority a privileged position) before finally – begrudgingly – at the very end accepting the inevitable, the NP Government had wasted valuable negotiation time and opportunity, plus political capital and leverage, in pursuit of a succession of earlier policy positions impossible to achieve in practice and which in any event bore little relation to their constituents' real fundamental interests at individual level.

Furthermore, it saddled the NP with the image of untrustworthiness through repeated about-turns on policy; of making concessions under pressure.

By not analysing and preparing properly, the NP initially clung to somewhat modified policy positions of the past, instead of defining at the outset what the real fundamental interests of the NP's own constituents as individual citizens were. Should it not have been clear to the politicians that what would really matter to their constituents would be that they as individuals should have their individual human rights guaranteed, their image restored and their personal security and property rights protected?

Equally, in the context of those party faithful being a voluntarily constituted interest group wishing for their party to somehow have a meaningful participatory input in the future governance of the country: was their real interest not that a partnership be established with the likely new governing party to help ensure security, effective service delivery, and some influence over decision-making by means of a non-ideological, non-adversarial approach? (Instead of the "feel good" but futile exercise of seeking to be the Westminster-style Official Opposition – the very debate about partnering versus opposition that would, within less than a decade, tear the NP apart and lead to its complete demise, with its remaining leading politicians joining the ANC).

If the NP Government had from the outset focused on the real fundamental interests of their supporters (as opposed to implausibly and impossibly trying to "evolve" past party-political policy positions), and had they comprehensively and thoroughly analysed all negotiation strategies and formats that conceivably could have resulted in achieving such an aim of active participation in partnership (rather than aiming to be a brake, through opposition), what process format and substantive content would they then have prioritised in their initial approach to the negotiation?

Was the most fundamental political interest of the NP's constituents not that the radicals in the ANC be kept away from the levers of power, by helping the moderates to deliver and retain control? (As amply demonstrated by what resulted when the moderate Mbeki was ousted by the Zuma faction…).

Where could we South Africans (and the NP, as party) have been today, if they had from the word go adopted a long-term strategic and not a day-to-day tactical approach? If they had drawn on the expertise available in broader civil society and academia to first comprehensively analyse strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and on the basis of such analysis and the proven principles of negotiation theory, then to game out different possible scenarios and strategies? If they had at the outset taken the time to understand these and prepare properly for the challenge ahead instead of tactically launching precipitously into party-political one-upmanship, with no real plan for what would come next, or for how best to protect their fall-back, their leverage? (BATNA).

What if they had accepted reality and adopted a negotiation strategy and goals based on the practically achievable, allowing them to have concentrated their efforts and means on refining the broad majoritarian, unitary model so that it be as best suited as possible to South African needs? (For example, by ensuring that it included a directly elected president so as to have a clear division between the executive, legislature and judiciary, plus including better provision for forming coalition governments composed of minority parties; as well as trying to devolve as much power as possible down to lower tiers of government, as close as possible to the people).

If the NP had from the start accepted in principle the majoritarian, unitary state model (which in the end they in any way had to do), and had from the outset adopted such a "making a virtue out of necessity" approach, they would likely also have received more support from other democratic parties and from the West for significantly improving that basic model; they could conceivably then have achieved that in cooperation with the ANC, rather than through opposition.

However, due to the NP's apparent vacillation on goals and their adversarial contrariness, they got themselves politically isolated, without any partners internally and externally. This in the end left key work on the constitution undone because critical time was lost while haphazardly chasing unrealistic policy positions in public out of fear of further alienating their traditional voter base (which base eventually itself had to accept the inevitable, and did so with much more intelligence and equanimity than the politicians seemed to be willing to credit them with – but not thanks to the NP having from the outset helped them to understand what was realistically achievable and what not). What was even worse than the NP's lack of preparation for the negotiations, was its inadequate preparation for the political power contest that that process would inevitably unleash. This lack of political preparation (compared for example to what the Vorster team had helped Dirk Mudge set up in SWA/Namibia) had left the De Klerk Government without allies at the negotiation table and in the end with far less electoral support than what polling at the outset of the process had indicated they may have conceivably been able to aim for...

## 11.3.27 AUGUST 9TH, 1991: THE "BATTLE" OF VENTERSDORP

The "Battle" of Ventersdorp occurred on August 9, 1991, in the small town of that name located in the western part of the then Transvaal province of South Africa – now part of the North West Province. Approximately 2,000 armed supporters of the AWB, led by Eugène Terre'Blanche, clashed with about an equal number of members of the SAP. Ventersdorp was the AWB's stronghold and headquarters, a conservative Afrikaner community deeply opposed to President FW de Klerk's reforms (such as the unbanning the ANC & SACP, the release of Mr Nelson Mandela, and initiating negotiations toward a non-racial democracy).

De Klerk had scheduled a public meeting of the NP in the Ventersdorp town hall to rally support among white voters amid declining NP popularity in conservative rural areas. Originally promoted as open to the public, it was changed to invitation-only due to intelligence about planned disruptions.

De Klerk himself wrote about the events in his "*The Last Trek*": "*As we approached Ventersdorp my advisers told me that it would be unsafe to proceed by car. A police helicopter picked us up beside the road and flew us to Ventersdorp. However, before we could descend to our designated landing spot at the hospital, the helicopter had to circle the town once again because the police spotted an AWB sniper on one of the rooftops. We finally landed at the hospital where we boarded one of the police's armoured personnel carriers which took us to the venue. We had to walk the last few yards to the hall, surrounded by a phalanx of police. The situation was extremely tense. The Commando Hall, where we held the meeting, was protected by some 2,000 policemen and was surrounded by razor wire, police vehicles and police dogs. An equal number of AWB members, armed with pistols and hunting rifles, arrived at the hall just before the meeting was due to begin. They were determined to break through the police barricade and disrupt the meeting. The AWB members were egged on by one of their leaders, Piet Rudolph, the secretary-general of the AWB, to take on the police and to charge the razor wire. After their initial attempt was repulsed with tear-gas, members of the AWB reportedly opened fire on two minibuses. The police returned their fire, killing one of the AWB men and wounding another, who subsequently died in hospital. A third AWB supporter was killed when one of the minibuses, which had been attacked, careered through the crowd. Altogether, forty-eight people, including six policemen, were injured in the fracas. At the end of the meeting, which took place without incident inside the hall, Marike and I visited a few of the injured in hospital, before being whisked away in the helicopter*."

## 11.3.28 AUGUST 18TH, 1991: MOSCOW COUP AGAINST GORBACHEV – USSR COLLAPSES

On 18 August 1991 a group of hard-line communists attempted to oust Michael Gorbachev as Soviet leader but instead incited a popular uprising among the Russian public. This culminated in the populace taking control of the streets of Moscow and of the Russian Republic's Assembly building, leading to Boris Yeltsin emerging as the new leader and precipitating the final collapse of the communist regime. Yeltsen, the President of the Russian Republic, took over authority and the USSR as such was formally dissolved on 26 December 1991, replaced by the (non-communist) Russian Federation, with many of the former Soviet republics subsequently peeling off and becoming independent, such as the Baltic states, and Ukraine.

The result of this for South Africa was that the West no longer had any fear of a "Red Threat", so that the NP Government could no longer count on the traditional support (latterly "under the table") that it had received to help keep the Red Bear at bay – equally, the ANC/SACP could no longer count on the support of Moscow either, which had for many decades been its main international sponsor.

## 11.3.29 SEPTEMBER 11TH, 1991: CONFRONTATIONAL MEETING BETWEEN DE KLERK AND MANDELA

FW de Klerk and Nelson Mandela had from their first meeting not clicked at a personal level, with the relationship becoming increasingly adversarial as their interaction progressed. On 11 September 1991, three days before the National Peace Accord was to be signed, the two met one-on-one, at which occasion De Klerk took Mandela and the ANC/SACP to task about violence-related issues that had come to seriously concern the NP Government, such as the ANC/SACP not living up to their commitments as agreed in the DF Malan Accord, and continuing with Operation Vula (infiltrating men and arms into the country and continuing to establish extensive underground structures manned by MK cadres). The ANC/SACP had also continued to make public statements and threats bound to incite violence, and De Klerk particularly challenged Mandela about statements by Chris Hani, who had shortly before said in Nelspruit that: "*the ANC was going to get what we want, all the weapons are here*" and then boasted in Uitenhage that: "*if told, MK would go back to the bush, irrespective of what the NEC (National Executive Committee) of the ANC is saying. We will get the mandate from the people and not from the executive of the ANC*."

De Klerk then warned that, if no satisfactory response was forthcoming, then the NP Government would scuttle the upcoming Peace Conference. Mandela was placatory and, as De Klerk would later write: "…*we received yet*

*more firm assurances from the ANC that it would carry out its commitments under the D. F. Malan Accord. We accordingly decided to proceed with the Peace Accord*".

## 11.3.30 SEPTEMBER 14TH, 1991: NATIONAL PEACE ACCORD SIGNED BY NP, ANC, AND IFP

The National Peace Accord (NPA) was signed during a conference held at the Carlton Hotel in Johannesburg on 14 September 1991. It was the first formal multi-party agreement to result from the country's transition process and was presided over by religious and business leaders such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Mr John Hall. The accord was signed by President De Klerk for the NP Government, Mr Mandela for the ANC, Prince Buthelezi for the IFP, and by 23 other entities from civil society, such as the COSATU trade union. The NPA was not focused on constitutional issues but on immediately addressing and reducing political violence to create space for negotiations. Key provisions and results included:

- Codes of conduct for political organizations, the police (SAP), and security forces (including the SADF), emphasizing political tolerance, non-violence, and accountability.
- Establishment of multi-party peace structures at various levels, which included:
    - The **National Peace Committee** (to monitor compliance, handle complaints, and promote reconstruction, which was co-chaired by figures like businessman John Hall and Bishop Stanley Mogoba from religious/business sectors).
    - The **National Peace Secretariat** (An independent body chaired by Advocate Anthonie Gildenhuys to implement and coordinate regional/local committees).
    - **Regional and Local Peace Committees**: Grassroots mechanisms for conflict resolution and community rebuilding.
    - The **Goldstone Commission** (formally called the Standing Commission of Inquiry Regarding Public Violence and Intimidation, chaired by Judge Richard Goldstone, tasked with investigating incidents of violence).
- Commitments to socio-economic reconstruction in affected communities, police reform (e.g., a Police Board with public input), and principles like freedom of speech, assembly, and multi-party democracy.

## 11.3.31 DECEMBER 1991: RIGHT-WING BOMBING CAMPAIGN CONTINUES

On the Day of the Vow, 16 December 1991, right-wingers bombed a multiracial school in Klerksdorp, followed on 19 December 1991 by the bombing of COSATU House in Pretoria. On Christmas Eve 1991 the bombers stole some 200kg of Anfex explosive from the fourth level of a platinum mine near Rustenburg.

## 11.3.32 DECEMBER 20–21, 1991: THE FIRST PLENARY SESSION OF CODESA

The first session of the multi-party Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA I) was held at the World Trade Centre in Kempton Park shortly before Christmas 1991 – thus, three years and seven months after the pre-negotiation talks between Mr Mandela and Dr Niël Barnard's team had commenced at Victor Verster Prison. Participants in CODESA I signed a Declaration of Intent, agreeing to a united, democratic, non-racial state with separation of powers, a constitution, a bill of rights, and multi-party elections. As a public exercise in ostensible inclusivity, it went well, with 19 delegations (consisting of recognised political parties and government institutions) participating through some 230 delegates, with nearly one thousand international observers also present.

Limiting participation to political parties and government entities did mean, however, that civil society was excluded, which resulted in ethnic groups such as the Afrikaner not being represented as such, and important cultural organisations and think-tanks such as the Broederbond being excluded. Nor were the business community represented.

The very public nature of the proceedings also meant that there was a temptation to grand-stand for the TV cameras – which in the end led to the most significant incident of the entire event and which cost the NP Government dearly in terms of perceptions.

It will be recalled from earlier chapters that I had recounted a KIK meeting held in the early eighties (which I had personally attended and minuted, as its secretary). This particular top-level meeting of the intelligence community had as purpose to review (already back then) the continued detention of prisoner Mandela, and to make

recommendations in that regard to cabinet – it was basically an annual assessment. You may also recall that I had recounted how the psychologist of the Prison Service (who had been tasked to observe Mr Mandela up close) had on that occasion already categorically stated that, when Mr Mandela is released, he will run circles around any of the white ministers then serving in cabinet and that he will totally dominate the political scene thanks to his charisma and intellect. You may furthermore recall that Niël Barnard had explicitly told PW Botha (when in May 1988 Barnard was tasked by Botha to lead the team that was to commence meeting with Mandela in prison) that he – Botha – must understand from the outset that the inevitable outcome of talking with Nelson Mandela would be black majority rule with Mr Mandela as president.

Despite this clear understanding on the part of the intelligence community about Mr Mandela's superior skills as politician, FW de Klerk was unfortunately advised by some in his circle that he should use the opportunity afforded him by the convention organisers to speak last, at the closing of the event, to portray a strong image (for the benefit of his voter base) and to "take the ANC to task" for their perceived role in the delays and violence that had been plaguing the negotiation process. De Klerk had been uneasy about this, but in the end did agree to try and seize the opportunity offered by the cameras to publicly confront Mr Mandela. Because of his unease, De Klerk had insisted that a message should be passed to Mr Mandela beforehand (by Kobie Coetsee, via Thabo Mbeki) to forewarn him that De Klerk's closing speech will be confrontational in tone.

Mandela, who had allegedly not received the alert beforehand, was furious when he heard De Klerk speak and insisted that he be afforded the right to reply – which he was immediately granted by the co-chairs. Nelson Mandela then tore into De Klerk and the NP Government with great effect, calling him the head of an "illegitimate, discredited, minority regime". Mandela emerged from that confrontation the clear winner, viewed by most TV watchers as the dominant personality – to the cost of De Klerk (who was made to look sneaky for trying to use his "last word" to put down the "old man" when the latter supposedly wouldn't have been able to defend himself, and in any event not being in the same league as Mandela when it came to holding an audience in his hand).

In short, Mandela that evening established himself in the eyes of most TV-watchers across the country and abroad as the "alpha male" in the political power equation…

In my opinion it was a cardinal error to have put FW de Klerk up to attacking Nelson Mandela at the end of the first CODESA session:

- Firstly, it was not the occasion nor the platform from which to try to do it – in tone, it was supposed to have been a happy milestone event to celebrate, rather than to berate.
- Secondly, for trying to do it without knowing for certain that De Klerk actually was capable of stepping into the proverbial boxing ring with Nelson Mandela and prevail – and not understanding how grave the consequences would be, perception-wise, if he should fail (as he did).
- Thirdly, for trying to issue a prior warning and thinking it would somehow help (it was an inherently feeble gesture, like: listen, I need to be seen by my guys to slap you, but I'm giving you fair warning so that you don't mistake my gesture – I actually don't want war, just score some cheap points);
- Fourthly, because of not having beforehand confirmed (or correctly assessed) how Mandela would likely react, and on the basis there-of deciding whether to risk such confrontation or not (it was like planning your own chess moves with no regard to your opponent's countermoves).
- Fifthly, because of not confirming beforehand at least that the message had indeed reached Nelson Mandela (which left Mandela with two excellent options – to either feign not having received it but in fact having been enabled by it to prepare and have his counterattack ready to hand; or, if indeed he had not received it, to explode in righteous indignation).
- Sixth, not taking into account that the public would in any event not have known about the supposed "warning", so that they would thus believe that FW was exploiting his privilege to speak last to unfairly attack Nelson Mandela, sucker-punch style.
- Seventh, not anticipating that Nelson Mandela would be afforded the right to reply by the chairs and that he would use that to devastating effect, for all of South Africa and the world to see – without De Klerk then being in a position to respond.

- Eighth, not anticipating that Nelson Mandela would under the circumstance be able to totally wipe the floor with FW de Klerk in terms of oratorical skills, charisma, and the projection of innate strength (the alpha male up against the nerd).
- Ninth, not anticipating what a formative effect this uneven contest would have on the perceptions of the many millions of people who saw Mandela's dominance over FW de Klerk play out on TV.

Willie Esterhuyse's summation of the fiasco and its aftermath is instructive (translated from the Afrikaans): "*The meeting, as one of my NIS friends put it, 'produced a strategic catastrophe'. Under pressure from his inner circle and some advisors to provide strong leadership and prove that the NP has muscle, De Klerk launched a scathing attack on the ANC and Mandela. Mandela then does the same. Mbeki later told me that Kobie Coetsee had warned him that something confrontational could happen. However, Mbeki did not know exactly what it was about and was not directly involved in the process anyway. After this, it was difficult to get the settlement process back on track again. The construct of "the enemy" – on the one hand from the De Klerk government's perspective and on the other from the ANC's perspective – was now dominant*."

Niël Barnard summed up the consequences of the Mandela/De Klerk clash as follows, in his autobiographical account of the transition "*Peaceful Revolution*": "*Despite De Klerk's protests, the pendulum of power in the negotiations swung irrevocably that day. Mandela and his team soon became the primus inter pares of the negotiations. The moral authority shifted to the ANC…*"

### 11.3.33 JANUARY 2ND, 1992: RIGHT-WINGERS BOMB POST OFFICES AND ANOTHER SCHOOL

After their successful bomb attacks on the Hillview High School and COSATU House in Pretoria, the right-wing bomb planters had their tails up. A number of men were recruited, bombs were built, but on the designated night of 2 January 1992 most of the recruits failed to turn up, so that in the end one team headed by main bomb builder Dries Kriel pressed ahead and bombed the post offices in Centurion and Krugersdorp in short order. In Nylstroom, Gawie Volschenk bombed the Melkrivier Primary School on the same date.

### 11.3.34 JANUARY 14/15TH, 1992: SAP-SB ARREST RIGHT-WING BOMB-PLANTERS

The SAP-SB were quick to close in on the bomb-planters. Volschenk was the first to be arrested, early in January 1992. On the evening of the 14/15th of January, a person arrived at the home of Piet Judeel (who had supplied the Anfex explosives to Dries Kriel). Judeel was given a fake message that one of the top right-wing militants was waiting in the veldt, wanting to meet him (Judeel) secretly. It turned out to be an SAP-SB trap. Early the next morning Kriel was arrested at his home.

Although bombings continued on and off throughout the negotiations (as we will discuss in the next chapter, when we will deal with the right-wing threat in much more detail) the SAP-SB was effective in ensuring that it didn't get out of hand (as it could have, given the ease with which explosives could be stolen in a country like South Africa, with its extensive mining industry). For this efficiency, they were praised by Mr Mandela.

### 11.3.35 JANUARY 31ST, 1992: NIËL BARNARD IS MOVED FROM NIS TO DG OF DCDP.

With the negotiations struggling to get off the ground, it was decided to move Dr Niël Barnard (who had headed the team conducting the initial meetings with Mr Mandela in Victor Verster prison) from his position as DG of the NIS, to become the new DG of CDP (Constitutional Development and Planning), the department most directly responsible for facilitating the negotiations and supporting the NP Government team. It was clear that the NIS would still be in excellent hands (those of Barnard's brilliant deputy, Mike Louw).

Barnard took with him a number of analysts from the NIS constitutional section, as well as Maritz Spaarwater (who had partnered Mike Louw in the initial contacts with the external ANC in Switzerland) to strengthen the capacity of the CDP. (Spaarwater, for example, would become Minister Roelf Meyer's "man Friday"). Under Barnard's leadership the CDP remained in close contact with Mike Louw and the NIS, benefiting from the latter's input.

As will soon be seen, Barnard's earlier consensus with Mandela and thus the former NIS DG's clear, first-hand understanding of what was needed to get the negotiations properly going (both in terms of procedure and substance, namely a confidential bilateral channel and acceptance of majority rule) helped to salvage the talks in

August 1992 when at mid-year it had become completely stalled for months already, resulting in internal mass action and international intervention beginning to loom ever larger. A total break-down was averted thanks to reverting, process-wise, from publicly staged multi-party talks (CODESA) back to the confidential bilateral format that the NIS had pioneered and about which consensus had been reached with Mandela while he was still in prison.

However, in-between Barnard taking over as head of the CDP at the beginning of February 1992 and the talks being brought back on track in the second half of August 1992, the NP Government would face a number of very challenging (and sobering) months…

## 11.3.36 FEBRUARY 17TH,1992: NP BADLY LOSES WHITE BY-ELECTION IN POTCHEFSTROOM

The Potchefstroom constituency was traditionally an ultra-safe NP seat. However, with the disgruntlement about the way the negotiations were going that was daily becoming more evident among especially rural Afrikaners (the NP had, prior to the Potch by-election, already lost three other by-elections in a row), it had become evident well before the by-election set for 17 February 1992 that the NP may lose the seat. Accordingly, Minister Dawie de Villiers, backed by Barend du Plessis, had approached De Klerk with the proposal that – should the NP lose – then De Klerk should immediately announce a snap referendum among white voters to obtain a clear mandate for continued negotiations and thereby prevent that the right-wing Conservative Party make hay of a by-election result in their favour.

On election night it transpired that the previous 2,000 vote NP majority indeed had inverted, to a 2,000 vote CP majority in Potchefstroom. This led De Klerk to announce on 24 February, without having consulted the NP's parliamentary caucus (technically he hadn't needed to), that a whites-only referendum would be held on March the 17th, 1992.

## 11.3.37 MARCH 17TH, 1992: BIG "YES" FOR NEGOTIATIONS IN WHITES-ONLY REFERENDUM

The referendum question to which the white electorate had to respond to by ticking either "yes" or "no", was: "*Do you support the continuation of the reform process that the state president started on 2 February 1990 and which is aimed at a new constitution through negotiation?"*

The voter participation was high – 85%. The NP and the progressive Democratic Party (DP) had campaigned for "yes", while the right-wing CP and HNP had campaigned for "no".

The result was a resounding win for the "yes" side, with almost 69% of the white electorate voting in favour of the continuation of negotiations. It is estimated that 62% of Afrikaans voters voted "yes", with an even bigger percentage of English-speaking voters doing so too. The "no" vote had come mostly from rural Afrikaans voters in mostly the northern provinces. However, even in those areas the "no" vote constituted a majority in only a single constituency in the entire country.

Colin Eglin, the leader of the DP, stated that what had united voters behind the "yes" option was the realisation that: "*there's no possibility of turning back*".

## 11.3.38 APRIL 11TH, 1992: SADF AGENTS FLORES & DU RANDT ARRESTED IN LONDON

In 1989 a former commander of the SAP-SB's Vlakplaas unit, Dirk Coetzee, had fled the country and defected to the ANC, seeking their protection, when he feared that he was about to be criminally charged by the South African authorities. Coetzee's revelations were highly embarrassing, so that he became a priority target for "elimination" on the part of elements within the Securocrat orbit. In accordance with of the profoundly changed approach adopted by the De Klerk Government, the KIK (coordinating intelligence committee) had formally passed on to every department the president's clear instruction that Coetzee should not be harmed, because such retribution would create more damage in itself than it would solve anything.

Nevertheless, despite these unambiguous instructions, Military Intelligence planned to send two SADF intelligence operatives, Captain Pamela du Randt (secretary to Lt Gen Joffel van der Westhuizen, the DMI) and Leon Flores (a former policeman then working for South African military intelligence), to London the week before Easter in April

1992 under the cover of ostensibly investigating alleged links between the ANC and the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Their actual mission, however, would be to recruit and direct Ulster loyalist paramilitaries to assassinate Dirk Coetzee.

However, the NIS had got wind of this planned operation, and because its execution was contrary to clear instructions, as well as because of the damage it would surely do to relations with Britain and to the Government's image, it was decided to give the NIS's British Security Service counterparts prior warning (so as to establish the SA Government's *bona fides* in advance, demonstrating that the operation was not authorised and shouldn't be attributed by the British government to the De Klerk government).

Upon arrival at Heathrow Airport on April 11, an Ulsterman with known South African connections met the pair. Unbeknownst to them, from their landing they were under constant surveillance by the British security services, thanks to the warning the NIS had given. The Ulsterman escorted the two to The Three Kings pub in West Kensington, where they linked up with three loyalist paramilitaries. Two of those loyalists conducted reconnaissance on Coetzee's flat in Hinde Street, Marylebone, to plan the hit, which was intended to involve plastic explosives and night-vision gear.

The two Military Intelligence operatives had checked into the Royal National Hotel using their real passports. They had been allocated around US$7,000 for the operation (including an overseas travel clothing allowance for Du Randt), with Flores receiving an additional US$3,500 from Lieutenant Colonel Eugene de Kock (Coetzee's successor at Vlakplaas) specifically for the assassination plot, meaning that the SAP-SB was also implicated in the planning.

On April 15, as they prepared to depart Heathrow, Du Randt and Flores were arrested, along with the Ulsterman who had met them. They were interrogated for three or four days under the UK's Prevention of Terrorism Act but were then quickly released without charges and deported to South Africa over the Easter weekend (the NIS had sent a very senior official over, post-haste, to personally arrange that they be returned and that the matter be handled delicately, considering that prior warning had been duly given and no harm had befallen anyone – the cover story spun to the world by the British was that the original tip had come to them from an unnamed conscientious SAP officer).

The British authorities did send a protest note to President De Klerk's government, demanding a full explanation in a secret memo and expressing outrage over the involvement with Irish terrorist groups and the planned murder on British soil. Given that they had been warned by the NIS and to avoid embarrassing Mr de Klerk amid his reforms, the UK chose not to publicize the incident widely. President de Klerk of course pledged full cooperation, appointing Adv Michael Hodgen (Acting Attorney-General of the Eastern Cape) to investigate. Hodgen travelled to London in May 1992 for talks with British officials, met with Coetzee and ANC representatives, and explored broader South African security force links to Ulster loyalists. General van der Westhuizen submitted an affidavit on May 15 denying prior knowledge, though the mission had high-level authorization from military intelligence desk officers.

The SAP-SB command, when they were questioned by the NIS (which by statute chaired the KIK and had responsibility for the national coordination of intelligence activities, as well as for conducting counter-intelligence surveillance of South African government entities), also denied any knowledge. Generals Basie Smit and Krappies Engelbrecht were then confronted with incontrovertible proof, demonstrating to them (somewhat to their surprise) that the NIS was indeed well informed about what was going on within the different components of the intelligence community (it always surprised me – going way back in time to the blocked attempt to send special forces into Mozambique in 1974 and then Operation Savannah in 1975 – that it was apparently not comprehended by the other member organs of the security/intel-community that the NIS would likely possess information about such important schemes of theirs).

The London episode provided further reason for President de Klerk to feel uneasy about the willingness of elements within the SADF (especially Military Intelligence) and the SAP-SB to obey his clear instructions, as well

as about their evident lack of situational awareness. The matter also did not help relations between the NIS and their colleagues in securocrat ranks.

Unfortunate as it was, this incident would later prove to have been just a foretaste of what was to follow eight months later, in what was to become known as the “Night of the Generals” a week before Christmas 1992 (when 23 senior SADF officers were suspended), and then a year after that, when the Goldstone Commission report about Vlakplaas was published (and three SAP-SB generals – including Smit and Engelbrecht – were separated from service).

### 11.3.39 MAY 15–16TH, 1992: CODESA II CONVENES, BUT SOON DEADLOCKS AGAIN

CODESA II commenced with high public expectations but ended in complete deadlock over issues like regional autonomy, self-determination, and the constitution-making process, leading to its dissolution. The ANC and their allies walked out on 16 May 1992. What the convention ostensible failed about, was disagreement between the NP and ANC about the percentage vote that would be needed to amend pre-agreed constitutional principles in the final version of the constitution. The NP wanted that amendments would require 75% votes in favour (which showed that the NP was then already concerned that the ANC and its allies may well win significantly more than two-thirds of the vote in a non-racial election). However, the ANC was only prepared to up its initial position of 66.7% to 70%, with the added proviso that if a sufficient majority is not achieved in the future Assembly to finalise the draft constitution within six months, then a referendum should be held to approve it on the basis of a simple majority of the popular vote.

On the NP Government side, it was suspected that the ANC/SACP at that stage deliberately wanted to let the negotiations fail over the percentage issue, in order to demonstrate its negotiating power – the reality that they possessed an effective veto. The press, however, attacked the NP for its perceived blunder in persisting with the demand for a higher percentage than the ANC was prepared to accept. (The ANC/SACP was afraid that the CODESA process would leave them trapped in a practically unchangeable provisional constitution and therefore looked for a loophole to get out – i.e., the percentage issue).

With CODESA II deadlocked because a “sufficient consensus” could not be found on key matters, the entire multiparty process was dissolved, and a new format had thus to be found in which to conduct the negotiations more effectively. In the meanwhile, the ANC/SACP announced that a campaign of "rolling mass action" would begin on the 16th of June 1992. (At that stage, radicals within the ANC/SACP were favouring what they called the “Leipzig option” to force the negotiations in their preferred direction – “Leipzig” referring to the results that mass mobilisation in that city and others in Eastern Europe had achieved, in forcing the changes that had swept the erstwhile communist block in the late eighties).

Thus began a particularly difficult couple of months over the mid-year of 1992 which would bring the entire transition to the brink – but which also served as a harsh reality check for the hardliners on both sides…

### 11.3.40 JUNE 17TH, 1992: BOIPATONG MASSACRE CAUSES TALKS TO BE SUSPENDED

The “Boipatong Massacre” (Boipatong being a black township in the Vaal Triangle south of Johannesburg) involved a large group of around 200 to 300 armed men who attacked the predominantly ANC-supporting Joe Slovo informal settlement and parts of Boipatong township.

The attackers were primarily Zulu migrant workers affiliated with Inkatha (IFP) who were operating out of the nearby KwaMadala Hostel in Sebokeng. They went house-to-house, using firearms, knives, pangas (machetes), axes, and other weapons to hack, stab, shoot, and beat residents. Homes were looted, vandalized, and in some cases set alight. At least 45 people were killed, with dozens more injured or maimed. Victims included many women (at least 17), children (at least 9, including babies), and elderly people. Survivors reported attackers chanting Zulu slogans, wearing red/white headbands (common IFP identifiers), and targeting people they believed were ANC supporters. The attack lasted several hours, and the violence was extreme even by the standards of that time's township conflicts.

On the part of the attackers their actions were explained as being revenge for earlier attacks on hostel dwellers by ANC-aligned elements in the squatter settlement and township.

The ANC/SACP seized upon the tragedy to completely suspend all negotiations with the NP Government, and immediately blamed the police for allegedly being involved in the attacks as supposedly part of deliberate covert "third force" activity (although this was strenuously denied and never proven – not before the Goldstone Commission, nor in later criminal court proceedings in 1993 where-in several IFP attackers were sentenced, but the police were cleared). However, the ANC/SACP expertly exploited the horrific slaughter for propaganda purposes to which the NP Government failed to respond with any effect.

Anthea Jeffery, a researcher at the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR – no friend of Apartheid!), provided a detailed analysis of the Boipatong Massacre in her book "*People's War: New Light on the Struggle for South Africa"* (originally published in 2009). She placed the event within the broader context of the ANC's **"people's war"** strategy—a revolutionary approach inspired by the teachings of Vietnamese General Võ Nguyên Giáp, which combined violence, intimidation, and propaganda to undermine rivals and secure political dominance during South Africa's transition from Apartheid.

Jeffery argued that the massacre was transformed into a major propaganda victory for the ANC/SACP against the NP Government. ANC leaders, including Cyril Ramaphosa, immediately accused De Klerk personally of orchestrating or enabling the massacre, claiming it was timed to discredit the ANC's mass action campaign and to serve as "proof" backing government warnings that such mass protests would inevitably spark chaos. This ANC/SACP narrative portrayed the NP as pursuing a duplicitous "dual strategy": negotiating peace publicly while allegedly waging a covert war via security forces and IFP proxies in order to cling to power. She noted that the ANC even withheld witnesses from inquiries, like Eugenius Mnqithi, whose testimony contradicted their claims (in that he denied police or white involvement and identified only IFP perpetrators).

In final analysis, Jeffery concluded that the ANC's propaganda success at Boipatong helped further erode the NP Government's credibility, both domestically and internationally. She believes that this helped force De Klerk into concessions during the negotiations (when it continued – such as the Record of Understanding signed in September 1992). Boipatong was used as further justification for the ANC's withdrawal from talks. The emotional tone and impact of the propaganda helped intensify the "rolling mass action" and positioned the ANC/SACP as morally superior, accelerating their path to power while deflecting scrutiny from their own contributions to the escalating violence of the early 1990s.

The propaganda victory constructed upon the Boipatong tragedy, in her analysis, exemplified how the ANC/SACP in their "people's war" successfully used misinformation and victimhood narratives to outmanoeuvre the NP Government and IFP, shaping public memory of the transition in ways that persist to this day.

### 11.3.41 JUNE 26TH, 1992: MANDELA SENDS DE KLERK A MEMORANDUM OUTLINING ANC DEMANDS

Following upon the collapse of the CODESA process and the Boipatong tragedy, Nelson Mandela sent FW de Klerk a memorandum on the 26th of June 1992. In it he outlined ANC/SACP demands and concerns, particularly regarding violence, hostels (used as bases for attacks), and creating conditions for resumed negotiations.

The memorandum listed specific measures which the ANC/SACP insisted the government needed to take, including:

- **Control of hostels**: Immediate fencing or removal of certain single-sex worker hostels (often associated with IFP-aligned violence against ANC supporters).
- **Banning of dangerous weapons**: Prohibition of "cultural weapons" (e.g., spears, knobkerries) used in attacks.
- **Impartiality of security forces**: Ensuring police and security forces acted neutrally, with prosecution of members implicated in violence or misconduct.
- **Release of political prisoners and return of exiles**: Accelerating releases and repatriations.

- **International involvement**: Establishing an international commission of inquiry into the Boipatong massacre and broader violence, plus international monitoring/peacekeeping observers.
- **Other measures**: Curbs on state-sponsored or third-force elements, and actions to prevent further massacres or intimidation.

An annexure was attached to the memorandum, which elaborated on these points and sought to justify the ANC/SACP's suspension of talks.

### 11.3.42 JULY 2ND, 1992: DE KLERK REPLIES TO MANDELA, WARNS ANC AGAINST TRYING TO OVERTHROW STATE BY FORCE

FW de Klerk replied to Nelson Mandela's memorandum on 2 July 1992 and warned that: "*Our information indicates that the SACP & COSATU have played a significant role in the ANC's change of course from negotiations to the politics of demands and confrontation, typical of mass mobilisation. Insurrectionary thinking is currently flourishing in the ANC... The declared ultimate aim of the ANC's mass action is to overthrow the government by force. This will not be tolerated*." Nevertheless, De Klerk invited Mandela to face-to-face talks to try and find a solution so that negotiations could proceed.

The letter was accompanied by six attachments, marked A to F. "A" was an analysis entitled: "*Current influence of Marxism-Leninism within the ANC*." Attachment "F" was a memorandum drawn up mostly by Potchefstroom University Constitutional Law expert Fanie Venter (then contracted to the CDP) which was entitled: "*Government Proposals Regarding a Transitional Constitution for South Africa*".

This document "F" marked a significant departure from the previously held NP Government stance favouring power sharing based on group rights. It proposed that there be a "constitutional state" in which the constitution is supreme, applied by an independent judiciary. This new focus on a "constitutional state" (*regstaat*) and the protection of individual rather than group rights was later identified by Roeld Meyer as having been in his estimation the most critical moment in the entire negotiation process, signalling the "paradigm shift" on the part of the NP Government that he credited with saving the negotiations and having made the reaching of a peace settlement possible.

The crisis brought about by the collapsed talks and the unbridled political violence (and the negative perceptions that these created locally and abroad) began to detrimentally affect the economy.

### 11.3.43 JULY 9TH, 1992: MANDELA RESPONDS TO DE KLERK, REBUFFS TALKS UNTIL CONDITIONS ARE MET

Mandela's letter a week later in reply to De Klerk's was firm in tone, critical, and accusatory. It rejected De Klerk's response as "inadequate" and "evasive" and expressed deep disappointment.

The letter rebuffed De Klerk's invitation for immediate face-to-face talks unless the ANC/SACP's underlying grievances (especially regarding violence and security force impartiality) were addressed first. This reflected the ANC's " Preconditions" stance at the time.

Formal negotiations remained suspended for months afterward.

### 11.3.44 JULY 16TH,1992: UN SECURITY COUNCIL ADOPTS RES 765 AND SENDS SPECIAL ENVOY

In the light of the worsening security situation in South Africa and the worrying deadlock in negotiations, as well as in response to ANC/SACP efforts to involve the international community (which the NP Government dearly wished to avoid) the UN Security Council on 16 July 1992 adopted Resolution 765/1992 in terms of which the former U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance was designated as special envoy to urgently investigate the situation in South Africa and report back to the Security Council.

This development was a source of considerable concern to the NP Government (not because of the choice of Vance, but because of what it may portent in terms of possible escalated future international intervention).

Vance set to his task without delay, and his report informed the subsequent UN Security Council Resolution 772 of 17 August 1992.

## 11.3.45 JULY 1992: MONT FLEUR "FOUR FLIGHT" ECONOMIC SCENARIOS PUBLISHED

The business community was understandably concerned about the lack of progress in the negotiations, as well as about the future economic policies of a non-racial, democratic South Africa (it will be recalled that the initial Government procedural concept for the conduct of negotiations provided only for participation by political parties, without any forums at the time being created to focus on critical economic and civil society issues, nor initially for a peace accord).

In July 1992 a newspaper insert and video were published countrywide, designed to inform and influence public discourse and policy on the economy (e.g., warning against populist excess and helping to steer the ANC/SACP toward more pragmatic economics). This became known as the "four flight" scenarios, or the Mont Fleur Scenarios, developed during a series of workshops in 1991–1992 by a diverse group of 22 South Africans (including politicians, activists, academics, and business leaders from across the ideological spectrum).

The project, facilitated by the University of the Western Cape and others, aimed to stimulate debate on South Africa's future from 1992–2002 amid the deep political and economic crisis. Derek Keys (then Minister of Finance) and Trevor Manuel (a key ANC economic figure) were involved – Keys had shared a confidential economic briefing with the group during one workshop, which influenced discussions on fiscal realism, while Manuel was part of the team that helped shape the ANC's evolving economic thinking toward sustainable policies.

The scenarios used bird metaphors to illustrate potential paths for the transition and economic policy, highlighting risks and identifying a preferred outcome:

- **Ostrich**: A negotiated settlement is not achieved, and the (non-representative) white-minority government "sticks its head in the sand," avoiding real engagement with opponents like the ANC. This leads to prolonged conflict, international isolation, economic stagnation, and eventual collapse, as local resources without allies prove insufficient to sustain the regime.
- **Lame Duck**: A settlement is reached, but the transition is slow, indecisive, and hampered by a weak coalition government (such as a Government of National Unity, but with vetoes and restrictions). It purports to satisfy all parties but delivers little, leading to frustration, instability, and failure to address key issues like growth and inequality—ultimately unsustainable.
- **Icarus**: A rapid transition occurs, with a new (black majority) government coming to power on a wave of popular support. However, it pursues unsustainable populist economic policies, such as massive public spending without fiscal discipline, leading to economic overheating, inflation, debt crisis, and a crash (like Icarus flying too close to the sun).
- **Flight of the Flamingos**: The positive scenario, where the transition succeeds through inclusive, sustainable policies. All societal "building blocks" are put in place—representative democracy, market-oriented economy with global access, fiscal and monetary discipline, and gradual improvements in living standards. Everyone rises slowly and together, like a flock of flamingos taking off, fostering long-term growth and stability.

Two things were becoming clearer regarding the business community: they were increasingly worried about the deteriorating state of the economy; and they were beginning to believe that they would be able to do business with an ANC government.

## 11.3.46 JULY 23RD, 1992: U.S. ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AFRICA HANK COHEN INSISTS ON MAJORITY RULE

On the 23rd of July 1992 the United States Government made a key declaration in favour of a new dispensation for South Africa based squarely on majority rule. This clear position taken by a Republican administration at the head of the most key of the world powers that traditionally had been at least somewhat protective of white South Africa, came as an unequivocal signal to the NP Government that its negotiation options were very limited indeed,

if it wished to avoid being blamed for a break-down of the transition process and wanted to head off a return to the international pressure that had been applied to it before FW de Klerk's 2 February 1990 speech…

In Congressional testimony Hank Cohen had stated: "*All sides must recognize the right of the majority to govern... No side could insist on overly complicated arrangements designed to ensure power-sharing with certain groups that would frustrate effective government. Minorities have the right to protection; they cannot, however, expect a veto.*"

At the time, the multi-party talks were stalled precisely over disagreements on power-sharing mechanisms. The NP Government sought to constitutionally entrench minority vetoes and establish federal structures to protect white interests, while the ANC/SACP insisted on unqualified majority rule, in their view being essential for enabling effective governance.

Cohen's declaration reflected U.S. policy under President George H.W. Bush, which increasingly favoured the ANC's position (motivated by the USA's internal politics and by a wish to avert the kind of prolonged instability that the NP Government digging its heels in could lead to). Cohen's words signalled that complex constitutional arrangements based on minority group rights and thus risking gridlock or *de facto* vetoes were unacceptable.

This clear stance on the part of the USA (which was similar to that adopted by the UK, as articulated by its ambassador Robin Renwick: '*We will support the protection of minority rights, but not a blocking minority where white people can scupper all kinds of legislation on their own*') would pressure the NP to compromise further, contributing to breakthroughs in subsequent rounds of talks which began to focus on balancing majority rule by means of a Bill of Rights (for individuals, not groups).

### 11.3.47 JULY 23-24TH, 1992: CABINET "BOSBERAAD" FOCUSED ON EXPEDITING NEGOTIATIONS

The main issue discussed at the NP Government's 1992 winter "bush summit" was the "expedition of the negotiation process" (according to Kobie Coetsee's documentation). The secluded meeting of FW de Klerk's full Cabinet, held on 23 and 24 July 1992, came during one of the most strained periods in South Africa's transition negotiations, due to the collapse of the CODESA process, the fall-out from the Boipatong tragedy, the ANC/SACP's launch of rolling mass action, and Hank Cohen's declaration (with the latter coming amidst the bosberaad itself).

The discussions served as a pivotal reality check for the NP Government, with the "bosberaad" participants comprehending that they had to re-assess the government's existing strategy. Accordingly, the meeting focused on ways and means of getting negotiations back on track asap and expediting the transition towards a democratic settlement.

Key elements discussed boiled down to weighing the urgency of resuming talks versus the political risks of making the kind of concessions that a resumption would require. The NP had to balance demands from conservative NP factions (who feared that majority rule equated to the loss of safeguards for white/minority interests) with the need to prevent total breakdown or escalation into a race war, whilst also being cognisant of the risk of alienating the international community plus the threat of a right-wing coup. They had to find ways to address ANC preconditions on violence and security without appearing to capitulate fully. All of this obliged a re-evaluation of the NP Government's prior constitutional vision (e.g., power-sharing, federal elements) in the light of the deadlock at CODESA II, and the format in which the negotiations needed to proceed, process-wise.

The brainstorming sessions reflected internal recognition that stalling or confrontation would be unsustainable (due to the lack of a viable fall-back option), so that De Klerk's team knew they needed to find a path forward, despite the conservative resistance that could be foreseen. The Cabinet was caught between continuing to prioritise core NP policy positions on the one hand, and on the other, accepting the inevitable need for policy adjustment. Such reformulation of policy positions was needed for the sake of bringing these better in line with fundamental interests, and was recognised to be a prerequisite for making quicker progress in the negotiations. The NP Government knew that the talks had to regain momentum and maintain international credibility, warding

off the possibility of collapse and all the negatives that that would result in (in terms of renewed international and local pressure, violence, and harm to the economy).

The bush summit did not produce immediate publicly announced breakthroughs. However, it did help De Klerk's inner circle to comprehend the urgent need for, and refine more realistic positions. It contributed to De Klerk's eventual willingness to engage more flexibly via confidential back-channel contacts (in other words, going back to the format that Mandela and Barnard had reached consensus on during their prison meetings).

### 11.3.48 AUGUST 17TH, 1992: UN SECURITY COUNCIL ADOPTS RES 772, SENDS UNOMSA

The United Nations Security Council's Resolution 772/1992 was adopted unanimously on 17 August 1992. It built on the earlier Resolution 765 of 16 July 1992, which had requested the Secretary-General to undertake urgent consultations and consider measures to address the violence threatening the negotiation process, and in terms of which Cyrus Vance had been appointed as special envoy.

The resolution expressed deep concern over the ongoing violence and its threat to the peaceful transition to democracy and welcomed the Secretary-General's report (following his special envoy Cyrus Vance's mission to South Africa) on the situation, which concluded that there was an urgent need for international support for the process.

The resolution accordingly authorized the Secretary-General to deploy, as a matter of urgency, a United Nations observer mission to South Africa. These were to be sent in such numbers and manner as he deemed necessary to help address the concerns identified in his report (which resulted in 50 observers being sent in short order, with some 3,000 observers eventually sent to monitor the actual elections).

Resolution 772 specified that the observers, led by the senior Jamaican diplomat Angela King and headquartered in Johannesburg, would operate in coordination with the structures established under the 1991 National Peace Accord. It called on the South African government, political parties, organizations, and all National Peace Accord structures to fully cooperate with the UN observers and extend their fullest support. It was emphasized that the UN observer mission was part of preventive diplomacy to support the efforts of South Africans to end violence and resume negotiations. The Security Council requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council quarterly (or more frequently if needed) on the implementation and effectiveness of the deployment.

The deployment of this observer mission constituted definitive UN involvement in monitoring violence inside South Africa, but (as yet) without a full peacekeeping force. This concrete step by the UN to involve itself significantly in South Africa's internal transition signalled unambiguously to the NP Government that the UN regarded the transition to a non-racial democracy not as a strictly internal South African matter; that it reserved for itself the right to intervene as it saw fit, and that further escalation leading to the deployment of UN forces was a distinct possibility if the situation deteriorated to the point that the Security Council felt such a step necessary and justified.

Willie Esterhuyse subsequently wrote that the UNSC's adoption of Resolution 772 was "*a great victory for the ANC's strategy of undermining international support for the De Klerk Government*".

If there was one thing that the NP Government had desired to keep to an absolute minimum, then that was international interference in the negotiation process (because of the obviously valid assumption that such intervention would serve to benefit the ANC). The flip-side of the coin was that ANC/SACP in equal measure wished for the negotiations to be conducted between itself and the NP Government, bilaterally (as recognition of the ANC/SACP's standing and to avoid that the NP could assemble – in a Turnhalle-like multiparty forum – an alliance of lesser parties against it).

Consequently, the "deal" that Nelson Mandela and Niël Barnard had reached consensus on while the former was still imprisoned, was that the Government would accept that the negotiations be conducted bilaterally between itself and the ANC, and the ANC would in turn accept that the process would be an internal South African one (i.e., unlike the Zimbabwean and Namibian talks, which were internationally supervised/facilitated). Both Mandela and

Barnard had also agreed that the only realistic way in which such bilateral negotiations could efficiently be conducted, would be confidentially.

When De Klerk had taken over as head of state (with the declared goal that in future politicians would again be the main actors and decision-makers in all political matters – such as the negotiations – and not the security/intel-community as pertained under PW Botha) the consensus earlier reached by Mandela and Barnard was set aside by the NP, in favour of public negotiations in a multilateral format between representatives of political parties. With the collapse of CODESA and the increasing pressure under which the NP Government found itself, it had become clear that that multilateral, public format had been a recipe for disaster.

The watershed "reality check" that the events of the (southern) winter of 1992 undoubtedly constituted for the NP Government, would – fortunately – soon see a resumption of negotiations between the ANC/SACP and the Government. This time, on a much more appropriate procedural footing, in terms of a bilateral confidential format. The negotiations would henceforth also be conducted by respective teams of competent career experts who would develop solutions confidentially through bilaterally working together intensively, with the drafts they produced then presented upwards to political principals for approval.

This new, confidential bilateral format became known among its participants as "the **Channel Bilateral**". To retain some semblance of broad inclusivity the CODESA forum was replaced by the "Multi-Party Negotiation Forum" (MPNF), but with the only real function of the latter being to rubber-stamp the consensus positions that the ANC and NP had bilaterally agreed beforehand.

This new process came into effect when Cyril Ramaphosa and Roelf Meyer resumed talking.

### 11.3.49 AUGUST 21ST, 1992: RAMAPHOSA & MEYER TALK, ESTABLISH "CHANNEL BILATERAL"

Roelf Meyer had been appointed minister of constitutional development in the May 1992 cabinet reshuffle, when his predecessor Dr Gerrit Viljoen had retired because of health concerns. In that capacity, Meyer became the chief negotiator at political level for the NP Government. According to Maritz Spaarwater (who had been appointed as Minister Roelf Meyer's assistant): "*Within minutes of the ANC storming out of the negotiations in reaction to Boipatong with scathing denunciations of the government, Cyril Ramaphosa phoned Roelf Meyer and said simply: 'Can we talk?' In August 1992, it was agreed between the ANC and the government that they would constitute what became known as the 'channel bilateral' for quiet continuation of dialogue out of the limelight*."

Whilst Spaarwater stating that Ramaphosa had phoned "within minutes" is obvious hyperbole, it is said by many who were in the know that a number of conversations were held between the two (some mention as many as forty in the space of two months). The first confidential face-to-face contact is said to have resumed between Meyer and Ramaphosa on the campus of the NIS's National Intelligence Academy, located on "The Farm" to the east of Pretoria. At the time of the contact between Meyer and Ramaphosa, Mac Maharaj had also reached out to Fanie van der Merwe with the request that contact not be lost.

It is well known that the ANC/SACP at the time was divided between those who favoured a negotiated settlement (such as Thabo Mbeki), and hardliners who had put their faith in rolling mass action in Leipzig-style. It was also a well-known negotiation tactic of organisations such as the ANC/SACP to adopt a certain posture in public, but then do something quite different in private – despite the "break-off" and demands for preconditions to be met, the ANC/SACP clearly didn't want to abandon all contact with the NP Government.

The historian Hermann Giliomee wrote about this period that: "*From mid-May to mid-September, there were numerous secret meetings between representatives of the ANC and the government in what became known as 'The Channel'. On Meyer's side were SS (Fanie) van der Merwe, a senior official of constitutional development, and Niel Barnard of the NIS (sic). Sometimes Dawie de Villiers and Leon Wessels joined the government team. Jan Heunis, a legal advisor, was also often present. On the ANC side was Cyril Ramaphosa, assisted by Joe Slovo and Mac Maharaj... Mandela and De Klerk, the two so-called principals, were fully informed about these meetings. The key question that the people on both sides of The Channel had to ask themselves was: 'Do we want to start fighting all over again?' It was a tense time that required cool heads and strong nerves…*"

Willie Esterhuyse wrote about this delicate phase that played out over the winter of 1992 that: "*Roelf Meyer becomes the decisive person in the process that unfolds. Someone from the NIS tells me that he is 'converted' from all ideas about group rights and group protection. The path that must be taken is majority rule in a unitary state with a constitution that protects individual, cultural and other rights*".

So, how did Meyer see his task? What were the principles that he was committed to? According to Giliomee: "*He declared that as chief negotiator he was 'determined to have nothing to do with the variety of unrealistic tricks and gimmicks that some on our side still considered viable options'. He added: 'Loaded majorities, rotating presidencies, peculiar protection mechanisms for (white) minorities, and so on, simply would not have brought the stability that a new constitution was supposed to ensure – apart from the fact that it would have no chance of being accepted by other parties.' Meyer continued: 'A truly democratic system, based on individual human rights and with all the necessary built-in checks and balances to ensure the separation of state powers, was, as far as I was concerned, the only option. And we had to accept the consequences of such a dispensation. It was not always easy to sell the concept to my colleagues.*'

The conclusion to which Roelf Meyer had come was, in other words, the same one that Mandela and Barnard had arrived at and reached consensus about already four years earlier during the prison talks – namely, that the new constitutional dispensation had to be based on majority rule in a non-racial unitary state…

As regards the format in which the talks had to be conducted going forward, there was also now consensus on that earlier Mandela – Barnard consensus on procedure; namely, that the talks needed to be held bilaterally, confidentially. Via "The Channel". Suffice it to say here that the new format was a huge improvement on the chaotic internal structures that the NP Government had initially created for itself – to quote Niël Barnard: *"Talk about Greek! That is certainly what an outsider to the Government's negotiating structures would think. There is an 'AK11' reporting to the 'KGO' which replaced the 'BGO' and reporting to the 'BGH' which refers policy matters to the 'UK', while on a sideline there are the 'WVVS' and 'VIK' which, with their own agenda, mess up all coordination – and the Cabinet, in theory, supervises all of this."*

Even Maritz Spaarwater, who had actually served on the support staff of the BGH (Afrikaans acronym for the Cabinet's "Policy Group on Reform" – Beleidsgroep vir Hervorming) was afterwards uncertain about how this BGH related to the KGO ("Core Group on Negotiations" – Kerngroep vir Onderhandelings), writing: "*I am uncertain whether this is the same committee referred to in some documentation as the Cabinet Committee for Negotiation, but a distinction between the two would anyway have little meaning as they were sure to have had largely overlapping purposes and membership.*"

The new procedural format ("The Channel Bilateral") can be briefly outlined as follows, to assist understanding of how the peace negotiations had in practice proceeded from this point on:

**The Principals**
**(FW de Klerk & Nelson Mandela)**

Ultimate decision-makers, stepping in for final sign-off or crisis resolution

**The Channel**
**(Roelf Meyer & Cyril Ramaphosa)**

The political link and gatekeepers between the principals above, and the working structures below, with the latter producing and presenting to Meyer and Ramaphosa the needed drafts for consideration

**The Extended Channel / Working groups**

The technical/policy layer, debating details and formulating principles for upward referral. This mirrored the earlier CODESA working groups but now continued/reformed in the bilateral context.

**The Problem Solvers**
**(Fanie van der Merwe & Mac Maharaj)**

Critical troubleshooters for stuck issues at working levels.

**The Persuaders / "Fire brigade"**
**(Niël Barnard and Joe Slovo)**
Tasked with managing radicals – respectively keeping far-right and far-left hardliners in check.

**The Drafters**
The legal craftsmen (e.g., Jan Heunis and Fanie Venter on government side; Fink Haysom, Arthur Chaskalson on ANC side) who translated agreed principles into draft instruments like the Transitional Executive Council (TEC) legislation and the Interim Constitution.

In any event, the new approach to both the procedural and the substantive side of the negotiations had fortunately begun to pay real dividends, resulting from the intensive contact between the Meyer and Ramaphosa teams – in the nick of time, because 1992 was about to deliver another shock…

## 11.3.50 SEPTEMBER 7TH, 1992: BISHO MASSACRE WORSENS TENSIONS, HEIGHTENS PRESSURE

The litmus test for the belief among hardliners in the ANC/SACP that they could significantly increase their leverage at the negotiation table via their so-called "Leipzig option" of rolling mass action (targeted at taking over the homelands of Ciskei, KwaZulu and Bophuthatswana), came on 7 September 1992. Some 80,000 ANC militants, accompanied by Ramaphosa and Kasrils, advanced from King William's Town to the neighbouring Ciskei capital of Bisho, intent on occupying key government buildings. Soldiers of the Ciskei Defence Force however opened lethal fire before those who were storming the buildings could reach their objectives, killing 28 ANC supporters and wounding more than 200 others, causing the crowd to immediately abandon their assault and scurry back to safety.

The high casualty toll shocked both sides, highlighting the risk of uncontrollable escalation inherent in deliberate confrontation. It discredited the hard-liners' push for aggressive mass action, as the high number of deaths and injuries demonstrated the potential for such strategies to backfire disastrously. Within weeks, the ANC leadership consulted its National Executive Committee (NEC) and decided to de-emphasize mass action and again prioritise negotiations.

According to the historian Hermann Giliomee, the leader of the DP, Colin Eglin, had told Nelson Mandela that "*it was one thing for the ANC to unite its supporters through mass action, but quite another thing to try to overthrow the state by such means. Mandela replied that rebellion was never the aim. There was growing concern about the huge losses that businesses were suffering as a result of the ongoing unrest. The resumption of negotiations became an urgent priority for both Mandela and De Klerk. Bisho forced the parties back to the negotiating table*".

Niël Barnard echoed this view: "*Paradoxical as it may sound, the tragedy at Bisho contributed to getting the negotiation process back on track. Within the ANC's inner circle, the pendulum swung back towards the negotiation option…"* In Barnard's view, the Bisho tragedy had forcibly brought home to the ANC the risks inherent in revolutionary action, especially if they should try and take on bastions of conservative sentiment such as the homelands which they had targeted for take-over. Barnard illustrated that this realisation had sunk in with a quote regarding a conversation he had with Jacob Zuma: *"When I teased Jacob Zuma a few days after the Bisho events with the remark that I had heard he was going to lead a mass attack on Ulundi, he swore like a sailor and summed up the likely consequences: 'Ulundi is not Bisho. No marcher would have left that valley alive'.*"

## 11.3.51 MID-SEPTEMBER, 1992: MANDELA AND DE KLERK MAKE CONCILIATORY MOVES

On 14 September 1992 Nelson Mandela made an important statement: "*We want to end the deadlock, because if we don't do this, I fear the economy will be destroyed and when a democratic government comes to power it will no longer be able to restore it. The longer it takes to establish a democracy, the more difficult it will be to restore the economy*".

Derek Keys and Trevor Manuel had together played a central role in bringing about realism about the poor state of the economy and thus the need for the negotiations to resume and rapidly progress in order to avert collapse,

as well as about the need for realistic future configuration of economic policy (as illustrated with the "four flight" scenarios mentioned earlier).

On 16 September 1992 FW de Klerk wrote to Nelson Mandela in much more conciliatory tone than their earlier correspondence, to endorse the ongoing informal bilateral discussions between Roelf Meyer and Cyril Ramaphosa mentioned above. These discussions were *i.a.* aimed at arranging a summit between Mandela and De Klerk (scheduled for 26 September 1992), where it was intended that a bilateral Record of Understanding be signed by the ANC/SACP and the NP Government that would revive the negotiations and publicly put it on a new track – in terms of both agreed procedural format and content substance.

## 11.3.52 SEPTEMBER 24TH, 1992: CABINET AGREES TO ACCEPT A COMPROMISE CONSTITUTIONAL FORMULA

The De Klerk team's new thinking on a "constitutional state" (as embodied in Prof Fanie Venter's memorandum that had been attached as Annexure "F" to De Klerk's 2nd of July letter to Mandela) was put to cabinet on 24 September 1992. Kobie Coetsee later told Padraig O'Malley that FW had announced "out of the blue", without having consulted the NP caucus beforehand, that the Government now accepted that the final constitution will be written by an elected new parliament, based on a non-racial election to be held under an interim constitution that would include an entrenched charter of human rights and constitutional principles, which principles then had to be included in the final constitution.

## 11.3.53 SEPTEMBER 26TH, 1992: A "RECORD OF UNDERSTANDING" IS SIGNED BETWEEN THE NP AND ANC

The understanding reached between the NP Government and the ANC/SACP on core constitutional principles flowed from the intensive confidential discussions held the previous two months between the teams headed respectively by Roelf Meyer and Cyril Ramaphosa. The formal record of that understanding (the "RoU") was signed on 26 September 1992. It publicly confirmed the government's acceptance of a transition framework consisting of a democratically elected non-racial new parliament (sitting also as a sovereign constitutional assembly) which would draft and adopt the final constitution. Preceding this, there would be non-racial elections held under an interim constitution passed by the existing tricameral parliament, based on a draft negotiated bilaterally between the NP Government and the ANC/SACP, and then approved by a multi-party forum.

The drafters of the final constitution would be bound by the interim constitution's entrenched constitutional principles and charter of individual human rights, to ensure protections for minorities (as individual humans) and thereby prevent majoritarian overreach.

Niël Barnard's recollections as recorded in the 2nd part of his autobiography gives a very clear view of the run-up to the signing on 26 September 1992 of the RoU (which unblocked the deadlock and brought the negotiations onto a fast track) as well as of the happenings on that critically important day in the negotiations/transition. Its key segments are presented here, as translated from the Afrikaans. His first observations were about something that had exasperated Barnard through-out, namely the manner in which the NP's top leadership arrived at decisions of key importance:

*"If one wondered how Pres. De Klerk dealt with one of the cardinal moments of the negotiations, he himself provides the answer in his autobiography. 'I held a quick planning session with my delegation before the meeting.'*

*…This remark by De Klerk confirms the impression that he did not adequately judge the moments of great strategic importance. His team could not have been well prepared if they had 'quickly' devised plans before the meeting."*

Barnard then went on to describe the import and intensity of the days leading up to the signing of the RoU:

*"Never during the 1 500 days of negotiations were negotiations as intense as during the little more than a month from 21 August up to 26 September 1992, when the Record of Understanding was signed. In all respects, this was the high point of the negotiations. Countless times the "Channel" came together and wrestled with each other over an understanding on how to resume the negotiation process… Meyer and Ramaphosa were the main players in*

*this drama. However, the donkey work was excellently done by Fanie van der Merwe and Mac Maharaj who endlessly formulated, reformulated and again formulated as the memorandum that served as the base document went through one draft after another.*

*"The first substantial part of the memorandum dealt with constitutional matters on which there was general agreement, for example the basic principles of democracy as embodied in a constitutional state. The envisaged role of the fixed constitutional principles was also accepted, which the Government had supported so as to establish a democracy and curb the revolutionaries in the SACP. In this respect, the Record of Understanding is a victory for democratic order and justice, the value of which is not always sufficiently appreciated. The second substantial part of the RoU dealt with the so-called levelling of the political playing field (at the behest of the ANC). That 'levelling' was the motive was only partly true, because it was apparently also included in response to the demands of ANC radicals, to show them that the ANC negotiators could force the Government to make concessions (the key sticking point here was the release of persons convicted for heinous crimes, such as the killing of civilians by means of planting bombs in crowded places).*

*"On 26 September 1992, De Klerk and Mandela, together with their chief negotiators, met at the World Trade Centre in Kempton Park to finalise and then sign the proposed document. After De Klerk and Mandela opened this closed meeting with introductory speeches, there were unnecessary and sometimes acrimonious exchanges between the delegates… At one point, De Klerk and Mandela left the meeting and met privately to discuss the outstanding issues, namely that of mass action and its disruptive consequences and probably also the release of political prisoners. No one except these two knows exactly what happened during the conversation, but it is a fact that De Klerk in short order conceded to Mandela's demands. This appeared to finally and decisively strengthen the ANC's leading position in the negotiations... The tragic truth is that De Klerk was already a lonely figure when he signed the RoU. When a strong position had to be taken by the Government, his ministers left him alone in the crossfire…*

*"Parts of the media and local and international public opinion had already shifted decisively in favour of the ANC. It was therefore no longer only the ANC that had to be convinced of the merits of the Government's position on key issues. However, it is a gross misunderstanding on the part of the general public to view the Record of Understanding as a victory for the ANC. Objectively seen, the agreement brought the ANC from its almost reckless confrontational path to responsible engagement, thus back on the path of constitutional negotiation politics. The fundamental constitutional issues to which the ANC agreed were largely the embodiment of the Government's positions. History will hopefully acknowledge the statesmanship of the Government, which was mature and wise enough to offer the ANC an honourable and credible escape route from the radical corner into which it had painted itself".*

In Barnard's view the issues on which the NP Government (and De Klerk in his one-on-one with Mandela) did make concessions were of marginal importance to the eventual constitutional deal: "*It cannot be denied that the issues of hostels, traditional weapons and mass action were little more than tactical negotiating levers that had at most a marginal influence on the actual course of the settlement process*".

Hermann Giliomee wrote about the RoU that: "*The Record of Understanding was the turning point in the negotiations… (it) meant three things. Firstly, the ANC would return to the negotiating table – but on its own terms. Secondly, the Memorandum destroyed the alliance between the NP and Inkatha. And thirdly, the NP's role shrank to that of a junior partner… In the meantime, support for De Klerk as a leader had fallen from 60% in March 1991 to below 40% in November 1992. Support for the NP, which had been around 40% in July 1992, had plummeted to 20% by March 1993. Black support for the NP had fallen from 8% in 1990 to just 2% by the end of 1992. In contrast, more and more black people were throwing their weight behind the ANC. In the election, the movement would receive more than 80% of the black vote*".

As a result of what the IFP saw in the RoU (namely that the NP Government had succumbed to the ANC/SACP pressure for the two of them to bilaterally decide the country's constitutional future, thus excluding the likes of the IFP), the IFP withdrew from the negotiation process. The white right had come to the same conclusion and also withdrew from the process. As will be seen below, as a direct result of the RoU these conservative forces united in what was known as COSAG (the Concerned South Africans Group).

In analysing the RoU it is evident that Barnard was right in saying that the concessions on prisoners and the like that dominated the media coverage of the RoU were in fact peripheral, and that the ANC/SACP – given their pre-1990 ambitions for a Marxist people's republic – had in reality made much larger "concessions" regarding the fundamental constitutional issues than the NP had (which, incidentally, were arguments that De Klerk also had offered in his autobiography). The difference, though, is that the ANC/SACP had very early on made a correct assessment of what would be attainable and what not. So that they had entered the negotiations with their earlier Marxist people's republic ideas already abandoned, favouring instead a Western-style democratic system replete with free-market capitalism.

The NP under De Klerk had also formally abandoned their long-standing policy preference of Apartheid but then had not immediately substituted it with what they eventually had to accept as inevitable, namely majority rule in a non-racial unitary state. Instead, they first proposed a "group rights" based dispensation (which other parties saw as Apartheid by another name); then, when "group rights" didn't fly, they suggested "power sharing", and only when that didn't elicit consensus support either, they begrudgingly accepted majority rule – but seemed to have needed to be dragged to that, which is why they were perceived to be continuously bending under pressure. (Which illustrates the need for proper SWOT-style analysis and strategic planning at the outset of negotiations, so that you do not adopt untenable positions at the start, that you will inevitably need to abandon and then be seen to have been weak).

It must also be admitted that the ANC/SACP became quite good at reading their opponents. The ANC understood what these politicians needed in terms of "optics", in order for them to be able to sell to their constituents, positions that the ANC/SACP favoured. In other words, the ANC/SACP were good at providing their opponents with "fig leaves". They understood that the NP needed to put their supporters at rest with concepts such as a "*regstaat*" (constitutional state) and a charter of individual rights (as notional substitutes for "group rights" and "power sharing"). Also, as we shall soon see, the "sunset clause" with which to calm the NP Government's large civil servant constituency. Similarly, the ANC would (late in the negotiations) offer the IFP and the Afrikaner Right constitutional amendments as fig leaves that would (again in terms of optics rather than substance) allow them to justify to their troops their participation in the elections – respectively the ensconced position of the Zulu king and the KwaZulu-Natal name change for the IFP, and the *Volkstaatraad* for the AVF of General Constand Viljoen.

What one also notices (in the case of the RoU, but also later with regard to the interim constitution) is the amount of effort that was focused on the legal-technical drafting of documentation, searching compromise formulations that would be "sellable" by both sides, and which would sound good to the media and international observers. This is understandable, both in terms of the politics of that moment and the need of the members of the negotiation team to come up with tangible results, duly documented – and, in such situations, it is typically the lawyers who are made to sit down and do the drafting of the documents needed, searching for mellifluous compromise phraseology that would not aggravate either side.

The process thus to a large extent became an exercise in mixing legal theory with political cosmetics – with, apparently, far less time, intellectual effort, and academic expertise invested in analysing and understanding what these high-sounding phrases would lead to in actual, real-world terms once the end product of the legal drafting needs to be implemented as practical politics. My own sense of it (as myself being lawyer + political scientist + intelligence analyst) is that the legal-technical expertise absolutely had needed to be supplemented by expertise in structural-functional analysis and human political behaviour, to accurately anticipate what these mellifluous formulations would in practice lead to once ingenious future politicians start looking for escapes from the supposed guardrails.

Today one of the big reasons for the buyer's remorse on both sides, is that people feel that the pretty paperwork has not lived up to the hype at the time, because of not being able to withstand to the real-world tests of devious practical politics and therefore not meeting the public's expectations…

In final analysis of the RoU moment, the real question that needs to be asked is: what would likely have happened, had the NP Government taken a more hardline approach and steadfastly insisted (during the talks that culminated in the RoU) that the ANC/SACP must accept formalized power sharing, or else there would be no deal? I agree

with Giliomee's opinion in this regard, where he said that this could have led to two possible scenarios playing out, which he described as follows: "*One is that the ANC might have realised that its supporters had grown weary of the disruptions and the loss of wages and less inclined to mass action. The ANC could have returned to the negotiations divided and much weaker. The other scenario is one in which the government took a much more intransigent stance and declared a state of emergency* (i.e., to stop the rolling mass action and stand fast on power sharing)*. The world would have hit back hard, the economy would have collapsed, and the NP would have been in a much weaker position. T**he second scenario seems the most likely***".

It seems obvious to me that the ANC/SACP (given the many and powerful advantages they held) would not simply have folded and accepted power sharing – i.e., permanently giving minorities the right to block the will of the majority; they would have leveraged their status (thanks to Mandela being the darling of the world, and them already being seen as the inevitable new governing party) to pile up the local and international pressure and further weaken the government, which in the end would likely have resulted in a deal far worse than the RoU, which at least fixed in place key principles of Western democracy.

The harsh reality is that by September 1992 the NP Government simply didn't have the leverage nor the national or international support anymore to have done anything other than that which they signed up for in the 26 September RoU…

### 11.3.54 OCTOBER 1992: JOE SLOVO PROPOSES "SUNSET CLAUSES" IN THE "*AFRICAN COMMUNIST*"

Following up on the "fig leaf" strategy that I mentioned in the preceding section, ANC/SACP strategists realised that they had to placate the powerful public service, particularly its security force component. The obvious fear of public servants at the time was that they would lose their jobs and pensions. The ANC/SACP knew that they would have nothing of their own with which to defend their new government, if these forces should turn on them after the coming elections. Especially if the Afrikaner Right should convert their threats of armed insurrection into actual deeds…

Civil Service functionaries, security force members included, who feel that they have nothing to lose, are inherently dangerous. Therefore, the ANC/SACP had to ensure that they have something to lose, by guaranteeing them continued employment and pensions.

Accordingly, Joe Slovo started floating a proposal for "sunset clauses", being guarantees to public servants and a time-limited Government of National Unity (GNU). He first had to get his own side's hardliners on board with what ran quite contrary to their emotional expectations and started this by setting out his proposal in a well-reasoned article *"Negotiations: What Room for Compromise?"* which appeared in the quarterly edition of the "*African Communist*" (#130) published in October 1992.

Willie Esterhuyse summed up the background: "*Even before the stalling of CODESA (in May 1992), the idea of a Government of National Unity was being discussed. Thabo Mbeki mentioned it several times as being his personal position. Nelson Mandela also spoke in this direction at a meeting in Stellenbosch (1991). Clever strategist that he was, Joe Slovo worked out the details of the idea in the period of storm and urgency and published it in the October issue of African Communist. A heated debate broke out within the ANC between those favouring negotiations and the militants. That it was Joe Slovo who proposed the so-called "sunset clauses", and not Mandela or Mbeki, was an excellent move*".

Slovo's standing as avowed communist and MK stalwart ensured that the idea could not be shot down by the militants as coming from "weak-in-the-knees negotiationists" selling out the revolution. As we shall see below, a month later the NEC of the ANC would indeed adopt the "sunset clauses" as part of its negotiation strategy.

The ANC/SACP's uniting, overriding short-term objective at the time was to unseat the white government. What worried analysts in the intelligence community, was what would follow after this "first revolution"? Because, there was no doubt that an influential part of the ANC/SACP were still firmly committed to their original "scientific

socialist" ideals and to achieving them through a second revolution (their "National Democratic Revolution" or NDR).

Did the NP Government politicians (who also had as short-term objective to do away with the old order) fully understand this reality? Did they understand that the real political struggle in the New South Africa – the one about the long-term direction of the country – would not be fought out in parliament (which would simply be a rubber stamp mechanism for the ruling party controlling it). That, in reality, the ideological and power struggles would take place within that ruling party itself, between its main factions? That destiny would be determined not in the chambers of parliament in Cape Town, but in the meeting halls where the ANC's National Elective Conference would gather, such as in 2007 in Polokwane?

Logically, when looked at from the perspective of the fundamental interests of the NP's mainly white, "Coloured" and Indian voters at the time, the most important strategic goal that the NP Government should have set itself in terms of future real-world politics, would have been to maximise every conceivable constitutional measure within the majority rule model that would have limited the ability of such factions to easily capture, via their control over the majority party, the legislature and the executive. By means of measures such as a directly elected presidency (i.e., akin to the Namibian system) for which there had been huge public support, strong division of powers between the three branches, and maximum devolution of power downward, to provincial, regional, and local levels of government.

Was the real future threat of the radicals in the ANC taking it over (as later evidenced in the election of Jacob Zuma and the disastrous "state capture" that followed) fully understood by the politicians, and did they sufficiently prioritise such measures?

You can be the judge of that…

### 11.3.55 OCTOBER 1992: COSAG FORMED BY IFP, CP, BOPHUTHATSWANA, AND CISKEI

In October 1992 the political parties that saw the signing of the RoU by the NP Government and the ANC/SACP as a turn to bilateralism which excluded them from an effective say in the negotiation process (which in truth it was, despite all of De Klerk's protestations to the contrary), formed COSAG – the Concerned South Africans Group. This was a seemingly unlikely alliance, initiated by the IFP under Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi. It included, besides the IFP, the governing parties of the Bophuthatswana and Ciskei homelands, led by Chief Lucas Mangope and Oupa Gqozo respectively, plus the white Conservative Party. COSAG's primary objective was to ensure that its members' demands, particularly for strong regional government (federalism) and ethnic political self-determination, were not sidelined during the negotiations.

### 11.3.56 OCTOBER 29TH, 1992: THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC FORUM IS FORMALLY LAUNCHED

On 29 October 1992 the NEF (National Economic Forum) was formally established. This followed on initial meetings such as that of 18 May 1992 when organised labour, business, and government had convened to advance the idea. The NEF served as a platform to address economic restructuring, job creation, and policy challenges amid the hiccups in the political negotiations and the concerning downturn in the economy. It reflected the worry that began to preoccupy top leaders like Mandela and De Klerk, as well as the business community, that the South African economy was coming dangerously close to suffering permanent harm.

The NEF was a precursor to the later National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), established in 1995, and helped lay the groundwork for collaborative economic policymaking during the transition period.

### 11.3.57 NOVEMBER 3RD, 1992: BILL CLINTON IS ELECTED AS PRESIDENT OF THE USA

Because of the participation of a strong third-party candidate in the American presidential elections of 1992 (which drained votes away from serving President George Bush Snr), Bill Clinton was elected president despite having won 43% of the vote. Clinton "owed" a very large share of both his primary victory and his general-election win to African-American voters. They provided a reliable block that was mathematically essential to his margins and strategically critical in key regions.

During his election campaign Clinton had visibly associated himself with the ANC and Nelson Mandela in particular, meeting with Mr Mandela in New York on 15 July 1992 (shortly before the Democrat National Convention). Clinton emphasized his backing for “democratic change” in South Africa. In a major foreign policy speech to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council on August 13, 1992, Clinton attacked President Bush, saying that: "*From the Baltics to Beijing, from Sarajevo to South Africa, time after time this President has sided with the status quo against democratic change*." He further pledged that a Clinton administration would "*keep the pressure on South Africa until the day of true democracy has dawned.*"

Clinton’s election and his promise of active intervention on the part of what he perceived were the democratic forces in regional conflicts (which under his presidency would, for example, lead to two devastating air wars being launched by the USA/NATO against Serbia to pressure it to bow to the Clinton Administration’s demands with regard to Muslim rights) was another sign to the NP Government that its leeway in the negotiations was rapidly shrinking – as well as being further proof of the harm done by the opportunities forfeited during the “lost decade” under PW Botha, when Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher headed the USA and UK governments, respectively.

## 11.3.58 NOVEMBER 25TH, 1992: ANC NEC FORMALLY ADOPTS JOE SLOVO’S “SUNSET CLAUSE” PROPOSAL

The ANC's National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting in late November 1992 formally adopted as official ANC policy, a strategy document titled "*Negotiations – A Strategic Perspective*" which incorporated Joe Slovo's controversial "sunset clause" proposal.

The most debated element was the temporary, time-limited provision in the new constitution for a Government of National Unity (GNU) in the immediate post-election period. This would last a fixed term of five years, after which unfettered majority rule could proceed without further such obligations. Additional related concessions included “sunset clause” job security/pension guarantees for existing civil servants (including security forces), the promise of some form of amnesty process, and the gradual phasing out of Apartheid-era structures by means of attrition, rather than abrupt dismissal. Slovo had framed these as short-term tactical retreats to lock in elections, isolate hardliners, prevent sabotage by disaffected white elements outside government, and allow the ANC (once in power via an electoral mandate) to pursue reconstruction and development unimpeded, after the transitional period.

The NEC – the ANC's highest decision-making body between national conferences – had convened to debate Slovo's ideas amid internal divisions. The debate was intense and initially deadlocked. Slovo defended the proposal vigorously, emphasizing that majority rule via elections would transform the balance of forces: the ANC would win the vote, govern democratically, and after the fixed transitional period could then advance socio-economic transformation without obstruction. A breakthrough came on the second day, with interventions like that of Albie Sachs (an NEC member and future Constitutional Court judge). Sachs reframed the GNU as a way to bring the National Party inside government under democratic legitimacy, giving the new order a broad national mandate for reconstruction while preventing external sabotage. After fierce discussion, the NEC reached consensus in favour of this strategic perspective, including the sunset clauses and a commitment to a GNU for a fixed transitional period.

This new policy helped unblock multi-party negotiations by signalling ANC/SACP flexibility on transitional arrangements, paving the way for productive talks via “the Channel Bilateral” in early 1993. This was followed by the establishment of the Multi-Party Negotiating Forum (in the place of CODESA, to rubber-stamp bilateral deals reached between the NP Government and the ANC/SACP). Ultimately it enabled the adoption of the interim constitution of 1993, that included a five-year GNU set to govern the country after the April 1994 elections.

Their “sunset clause” decision was a pragmatic turning point within the ANC/SACP/COSATU tripartite alliance, confirming the ascendancy of the moderate pro-negotiation faction. It balanced revolutionary ideals (which were effectively two-staged) with the immediate realities of negotiation, violence prevention, and international/diplomatic pressures. It helped avert potential collapse of the process and contributed to the relatively peaceful 1994 transition.

Critics on the left saw it as a dilution, but supporters of Slovo's initiative (including Mandela and key negotiators) viewed it as essential realism.

## 11.3.59 DECEMBER 18TH, 1992: "NIGHT OF THE GENERALS" – TOP SADF OFFICERS DISMISSED

From 10 December 1992 a series of events unfolded that would shake the security establishment, and Military Intelligence in particular – 23 senior officers were separated from service on 18 December, which became known in the media as the "Night of the Generals". The covert CCB (Civil Cooperation Bureau) of Military Intelligence, their arm for clandestine extra-judicial executive action, had not been closed down, as had long before been emphatically instructed. There were also underlying concerns that certain right-leaning officers may be receptive to the idea of an eventual coup…

To understand what had actually happened and by whose hand, it is useful first to look at President FW de Klerk's version of events, as Commander in Chief of the armed forces. In his "*The Last Trek*" he wrote: "*I received the first indication of how serious the problems in military intelligence were on 10 December. General (Pierre) Steyn came to see me at my office in the Union Buildings to give me a preliminary report on his investigations. He told me that, with the help of the directorate of counter-intelligence, he had started to uncover what appeared to be a veritable rat's nest of unauthorized and illegal activity within military intelligence. What concerned me was his visible nervousness. He seemed to be worried that his investigations were leading him into areas where his own personal safety might be at risk. I urged him to press ahead with his investigation as quickly as possible and offered him any support that he might require. I also instructed the National Intelligence Service – long-time rivals of military intelligence – to provide General Steyn with any assistance that might be relevant to his investigation*". (De Klerk obviously knew from earlier-discussed events such as the Du Randt-Flores snafu in London, that NIS counter-intelligence had been keeping an eye on the securocrat apparatus in general, including Military Intelligence – as was its statutory duty to do).

De Klerk continued: "*A short while later, on 18 December 1992, General Steyn flew from Pretoria to the air force base at the De Hoop nature reserve in the southern Cape. I flew in by helicopter from a nearby holiday home, where I had arrived a few days earlier. What he had to tell me was deeply shocking. We flew to Cape Town within an hour where General Steyn gave an oral report on his initial findings to a meeting that I had hurriedly convened in the Cabinet Room in Cape Town…*

*In my relationship with the security forces, I sometimes felt like a man who had been given two fully grown watchdogs - say, a Rottweiler and a bull terrier. Their previous owner had doted on them. He had given then the tastiest morsels from his table and had allowed them to run free and chase cats all over the neighbourhood. I had put a stop to all that. As a result, they did not particularly like me - although they had an ingrained sense of obedience. When I took them for walks in the neighbourhood, I put them on leashes and stopped them from chasing cats. I could determine the general direction in which they would move, but they would walk at their own pace, sometimes wanting to go back, sometimes straining to chase a passing cat, sometimes walking happily in my direction. I could guide them, but I knew that if I pulled too hard, I might choke them - or they might slip their collars and cause pandemonium in the neighbourhood.*

*"I immediately summoned the minister of defence, Mr Eugene Louw, the chief of the SADF, General Kat Liebenberg, the chief of the army, General Georg Meiring, and the chief of military intelligence, Lieutenant-General Joffel van der Westhuizen to my office in Tuynhuys. General Liebenberg was clearly nervous… He agreed that we would have to take immediate steps to cut to the root of the malpractices within the defence force. I instructed him to identify any officers or employees of the defence force who might be guilty of the abuses listed in General Steyn's allegations and to report back to me within the hour as to what steps should be taken against them… I also asked for the names of officers whose services would no longer be required because of the envisaged restructuring of military intelligence activities".*

According to De Klerk, General Liebenberg undertook to do so immediately. **It was thus SADF head Liebenberg and the forementioned top SADF generals** (excluding Steyn) who in fact **drew up the list** of those whose services would no longer be required – i.e., **not De Klerk by himself** – and, it were also **they** who presented De Klerk with their recommendations about what steps should be taken against the relevant officers (De Klerk

obviously didn't know the individuals listed sufficiently well himself, nor would he have been personally aware of the activities alleged, to have been able to make any determination on his own; he had to trust the top command and act on what THEY had recommended to him).

What De Klerk did know (and what the top leadership of the SADF said **they agreed with him** on) was that the time had come to draw a line in the sand – effectively to make an example, and to do it with sufficient scope, reaching high enough, so that it would have the required impact and hopefully pre-empt further tendencies to disobey orders.

We will discuss this in detail later, when we assess the general relationship between De Klerk and the Security Forces during the negotiations and how this relationship impacted the process and its outcome – suffice it to touch here, as conclusion of this sub-section of the timeline, on what in the media became an ongoing controversy: the dismissal of Major General Chris Thirion.

General Thirion, the Deputy CSI (Chief of Staff: Intelligence) at the time, was a highly respected officer who no-one who knew him would have suspected of harbouring right-wing tendencies or of being inclined to unconstitutional adventures such as coup plotting – on the contrary! I can personally vouch that he was one – if not the most – situationally aware and realistic DMI analysts that I had worked alongside with when at the NIS I was in charge of the SWA/N desks in the late seventies.

Nevertheless, Thirion was the most senior officer on the list of names made public – even though General Steyn strongly denied that he had in any way, shape, or form fingered Thirion in his reporting (I have myself seen a copy of Steyn's initial report, in tabulated spreadsheet form, which had a list of names running down the left-hand margin and opposite Thirion's name the annotation under the sub-heading transgressions was "**none**" and under recommendations also "**none**" (Maritz Spaarwater wrote that he had also seen such a list, confirming what I've myself seen).

Yet Thirion's name was included in the list which Liebenberg, Meiring, and Van der Westhuizen had given the unsuspecting De Klerk…

How come?

It was no secret that Thirion, who had as a young lieutenant commanded a company of the parachute battalion and was an insightful and academically highly qualified, multi-talented officer, wasn't exactly popular with his superiors. (Spaarwater, who knew Thirion well, wrote of him: "…*a dedicated soldier with an incisive and innovative military mind, but who did not always sit comfortably with his peers and superiors… Chris Thirion is an example of that rare combination of a free-spirited Renaissance man wrapped in the uniform of a professional soldier with decorations and insignia of rank testifying to an excellent career*".

Thirion immediately and very publicly contested his dismissal, insisting on being court-martialled so that he could know what exactly he was being blamed for, and could defend himself. When this opportunity was denied him by his superiors, he sued President de Klerk in civil court. The matter was later privately settled, when De Klerk had the decency to issue a public apology of sorts to Thirion after he (De Klerk) realised that he had effectively been set up by the top generals who had decided of their own volition and for their own purposes to include Thirion on the list that they had given to De Klerk.

So, what had actually happened? What is indisputable are two key things: Firstly, Thirion's name was never put forward by Steyn. Secondly, the list of those to be dismissed was drawn up by Liebenberg, Meiring and Van de Westhuizen, not by De Klerk. Why did those three include Thirion?

What more than one very highly placed source privy to what I believe to be reliable knowledge of what had actually been going on have independently confirmed to me, was that Thirion had fallen into disfavour with his bosses – not because of right-wing insurrectionist tendencies, but because he was a threat to particularly Van der Westhuizen's position, and furthermore because the three of them were concerned that Thirion was involved in a delicate matter that they believed could bring embarrassment to the SADF, should it be publicly revealed. Better,

therefore, to seize the opportunity afforded by De Klerk's insistence on firing some top brass as example to others, and be rid of Thirion that way, without having to bring charges in open court or the like...

Joffel van der Westhuizen, a firm "total onslaught" believer, was generally regarded in the rest of the intel-community (i.e., outside the SADF) as an intellectual lightweight whose real forte and inclination was to engage in sly political games at intra-bureaucratic level. Should De Klerk have wished to have him replaced by someone with actual situational awareness and better intelligence credentials, then the best fit with New Nat thinking would clearly have been Thirion. It also so happened that the DCC, the Directorate of Covert Collection, fell under Thirion as Deputy CSI; in order to keep the CCB (which was part of the DCC) clandestinely going after De Klerk had ordered it shut, the funding for it had needed to be fudged in the DMI's financial records, for which Van der Westhuizen was by law the accounting officer (and should thus have been legally held responsible). It can therefore be logically deduced that it was necessary, in order to protect Van der Westhuizen, to put all the blame for fudging the finances on Thirion and fire him, lest Joffel be held accountable.

However, I've been reliably told that the key quibble with Thirion on the part of his superiors (and the purported cause of their fear of public embarrassment for the SADF) concerned an allegation that he had mishandled classified information. I was told that this, above all, was the excuse that in the end led to Thirion being conveniently added to the list (though not revealed as such to De Klerk). Thirion was believed by his superiors to have shared classified information in unauthorised manner with a foreign power, which would *prima facie* have been a transgression of the Official Secrets Act and thus could have led to prosecution – and the Deputy CSI facing such charges in open court would indeed have been a severe embarrassment for the SADF.

Whilst this may on the face of it look serious and certainly seems to be the main excuse used by the troika of Liebenberg, Meiring, and Van der Westhuizen among themselves to conveniently add Thirion to the list and in that way be "quietly" rid of him (never mind that they were in fact egregiously deceiving De Klerk, their Commander in Chief) I find the justification legally and professionally doubtful.

What appears to in fact have happened (as indicated to me by a very senior NIS counter-intelligence officer with knowledge of the matter) is that Thirion had shared – evidently in his discretion as Deputy CSI – classified information with the local CIA representative at the American Embassy, with whom he had built up a good working relationship (as he was supposed to have done). Thirion did not do so clandestinely, nor for personal gain, but as part of his duties as Deputy CSI, which clearly included liaison with foreign representatives, undertaken with a view to inform and shape their opinion on matters of security interest to South Africa at what obviously was a complex moment in our history.

It may thus technically have been classified documents that he had allegedly shared without prior approval from higher up, but legally and professionally speaking, Thirion should be deemed (in my opinion), to have had the discretionary authority to have made the judgement calls on what could/should have been shared with a service as important as the CIA, in a moment as important as the transition.

Among those who knew what actually had happened, the Thirion case is therefore seen as just more duplicity on the part of senior SADF generals who abused a perceived opportunity to again slyly advance their own agendas, no matter that they were deceiving and manipulating the State President in the process – leaving him in the end obliged to apologise for what THEY had under-handedly engineered…

What FW de Klerk in my opinion should ideally have done, in the interest of the country and the transition (if only he at the time had had the necessary knowledge of what really was going on – which of course he didn't have, and couldn't reasonably have been expected to have) would actually have been to fire Joffel and appoint Chris Thirion in his place. Not to mention Liebenberg…

## 11.3.60 APRIL 1ST, 1993: THE MULTI-PARTY NEGOTIATING FORUM (MPNF) CONVENES FOR FIRST TIME

On the 1st of April 1993, the MPNF (which had replaced CODESA) met for the first time at the World Trade Centre to continue constitutional talks. Whereas CODESA had involved 19 parties (including homeland government

representatives), the MPNF saw 26 delegations participate. Notable hold-outs still boycotting were AZAPO, the AWB and the HNP. (The IFP attended the first meeting but later walked out in June 1993 over the election date and federalism disputes). Among the new attendees were the CP and the PAC.

The gathering was described as a major success — the planned two-day programme was completed in one day. Important outcomes included the identification of key outstanding negotiation issues; establishment of more practical, streamlined structures for negotiation and approvals; and, the unanimous adoption of a strong resolution against ongoing political violence.

As part of an overall framework agreement the parties committed to proceeding with negotiations aimed at the adoption of an interim constitution, a Transitional Executive Council, and the holding of South Africa's first democratic elections. It was confirmed that decisions would be taken by "sufficient consensus", regarding which it was understood that deals reached bilaterally between the NP Government and the ANC/SACP would carry the process, with the MPNF serving to bring the others along in as palatable a manner as practically possible.

The significance of the successful first meeting of the MPNF was that it effectively relaunched the transition process on a more practical and realistic footing. In short, 1 April 1993 was the quiet but pivotal day when the fractious parties agreed on how they would negotiate – and that agreement held long enough to deliver a non-racial democracy.

## 11.3.61 APRIL 10TH, 1993: SACP LEADER CHRIS HANI ASSASSINATED

The assassination of Chris Hani on 10 April 1993 was one of the most dangerous moments in South Africa's transition from Apartheid. Hani, the General Secretary of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and former Chief of Staff of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK, the ANC's armed wing), was an enormously popular figure especially among militant black youth. He was gunned down outside his home in Dawn Park, Boksburg, by Polish immigrant Janusz Waluś, a far-right extremist. The pistol had been supplied by Clive Derby-Lewis, a Conservative Party MP. The clear aim was to provoke a race war and derail the MPNF talks. The hope of the assassins seems to have been that by pushing the country into chaos, the white security forces would need to step in to reassert control.

The killing came just nine days after the MPNF's first meeting. Within hours there were riots in several cities (Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth, and elsewhere). At least seven people died, and the mood in the townships was explosive. A nationwide stay-away/strike on 15 April 1993 would bring millions of black workers out in mourning and protest.

On 13 April 1993 Nelson Mandela (then still only the leader of the ANC, not yet South Africa's head of state) delivered a powerful live televised address to the entire nation. What made this extraordinary was that State President FW de Klerk had deliberately stepped aside and handed national broadcasting authority to Mandela. In the words of contemporary accounts, De Klerk performed "an unusual act of statesmanship" by giving Mandela the prime-time platform on SABC television and radio to speak directly to every South African — black and white.

Mandela used the moment masterfully. Key passages included: "*Tonight I am reaching out to every single South African, black and white, from the very depths of my being. A white man, full of prejudice and hate, came to our country and committed a deed so foul that our whole nation now teeters on the brink of disaster. A white woman, of Afrikaner origin, risked her life so that we may know, and bring to justice, this assassin… Now is the time for all South Africans to stand together against those who, from any quarter, wish to destroy what Chris Hani gave his life for – the freedom of all of us*."

Mandela explicitly praised the white Afrikaner woman (Retha Harmse) who had witnessed the murder, noted the killer's car plate number, and phoned the police — leading to Waluś's arrest within 30 minutes. Mandela urged discipline, warned against rash actions that would "*serve only the interests of the assassins*," and called for peaceful commemorations and continued negotiations.

De Klerk's gesture was widely seen as the moment he effectively acknowledged that, in a crisis of such enormity, it was Mandela – and not himself as the white president in office – who was the person with the moral authority

and popular legitimacy to hold the country together, specifically in terms of being able to connect with the understandably upset Black masses, but also to calm white nerves. It was as if Mandela was already functioning as head of state, more than a year before he actually became president. Many historians and participants describe it as a de-facto recognition that power had, in real-world terms, already irrevocably begun to transfer.

Paradoxically, the crisis sped up the transition rather than derailing it. Within weeks the ANC/SACP and the NP Government reached breakthroughs such as setting a firm election date and reaching agreement on the how and when of launching the Transitional Executive Council (TEC) to oversee the final pre-election phase, while progress in the drafting of the interim constitution also accelerated.

The episode burnished Mandela's image among both black and white as the indispensable unifier and statesman. It also showed De Klerk's patriotic pragmatism at a critical juncture, putting the interests of country before that of his party.

In short, de Klerk's decision to let Mandela address the nation was one of the most consequential acts of the entire transition. It demonstrated that the two men – despite deep mutual suspicions – could put the survival of the country above narrow political positioning. By stepping back, De Klerk helped ensure that the "deed so foul" did not achieve its intended purpose of plunging South Africa into a race-based civil war.

Something to ponder, though – what if the assassins had targeted Mandela, instead of Hani? From an analytical intelligence perspective, clearly South Africa's fragile transition was extremely vulnerable to "black swan" events such as high-level assassinations, bombings, massacres stemming from local political rivalries, or a right-wing coup attempt…

## 11.3.62 APRIL 20TH, 1993: "VEKOM" FORMED, UNITING THE AFRIKANER RIGHT-WING

The Volkseenheidskomitee (VEKOM), translated as the People's Unity Committee or Afrikaner Unity Committee, was formed on 20 April 1993 in Pretoria at the TLU (Transvaalse Landbou-Unie / Transvaal Agricultural Union) building in Silverton. The formation came in the immediate aftermath of Chris Hani's assassination on 10 April 1993, which had created intense uncertainty and fear among many white South Africans, particularly Afrikaner right-wing groups. The killing heightened perceptions that the NP Government under President de Klerk was conceding too much in the talks, without adequate safeguards for Afrikaner self-determination or security.

Right-wing Afrikaner discontent had been building since the late 1980s/early 1990s, with opposition to De Klerk's reforms, the unbanning of the ANC and SACP, and the collapse of CODESA. Earlier such unity initiatives included the Eenheidskomitee 25 (EK25), a "Committee of Generals" formed after the 1993 death of Conservative Party (CP) leader Andries Treurnicht. This informal group of retired senior SADF and SAP officers held meetings across the country to mobilize resistance.

Hani's death acted as a catalyst: it galvanized fears of chaos or revenge attacks, prompting a push for greater unity and self-defence preparation among fragmented right-wing factions. VEKOM emerged as an expanded, more structured vehicle to coordinate these efforts, focusing on paramilitary preparedness, resource access (including arms), and political mobilization ahead of any potential breakdown in negotiations or the looming 1994 elections.

VEKOM was led by General Constand Viljoen (former Chief of the SADF, a highly respected figure among conservatives) who had resigned from the NP in protest over its reforms under De Klerk. VEKOM included a core of retired high-ranking security force officers, often referred to as the "generals" or the Direktoraat van Generaals (DvG):

- Major General 'Tienie' Groenewald (former head of Propaganda at Military Intelligence)
- Lieutenant General Koos Bischoff (former chief of army operations)
- Lieutenant General Lothar Neethling (former deputy SAP commissioner in charge of the forensics laboratory)
- Lieutenant General Cobus Visser (former head of the SAP's CID)

The founding meeting on 20 April 1993 brought together leaders from various right-wing organizations, including:

- Conservative Party (CP) — e.g., MPs like Ferdi Hartzenberg, Dries Bruwer (also TLU president), and Tom Langley
- Afrikaner Volksunie (AVU)
- Transvaalse Landbou-Unie (TLU)
- Other groups such as the Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP), though the event emphasized broad unity.

VEKOM positioned itself as a coordinating body rather than a new political party, drawing support from farmers, former security force members, and cultural/religious Afrikaner networks. VEKOM's primary goals were defensive and preparatory in nature, given the volatile transition context:

- To unite ("eenheid") Afrikaner/Boer forces across political, cultural, and paramilitary lines to counter what they saw as the betrayal by De Klerk and the impending loss of white/Afrikaner control.
- To build a paramilitary structure for self-protection, facilitating access to weapons, training, and resources in case negotiations collapsed or violence escalated (post-Hani fears included potential ANC-led reprisals or civil unrest).
- To advocate strongly for Afrikaner/Boer self-determination, ideally through a sovereign **Volkstaat** (people's state) – a separate homeland or autonomous territory where Afrikaners could govern themselves.
- To mobilize grassroots support and pressure the government/MPNF process to recognize Afrikaner demands, including cultural autonomy, regional powers, or secessionist options.

VEKOM was short-lived in its original form. Just weeks later in early May 1993, it merged/evolved into the broader **Afrikaner Volksfront (AVF)** at a larger meeting on 7 May 1993 in Pretoria. The AVF became the main umbrella for right-wing resistance (including CP, AVU, HNP, AVSTIG, and others), with General Viljoen as its public face.

The AVF initially boycotted the negotiations, staged public protests, and aligned itself with COSAG's "Freedom Alliance".

## 11.3.63 MAY 7TH, 1992: THE AFRIKANER VOLKSFRONT (AVF) OFFICIALLY FORMED

The AVF was formally launched on 7 May 1993 in Pretoria, building directly on the momentum from the Volkseenheidskomitee (VEKOM). Major affiliated groups included:

- Conservative Party (CP) — led by Ferdi Hartzenberg, which joined shortly after formation.
- Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP).
- Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) — led by Eugène Terre'Blanche (though tensions arose due to AWB's more militant style).
- Afrikaner Volksunie (AVU).
- Various cultural, farmers' (e.g., TLU), and paramilitary networks.

The AVF positioned itself as a coordinating body with a "directorate of generals" (all of whom who had been adherents of the "total onslaught" doctrine). The AVF's primary goal was Afrikaner/Boer self-determination through a sovereign volkstaat (people's state) – an independent or autonomous homeland where Afrikaners could preserve their language, culture, religion, land rights, and political control, free from majority rule. Other aims were:

- Oppose or pressure the negotiations, rejecting federal/provincial compromises as insufficient.
- Unite fragmented right-wing factions to present a stronger front.
- Prepare defensively (including access to arms/training) for potential collapse of the negotiations and/or the outbreak of civil unrest.
- Advocate internationally for recognition of Afrikaner claims, drawing on the historical Boer republics (e.g., Transvaal, Orange Free State).

Their manifesto stressed demographic self-preservation in "viable" geographical enclaves, rejecting integration as being a threat to Afrikaner identity.

According to the investigative journalist De Wet Potgieter in his book "*Kwart voor 'n Bloedbad*" (A Quarter to a Bloodbath) the Front aimed to disrupt the 1994 elections and to propagate the idea of self-determination in an own nation-state (Volkstaat) for the Afrikaner. Potgieter enjoyed excellent access to the militant Afrikaner right-wing,

including to those involved with the founding of the AVF. He described the events around the formation of the AVF as follows (translated from the Afrikaans): *"Jan Taljaard, investigative journalist for the Weekly Mail – the forerunner of today's Mail & Guardian – had revealed the top-secret planning for the establishment of the AFV already in April 1993… Taljaard's contacts in intelligence circles secured him this 'scoop'. In and of itself, the leak from the secret meeting showed how the security police and the National Intelligence Agency (NIA - sic) were able to infiltrate right-wing organisations from grassroots to top executive level with informants and agents.*

*"Viljoen explains his perspective on the founding of the AVF as follows: 'When Dries Bruwer* (leader of the TLU) *and his delegation came to discuss the Afrikaner's fears with me, he made it clear that they did not trust De Klerk at all and were concerned that no political party – including the CP – had sufficient support and influence to resist the NP.' Therefore, the AVF was structured in such a way that a Directorate of Generals (DvG) had to take the lead – in the belief that the Afrikaners had traditionally been led by generals in times of crisis. According to Taljaard, Bruwer said during the founding meeting: 'The time of the generals has now arrived, once again.'*

*"The route to the Volkstaat that the DvG envisaged involved the Right moving away from parliamentary politics towards defiance of the system – initially through passive resistance, but eventually through armed struggle. 'I designed the general strategy to advance the Front's cause,' says Viljoen. It rested on three pillars:*

*• Build a power base by gaining mass support among the Afrikaners.*

*• Once the power base is established, begin negotiations on self-determination with the TBVC countries (homelands) that want to remain independent, the government and the ANC.*

*• If negotiations fail, turn to violence. If violence offers an opportunity for further negotiations, follow this route. The aim of violence is not to overthrow the government, but to force them to the negotiating table'.*

*"Under Viljoen's leadership, the Directorate of Generals then decided on developing three main strategies:*

*• A political strategy: An alternative dispensation based on self-determination had to be established. The Afrikaner had to be awakened. For this purpose, 160 meetings were held nationwide. The issue of self-determination was particularly emphasized, and the people were warned against De Klerk, whose negotiating abilities could not compare to those of Mandela, Joe Slovo and Arthur Chaskalson.*

*• Propaganda: Groenewald, who was the expert in this field, had to launch propaganda campaigns.*

*• Military strategy: The point of departure was always that arguments had to be made with a rifle in hand."*

This planning and preparation for using the threat of force as leverage – including toying with a coup by right-wing forces – remained a constant in AVF thinking and actions, till Constand Viljoen at almost the last possible moment realised (after the Mmabatho fiasco, which I will discuss in detail below) that the AVF resorting to military action would lead to the decimation of its forces when confronting the State's professional military might, as well as result in international intervention that right-wing forces had no hope of defeating.

## 11.3.64 JUNE 3RD, 1993: NP AND ANC ANNOUNCE DATE FOR 1ST NON-RACIAL ELECTIONS

Niël Barnard and Fanie van der Merwe had become increasingly convinced of the need to urgently concretise and incentivise the negotiation process by means of fixing the date for the coming elections. Therefore, they had been pressuring De Klerk and Mandela to publicly announce the date, without delay. There were a number of reasons why they believed this necessary. A prime consideration was because of the clear vulnerability of South Africa's transition to sudden "black swan" events (such as the assassination of Chris Hani) which could be unpredictably engineered by just a few individuals yet derail the entire process. Finishing the process quickly, rather than allowing it to be dragged out and thereby allowing more opportunity for such events to occur, was thus prudent.

Another was the need to focus the minds of all who were engaged in the process of drafting and finalising the interim constitution, which could go on interminably due to grandstanding or political bloody-mindedness if a clear cut-off date wasn't set (the constitution had to be finalised at least four months before any election, to allow sufficient time for proper preparation and implementation).

What one can assume also played a role, is the fact that the NP Government's bargaining power was visibly diminishing by the day, plus the reality that – if the new government elected in terms of the interim constitution wasn't in place by mid-year 1994 – then the old constitution would have required that "white" elections again be held, because of the end then of the 5-year term which had started with the September 1989 election.

Accordingly, it was announced on 3 June 1993 that the first democratic elections will be held on April 27th, 1994. The downside of this move was, of course, that important issues not finalised in time for inclusion in the interim constitution (such as a general amnesty and the direct election of presidents by the voters) would have to stand over and then become dependent on new forces and shaping events, for their finalisation…

## 11.3.65 JUNE 25TH, 1993: AWB STORM WORLD TRADE CENTRE DURING MPNF TALKS

In late June 1993 the Conservative Party, the Afrikaner Volksfront and other conservative Afrikaner movements, including the AWB, decided to hold a major protest action against the way in which the negotiations were proceeding. They obtained the necessary permission for the protest action to take place on 25 June 1993 at the World Trade Centre at Kempton Park (i.e., the venue where the negotiations were being held). The then SAP Commissioner Johan van der Merwe had instructed Deputy Commissioner Johan Swart to ensure that order was maintained (parliament was in session at the time and Van der Merwe therefore was in Cape Town). Gen Swart negotiated with Gen Constand Viljoen and received assurances from him that everything would proceed peacefully.

However, on the day the AWB leadership impetuously decided to follow their own heads and not heed the requests of the AVF for disciplined, peaceful protest action. Some three thousand AWB members, many in camouflage uniforms and armed with firearms harassed people entering the building. A key dramatic moment captured on TV was when an AWB armoured vehicle (a "Viper") was driven through the plate-glass front entrance, smashing it and allowing hundreds of protesters to pour inside. The invaders occupied parts of the building, including offices of some delegations and the main conference hall. They threatened delegates, chanted "AWB," waved flags, painted slogans on walls, and caused chaos—but did not take hostages or cause fatalities. Though no one was killed in the incident itself, it traumatized negotiation delegations trapped inside the building (where they had had to barricade themselves in offices) and it escalated tensions in the country. Property damage was estimated at around 700,000 Rand (significant at the time).

The rowdy scenes witnessed on TV screens by the South African public and abroad was a disaster for the right-wing Afrikaner cause, leaving Viljoen and the AVF fuming at the AWB. It was a lesson for Viljoen about the kind of damage that resulted from being associated with the undisciplined AWB with their impetuous, bullying bravado, and a foretaste of what was to come…

## 11.3.66 SEPTEMBER 18TH, 1993: BWB BOMB IN BRONKHORSTSPRUIT KILLS POLICEMAN, INJURES SIX

On 18 September 1993, a bomb planted by the Cullinan cell of the BWB (Boer Resistance Movement) at the Indian-operated shopping area in the outskirts of Bronkhorstspruit (east of Pretoria) killed SAP constable Abraham Labuschagne, who was investigating the suspicious package when it exploded. Another policeman was reportedly injured, with up to six people wounded in total. The explosion also caused significant property damage to the shopping complex.

## 11.3.67 OCTOBER 15TH, 1993: MANDELA AND DE KLERK ARE JOINTLY AWARDED THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

For their efforts to dismantle Apartheid peacefully, Nelson Mandela and FW de Klerk were jointly awarded the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize.

## 11.3.68 NOVEMBER 17TH, 1993: DE KLERK AND MANDELA AGREE DRAFT INTERIM CONSTITUTION IN LATE-NIGHT TALKS

With a key meeting of the MPNF scheduled for 18 November 1993 (set to approve the draft interim constitution, so that it could be forwarded to parliament for enactment) during the preceding evening of the 17th of November

FW de Klerk and Nelson Mandela negotiated until late at night on the last six outstanding points – the crucial one of which was with what majority the GNU cabinet would take decisions (the NP had wanted consensus or some other blocking mechanism, whilst the ANC/SACP insisted on simple majority decision-making).

Having finally reached agreement with Mandela, De Klerk convened the cabinet on the 18th and informed them that he had accepted Mandela's insistence on a simple majority vote in the GNU cabinet. (Which in practice meant that there would be no real power sharing). FW then adjourned the cabinet meeting so that everyone could think it over, before re-convening to take a decision on the matter. During this break, a highly agitated Minister Tertius Delport is said to have knocked on De Klerk's office door, then grabbed him by his lapels and cried out: "*What have you done!? You gave the country away! You let children negotiate! What we have now is not power-sharing, it is conventional majority rule. We have lost all power!*"

However, not one cabinet minister formally opposed what had been agreed…

Again, one is struck by the manner in which the NP's top leadership arrived at momentous decisions… (not that the decision of De Klerk was wrong – it was the only realistic option then available – what was wrong was the obviously dysfunctional decision-making process by means of which it was arrived at!).

De Klerk evidently knew that his negotiation team were of the opinion that majority rule was the only viable option under the circumstances, and that to break off talks over the issue would put the NP Government at odds with not only the vast majority of its fellow South Africans (including probably a majority of whites), but also with the leading world powers who had insisted that the majority should be allowed to rule, with no blocking powers for minorities (whose protection had to be sought in other ways).

In other words, this was the make-or-break moment: agreeing to go forward (and thereby putting an end to the conflict, isolation, and looming economic disaster) or breaking off talks without having a viable BATNA fall-back position in place (and thereby being exposed to ever more intense pressure and opprobrium). With in the end, inescapably, then always still the only way out being to, at some stage, resume talking – but then likely with even less bargaining power. What De Klerk concluded that day, was unavoidable in terms of the realities he and his government faced. In effect, it meant that they were reverting to what Barnard and Mandela had reached consensus on already five years earlier, namely that only majority rule could provide a basis for peace, as reflected in the very clear intelligence picture already to hand in the late eighties.

De Klerk's decision wasn't, therefore, the result of a weak negotiation team, but of the weak cards that the strategic errors and inaction of his predecessors had left for him to play. That the NP chose not to go down the road of fresh confrontation with their fellow countrymen and the world over what was after all nothing more than an NP policy position, but decided rather to aim for protecting and promoting their constituency's real fundamental interests (peace, rehabilitation of image, and the protection of individual and property rights) as overriding goal, was plain common sense under the circumstance…

Looking at the speed and manner in which this momentous decision was taken over the course of just 24 hours by essentially De Klerk himself, with his cabinet impotently divided and some emotionally overwrought (but not doing anything of consequence about it) the manner in which this momentous decision was taken provides yet another example of how dysfunctional the NP Government's decision-making had become – not in terms of questioning what De Klerk decided, but how it came about (when analysed from the perspective of standard theory on negotiation and decision-making).

## 11.3.69 NOVEMBER 18TH, 1993: THE MPNF RATIFIES THE DRAFT INTERIM CONSTITUTION

On 18 November 1993 the MPNF ratified the text of the interim constitution as agreed between the NP Government and the ANC/SACP, thereby paving the way for elections to be held and a transitional GNU government to be installed there-after.

With the search for "sufficient consensus" on the configuration of the new constitutional dispensation now essentially done, the big threat to its implementation would no longer come from discord within the negotiation

process, but rather from outside – from the right-wing and traditionalist forces favouring secession and threatening violent insurrection to achieve it.

The peaceful implementation of the interim constitution and the holding of elections depended on the one hand on the continued loyalty and efficiency of the State's existing Security Forces, and on the other hand, on convincing the right-wing and traditionalist forces (the AVF and IFP, above all) to abandon their threats and to join the democratic process. Even after the election, during the first years of the first non-racial government, the practical reality would be that the ANC/SACP in and of itself by no stretch of the imagination would possess sufficient own means (i.e., their underwhelming MK) with which to resist a coup or secession attempt.

Peace, both before and after the elections, would thus depend on the State's existing Security Forces, and on the willingness of the right-wing and traditionalist leadership to abandon their threats of a violent take-over and/or secession, in favour of participating in the new dispensation.

People nowadays tend to underestimate how real and serious the threat of a right-wing armed take-over was. The story is told that General Constand Viljoen had said to General Meiring of the SADF that, together, they could take over the country in an afternoon. Which was, objectively speaking, certainly true – a fact that Meiring implicitly admitted in his response. He is said to have replied: "*Yes, but what do we do the next day*?"

## 11.3.70 NOVEMBER 26TH, 1993: ANC ISSUES STATEMENT ON WHITE RIGHT'S WAR THREATS

On 26 November 1993, the ANC issued a statement on Nelson Mandela's behalf in which he said he was aware that certain right-wing groups were preparing for war and already had large arms caches in rural areas. He called on all democrats, white and black, to join hands and work together to isolate those who incite racial hatred and violence. He added that he had had a number of meetings with Constand Viljoen (AVF) and Ferdi Hartzenberg (CP). "*Today, I want to reiterate my appeal to them to stop making inflammatory and racist statements and to help me prevent war and bloodshed. If they do this, it will show true courage and responsible leadership on behalf of their people*."

## 11.3.71 DECEMBER 7TH, 1993: THE TRANSITIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL COMMENCES FUNCTIONING

To avoid a situation in which the NP (as one of the main contenders in the coming elections) would be in sole control of the government in the run-up to the ballot, a multi-party mechanism in the form of the Transitional Executive Council (TEC) commenced functioning on **7 December 1993,** to oversee the election preparations and the transition process.

The TEC was established under the Transitional Executive Council Act 151 of 1993. It entailed a transitional governance mechanism designed to create a neutral "level playing field" for the elections and was composed of one representative from each participating party in the multi-party negotiations (excluding the Pan Africanist Congress and Freedom Alliance), thus 19 members, with eight who served on a management committee. It operated through seven sub-councils covering key areas: finance; foreign affairs; law and order; stability and security; defence; intelligence; regional and local government; and traditional authorities. These sub-councils had powers to access relevant government information, review and veto legislation from the Tricameral Parliament or Bantustans if it risked undermining free elections, and could curtail executive actions of the NP Government.

## 11.3.72 DECEMBER 7TH, 1993: FORT SCHANSKOP OUTSIDE PRETORIA OCCUPIED BY RIGHT-WING BOEREKOMMANDO

At 5am on 7 December 1993 (the same day as the TEC was set to hold its first meeting in Pretoria) a small group of about 30 right-wing paramilitary activists of the self-styled "Pretoria Boerekommando" armed with licensed private weapons occupied Fort Schanskop (then a military museum) on the outskirts of Pretoria. They were led by Willem Ratte, a former elite soldier who had served in the Rhodesian Light Infantry, South African Defence Force (including 32 Battalion), and special forces.

The occupiers had large quantities of ammunition with them, plus radios, sleeping bags, food, water, a generator, and medical supplies – thus being prepared for a prolonged siege. They declared the fort “Boer property” not subject to the new “Azanian” authority. Ratte described the action as peaceful resistance to the TEC, which he called “Communist-led,” and stated that they no longer recognised the De Klerk government’s legitimacy. Their goal was to highlight the demand for Afrikaner self-determination (including a separate volkstaat) but without starting a war.

By mid-morning, police and army units surrounded the fort with roughly 150 soldiers. Sympathisers of the Boerekommando gathered outside with the old Vierkleur (ZAR Boer republic flag), some in traditional Voortrekker dress. The standoff lasted about 24 hours. During the night of 7–8 December, General Constand Viljoen entered the fort and persuaded most of the men to stand down, placing the commando under his authority and promising no immediate punishment. At around 04:00 a.m. on 8 December, 17 men surrendered to the police. Ratte and a small number of others slipped away in the rain and evaded capture that night. Ratte later broadcast from the underground right-wing Radio Donkerhoek, refusing to surrender. No one was injured in the occupation.

## 11.3.73 DECEMBER 22ND, 1993: INTERIM CONSTITUTION APPROVED BY PARLIAMENT

The Interim Constitution (formally: the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 200 of 1993) was adopted by parliament on 22 December 1993 with a majority of 247 votes in favour and 45 against. It was a pivotal instrument in the country's transition from Apartheid to democracy, serving as a temporary "bridging" constitution which enabled the evolution to full a non-racial democracy, whilst simultaneously ensuring state continuity. President FW de Klerk assented to it on 25 January 1994 and it came into force on 27 April 1994, coinciding with South Africa's first fully democratic, non-racial general election. It remained in effect until superseded by the permanent Constitution of 1996 (adopted in 1996 and effective from 4 February 1997).

The Interim Constitution included groundbreaking elements such as:

- A comprehensive Bill of Rights.
- Establishment of a Constitutional Court as apex court.
- Provisions for a time-limited Government of National Unity.
- Nine provinces, enjoying some devolved powers.
- 34 binding Constitutional Principles that any final constitution (to be drafted by an elected Constitutional Assembly) had to comply with.

## 11.3.74 LATE 1993: RIGHT-WINGERS STEAL WEAPONS, PLAN TO TAKE OVER 50 TOWNS

In a raid on the SADF’s arms depot in Pietersburg (north of Pretoria) late in 1993, right-wing elements stole more than three tons of military equipment, including over 100,000 rounds of ammunition, 400 hand grenades, 200 mortar shells and explosives from a South African Defence Force (SADF) arms depot as part of preparations for potential armed resistance against the transition to non-racial democracy.

As the transition gained momentum after the signing of the RoU between the NP Government and ANC/SACP, and then the approval of the Interim Constitution by the MPNF and later enacted by parliament, the AVF and its Directorate of Generals (DvG), leveraging BKA structures and the Volksleër, developed an elaborate plan for armed resistance and potential secession. The plan aimed to establish an independent Boer state in parts of the Transvaal and Orange Free State (traditional Afrikaner heartlands), using a combination of civil disobedience, sabotage, and military-style takeovers to pressure negotiators and create facts on the ground.

Key elements of the plan included:

- **Systematic Takeover of Towns and Cities**: The strategy centred on securing control of approximately 50 towns in right-wing strongholds, particularly in the northern and eastern Transvaal. These were "well-disposed" areas (i.e., sympathetic to their cause), often governed by conservative local councils that had granted "freedom of the town" honours to the AWB and other groups. The idea was to occupy key infrastructure (e.g., police stations, radio stations, and power supplies) in these towns, declaring them to be part of a provisional volkstaat. This would involve Volksleër militias and sympathetic Commando units, potentially backed by defecting SADF or SAP elements.

- **Stockpiling and Armament**: The plan included amassing weapons, armoured vehicles, ammunition, fuel, and foodstuffs at assembly points. The 1993 arms raid in Pietersburg by BKA members was part of this preparation, aimed at equipping underground resistance cells. Viljoen encouraged supporters to join Commandos for access to military-grade rifles and gear.
- **Phased Approach and Contingencies**: If their own negotiations with Nelson Mandela and the ANC/SACP failed, then the AVF envisioned unilaterally proclaiming independence in secessionist enclaves, defended by “Volksleër” armed forces. Viljoen had developed a "Plan B" for protracted guerrilla warfare (which did not enjoy full support from the CP, though). This Plan “B” involved targeted sabotage and strikes by guerrillas, to apply pressure. Important to this plan was acquiring and establishing logistical base areas (having, for example, sent General Tienie Groenewald to meet with Jonas Savimbi of UNITA in south-eastern Angola, who agreed to make areas there under his control available for such purpose).
- **Symbolic and Initial Actions**: In early 1994, actions like the symbolic occupation of Fort Schanskop near Pretoria by armed men (led by ex-SADF officer Willem Ratte, linked to BKA/AVF circles) tested resolve and demonstrated capability. Rallies, such as one on January 30, 1994, in Pretoria, saw thousands vow to establish a "Transitional Assembly" as a government-in-waiting, threatening violence if peaceful demands for an own homeland were ignored.

### 11.3.75 JANUARY 17TH, 1994: ZULU KING DEMANDS INDEPENDENCE AND RETURN OF LAND

On 17 January 1994 FW de Klerk met in his offices at the Union Buildings in Pretoria with the Zulu king, Goodwill Zwelithini, Chief Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi, several Zulu royal princes and IFP leaders. The king, who had increasingly begun to identify himself with the positions taken by the IFP, addressed between 35,000 – 60,000 Zulu warriors (dressed in their traditional tribal regalia and bearing their traditional weapons) who had gathered peacefully on the extensive lawns below the Union Buildings.

The IFP, which from its inception had aligned itself with the interests of the Zulu traditional leadership, opposed the centralized structure of the new constitutional dispensation adopted by the MPNF, fearing that it would marginalize Zulu interests, reduce provincial autonomy (especially in Natal/KwaZulu), and diminish the role of the Zulu monarchy.

The core Zulu position focused on self-determination, sovereignty, and protections for Zulu identity and institutions. Key demands included:

- **Recognition of Zulu sovereignty and self-determination**: The king declared that the Zulu nation had an indisputable claim to sovereignty; he rejected the interim constitution as unrepresentative and non-binding on the Zulu people and demanded the right for them to determine their own destiny outside of the Interim Constitution’s unitary, majoritarian framework.
- **Restoration or protection of the Zulu monarchy's status**: The delegation sought constitutional guarantees for the Zulu king's role, including recognition of the monarchy as a sovereign (or at least semi-sovereign) constitutional entity, potentially with special powers in KwaZulu/Natal.
- **Greater autonomy for the region (federalism or special status)**: This encompassed stronger provincial powers for Natal/KwaZulu, resistance to full integration into a centralized post-Apartheid state, and opposition to the dilution of Zulu homeland (KwaZulu) structures.
- **Land and territorial control**: This was framed around reclaiming or securing Zulu territorial integrity against anticipated ANC/government centralization.

The king emphasized that the negotiations had excluded adequate Zulu representation and that the Zulu people would not accept a constitution denying their historical rights. He positioned the demands as a peaceful claim but warned of readiness to pursue Zulu independence if necessary (a theme that we will see would seriously escalate in subsequent weeks).

### 11.3.76 LATE JANUARY 1994: SADF GENERAL STAFF WARN ABOUT RIGHT-WING THREAT

In late January 1994 the General Staff of the SADF provided an ominous assessment about the potential national security implications of the volatile political climate in the lead-up to South Africa's first democratic elections scheduled for 27 April 1994. This assessment was presented directly to President De Klerk. It was framed as an

urgent security briefing, drawing from intelligence reports on right-wing mobilization. The briefing focused on the escalating mood of fear (leading to increasingly radical political posturing and pre-emptive planning) visible in the white communities, particularly among rural Afrikaners, and thus the potential for the radical white right to disrupt or derail the transition process through violence, sabotage, or even a coup attempt.

Conservative white groups organized under umbrellas like the Afrikaner Volksfront (AVF) and the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) were demanding an autonomous Afrikaner *volkstaat* (homeland) and threatening boycotts or armed insurrection if their demands went unmet. These groups, drawing support mostly from rural Afrikaner farmers and former SADF/SAP personnel, had mobilized through structures like the Volkseenheidskomitee (Vekom), established by retired SADF generals after the April 1993 assassination of Chris Hani. Tensions were "febrile," as described in contemporary reports, with right-wing rhetoric escalating to vows of defiance, civil disobedience, and violence to resist the elections.

The SADF, as the primary statutory military force, was tasked with maintaining stability during this period. However, according to the General Staff internal divisions within the military (stemming from loyalty to the old Apartheid order versus support for De Klerk's reforms) complicated matters.

The SADF General Staff in their briefing to De Klerk described an "extremely dangerous security situation" among whites, especially rural Afrikaners, who felt alienated by the rapid pace of reforms and feared loss of cultural and economic autonomy under majority rule. They highlighted widespread discontent, with groups like the AVF and AWB arming supporters, stockpiling weapons, forming paramilitary units (e.g., the Volksleër or "people's army"), and planning sabotage, bombings, and attacks on black communities to provoke racial conflict or civil war. The radical right was deemed a "credible threat" to the negotiation process and elections, potentially through coordinated assaults on "liberated zones," occupation of police stations, or broader insurrection. The generals noted that while the top echelons of the SADF remained loyal to De Klerk and supportive of the elections, lower ranks and rural-based units were vulnerable to right-wing influence.

A core concern raised by the General Staff was in fact the loyalty of SADF officers and personnel. The briefing stated that the loyalty of up to 40% of the officer corps was in doubt, raising the spectre of defections or a right-wing coup attempt. This was particularly alarming given the involvement of retired generals like Constand Viljoen (former SADF chief) in leading the AVF, which could sway active-duty personnel. (De Wet Potgieter wrote that it was estimated in security circles that the BKA/Volksleër could count on the support of as much as 60% of total SADF personnel, i.e., of all ranks).

Details of the SADF General Staff briefing to President De Klerk were leaked to the Afrikaans newspaper *Rapport* shortly after, amplifying public awareness.

## 11.3.77 JANUARY 29/30TH, 1994: BIG AVF RALLY IN PRETORIA; IFP SPECIAL CONFERENCE IN ULUNDI

The AVF rally in the Skilpadsaal on the Pretoria Showgrounds on 29 January 1994 drew an estimated **10,000** right-wing Afrikaners from the AVF's various member organisations such as the CP and AWB. It was a daylong mass meeting intended to rally support for Afrikaner self-determination and resistance to the impending transition. Delegates and attendees renewed demands for a separate Afrikaner volkstaat and explicitly rejected participation in the upcoming multiracial elections, which they viewed as constituting a grave threat (under subsequent ANC majority rule) to Afrikaner identity, culture, and autonomy.

As the key decision of the day, the crowd voted to establish a Transitional Assembly (essentially a "government-in-waiting") for the proposed volkstaat. This body was meant to prepare for and advocate the creation of an independent or autonomous Afrikaner entity, working outside the formal negotiation process (i.e., talking directly with the NP and especially with the ANC/SACP). Speakers warned that if peaceful negotiations for a homeland failed, then violence could not be ruled out.

General Constand Viljoen, seen as relatively moderate among hardline right-wingers, also addressed the crowd. He proposed that AVF members consider participating in the elections strategically – to demonstrate political strength and potentially gain leverage for volkstaat concessions. This suggestion was met with strong opposition: attendees jeered, shouted him down, and chanted demands like "we want war" and similar militant slogans. This reaction highlighted internal divisions within the right wing — between pragmatic negotiators (like Viljoen) and uncompromising militants (influenced by groups like the AWB) who favoured confrontation or armed resistance if talks over a volkstaat failed. There was also division over where the Afrikaner Volkstaat should be located: the AWB favoured claiming the entirety of and re-establishing the Boer republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State, while more moderates favoured a patchwork of “viable” areas, with Pretoria and lands to the east of it as heartland.

**The IFP’s big rally/conference** on the next day (30 January 1994) was held in Ulundi, the capital of the KwaZulu homeland. It was a high-stakes gathering of IFP leaders and supporters amid the IFP's ongoing boycott threats against the upcoming elections. The party, led by Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi (then Chief Minister of KwaZulu and traditional prime minster to the Zulu king), demanded greater provincial autonomy in the interim constitution, fearing that ANC dominance at central government level would lead to the dismantling of KwaZulu structures and undermine Zulu traditional authority.

In his address to the IFP congress, Buthelezi urged followers to prepare for an election boycott and adopt "the politics of resistance" if demands for constitutional changes (e.g., stronger federal elements) were not met. He described the interim constitution as an "instrument for Inkatha's destruction" designed to entrench ANC power. The tone of the gathering signalled that traditionalist Zulu hardliners were gaining ground within the IFP, rejecting compromise and aligning with the broader Freedom Alliance (including right-wing groups like the AVF) to oppose the transition.

### 11.3.78 FEBRUARY 1ST, 1994: DE KLERK MEETS AGAIN WITH THE ZULU KING, IN PRETORIA

Matters with especially the Zulus continued to escalate in February 1994, thanks to a high-stakes Zulu/IFP strategy of leveraging the monarchy's cultural authority to extract concessions even as the time till the elections grew shorter and shorter. As De Klerk described in *The Last Trek*: “*I quickly convened a meeting to allow the king to clarify this new demand* (i.e. for autonomy and land restoration)*. He arrived at the Union Buildings accompanied by senior Zulu princes. In response to my queries about the deadlock in the working group, he informed me quite blandly that he had come to see me in Pretoria to claim his right to his kingdom. He said that because the ANC had never accepted the idea of a genuine federation, the Zulus would have to make other arrangements to secure their right to self-determination. All the other nations of Africa had achieved their freedom, some through peaceful means and some through the barrel of a gun. Now it was the turn of the Zulus*”.

### 11.3.79 FEBRUARY 2ND, 1994: ANC ACCEPTS NP PROPOSAL FOR BRINGING FA ON BOARD

On 2 February 1994, after weeks of intensive bilateral bargaining between the NP and ANC, the government's negotiating team made proposals to the ANC for amendments to the Interim Constitution which were designed to facilitate the participation of the main election boycotters (the Freedom Alliance – the IFP and AVF) in the election and transition. The ANC agreed to drop its earlier opposition to important aspects of the proposal and, together with the NP, accepted a legislative package that it was hoped would attract at least some of the parties in the FA to participate. The proposal included writing into the Interim Constitution a principle recognising a (conditional) right to self-determination and related thereto, a mechanism for giving consideration to the establishment of a *volkstaat* for Afrikaner nationalists.

The compromise package agreed in principle between the ANC and NP also included provisions to strengthen the powers and functions of provinces and a constitutional principle that would ensure that these powers would in essence be maintained after the election, in the hope that this would open the door for the IFP to participate in the elections. De Klerk subsequently convened the “old” parliament to give effect to this. The relevant amendments (after urgently working their way through the normally slow legislative process), was finally promulgated on 3 March 1994.

In the meanwhile, the ANC/SACP and NP Government continued apace, on a bilateral basis, to work together discreetly to ensure that the transition process as encapsulated in the Interim Constitution could be smoothly implemented at the technical-administrative level. A high-level bilateral planning meeting between the ANC/SACP and NP Government was held on 11 and 12 February 1994, where it was agreed to establish a joint "Technical Committee for the Implementation of the Transitional Constitution" headed by Roelf Meyer and Cyril Ramaphosa who were to take overall responsibility for the transition's coordination and implementation as another function of the Channel. It was further agreed that Valli Moosa, secretary of the ANC's negotiating commission, and Dr Niël Barnard would act as the joint coordinators and project managers of the transition. Their task was to identify and set up sub-councils for the various functional areas of action as provided for in the Transitional Constitution and to ensure their successful functioning.

## 11.3.80 FEBRUARY 14TH, 1994: ZULU KING DEMANDS KINGDOM BE RESTORED "AS IN 1838"

In the light of the escalating crisis with the Zulu royals and IFP, on 14 February 1994 FW de Klerk and Zulu king Goodwill Zwelithini met in the Durban City Hall for three hours in private session, amid a large public gathering outside (estimated of 50,000+ Zulu supporters, many armed with traditional weapons like spears and shields, which created a tense atmosphere marked by a heavy police presence). In a memorandum presented during the talks, Zwelithini dramatically escalated demands far beyond previous calls for regional autonomy or special status, which demands he echoed in his address to the crowd. He declared his readiness to unilaterally establish an independent Zulu state or kingdom, restoring Zulu sovereignty "as it was in 1838", referring to the pre-colonial era before British colonization and the Anglo-Zulu War, when the Zulu kingdom under kings Shaka, Dingane, and his successors was fully sovereign.

Specifically, the king demanded:

- Exclusive control over the KwaZulu homeland and the entire province of Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal).
- Recognition of the Zulu monarchy as a sovereign entity outside the interim constitution's framework.
- Rejection of the emerging centralised post-Apartheid state, arguing that Zulu interests had been inadequately represented during the negotiations.

De Klerk responded cautiously in public statements afterward, saying that he would consult his Cabinet and formally reply later (on 17 February). He suggested that the Interim Constitution could still be amended for "special needs" but did not endorse Zulu independence. (The NP government viewed full secession as unrealistic and unacceptable, given the ANC/SACP's opposition and the risk of fragmenting the transition).

## 11.3.81 FEBRUARY 20TH, 1994: JUDGE GOLDSTONE SHARES UPCOMING VLAKPLAAS REVELATIONS WITH FW DE KLERK

Judge Richard Goldstone (the Goldstone Commission) asked to meet privately on 20 February 1994 in Pretoria with President De Klerk and Justice Minister Kobie Coetsee to share disturbing preliminary findings from an interim inquiry focused on criminal political violence by elements within the South African Police (SAP), KwaZulu Police (KZP), and IFP. He informed De Klerk and Coetsee of *prima facie* evidence linking senior SAP officers (including high-ranking generals) to "third force" operations, including weapon supply to the IFP, as well as orchestration of violence in KwaZulu-Natal, plus attempts to obstruct the commission itself. The Vlakplaas farm located between Pretoria and Johannesburg, which served as base for SAP-SB counter-insurgency forces, featured prominently as the operational hub for many of these activities, with evidence of hit squads, arms smuggling, and direct involvement in atrocities.

Goldstone's briefing was intended to allow De Klerk time to prepare for the fallout before public release of this information. Goldstone expressed concern that such activities could only have occurred with high-level knowledge, permission, or at least wilful blindness from parts of the government/security establishment.

De Klerk and Coetsee were reportedly shocked by the allegations' gravity; as evidenced by De Klerk's own description of this meeting: "*On Sunday, 20 February 1994 Judge Goldstone came to see me and Mr Kobie Coetsee, the minister of justice and defence, at Libertas, my official residence in Pretoria. During our meeting he provided us with stark and disturbing confirmation of the existence of such activities. His revelations were based*

*on the testimony of a former member of the police's notorious Vlakplaas Unit - which had been officially disbanded two years earlier*".

That Goldstone was right to anticipate serious fallout, was amply confirmed when his findings were made public on 18 March 1994 (see below)

## 11.3.82 FEBRUARY 28TH, 1994: PARLIAMENT AMENDS INTERIM CONSTITUTION TO FACILITATE FREEDOM ALLIANCE PARTICIPATION

As De Klerk had promised, he reconvened Parliament to adopt amendments to the Interim Constitution stemming from the package of measures agreed between the NP and ANC on 2 February (to try and entice FA parties to participate). This De Klerk did unilaterally, without any prior commitment from the parties of the Freedom Alliance that the new package would satisfy their demands. On 28 February, in a key speech, De Klerk stated that the amendments enacted had in his estimation addressed all the FA's reasonable concerns.

## 11.3.83 MARCH 7-11TH 1994: BIG TROUBLE BREWS IN MMABATHO

In March 1994 a series of events unfolded in Mmabatho, the capital of Bophuthatswana, the nominally independent homeland of the Tswana tribe with Chief Lucas Mangope (allied with the FA) as its president. These events brought the transition onto a knife's edge, from whence it would topple towards either:

- and armed showdown between an awkwardly caught State and significantly empowered white right-wingers with their tails up; or
- embarrassment and a chastening for the right-wingers when faced with reality.

As earlier indicated, the BKA/Volksleër had been making definite preparations for war: drawing up plans, stealing arms, training and equipping fighters, and even arranging for rear base areas with Jonas Savimbi in Angola. According the Niël Barnard: "*In 1993, more than 164 training camps were held across the length and breadth of the country; from beginner training to advanced courses in espionage, explosives handling, and sniper training…*"

In March 1994 Mangope formally requested General Viljoen and the BKA to come to his assistance, with the promise of constituting and equipping them as part of Bop's statutory forces. What this turn of events in Mmabatho was presenting the BKA with, was an opportunity to have such a rear base much closer to their own heartland. Which would mean that they would be able to force a showdown with the SA Government (who would be caught in a legally tricky dilemma, because of the sovereign independence of Bophuthatswana under South African law) and which would furthermore confront the SADF and SAP with a psychologically-difficult decision, if ordered by the NP Government to go in and "take out" their former brothers-in-arms now ensconced in Bop as a well-armed, nominally legitimate statutory force of an independent state – a Tswana volkstaat…

It is, therefore, not an exaggeration to say that Mmabatho in March 1994 determined whether South Africa fell into civil war, or (as fortunately transpired) went on to hold inclusive elections leading to a successful conclusion of its transition. Because of this importance, I'm going to provide ample information about what transpired – in the form of De Klerk's own observations in his autobiography, and De Wet Potgieter's account (who had viewed the events from the "other side", namely that of the BKA).

In "The Last Trek" De Klerk wrote: "*At the beginning of March 1994, the Bophuthatswana government was still steadfastly refusing to allow parties to campaign for the elections in its territory or to make facilities available to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). During the first week of March this had led to serious unrest in Bophuthatswana as supporters of the ANC and other parties began to agitate to be allowed to participate in the elections. On 8 March we considered the deteriorating situation during a meeting of the cabinet committee dealing with security and intelligence affairs and decided to put the security forces on alert in case they might be required to restore order. We also made an urgent appeal to the Bophuthatswana government to become a full participant in the constitutional process, including the proposed election.*

"*As the chaos in Bophuthatswana increased, Mangope called on paramilitary forces led by his Freedom Alliance ally, General Constand Viljoen, for assistance. The plan was that General Viljoen's force of about 3,000 men would gather at the airport near Mmabatho, the capital of Bophuthatswana. They would be issued with arms by the*

*Bophuthatswana Defence Force and would then restore order. However, they were beaten to the mark by the ultra-rightist Afrikaanse Weerstandsbewing (AWB) of Eugene Terre'Blanche. Despite a specific request from the Bophuthatswana government that the AWB should not be involved in the operation, Terre'Blanche could not resist the opportunity of unleashing his much-vaunted Iron Guard troops on the territory. In reality, they were a bunch of ill-disciplined and poorly organized racists. Hundreds of bearded and khaki-uniformed AWB soldiers rolled into Bophuthatswana in their family cars and bakkies (pick-up trucks). By this time the crowds in Mmabatho had begun to loot stores and there was general chaos in the town. The violence was further exacerbated when the AWB force began shooting people in the town at random.*

"*The AWB invasion and the presence of General Viljoen's men triggered a mutiny in the ranks of the Bophuthatswana security forces. Two wounded AWB supporters were shot dead in front of international TV cameras by one of the Bophuthatswana soldiers. The pictures were carried on SABC TV that night and did much to expose the tragic farce of the AWB's invasion and to undermine support for right-wing violence. Faced with the chaotic intervention of the AWB, without the promised help and arms from the Bophuthatswana Defence Force and with the SADF standing at the ready to intervene, General Viljoen had little choice but to order his men to return to South Africa.*

"*By the end of the day Mangope had lost control of his country. The following day, 12 March 1994, a delegation from the TEC was sent to see him at his country home at Motsoedi, to which he had retreated from the chaos in Mmabatho. The delegation was led by Foreign Minister Pik Botha. He informed Mangope bluntly on behalf of the South African government and the TEC that he was no longer in power. He was soon replaced by two administrators appointed by the TEC".*

*De Klerk concluded: "…it had been a narrow escape. If General Viljoen's operation had not been sabotaged by the precipitate action of the AWB and if he had been able to re-establish order in Bophuthatswana at the invitation of a government to which we still gave legal recognition, we would have been confronted with a very serious situation. Under such circumstances would we have been prepared to send the SADF in to seize control of the country? And would they have been prepared to fire on their former comrades and their former commander?"*

De Wet Potgieter (in "*Kwart voor 'n Bloedbad*", translated from the Afrikaans) related the events from the AVF perspective: "*Following the information about large-scale uprisings and looting planned for the Bop capital, the AVF was approached to help stabilize the country. Viljoen received permission from the AVF's Exco to begin mobilizing its military force, the BKA.*

"(General Tienie) *Groenewald was present with Douw Steyn at the planning meeting where Viljoen telephonically forbade Terre'Blanche from participating in the operation. Hartzenberg was also there and took the phone from Viljoen and repeated the instruction very clearly*.

"*According to Viljoen, at that stage they were already offering secret military training nationwide. 'We focused especially on the BKA members and we kept a database on the computer of the men who were willing to help. The reasons for this were that we did not trust De Klerk at all, were not sure whether we could trust Mandela and the ANC and got involved in the negotiations at a very late stage – so late that we decided not to participate in the Codesa negotiations at Kempton Park, but rather to talk directly to the ANC. It was clear that they, and not the NP, had the upper hand*.'

"*By the beginning of March 1994, the Front already had a force of 50 000 able-bodied men available for the fight. They were all highly disciplined and reliable BKA members but only lightly armed. 'In contrast to the BKA, the AWB was a poorly disciplined movement. The AVF's military capabilities were based in the BKA and most of their members were also in the commandos'," Viljoen explained*.

"*He also told how the commissioner of police, Johan van der Merwe, and Gen. Basie Smit came to speak to him with the words: 'Colleague, we just came to tell you that we know about everything you are planning. We also want to tell you that we get the information very easily.' They informed Viljoen that their agents simply targeted the*

*hangouts around the AVF's meeting places and then sat down and listened to the AWB's talk about what they were up to.*

"*According to Viljoen, they also received information at that stage that the De Klerk government planned to arrest 5 000 BKA members and intern them in specific prisons if it appeared that the right-wingers were going to disrupt the election. 'This gave us a good indication of what was going on. While I had full confidence in the BKA, I distrusted the AWB'.*

"*Viljoen, Leonard Venter, Vercueil, Piet Uys, Douw Steyn and Michael de Klerk flew to Mmabatho again. During the (Bop) cabinet meeting, it was decided to allow the BKA into the country to assist the Bop security forces in stabilising the country. It was expressly requested that the AWB should not be involved. It was further decided that the* (Mmabatho) *air force base would be the assembly point from which the planning would be done. Turner* (Chief of the Bop defence force) *had to arrange for the BKA to be supplied with weapons and ammunition. Mangope wanted to know how many men the BKA had available. 'We told him 28 000 members,' says Vercueil.*

*"At around six o'clock that evening, Viljoen called Vercueil and gave the green light to move in so that the leading column could be in Bophuthatswana by first light the following morning. As requested by Mangope, the purpose of the operation was to give the Bop parliament the opportunity to decide on the way forward. 'There was never an intention to go to war,' said Vercueil. The troops were still arranging for their departure from a farm outside Pretoria when he received a call from BKA members that the AWB were gathering in Lichtenburg and preparing to go to Bophuthatswana as well. He gave Douw Steyn instructions to stop the AWB and warn them that they were not welcome in Bophuthatswana. Steyn left quickly, but when he arrived in Lichtenburg, the AWB had already left. He and a few patrols then tried to catch up with the units. When they arrived in Mmabatho, the BKA immediately dispersed the rioters and tried to stabilize things. The AWB must have taken a detour, because Steyn did not encounter them on the way.*

*"AWB goes on a rampage: Upon their arrival in Mmabatho, AWB members began to shoot wildly at the public. This had a very negative impact on the residents, the army and the police. Steyn intervened and ordered the AWB to go to the air force base, which was the assembly point and control centre. Angry soldiers of the Bop army moved summarily to their bases, locked all the white commanders and officers in their offices, seized the keys to the weapons safes, unlocked the safes, collected ammunition and distributed guns and ammunition to the local population. This action disrupted the good cooperation between the BKA and the Bop police and army. The result was that the Bop cabinet decision to provide BKA members with weapons and ammunition was not adhered to.*

*"That entire day, Terre'Blanche's heavily armed men roamed the streets of Mmabatho and Mafikeng, shooting wildly at innocent civilians, forcing journalists' cars off the roads, assaulting and intimidating them, and simply ripping rolls of film from their cameras.*

*"When Vercueil, Breytenbach and Piet Uys arrived from Wonderboom Airport in Mmabatho to join their people, they were shocked to hear of the AWB fiasco. At that stage, BKA members were still arriving in their hundreds and by the end there were 1 500 BKA members in the base. Brig. Jorrie Jordaan, the acting commander of the Bophuthatswana Defence Force, arrived at the base and requested the farmers to return to South Africa immediately...*

*"Vercueil and Hartzenberg went to see the president (Mangope) at his traditional home. Cronjé, Turner and four other cabinet members were present. Mangope expressed his dismay at the AWB and said he had expressly requested that they not enter his country..."*

As the situation deteriorated and the population of Mmabatho turned ever more fiercely against the AWB, Terre'Blanche's "troops" were ordered to go to the local air base (where the BKA men had been converging).

Potgieter's account continued*: "At the airbase, Terre'Blanche's "fighting general" (veggeneraal), Alex Cruywagen, was chased away with his tail between his legs by (Colonel Jan) Breytenbach when Cruywagen, full of bravado, rushed in with his men, jumped on a ladder and announced that he was "the general in command". Anyone who*

*knows Jan Breytenbach well knows that this seasoned soldier does not tolerate nonsense..."* Breytenbach later escribed his heated argument with the AWB "general" to Potgieter: *'I told the chap: 'Your guys have no discipline, pêl,' "At this, Nic Fourie – one of the two AWB members who were later shot dead – apparently intervened and asked Breytenbach: 'How dare you talk to my commandant-general like that?'*

*"Breytenbach then recommended that the AWB men leave Mmabatho on back roads with the help of guides, but the group ignored the guides and raced out of the base while firing shots into the air like cowboys. 'And then they buggered straight through town again and that same big mouth Fourie was sitting in the back of the Mercedes and shooting wildly at innocent residents walking along the road'."*

With the SADF also now engaging, having sent an armoured column to the air base to stabilise the situation, an escape route back to "South African territory" for the AWB men was arranged, but again they followed their own heads and decided to drive straight back through Mmabatho. It was then that three of them were shot to death execution-style by Bop policeman Ontlametse Bernstein Menyatsoe, in front of the world's cameras.

*Potgieter relates: "With the total chaos and anarchy that erupted in the streets of Mmabatho and Mafikeng on Friday, 11 March 1994, the AWB's armed invaders played right into the hands of the ANC in making the country ungovernable and bringing down Mangope's government. This happened at noon when Mangope's last loyal soldiers in the elite parachute battalion also began to mutiny due to the bossy and defiant attitude of Terre'Blanche's AWB invaders."*

*"The late Kevin Carter, the internationally acclaimed Reuters photographer and member of the famous "Bang Bang Club" about whom a film was later made, described his experience as the AWB men pleaded for their lives, crying and begging, "Please God, help us!" before being shot in cold blood. According to soldiers at the scene, the Bop troops started shooting because the whites were shooting 'innocent people.'*

*"Nic Fourie, one of Terre'Blanche's 'generals' from Natal, died first, lying next to the Mercedes...*

*"The events in Mmabatho were the turning point of the impending civil war in South Africa. These events sent shockwaves around the world. The Pretoria News' foreign correspondent in London summed up the international sentiment about the cold-blooded murders very well in an in-depth article a few days after the incident. The headline was: 'Is this the beginning of bloodshed, or the end?' Almost every television station in Europe broadcast the gruesome scenes of riots, looting and the bloody execution of the AWB men in Bophuthatswana. The civil war in Bosnia was forgotten for a while…*

*"Even before the invasion, it was clear that the BKA would encounter problems with the undisciplined AWB members who simply refused to stand under Douw Steyn's command, as agreed. 'General' Nic Fourie was one of the two AWB delegates who attended the order group in the TLU council chamber in Silverton on 9 March 1994 – two days before the invasion. The very same 'general' was then shot in a dusty street in Mafikeng. 'The execution was the death knell for the 'brave' AWBs who so loved to talk war. Tails between their legs, the bunch of cowards then tried to flee Bophuthatswana,' were (Dries) Bruwer's harsh words about the Battle of Mmabatho…*

*"… 'I had received a call from a contact in Bophuthatswana's military intelligence the previous night just after midnight to tell me that the AWB had just entered Bophuthatswana's territory. According to him, they had stopped the AWB led by Terre'Blanche at Rooigrond and warned them not to enter the country. 'Terre'Blanche is drunk and refuses to listen to reason,' were his words to me.*

*"It was clear that the AWB had caused incalculable damage in Mmabatho and the situation had become so critical that a way had to be found to get the BKA members safely out of the country. The homeland had turned into a powder keg. 'It was pointless for the BKA to stay in Mmabatho any longer,' said Bruwer. 'The AWB had enraged the people of Bophuthatswana and the Bop Defence Force was fed up with whites. The invasion had caused an irreparable breach of trust.' It was then agreed with* (SADF general Georg) *Meiring that the BKA would move out of Mmabatho using specific routes and that the deployed South African troops would not hinder them. All that*

*remained for Viljoen, as a dedicated fighting general, was to ensure that his troops could move safely out of the danger zone.*

*"(General Tienie) Groenewald described the situation between the BKA members in the air base and the SADF as follows: 'The SADF surrounded the air base with Ratel IFV's equipped with 20-mm cannons. Many of the men then experienced for the first time what it felt like to be confronted by professional soldiers and to stare into the barrels of such big cannons. The situation was extremely explosive. It was indeed brother against brother standing and staring each other in the face, on the brink of a civil war. It must have been a powerless and shocking disillusionment for many of them. The farmers of the BKA were not there to wage war, but to stabilize the country. And here they were trapped, armed with small arms, against De Klerk's big cannons that could let loose upon them at any moment."*

*"On the plane back* (from Mmabatho to Pretoria)*, Constand Viljoen told Jan Breytenbach that he would register for the election that very same evening. 'I told him: 'Yes, General, I think it's the right thing for you to do.'"*

*" 'What happened in Mmabatho is to this day a terrible embarrassment to me', General Constand Viljoen sums up those events. 'It made me realise that the salvation of the Afrikaner lies not in chaos, but in negotiation. According to Viljoen, in Mmabatho he came to the terrible realisation that it would be suicide if he had to lead the AVF and its alliance partners into armed struggle against the government. 'I came to the realisation that I owed it to my people to prevent a genocide.'*

*(General Georg) Meiring feels that many people were misled by the BKA leadership with promises of a successful popular uprising against De Klerk's winds of change. 'I really didn't want to see a massacre like in Bosnia,' Meiring said. 'In any case, we were still the skunk of the world at that time and no one would have tolerated such a* (right-wing) *revolution and takeover of the government'."*

*Potgieter quotes Dr. Jakkie Cilliers of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) where the latter summarised the events in Mbabatho as follows in his research paper "From Pariah to Partner": "The country has come back from the brink of civil war. March 1994 in Bophuthatswana was decisive for the country. It was the turning point in modern South Africa."*

## 11.3.84 MARCH 14TH, 1994: GEN VILJOEN BREAKS WITH FA, SUBMITS FF CANDIDATE LIST FOR ELECTION

In an interview with Padraig O'Malley in June 1995, General Constand Viljoen explained the reasons why he in the end opted to submit a candidate list to the IEC (Independent Electoral Commission) on 14 March 1994, thereby committing to participating in the election. He had, on the 4th of March already (as then a tactical move) registered the name "Freedom Front" for his party, a combination of "Freedom" from the Freedom Alliance and "Front" from Afrikaner Volksfront. It will be recalled that on 29 January 1994 at the Skilpadsaal right-wing rally he had already toyed publicly with the idea of participating in the elections as a move to demonstrate political strength and relevance – which had caused him to be roundly booed by the radicals in the hall such as the AWB.

Viljoen started out his explanation to O'Malley with reference to what had happened in Mmabatho: *"So it was then agreed between me and Mr Mangope and his defence force that we will send the farmers unarmed to Bophuthatswana and then they will come under the command of the Bophuthatswana Defence Force, they will be armed by them and then they will carry out the task as required by the Chief of the then Bophuthatswana Defence Force.*

*"The AWB, notwithstanding the fact that they were warned by Dr Hartzenberg not to go to the area decided to go in any case and then they went into the area with the disastrous results well known all over the world at this stage. Now this was not the final, well maybe it was one of the final aspects convincing me of the dangers of this kind of operation considering the insurrection of the AWB because had I, for example, decided to go for the larger operation, and that is to seize a volkstaat and to defend the volkstaat, then I would again run the risk of the AWB following their own agenda as they have done at the World Trade Centre on 25th June in the previous year and as they have done in Bophuthatswana.*

*"That evening going back I realised that with the AWB as a military factor all the goodwill of the farming part of my forces would be nullified by the actions, or the ill-discipline, of the AWB. Therefore, a military operation would in any case have been ridiculous but that was not the only reason. I had some other reasons too and that is mainly the economic side, the financial side. Dr "Hartzenberg himself had committees appointed and they calculated that financially such a volkstaat if we grabbed it by force would only be able to last for about three weeks and then financially it would either have to raise its own taxes within three weeks which is virtually impossible or it would be choked to death financially. Considering also the dangers of political isolation as we have had before with such a small tiny volkstaat, considering the effect which, for example, economic sanctions such as cutting off power, such as cutting off diesel and fuel, such as preventing the farmers from the volkstaat to deliver their products at the markets and so on, considering all that together with the inadvisability from the poor performance of the AWB in Bophuthatswana, I then decided that it was certainly not the right time for this kind of operation.*

*"In any case, and I think this is the most important reason, that had we gone for a military option then – after the military option – in any case you will have to sit around a table again and discuss the future of South Africa because we share this country together with the other people and whatever road you take eventually you have to sit around the table to discuss the pros and cons of self-determination and had you taken the road of violence we would have killed a lot of their people and they would have killed a lot of our people and it certainly would have hardened the attitudes of many, many people for the whole negotiation process."*

## 11.3.85 MARCH 18TH, 1994: GOLDSTONE REPORT ON VLAKPLAAS MADE PUBLIC

The Goldstone Commission's interim report on "*Criminal Political Violence by Elements within the South African Police, the KwaZulu Police and the Inkatha Freedom Party*" was publicly released on 18 March 1994. This was, by his own admission, one of the most difficult (and damaging) moments for President FW de Klerk in the final six weeks before the 27 April 1994 election.

As mentioned earlier, Judge Richard Goldstone had already privately briefed De Klerk and Justice Minister Kobie Coetsee on 20 February about the emerging evidence. By mid-March the Commission had received explosive testimony from protected witnesses (including former Vlakplaas operatives who had in the meanwhile been spirited away to Denmark for safety).

Goldstone decided to release the findings before the election to pre-empt conspiracy theories and accusations of a cover-up. Judge Goldstone released the report at a joint press conference with De Klerk at the Union Buildings at 6pm on the 18th of March 1994. He described what the Commission had uncovered as "*a horrible network of criminal activity*". Key points he highlighted were that:

- *Prima facie* evidence existed that senior SAP officers had been running a "third force" operation aimed at destabilising the transition by making the country "ungovernable".
- The operation centred on Vlakplaas (the Security Branch farm outside Pretoria), which served as the logistical hub for manufacturing, purchasing, smuggling and distributing large quantities of weapons (mainly AK-47s and hand grenades captured from former Eastern Bloc or Koevoet stocks) to Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) structures, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal and the Transvaal.
- Direct links between Vlakplaas operatives (including Col Eugene de Kock and his COIN unit) and political murders, train violence, vigilante actions and attempts to subvert the Goldstone Commission's own investigation.
- Specific senior officers were named as having "masterminded" or at least knowingly participated in these activities. The three most senior officers explicitly implicated were:
  Lt-Gen. Basie Smit – Head of the SAP-SB.
  Maj-Gen. Krappies Engelbrecht – Head of the counter-intelligence / Criminal intelligence division of the SAP-SB.
  Lt-Gen. Johan le Roux – Head of the SAP detective branch, the CID.

The report amplified ANC criticisms of ongoing "third force" activities, eroded public trust in the security forces, and complicated the election buildup amid other crises (such as the Bophuthatswana and Zulu tensions). The report spurred the creation of a TEC-appointed task force (reporting on 22 March) that corroborated hit-squad activities.

President De Klerk's own recollections highlight the seriousness of the situation: "*At 9.00 a.m. on 18 March, Judge Goldstone came to see me at the Union Buildings to discuss the publication of the report that he had drawn up as a result of his investigation. I had asked Hernus Kriel, the minister of law and order, and General Van der Merwe, the commissioner of the police to be present. Both of them – as well as Nelson Mandela – had already been briefed by Goldstone on the broad nature of the investigation.*

*"During their previous meeting General Van der Merwe had assured Judge Goldstone of his full co-operation in the investigation and had been given credit for this in Goldstone's report. However, as Judge Goldstone apprised the meeting of the main findings of the investigation, General Van der Merwe became progressively and visibly upset. In particular, he could not accept the allegations that had been made against his close colleagues, Generals Basie Smit and Johan le Roux - although he was less adamant in his defence of General Krappies Engelbrecht. He claimed that the evidence against them was unsubstantiated and objected strenuously to the inclusion of their names in the report.*

*"At 2.00 p.m. I met again with Judge Goldstone to discuss the finalization and release of his report. We decided that the best method of doing so would be to hold a joint press conference that evening.*

*"At 6.00 p.m. we gathered in the large wood-panelled circular conference room at the Union Buildings which we used for major press conferences. I was flanked by Judge Goldstone, Minister Hernus Kriel, General Van der Merwe and Dave Steward who, as government spokesman, introduced the proceedings. I announced that all those who had been implicated in the report – including the three generals – would be immediately placed on leave pending further investigations and that, where appropriate, cases would be referred to the attorneys-general for possible prosecution.*

*"After the press conference I returned to Libertas for drinks with a few friends and members of my family who had gathered there. It was my 58th birthday.*

*"General Van der Merwe had begun to show extreme reluctance to carry out my instruction that those implicated in the report should be placed on immediate leave. He informed me that he had received advice that he could not do so without first completing all the necessary formalities, which included consultations with the officers concerned. In fact, he had been deeply angered by the report and by what he regarded as unsubstantiated allegations against his close and senior colleagues, Generals Smit and Le Roux. He made little secret of his feelings or of his low opinion of Judge Goldstone.*

*"On 22 March I issued a statement in which I made it clear that if General Van der Merwe's consultations did not soon lead to a satisfactory outcome, the minister of law and order might have to intervene and suspend the officers concerned. Three days later the generals were temporarily withdrawn from service. In deciding my reaction to the Goldstone report, I had considered not only its contents, but also the national interest and the sound custom that police officers should be withdrawn from service – pending investigation – if serious allegations had been made against them."*

## 11.3.86 MARCH 26TH, 1994: IFP ALLOWS IEC ELECTION PREPARATION IN KWAZULU

By late March 1994, the IFP was still officially boycotting the multi-party process and threatening to boycott the 27 April elections, demanding greater provincial autonomy (especially for KwaZulu-Natal), recognition of the Zulu monarchy, and other concessions. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) for its part, was under intense pressure to set up voter registration, polling stations, voter education, and monitoring in KwaZulu-Natal (a high-violence area and IFP stronghold), but IFP/KwaZulu resistance was blocking access and cooperation.

Accordingly, De Klerk, Roelf Meyer, and Natal NP leader Danie Schutte on 26 March 1994 met in Durban with Buthelezi and some of his top advisors for talks focused on de-escalating tensions and securing practical cooperation. As De Klerk later wrote: "*Our meeting was, for once, a success*". Specifically, the IFP agreed (at least in principle) to allow the IEC to begin preparatory work inside the KwaZulu homeland, including deploying staff, identifying sites, and facilitating voter registration.

The Durban meeting was a necessary formal step to enable IEC logistics in KwaZulu amid the boycott threat. Informally, in semi-secret talks between the NP Government and the Zulu royals, the concept of securing traditional Zulu communal land via a trust (later to be named the Ingonyama Trust) under the control of the reigning Zulu king was quietly evolving as a parallel incentive. The De Klerk/Buthelezi meeting of March 26th wasn't explicitly "linked" to the separate Trust talks, but together these fitted into the multi-layered pressure-and-compromise strategy that ultimately produced the Trust and the IFP's participation in the election.

## 11.3.87 MARCH 28TH, 1994: SHELL HOUSE INCIDENT – ANC GUARDS SHOOT IFP MARCHERS

The "Shell House massacre" occurred on 28 March 1994 at Shell House, the ANC's national headquarters on Plein Street in central Johannesburg. It unfolded amid extreme political tension in the final month before the first non-racial elections. The IFP of Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi was still boycotting the elections and demanding major concessions (including greater autonomy for KwaZulu-Natal and recognition of the Zulu monarchy). The IFP accordingly organized a large protest march to Shell House to demonstrate opposition to the ANC-dominated transition process and to rally in support of the interests of the Zulu nation and its king, Goodwill Zwelithini.

Approximately 20,000 IFP supporters (many armed with traditional weapons like spears, knobkerries, and shields) took part. As the march approached the building, ANC security guards (a private protection unit, not police or military) opened fire on the crowd. Official figures indicate 19 were killed and 84 injured. The ANC guards claimed that they acted in self-defence after receiving a tip-off that the marchers planned to storm the building and attack/kill ANC leaders (including Nelson Mandela, who was inside at the time). The guards referenced fears of a repeat of the 1992 Boipatong massacre, where IFP supporters killed dozens in a township rampage.

As a consequence, tensions between the ANC/SACP once again heightened. Buthelezi and the IFP reacted furiously, vowing to fight "to the finish" and threatening to boycott the elections indefinitely unless their demands were met. The massacre intensified fears of election chaos but paradoxically helped accelerate last-minute negotiations – as had been the case with Bisho for the ANC radicals and Mmabatho for the white right, the Shell House incident underscored for the IFP the risks of continued boycott and violence, thereby contributing to an eventual breakthrough.

## 11.3.88 MARCH 31ST, 1994: PRESIDENT DE KLERK DECLARES STATE OF EMERGENCY IN NATAL

In March 1994 Niël Barnard gave a confidential briefing to the NP Cabinet's Policy Group for Reform which emphasised that the elections set for the end of April absolutely had to proceed "as a matter of life and death". Barnard said that it was already clear by then that if Inkatha's blackmail was heeded, anarchy and full-scale civil war would be inevitable. "*We had to take all necessary steps to protect the settlement process, because no group in South Africa could be allowed to secede from the rest of the country*". Accordingly, he proposed that a state of emergency be declared in Natal (plus in the East Rand and Eastern Transvaal, if matters there deteriorated further).

Tensions and violence in Natal had reached such proportions in the aftermath of the Shell House tragedy that President De Klerk on 31 March 1994 declared a state of emergency in the province (including the KwaZulu homeland). The South African Human Rights Commission had recorded 266 deaths in Natal since early March 1994 — which, measured over the preceding three years, had been the highest such toll at the time. Furthermore, a joint working group of the IEC, SA Government and the KwaZulu government had been warning that in the current political climate, elections could not be held credibly or safely in KwaZulu without major intervention.

The State of Emergency enabled detention without trial for up to 30 days, warrantless searches of people and premises, the prohibition on unauthorised military-style training as well as the public display of weapons (including traditional Zulu spears and knobkerries), strict controls on marches and gatherings, and the deployment of additional South African Defence Force troops alongside the police – the Army began moving into the region the same night.

De Klerk first of all phoned Prince Buthelezi to inform him personally of the background to and purpose of the decision to impose a province-wide state of emergency, promising that it would be implemented in an even-handed manner and would also help to protect IFP supporters from attack by their enemies. He also stressed the

importance of the “last ditch” summit meeting between himself, Buthelezi, Mandela, and the King which had been scheduled for 8 April 1994, to be held at a private camp in the Kruger National Park (i.e., less than three weeks before the scheduled election).

If the State of Emergency was the stick, then the Ingonyama Trust negotiations (involving a small group of NP ministers/officials and KwaZulu moderates such as Danie Joubert and Willem Olivier) which had been quietly advancing since mid-March, was the carrot – and under the emergency’s shadow these talks now accelerated. What the imposition of the state of emergency had done, was to make Buthelezi more willing to accept a face-saving compromise rather than risk total defeat, because the creation of the Trust and transfer to it of title to 2.8–3 million hectares of KwaZulu communal land with the King as sole trustee was the key inducement that would provide tangible protection of traditional authority and the power of chiefs – the IFP’s core support base (the parallel Trust negotiations were deliberately kept secret from the ANC and the broader public until after the election).

## 11.3.89 APRIL 8TH, 1994: FOUR-PARTY MEETING AT JAKKALSBESSIE IN THE KNP ENDS INCONCLUSIVELY

The smallish, yet luxurious and very exclusive Jakkalsbessie private camp in the Kruger National Park (near Skukuza with its airport), had been built at state expense in a joint secret operation between the NIS and the Parks Board with the objective for it to host future negotiations, as a South African equivalent to the USA’s Camp David. (This decision to invest in the construction of such a facility in itself is highly revealing about the format in which the NIS had originally envisioned that the negotiations would take place, namely in secluded confidentiality, mostly as bilateral, small-group confabs among the top decision-makers of the main protagonists – not the public spectacle with its associated political grandstanding and plethora of minor parties that was witnessed at the WTC in Kempton Park in the multi-party talks held there, till that approach proved ineffective by 1992 and the process had to revert to the confidential bilateral format of The Channel as described earlier).

The intensive one-day meeting held on 8 April 1994 at Jakkalsbessie between De Klerk, Mandela, Buthelezi and the Zulu king included some straight talking, with King Goodwill stating straight-out to Mr Mandela (as he had in previous meetings done with President De Klerk) that he was not asking for Zulu independence but claiming it: “*I am not prepared to talk to you, Sir, about whether or not there shall be a sovereign Zulu Kingdom in the new South Africa. The only thing to talk about are the modalities of bringing the sovereignty of the Zulu Kingdom into full recognition and relating the Kingdom properly to the rest of South Africa.*”

The Jakkalsbessie talks ended inconclusively without any real breakthrough having been achieved, but at least the protagonists had been talking, and in their joint press conference afterwards at the Skukuza airstrip the four delegations did try to put as positive a spin on the meeting as possible. Furthermore, the ANC and the Zulus had accepted the idea of international mediation to try and resolve the impasse, as well as the creation of a working group to try to facilitate an agreement on the constitutional position of the Zulu monarchy.

Thus began what De Klerk later called “*the short-lived and somewhat farcical efforts at immediate international mediation that preceded the election. It was an idea that had had its roots in bilateral discussions between the ANC and the IFP. The government was sceptical about the likely success of such a hasty exercise – particularly in the absence of clear terms of reference*.”

The former American secretary of state, Dr Henry Kissinger, and the former British foreign secretary, Lord Carrington, were invited to be the main international mediators. They arrived in South Africa within a few days, and on 12 April met with De Klerk in the living room of Libertas, the presidential residence in Pretoria. According to De Klerk: “*They looked a little travel weary and were clearly perplexed about the role that they were expected to play*.” The parties subsequently failed to reach agreement on the terms of reference of the mediators, and Kissinger and Carrington left South Africa on the evening of 14 April 1994 without even having begun a meaningful mediation process.

As Barnard would later write (translated from the Afrikaans): “*However, this team also included a Kenyan diplomat, Prof. Washington Okumu, who knew Buthelezi personally. He was convinced that if the IFP did not participate in the elections, the genocides in Rwanda would seem like child’s play compared to what awaited South Africa.*

*Thanks to technical problems with the plane Buthelezi was to leave on – which Okumu later described as "an act of God" – the two met at the airport. Over the next five days, there was intense whirlwind diplomacy between Okumu, Buthelezi, and Mandela. Finally, an understanding was reached on 19 April. The IFP would participate in the elections, and the role and status of the Zulu king would be constitutionally recognised. Okumu must be saluted for this. At last, it was an African 'ring-head'* (i.e., wise elder) *that had played a pivotal role in South Africa's peaceful revolution*".

## 11.3.90 APRIL 15TH, 1994: OKUMU CONVINCES BUTHELEZI TO PARTICIPATE IN ELECTIONS

The encounter between Buthelezi and Prof Washington Okumu (who had not flown out with Carrington and Kissinger but stayed behind to see if he couldn't somehow manage to salvage the situation) took place the morning of Friday, the 15th of April 1994 at Lanseria Airport, a regional airport north of Johannesburg, frequently used for private and charter flights to Ulundi in KwaZulu.

Buthelezi had been in the Johannesburg area for the previous day's final round of abortive talks with the Kissinger-Carrington team and other parties. Once the mediation collapsed on 14 April, he decided to fly home to Ulundi that Friday morning. His aircraft (a private charter plane) was at Lanseria preparing for departure. Okumu, who had deliberately stayed behind when the other mediators left on the 14th, learned that Buthelezi was about to fly out. He phoned ahead to request a delay and raced to Lanseria.

Buthelezi waited as long as he could but eventually boarded and took off. However, shortly after take-off, the plane developed a rudder malfunction (a genuine mechanical fault, as confirmed later by the pilot). The aircraft was forced to turn back and land again at Lanseria. While the plane was being checked, Okumu arrived at the terminal. The two men (long-time friends — they had known each other since the early 1970s) then had their fateful private conversation, first on the tarmac and then in the airport lounge. Buthelezi later described it dramatically: "*It was as though God had prevented me from leaving… I'll never forget him* (Okumu, a very rotund man) *waiting for me at the airport, larger than life*."

In that conversation, Okumu urged Buthelezi that continued boycott and confrontation would be disastrous, that he had no viable future outside the new democratic order, and that a face-saving compromise was still possible. This meeting restarted serious shuttle diplomacy and directly paved the way for the breakthrough agreement signed on 19 April 1994.

The mechanical "failure" was real (not staged), but the timing was extraordinarily fortunate — and widely seen (including by Buthelezi himself) as providential. This single airport encounter is now regarded as one of the most decisive moments that saved South Africa's 1994 election from potential disaster in KwaZulu-Natal.

De Klerk described what had happened as follows: "*Then within eleven days of the election there were two remarkable developments. The first came by way of the intervention of Professor Washington Okumu, an enormously corpulent Kenyan academic who had come to South Africa in the wake of the Carrington/Kissinger mission. He had requested an urgent meeting with his old friend Dr Buthelezi on 15 April. The meeting would not have taken place, except that Buthelezi's aircraft developed an engine fault and had to return to the airport where Okumu was waiting. The two men met and during their meeting the Kenyan persuaded Buthelezi to make a last-minute effort to find a solution which would enable the IFP to participate in the election. Buthelezi later described the circumstances of his remarkable meeting with Okumu as an Act of God.*

*"The second unexpected development was the announcement by the IEC that, provided that Parliament amended the electoral act in time, it would still be possible for the IFP to participate in the elections at both the national and provincial levels. The IEC had concluded that it would still be able to print and distribute some eighty million IFP stickers which could be attached to the ballot papers and thus enable IFP supporters to cast their votes in favour of their party. The revelation that the IEC was still in a position – even at this late stage – to include the IFP in the ballot came as a complete and extremely welcome surprise to me."*

What neither De Klerk nor Barnard mentioned in their respective autobiographies, was the third "unexpected development" which had helped seal the deal with the Zulus and assured IFP participation in the elections – the

secret manoeuvring to set up the Ingonyama Trust and transfer title to all KwaZulu communal land to it, as concrete protection of the interests of the King...

### 11.3.91 APRIL 19TH, 1994: DE KLERK, MANDELA, BUTHELEZI, AND OKUMU REACH ACCORD

On 19 April 1994 – just one week before the elections – De Klerk, Buthelezi, Mandela, and Professor Okumu met at the Union Buildings and formally concluded an agreement that assured the IFP's participation in the elections for both the national parliament and provincial assemblies.

There was only one outstanding question – where the IFP sticker would be affixed on the ballot papers? There were three possible choices: either at the top end, where there was most space, or at the bottom end, or on the reverse side of the ballot paper. However, in a lottery earlier organised by the IEC among the participating parties, the PAC had already won the right to have their name in the top position, and it was deemed unlikely that they would be willing to forfeit this right. The reverse side option was not acceptable to the IFP which felt that the inexperienced electorate might not notice the IFP sticker if it wasn't part of the front of the ballot, with the other parties. This only left space at the bottom end of the ballot – but the National Party had, during the lottery, drawn the bottom position and regarded this as advantageous from a marketing and communication perspective (their slogan in the campaign had been that if voters wished to come out on top, they should vote for the bottom line). De Klerk explained: "*Once again I was faced with a difficult decision where I had to make a choice between the clear interest of my party on the one hand and of the country on the other. There was only one decision and that was to accept that the IFP sticker would be affixed at the bottom of the ballot paper, below the National Party*".

### 11.3.92 APRIL 22ND, 1994: GEN VILJOEN THREATENS VIOLENCE IN CALL TO US AMBASSADOR

Five days before the start of the elections Constand Viljoen contacted the American ambassador to South Africa, Princeton Lyman, and informed him that, since he suspected that the NP and the ANC were both not prepared to sign the draft Accord on Afrikaner Self-Determination (which had been negotiated between the AVF and the ANC on 21 December 1993), Viljoen and his followers saw no other way out than to resort to violent means of resistance. The ambassador asked the Freedom Front leader to give him 48 hours to try and resolve the matter with the ANC and the NP Government, but Viljoen refused, saying that that was not acceptable under the circumstance. They then agreed that Viljoen would not take any action within the first eight hours after their conversation.

Subsequently, the ambassador contacted Viljoen within the deadline and confirmed that the NP and the ANC would sign the agreement by ten o'clock the next morning.

### 11.3.93 APRIL 23RD, 1994: ACCORD ON AFRIKANER SELF-DETERMINATION SIGNED

An initial unsigned memorandum between the ANC and AVF dated December 21, 1993, outlined self-determination principles, but the ANC refused to formally sign it at the time, stalling progress. By mid-April 1994, with elections imminent, Viljoen grew frustrated and approached U.S. Ambassador Princeton Lyman who had been mediating since late 1993 at the request of Nelson Mandela and President Bill Clinton. This pressured the parties to finalize and sign the accord, averting what Viljoen later described as potentially "letting the dogs loose" to make the election impossible.

The signatories to the accord were General Constand Viljoen (on behalf of the Freedom Front), Thabo Mbeki (National Chairman of the ANC), and Roelf Meyer (Minister of Constitutional Development, representing the NP-led South African government).

The key enabling amendments for implementing the Accord had already been enacted by parliament earlier, in February 1994 (see 11.3.81 above), effected via the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Amendment Act, 1994 (Act No. 2 of 1994) which had amended the Interim Constitution to include provisions for self-determination mechanisms, including allowing for the Volkstaat Council's authorization. Those amendments were part of broader concessions at the time to draw right-wing participation into the elections. Accordingly, the commitments agreed to in the now formally signed Accord could be implemented immediately.

The Accord recognized Afrikaner self-determination rights in principle (subject to feasibility and sufficient popular support) and promised a Volkstaat Council which would undertake feasibility studies into the concept. The signing

of the Accord prevented a broader right-wing uprising and fully integrated Viljoen's Freedom Front party into the electoral process.

The signing of the Accord was one of several 11th-hour deals in April 1994 (e.g., the similar accord with the Inkatha Freedom Party, reached on April 19; see 11.3.89 above) that in the end ensured a relatively peaceful transition.

## 11.3.94 APRIL 25TH, 1994: SPECIAL PARLIAMENTARY SESSION APPROVES ZULU TERMS

On Monday, 25 April, two days before the election, Parliament met to adopt the agreed amendments to the constitution regarding the Zulu kingdom. Hundreds of MPs interrupted their election campaigns at a critical moment so that they could attend the special session.

## 11.3.95 APRIL 25TH, 1994: SECRET NP / ZULU ROYALS DEAL CREATES INGONYAMA TRUST

The "KwaZulu-Natal Ingonyama Trust" (to give its full name) was created through emergency last-minute legislation in the KwaZulu homeland legislature passed on 24 April 1994, quickly assented to by President De Klerk the next day (i.e., one day before the elections started). Although the deal on the Trust was not formally part of the key 19 April 1994 Agreement (signed by De Klerk, Mandela, and Buthelezi in Pretoria after Kenyan mediator Washington Okumu's intervention) and in fact had been made in secret between representatives of the NP and Zulu royal interests, without the knowledge of the ANC, the creation of the Trust – because of its very substantial and very concrete nature – was an important part of the necessary confidence-building that eventually led the King to support participation in the election.

Informal negotiations had occurred in the chaotic days before the election, involving a small group of figures from the National Party and KwaZulu/IFP moderates. These talks deliberately kept core leaders (including even Buthelezi, according to some accounts) partially in the dark to maintain deniability and prevent ANC awareness. The core provisions of the deal were that it transferred title to approximately 2.8–3 million hectares of land (formerly held by the KwaZulu homeland government) into a trust, of which the sole trustee was King Goodwill Zwelithini (the Ingonyama) and his successors in title, with the land held "for the benefit, material welfare and social well-being" of Zulu tribes and communities living on it. This legally prevented that the new national or provincial governments could take control of or reallocate the land post-election, thereby preserving traditional Zulu communal land tenure under the monarchy and chiefs.

The deal served as a major inducement for the IFP to join the elections, shifting focus from unattainable "paper solutions" based on the theory of federalism/sovereignty to the very tangible, namely by concretely securing land for traditional authorities, which formed the backbone of KwaZulu administration and IFP support.

## 11.3.96 APRIL 26–29, 1994: SA'S FIRST NON-RACIAL DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS ARE HELD

The first democratic election was held on 26–29 April 1994 under a proportional representation system for the 400-seat National Assembly. A total of 19,533,498 valid votes were cast. The official national results for the three main parties were:

| Party | Votes | Percentage | Seats (out of 400) |
|---|---|---|---|
| African National Congress (ANC) | 12,237,655 | 62.65% | 252 |
| National Party (NP) | 3,983,690 | 20.39% | 82 |
| Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) | 2,058,294 | 10.54% | 43 |

(Other parties, such as the Freedom Front, Democratic Party, etc., took the remaining ~6.42% and 23 seats.)

Under the Interim Constitution any party that obtained at least 5% of the national vote was entitled to participate in the Government of National Unity and to receive one or more cabinet portfolios in proportion to its share of seats in the National Assembly. In practice, this produced the following allocation for the 27 ministerial portfolios (the core "cabinet posts"):

- ANC: 18 ministers (roughly proportional to its 62.65% vote / 63% seats share)

- NP: 6 ministers (proportional to its 20.39% vote / 20.5% seats share)
- IFP: 3 ministers (proportional to its 10.54% vote / 10.75% seats share)

In addition, two Executive Deputy Presidents were appointed, being Thabo Mbeki of the ANC and FW de Klerk of the NP, with the latter having qualified for a Deputy President under the rule that any party with more than 20% of the seats in the Assembly would be entitled to one.

## 11.3.97 APRIL 24-27TH, 1994: SPATE OF RIGHT-WING BOMBINGS MET BY QUICK SAP-SB RESPONSE

Not all right-wing groups were in agreement with General Constand Viljoen's decision to forsake violence and participate instead in the democratic process. The days before and during the elections therefore saw a spate of bombings, with the SAP-SB fortunately having significant success in quickly apprehending the perpetrators so that the bombing campaign rapidly receded in relevance after the elections were concluded. Here are the main incidents, which were mostly attributed to AWB sympathisers:

- April 24: A car bomb exploded in downtown Johannesburg (Bree Street, near ANC regional offices) killing 9 people and injuring over 90.
- April 25: Another car bomb exploded at a taxi rank in Germiston killing 10 people and injuring around 40, mostly Black commuters.
- April 27: A powerful car bomb (packed with about 150 kg of explosives) detonated outside the departure terminal of Johannesburg's international airport (then called Jan Smuts) around 9:45 a.m. on 27 April 1994, which was the first full day of voting. It happened shortly after Nelson Mandela had cast his vote in Inanda (which was broadcast live on TV). The explosion injured at least 16 people (including airport staff and passengers), caused extensive damage to vehicles and the building, and created chaos amid the high-stakes election atmosphere. Although there fortunately were no fatalities in this specific blast, it was described in contemporary accounts as a "particularly bad" escalation due to its targeting of the country's major international transport hub with such a powerful explosive charge.
- Additional smaller blasts targeted ANC-linked sites in Pretoria and other areas.

These bombings collectively resulted in at least 21 deaths and over 150 injuries, marking a last-ditch effort by hardline white supremacists opposed to majority rule.

The South African Police acted swiftly, launching raids starting on April 27–28. By April 28, they had arrested 31 right-wing suspects (later rising to 34), including AWB members and a serving police officer. The arrests were based on intelligence, forensic evidence (e.g., from unexploded devices), and confessions, effectively neutralizing the immediate threat.

On 2 May 1994, during his speech announcing the ANC's election victory at the Carlton Hotel in Johannesburg, Nelson Mandela explicitly commended the security forces for their role in safeguarding the elections and for quickly apprehending the bombers. In his speech, Mr Mandela stated: *"I also wish to thank the security forces for the outstanding work which they have done in the last few days. They have protected the electoral process and have moved swiftly to apprehend those responsible for the bombings which sought to derail our transition to democracy."*

## 11.3.98 MAY 10, 1994: NELSON MANDELA SWORN IN AS SA'S FIRST BLACK PRESIDENT

On 10 May 1994, in a historic ceremony at the Union Buildings in Pretoria, Nelson Mandela was sworn in as South Africa's first president to have been democratically elected on the basis of fully inclusive non-racial elections, thereby becoming the country's first Black head of state. The event, held in the amphitheatre of the grand ex-colonial government complex, drew a massive crowd of jubilant South Africans. Heads of state, dignitaries, and representatives from over 140 countries attended, symbolizing the hope-filled global embrace of the peaceful transition.

The ceremony featured significant participation by the military in the form of a flypast, gun salutes and the presence of top military and police commanders in dress uniform on the rostrum with Mandela, seen as the Security Forces symbolically saluting and committing themselves to the new democratic order. Mandela, flanked by Deputy

Presidents Thabo Mbeki and FW de Klerk, took the oath of office, pledging to uphold the constitution and devote himself to the well-being of all South Africans.

In his inaugural address, Mandela proclaimed the dawn of a new era of reconciliation and unity, famously declaring that "*the time for the healing of the wounds has come*" and that "*out of the experience of an extraordinary human disaster that lasted too long, must be born a society of which all humanity will be proud*."

The inauguration marked a peaceful culmination to decades of conflict, achieved through evolutionary transition that maintained state continuity. It was also the consensual triumph of non-racial democracy based on the liberal Western model within a free-market system (and not a Marxist people's republic), ushering in the Government of National Unity and setting the stage for building the "Rainbow Nation" vision that Mandela would champion throughout his presidency.

It remains one of the most iconic and hopeful moments in modern world history, watched by millions worldwide.

## 11.3.99 NOVEMBER 5TH, 1994: DRC MODERATOR PROF JOHAN HEYNS ASSASSINATED

Although the elections and swearing-in of President Mandela immediately brought calm to most of the country, not all on the fringes could reconcile themselves with the peaceful hand-over of power and many still harboured deep animosity towards the influential figures – particularly Afrikaners who had promoted fundamental change – whom these radicals held to blame for the "sell-out". One such thought leader was the former moderator of the main Afrikaner church, the DRC, Prof Johan Heyns. He was blamed for the conversion that had become visible within the DRC during the mid-eighties, with the general synod of the church eventually declaring Apartheid a sin.

Heyns was assassinated in Pretoria on the evening of Saturday, 5 November 1994. The assassin has to this day not been convicted. Heyns, then 66 years old, was at his home in Waterkloof Ridge, Pretoria, playing cards with his wife Renée and three young grandchildren (aged 2, 8, and 11). The assailant fired a single shot from outside through an open window using a .303 calibre rifle. The bullet struck Heyns in the back of the neck, exiting near his eye and causing massive trauma. He died instantly.

The top police detectives in charge of the case remain convinced that the assassin was driven by extreme right-wing sentiments; according to them, the murder was committed by an experienced and highly trained ex-Special Forces operator who succeeded in pulling off the fatal shooting without it having been possible for the police and prosecution to obtain and present the crucial linking evidence that would in court have placed his guilt beyond reasonable doubt…

## 11.3.100 JULY 19TH, 1995: TRC LEGISLATION ASSENTED TO BY PRESIDENT MANDELA

On 19 July 1995 the legislation that the new parliament had earlier passed to establish the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was assented to by President Mandela. The Commission, chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, was tasked with investigating human rights violations committed during the Apartheid era. The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act 34 of 1995 provided the legal framework for the TRC to investigate gross human rights violations from March 1960 to May 1994, grant amnesty for politically motivated acts on condition of full disclosure, hear victim testimonies, recommend reparations, and promote national reconciliation.

It very quickly became apparent that the TRC was creating as much division (if not more) than it created reconciliation – especially as seen from the perspective of members of the previous government's Security Forces. What it definitely was not, was the general amnesty that both the ANC/SACP and NP Government negotiators had initially envisaged – but which was delayed beyond the cut-off time for the finalisation of the Interim Constitution, thanks particularly to the machinations of Kobie Coetsee (who personally had come off scot-free and was later photographed, standing with puffed chest in an old-worldly black dress suit between Mandela and De Klerk, on the occasion of Coetsee having been unanimously elected as President of the new Senate in 1994).

The full saga of the missed opportunity at agreeing a general amnesty and – as a consequence – the parading of scapegoats before the TRC, is dealt with extensively elsewhere in this eBook.

## 11.3.101 24 JUNE 1995: PRESIDENT MANDELA PRESENTS THE RUGBY WORLD CUP TO THE VICTORIUS SPRINGBOKS

The 1995 Rugby World Cup, hosted by South Africa, culminated in a historic victory for the South African Springboks on June 24 at Ellis Park Stadium in Johannesburg, where they defeated New Zealand's All Blacks 15-12 in extra time. This win was far more than a sporting triumph; it occurred just a year after the country's first democratic elections and the end of Apartheid, transforming into a pivotal moment for national reconciliation in a still deeply divided society.

As South Africa's first Black Head of State, President Nelson Mandela recognized rugby's potential as a tool for unity despite its fraught history. The sport had long been dominated by white Afrikaners and was viewed by many Black South Africans as a symbol of oppression, with the Springbok emblem tied to Apartheid-era exclusion. During Apartheid, South Africa faced international sports bans, and Black fans often cheered for the Springboks' opponents...

Mandela actively intervened to reframe this narrative. He resisted pressure from within the ANC to scrap the Springbok name and green-and-gold colours, arguing that such changes would alienate whites and hinder reconciliation. Instead, he adopted the slogan "One Team, One Country" and personally engaged with the team, meeting captain Francois Pienaar multiple times to build rapport and encourage the players to embrace a broader national identity. Mandela also urged Black South Africans to support the Springboks, framing the tournament as a shared endeavour to heal the nation.

The defining image came after the final whistle: President Mandela appeared on the field wearing a Springbok cap and a replica of Pienaar's No. 6 jersey, shaking hands with players and presenting the Webb Ellis Cup to Pienaar after the win. Pienaar later reflected that Mandela's involvement elevated the event beyond sport. For whites, particularly Afrikaners, Mandela's embrace of the still essentially white Springbok rugby team signalled that the new government was not vengeful, easing fears and encouraging participation in the democratic era. For Black South Africans, the win represented a step toward equality, as scenes of multiracial celebration erupted nationwide – Blacks and whites alike rejoicing in shared success for the first time.

The event's legacy extended to broader reconciliation efforts, inspiring global recognition of sport's role in peacebuilding. It was later dramatized in John Carlin's book *Playing the Enemy* (2008) and Clint Eastwood's film *Invictus* (2009), which highlighted Mandela's strategic insight into the potential of the tournament for reconciliation and nation building.

## 11.3.102 FEBRUARY 1996: CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY DOESN'T ACCEPT VOLKSTAAT COUNCIL REPORT

On 21 February 1996, the Constitutional Assembly effectively rejected the key recommendations of the Volkstaat Council's reporting on Afrikaner self-determination, delivered over a period in 1995 and 1996 to the Assembly amid the drafting of South Africa's final democratic constitution.

The Volkstaat Council – established under the Accord on Afrikaner Self-Determination and the Interim Constitution to explore whether there existed viable forms of a volkstaat (Afrikaner homeland) or other mechanisms for cultural and territorial autonomy – had submitted complex proposals and alternative options, such as creating a "tenth province" for Afrikaners with specific exclusive powers (although the Council itself disliked the "10th Province" name tag", but also models for non-territorial councils, cultural autonomy, and potential territorial enclaves.

The Council did not propose a single large, contiguous "homeland" like the old Bantustans or a full secessionist state (no such a contiguous Volkstaat land mass could be identified by the Council that could meet the criteria of feasibility and sufficient support locally). Instead, it researched nearly the entire country and listed multiple possible areas for varying degrees of territorial self-determination ranging from local autonomy to being larger components of a federal South Africa. These were detailed in the First Interim Report. Key characteristics and examples were:

- Metropolitan areas with existing significant Afrikaner demographic presence or strong concentrations (suitable as nuclei or starting points, where Afrikaners could potentially achieve demographic dominance)

such as the Pretoria region (including surrounds like Verwoerdburg/Akasia; a ~1,800 km² nucleus, larger than some independent states, home to over 500,000 Afrikaners at the time – but also to millions of non-Afrikaners). This was frequently highlighted as a high-potential core due to cultural/historical significance (Pretoria as an "Afrikaner capital") and Afrikaner population density. Proposals sometimes envisioned it extending or linking to adjacent areas while surrounding (but not necessarily including) Johannesburg economically.

- Sparsely populated rural areas where Afrikaners were minorities but could increase via voluntary settlement, border adjustments, economic incentives, or "reclamation" (e.g., job exchanges, new towns, or pilot projects like Orania):
    - **Northern Cape** (including areas along the Orange River, Doring River, West Coast strip ~50 km wide from Kakamas to Port Nolloth, Upington, Clanwilliam/Saldanha, and arid/underutilized lands). Often cited by related groups (e.g., Afrikaner Freedom Foundation) as a primary candidate for a viable, expandable entity due to low population density, agricultural/tourism potential, and scope for Afrikaans-speaking settlement without massive displacement. Orania was referenced as a practical pilot project.
    - Parts of the **North-eastern Free State** and **southern districts along the Orange River**.
    - **South-eastern Transvaal** (now parts of Mpumalanga) and **Northern Transvaal** (specific magisterial districts like Waterberg, Potgietersrus, Pietersburg, Soutpansberg, Thabazimbi, Ellisras, Warmbaths; western and eastern sub-regions, with low black population in some commuter/guest-worker contexts and mineral/agricultural potential).
    - **Western Cape** pockets or combined Northern/Western Cape strips (e.g., Karoo, Mossel Bay to Humansdorp areas), where Western-oriented (including Afrikaans-speaking Coloured) communities formed majorities in places.
    - **Other scattered rural districts** across the Free State, Transvaal/Highveld, and elsewhere with historical Afrikaner presence or low density.

Overall, no exclusively “Afrikaner” geographic bloc existed, since all areas identified still included substantial percentages of non-Afrikaners (requiring protections, possible voluntary exchanges, or guest-worker models). Border tweaks could boost Afrikaner proportions modestly, but not dramatically. The Council listed several metropolitan plus rural options, plus seven or more tinier pockets scattered nationwide for limited local autonomy (e.g., cultural/community councils). The proposals were incremental and pragmatic, not a revival in full of the old Boer Republics (Transvaal/Free State/Natal).

The Council explicitly rejected framing its proposals as simply establishing "a tenth province" (to distinguish from the nine standard provinces under the new constitution's Schedules), instead referring to their proposed patchwork as a constituent Afrikaner entity within the existing SA boundaries in a federal-type setup. The entity would be part of South Africa, with concurrent national powers but exclusive or high autonomy in key areas (agriculture, education, health, local government, welfare, possibly provincial police/courts/taxation). Afrikaners outside the entity could have cultural/community councils (local/provincial) with revenue shares and Senate representation.

As regards how their vision could be implemented, the Council viewed a *Volkstaat* as a long-term process (i.e., incremental – not immediate full independence or secession). They suggested first establishing the legal basis in the final constitution by entrenching self-determination as a right. The second step would be delimitation of boundaries via negotiations, then thirdly, a development/settlement phase during which voluntary Afrikaner influx would be promoted (economic incentives, new towns, kibbutz-style projects, "self-labour" policies) as well as "reclamation" via job/land measures without forced removals, plus the launch of pilot projects (e.g., Orania expansion).

Once areas were delineated and settled, the next step would be to establish transitional structures such as a development council as authority, with administrative and service departments, leading eventually to the full trifecta of legislature/executive/judiciary for such territories. Over the long-term it was envisaged by the Volkstaat Council in their reporting to the Constituent Assembly that there could possibly be evolution to greater autonomy or independence, if this was mutually agreeable (with international mediation if needed).

As regards feasibility, economic viability was a clear concern (self-sufficiency in labour, free market, interdependence with SA). Regarding sufficient support from the local populace, the reporting was as yet lacking in proof, emphasizing ongoing research. It stated that it was accepted that any demographic adjustments needed to be peaceful, with Bill of Rights protections aligned with democracy and non-racialism for minorities/non-citizens in such territories (evidently a key issue, since no-where were white Afrikaners in a majority).

What is obvious is that the Volkstaat Council's cautious suggestions were on the one hand little more than fanciful dreams disconnected from practical reality, and on the other hand light years away from what right-wingers had envisioned as a Volkstaat (such as the AWB having demanded the former Boer republics of Transvaal/ZAR and the Orange Free State, reincarnated).

The Constitutional Assembly's Thematic Committee on Self-Determination and related sub-committees found these ideas incompatible with the practical reality of the emerging unitary framework of the new constitution, which emphasized a single, indivisible South Africa with strong national institutions and limited provisions for cultural/linguistic rights rather than ethnic-based territorial separation. The Assembly's response, reflected in its working drafts and public submissions process, dismissed the feasibility of a volkstaat as a separate entity, prioritizing reconciliation, non-racialism, and inclusive governance over the Freedom Front's demands for structural autonomy.

This rejection marked a significant setback for right-wing Afrikaner aspirations that had been provisionally and very much conditionally accommodated in the 1994 transition through the Volkstaat Council's creation and inclusion of Constitutional Principle XXXIV (self-determination). Where-as the final 1996 Constitution did include protections for language, culture, and religion (e.g., via the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities), it contained no territorial volkstaat provisions. The Volkstaat Council's work thus concluded without achieving its core objective.

The historian Hermann Giliomee saw the Volkstaat Council for the political fig leaf that it had been during the pre-election months of 1994, coming to the conclusion that the ANC never really took the clauses in the Interim Constitution about self-determination and the possibility of a Volkstaat seriously. The new ANC Government had indeed set up a Volkstaat Council consisting of Constand Viljoen's followers, tasked to investigate the feasibility of and support for an ethnic Afrikaner state. "*But once the ANC was sure that the security forces had been transformed well enough to face down any danger of armed rebellion, they first bled the council financially before dissolving it in 1999. The ANC managed to emasculate the white separatists for the paltry sum of R15 million*".

De Wet Potgieter's opinion on the Volkstaat Council was equally scathing: "*The Volkstaat Council was eventually – after millions of rands of taxpayers' money had been wasted – dissolved without further action. It was nothing more than empty promises and a well-planned ploy by the ANC to mislead the Right and manipulate them until after the first election. (On the flip side) It was also an ingenious ploy to create jobs for a few right-wingers who wanted to secure a nest egg for their retirement after the 1994 election… Indeed, for a few years, the Volkstaat Council offered secure positions, a solid salary and fringe benefits to a group of elderly right-wingers, who in turn dragged out the process as long as possible to be part of the gravy train brigade*".

## 11.3.103 MAY 8TH, 1996: CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY ADOPTS SA'S FINAL CONSTITUTION

On 8 May 1996, the Constitutional Assembly (CA) of South Africa – comprising members of the newly democratically elected National Assembly and Senate sitting jointly – formally adopted the text of the country's final Constitution (often called the 1996 Constitution). This marked the culmination of nearly two years of intensive drafting, public consultation, and multi-party negotiations following the April 1994 democratic elections.

**Key Details**

- **Vote and Support**: The draft was approved with overwhelming backing — approximately 86% of the CA members voted in favour (around 421 votes in support out of the roughly 490-member body, based on contemporary reports). This exceeded the required two-thirds majority (about 327 votes) under the Interim Constitution's rules for adoption.

- **Context and Process**: The CA had been tasked under the 1993 Interim Constitution to produce a final constitution within two years. It involved broad participation, including extensive public input (millions of submissions via campaigns, meetings, and media), thematic committees, expert advice, and intense last-minute bilateral negotiations (especially between the ANC and NP) to resolve deadlocks on issues like property rights, education in choice of language, labour rights (e.g., lockout), and provincial powers.
- **Dramatic Final Hours**: Negotiations ran into the night of 7 May, with compromises finalized in the early hours of 8 May. The plenary session then adopted the text amid high emotion and celebration in Cape Town's old Assembly chamber.
- **Significance**: President Nelson Mandela addressed the Assembly, describing the document as the "birth certificate" of the new South Africa.

The adopted text was not immediately enforceable. It had to be submitted to the Constitutional Court for certification against the 34 Constitutional Principles agreed in the Interim Constitution (to ensure continuity and protect key safeguards like democracy, non-racialism, and federal elements). On September 6, 1996, the Court delivered its First Certification Judgment, refusing certification on several grounds (e.g., insufficient protection for certain provincial powers, labour rights, and other details). The CA reconvened, made targeted amendments, and adopted the revised text on October 11, 1996. The Court then certified the amended version in December 1996.

President Mandela signed the final constitution into law on 10 December 1996 (International Human Rights Day). It was promulgated on 18 December 1996 and came into full effect on 4 February 1997, replacing the Interim Constitution.

### 11.3.104 MAY 9TH, 1996: DE KLERK ANNOUNCES NP'S WITHDRAWAL FROM THE GNU

Willie Esterhuyse wrote that, not long after the 1994 elections, he was already alerted by friends and acquaintances that FW de Klerk is unlikely to last in the GNU format: *"My NIS contacts and people close to De Klerk had quickly informed me: 'De Klerk will not be able to rise to the occasion in the Government of National Unity.' His problem, one of his colleagues told me, is that he sees Mandela as his opponent and himself as a potential president. He expects the NP ministers in the cabinet to caucus with him beforehand so that they can determine a joint strategy to oppose Mandela and the ANC. I am stunned. I tell my interlocutor that De Klerk works with a hardened opponent model. Not with a partnership model. He cannot survive.*"

On May 9, 1996 (the day after the Constitutional Assembly adopted South Africa's final Constitution) Deputy President FW de Klerk announced that the NP would withdraw from the Government of National Unity (GNU), effective at midnight on June 30, 1996. This gave President Nelson Mandela and the ANC-led government time to appoint replacements for the NP ministers as well as for De Klerk as Deputy President.

De Klerk made the announcement following a meeting of the NP's Federal Executive Committee.

The primary trigger was the new Constitution adopted the previous day, which did not include the power-sharing mechanisms or mandatory consensus elements that De Klerk had sought to preserve beyond the interim phase. The GNU was a transitional arrangement under the 1993 Interim Constitution, set to end once the new Constitution took effect (after its certification and promulgation). The NP as led by De Klerk felt that its influence as party in the GNU had been steadily declining, and that continuing would amount to a "political death sentence" for itself (through being associated with ANC policy). De Klerk also saw continued NP participation in the GNU as harmful for multi-party democracy as traditionally understood in South Africa (as a two-party system, with the majority party forming the government and the other being the official opposition).

De Klerk framed the move positively as an important step in the normalisation and maturation of South Africa's young democracy, that would allow the NP to become a strong, credible opposition party clearly disconnected from governance, and thus better able to hold the ANC government accountable. Therefore, leaving the GNU would avoid an "unnatural" situation where the party remained in a unity cabinet that was in any event soon becoming obsolete under the new constitutional framework.

President Mandela responded calmly and respectfully in a statement that same day, acknowledging the decision and expressing appreciation for the NP's contributions to the transition. He noted that it was a legitimate choice and emphasized that the GNU had served its purpose in building reconciliation. Internationally and in the media, it was seen as a sign of democratic progress – the end of forced coalition politics and the emergence of a more conventional multi-party system with opposition.

The NP's exit marked the effective end of the mandatory power-sharing era. The GNU formally dissolved for the NP on 30 June 1996 (the IFP and Prince Buthelezi stayed on in the GNU) though the broader transitional arrangements only phased out fully after the new Constitution came into force in early 1997.

De Klerk's announcement, coming right on the heels of the final Constitution's adoption, underscored the completion of the negotiated transition from Apartheid to a non-racial, fully majority-rule democracy, even as it highlighted lingering tensions over power-sharing and minority protections.

De Klerk himself retired from active politics in August 1996, and the NP continued as an opposition force, later rebranding as the New National Party in 1997, before joining with the DP to form the Democratic Alliance in 2000, but then left that again in 2001. In August 2004, following the NNP's dismal performance in the April 2004 general election (where it won under 2% of the national vote and lost most of its seats), new leader Marthinus van Schalkwyk announced that he would personally join the ANC, and that the NNP would disband and merge into the ruling party. This was framed as a cooperation pact evolving into full integration, allowing former NNP members to cross the floor under South Africa's temporary floor-crossing legislation.

The NNP's Federal Council formally voted to disband the party on April 9, 2005 (by an overwhelming 88–2 margin), after poor municipal election results were finalized. With effect from August 5, 2005 (during the September 2005 floor-crossing window period from September 1–15), remaining NNP members of parliament and provincial legislatures crossed over to become ANC members *en masse*. This effectively completed the absorption of the NNP's parliamentary representation into the ANC.

There were three fundamental causes for the demise of the GNU and then of the NP/NNP. These were that without the power of patronage, the NP/NNP had lost its appeal to many of those who had formerly sought to identify with it. Secondly, the constitutional dispensation (despite changes such as proportional representation) was indeed still modelled upon the typical Anglo-Saxon adversarial two-party system and wasn't properly configured to facilitate effective governance in coalition – a problem that persists to this day (in brief, the leader of the 2$^{nd}$ biggest party is member of cabinet at one moment, bound to the protocol of not speaking out against, but the next moment he/she is leader of the opposition, bound precisely to be publicly critical). Thirdly, the political mind-set of De Klerk was still bound up in his previous parliamentary experience where politics is a zero-sum game, fought out adversarially, whereas South Africa's complex group demographics and African heritage required a strategy of partnership politics.

## 11.4 THE ROLE (OR NOT) OF ELITA GEORGIADIS IN FW DE KLERK's PRE-1996 DECISION-MAKING

This general timeline of the negotiations and transition would not be complete without presenting also a quick timeline of the evolution of the personal relationship between FW de Klerk and Elita Georgiadis, who was to become his second wife. Presenting this is necessary, because of the myths and conspiracy theories currently so popular in certain circles alleging that the supposed "sudden radical change" in De Klerk's politics (from being deemed "verkramp" conservative to "selling out to the communists") was motivated by the "malign leftist influence" of the foreigner Elita Georgidias.

Apart from the fact that the second Mrs De Klerk is not known to be a "leftist", any brief look at the timeline of their relationship – compared to the timeline we have just sketched of the actual negotiations and transition – will make it quite clear that she simply wasn't ever in a position to exert a decisive influence on any of the key decisions that De Klerk took along the way (except for he himself, at the very end, perhaps having felt that he would like to end his political career so that he can more freely pursue his relationship with her).

When De Klerk first met Elita Georgiadis in London during his visit there in May 1989, she was married to the British/Greek businessman Tony Georgiadis, who had large business interests in South Africa and was friendly with Dr Dawie de Villiers, who was then the SA Ambassador to the Court of St James. As part of that visit, De Villiers had arranged tickets to the play Les Misérables for a party consisting of the De Klerks, the Georgiadis and De Villiers and his wife. Their first meeting was thus superficial, in a public setting, and well after De Klerk had become leader of the NP and had already announced his intention to "make a quantum leap".

The next time that De Klerk and the Georgiadis couple were present at the same event, was when they attended his formal investiture as State President on 20 Sept 1989 – again, a large public setting permitting only a brief superficial encounter not allowing for any influencing.

A year later, in the northern summer – thus, well after De Klerk had already made his pivotal 2 February 1990 speech – and before the De Klerks' departure for the USA to meet with President Bush on 24 Sept 1990, the two couples undertook a short holiday cruise together, to the Greek islands of Delos, Siphnos, and Mykonos. During a walk on the beach, FW picked up a pebble and gave it playfully to Elita. Later she would notice that the stone, which she had dropped into a handbag, looked exactly like a heart. Why she kept it in the first place she could not explain, but eventually she had it mounted in a heart-shaped gold frame.

At this stage, Elita and Marike de Klerk had become quite close friends, shopping together, with Elita serving as an informal international "style advisor" to Marike. Be that as it may – this first real occasion when FW and Elita had had more than just a fleeting encounter in some formal setting, and where she conceivably could have had the first opportunity to influence his politics, had come long after the die had already been cast in his 2 February 1990 speech and subsequent steps to implement that vision.

At the end of 1990 Tony and Elita Georgiadis spent a brief southern summer holiday with FW & Marike de Klerk at Botha House on the Natal coast. Still, it was the friendship between the two women that had been the incentive for these holiday get-togethers.

It was only in August 1993 that FW and Elita realized that they had mutual feelings for each other, but they immediately resolved to put these feelings aside for the sake of their marriages.

In July 1994 occurred another Med yacht cruise (the most talked about, nowadays) but in terms of the NP's decision-making timeline, FW then was no longer even president, the elections were over and done with, and President Mandela had been sworn in. Again, FW and Elita realised that they had feelings for each other but again they resolved to suppress their feelings. The cruise followed the planned schedule and then they flew their separate ways to London and South Africa, having arranged to meet a few weeks later at Lekkerwater on the Cape south coast.

Shortly before the planned visit to Lekkerwater (i.e., already in the latter part of 1994), Tony Georgiadis called FW to arrange to meet with him alone, in his vice-presidential office. There Tony revealed that he was aware of Elita's feelings for FW and wanted to know what De Klerk's feelings were. They discussed the situation as friends, civilly, agreeing that the matter must be handled with the "greatest sensitivity". FW informed Marike, and all four met on 26 August 1994, agreeing that under the circumstances their friendship couldn't work any longer and that they will not meet again. Among themselves, FW and Elita committed to give themselves two years to work on their respective marriages.

During those two years without contact the final constitution was approved on 8 May 1996, which event was celebrated in an impressive ceremony with King Constantine of Greece present – as well as the Georgiadis couple. FW was alone at the function, and unexpectedly encountered Elita, who avoided talking to him.

At the end of June 1996, the NP withdrew from the GNU and thus FW was no longer even Deputy President, but leader of the opposition. He therefore had no decision-making power that could be influenced by anyone. It was after the NP's withdrawal from cabinet that FW began thinking about his personal life. According to him, the pain of their separation became so sharp that he could not deal with it or sublimate it.

On 26 August 1997, exactly three years after the two couples had met and agreed to end their friendship, FW de Klerk retired from politics. In November 1997 FW informed Marike that he was still in love with Elita and divorce proceedings were initiated. Elita and FW were married on 7 November 1998.

It is plain from this timeline, and from the context of the little free time that FW de Klerk in any event had as president during the tumultuous, high-intensity transition, that it had been a literal impossibility for Elita Georgiadis to have influenced any of the key decisions he took between becoming leader of the NP on 2 February 1989, and the handing over of power to newly-elected President Nelson Mandela on 10 May 1994.

## 11.5 HOW I HAD LIVED THE TRANSITION – DIPLOMATIC BREAKHROUGHS

To round out the above "all source" timeline of South Africa's negotiations/transition it is opportune to recount now how I myself lived that period from 1990 to 1997, because of the light it will help cast on a mostly under-reported dimension of the jostling – namely, in the diplomatic arena.

### 11.5.1 OBSERVING THE EARLY STAGES FROM PARIS

That the NP Government's initial tactical aim of gaining the political initiative and changing the discourse had been largely met, I myself had seen enough evidence of, in the form of what I observed in Paris in 1990 at the outset of the transition.

President de Klerk's speech to parliament on 2 February had been well received there, across the spectrum. I remember how we at the DFA Information Section of the embassy (then located on the second floor of the chancery) had all been glued to the television that day, somewhat anxiously awaiting the telecast of the speech (in case it turned out to be another Rubicon). Even though we had been assured that it definitely won't be a repeat of that disaster, it was only human to feel a sense of trepidation... Mr De Klerk's preceding reputation as an arch-conservative and the fact that we weren't provided with the actual text of the speech beforehand (just told that this time it would be a true, concrete break with the past, with significant real measures to facilitate future negotiation) also had had us wondering beforehand exactly how far he would actually be willing to go…

We as diplomats had of course been very much exposed to the world's expectations regarding what would in their eyes be essential in order to constitute a true break-through (the liberation of Mr Mandela, unbanning of the proscribed organisations, definitive break with Apartheid, plus a willingness to negotiate inclusively for a non-racial democracy in a unitary South Africa). We were, therefore, hugely relieved when we realised that President de Klerk indeed had the bit firmly between the teeth and was truly aiming to do all that was necessary in order to get all-party negotiations going at last.

Even the left-wing Parisian press were positive about the speech. The leading French left-wing newspaper then was (and still is) "*Libération*". It was founded in 1973 by Jean-Paul Sartre and friends, following on the student uprising of 1968. Its Africa section was in the late eighties and early nineties headed by an American journalist, Stephen Smith, who in that position had succeeded Pierre Haski (well known to the South African authorities).

Fostering relations with the "*Libé*" and Smith was at that time my responsibility. Smith had from PW Botha's time dearly wanted to visit South Africa but could not get a visa. I had felt that such refusal was short-sighted, because without him having seen the situation in the country first-hand, Smith could publish whatever he wanted with a clean conscience, claiming that we were the ones who had made it impossible for him to go verify things for himself and form his own opinions.

Having made it a priority to get to know Smith and feeling sufficiently sure that he was a person of integrity who would not outright lie about what he saw if we gave him a visa, I could convince the security authorities in Pretoria (perhaps due to my own background) that Smith should be allowed to visit. It proved to be a good investment, because when the time came round to report on FW's speech "*Libération's*" coverage was informed and positive – and (seeing that they were left-wing), therefore of much more persuasive value than reporting in the centrist and right-wing French press.

Stephen Smith was an interesting individual – I had seen early on that he had journalistic integrity, as well as an own mind and would thus do his own thing, not feeling himself bound to a pre-set ideological line. After having visited South Africa, he did not hesitate to accept our invitations to official embassy events, such as to the ambassador's residence to attend our National Day celebrations on 31 May 1990. Or to come hang out with us in our "pub" that we had set up in a vacant space on the embassy building's ground floor. (Being publicly seen with and at events of South African diplomats was something that typical left-wingers would have rather died than do).

The embassy "pub" was more of an in-house club facility for us transferred staff – we could all import South African wines and beer duty-free, so that we clubbed together to bring in containers, in which we then made provision for a sufficient supply also for the "pub" (which was not a "for-profit" liquor-selling venture but rather a space for relaxation at lunchtime and after work – as well as for outreach, inviting contacts over so that they could meet and get to know real South Africans). The rather nice ground floor space we converted into our "pub" had been vacant because a few years before a communist mob had stormed the embassy and ransacked the ground floor, so that that floor – which was easy to access from outside – had then been left empty and un-used, with everything moved up to the higher levels, as a precautionary measure in case of another such attack.

The French president at the time was the Socialist François Mitterrand. The fact that he was the first overseas head of state to issue a formal invite for a state visit to President de Klerk, speaks volumes about how well the 2 February speech was received in France, also by the Left. The visit took place in May 1990, with Paris as the first stop on a nine-country tour – the first such official state visit by a South African leader in four decades. De Klerk's plane (a Boeing that the SAAF had hastily converted into a presidential craft) landed at the French Republic's VIP reception facility at Orly Airport in the southern outskirts of Paris, where important visitors were habitually received with the necessary pomp and circumstance.

From there it was a hair-raisingly fast dash by car, in an escorted convoy to the Hôtel de Crillon on the Place de la Concorde in the heart of Paris. Of necessity, for the safety of such official VIP convoys the police had to temporarily completely close (segment by segment), some of the very busiest Parisian roads, such as the south-western section of the circular highway that runs around the city, as well as the emblematic Avenue des Champs-Élysées. This allowed such VIP convoys to pass at high speed with no other vehicles then on the road. Paris of course receives many dignitaries and most of them receive this same treatment, following the same route. Typically (and quite understandably) this disruption of the traffic greatly annoyed the Parisian public, who are of course inconvenienced by the closures and security measures.

President De Klerk's visit had been big news from well before he arrived, so that most everyone knew that it was him for whom the roads were being closed that day. The amazing thing for us South Africans to see, was how many members of the public spontaneously cheered and waved at him as the convoy raced past them (I can only think of Zelensky of Ukraine as another example of such an applauding public reaction).

Among the most interesting developments surrounding that state visit was that African students studying at the famous Sorbonne University, of their own accord, had quickly organised a huge, very high-visibility pop concert specifically in honour of De Klerk. It was held in the prime location of the Trocadero Square (for those who know Paris, it's the vantage point overlooking the Eiffel Tower from across the River Seine, where the 2024 Paris Olympics opening ceremony was held). These African students were then confronted by some die-hards in the media, questioning as to why they had wanted to do such a thing? Didn't they know how poor the living conditions of Black South Africans were?

The students' response, on camera, then beautifully illustrated the difference in worldview and perspective that existed between the average European and Black African about South Africa. One French church-run channel had shown video of housing in Soweto, emphasizing that the typical township house only had one water tap. Pathetic, from a European's point of view. The Black students? Wow, that's wonderful – in South Africa's black townships the people actually had running potable water piped into their homes! Likewise with footage of old people queuing outside in the winter cold to receive their pensions; the Black students? Wow, there in Apartheid South Africa Black people do actually enjoy the privilege of receiving state pensions!

(One may thus wonder how much the negative propaganda over the years had actually contributed to stimulating immigration to South Africa from the rest of Africa…).

My stint at the Paris embassy terminated at the end of August 1990, when I returned to Pretoria, to take up my new position at the DFA's head office, as head of Diplomatic Training.

### 11.5.2 BACK IN PRETORIA: UPGRADING DIPLOMATIC TRAINING (1991-1992)

Because of the transition, the task that I was principally entrusted with was to completely transform the training system in order to ensure that it would be suited to the needs of the New South Africa. We thus began receiving cadets from the former liberation movements. Essentially, though, it was an effort to thoroughly professionalise the formation of prospective diplomats. This we did by focusing – similar to the MBA approach in business schools – on developing actual "**can-do**" professional abilities, rather than on merely imparting abstract theoretical knowledge.

We could successfully implement this new approach in little more than a year, *inter alia* with the help of the Human Sciences Research Council as the quality assessment and grading entity. We also had mobilised a select group of leading academics from different university campuses, who helped prepare study guides and presented coaching sessions on our identified subjects of professional interest such as international relations, international law, commerce and the economy, communication skills, the intelligence function, and the actual tradecraft of being a diplomat, such as the drafting of a *note verbale*. Thus, we could establish the foundations of what was, in the New South Africa, soon to be named the Diplomatic Academy.

Despite the clear future direction that we all could see that the country (and its future foreign service) was obviously headed towards, during that transition phase there still existed political tensions between the needs of the future versus that of the past. One such concerned the language of instruction.

As was then the case in the Civil Service in general, all DFA training had previously been essentially presented in Afrikaans. It was obvious that many of the new cohort of cadets would not be able to follow lectures or understand study guides presented in Afrikaans. It was also obvious that, in their intended foreign settings as diplomats serving abroad, the language in use would never be Afrikaans (English, plus the language of the host country). For example, they would never be interviewed in Afrikaans on international TV or radio, so what was the point of doing interview simulations with them in Afrikaans during the practical part of our communications course? I had accordingly proposed that, for purely practical reasons, the language of instruction should be changed to English – also because this would provide valuable practice opportunity for our cadets perhaps not yet fluent in English (since English had, world-wide, become the language of international communication).

The practical common sense behind such a change was evident and understood, but I soon enough received "guidance" from above that I needed to be very careful, lest conservative Afrikaner sentiment be offended and the issue then reverberates in the party-political arena…

This of course touched a raw nerve with me, personally – I don't believe that anyone could be more proud than me of the Afrikaans language (my great-uncle and namesake Dr Willem Steenkamp having been the first ever doctoral student to have written up his thesis in our language, long before Afrikaans had acquired official status, plus my own winning of the Afrikaans debating contest for high schools and being a published novelist in Afrikaans, and of course my Irish/Afrikaans heritage, which had not exactly conditioned me to be greatly enamoured of the language of the Anglo-Saxon colonial conqueror…).

As I've explained earlier, you are reading here this series of "my truth" in English, only because I'm writing it principally for my own grandchildren, who happen to have fathers (and nationality) that are neither South African nor Afrikaans, and who thus will only be able to read my memoirs if written in their home language, English. (Such is the reality for most children that had grown up in diplomatic families, living abroad and having been schooled in international institutions).

## 11.5.3 DIPLOMATIC BREAKTHROUGHS, SUCH AS ESTABLISHING AMBASSADORIAL RELATIONS WITH GABON

The formal accord between Gabon and South Africa to establish full diplomatic relations was signed on 15 October 1992. In December 1992 already we had a top-notch young advance team on the ground in Libreville, Gabon's capital, where an interim embassy chancery was physically established in a leading local hotel – the first actual new South African embassy opened in formerly hostile Black Africa after President De Klerk's 2 February 1990 speech. With the chancery (i.e., the embassy offices) in place – even if then still in temporarily converted hotel rooms – I myself arrived there on 13 January 1993 to take up my post.

It was on the 1st of April 1993 that South Africa as the country I was privileged to represent was accorded the honour of me presenting my Letters of Credence to the Gabonese head of state, Omar Bongo, in a full-parade ceremony staged for me alone. This invite to present was very quick by African standards (where newly-arrived ambassadors more often than not wait months on end), and furthermore exceptional in that such elaborate ceremonies were typically hosted just a few times per year, with new ambassadors presenting in groups – my American and French colleagues were typically the only other ones accorded such privilege to present on their own.





*Invited to hand over my Letters of Credence on my own (typically done in a group). This was an important message to ANC, that they could no longer take it for granted that Black Africa would look kindly only at them any longer.*

The concretisation of full diplomatic relations at resident ambassadorial level with the New South Africa was the main news on the first two pages of Gabon's leading newspaper the next day, eclipsing coverage of the visit to the country by the then German foreign minister, which had happened the same day.

The reception by the Gabonese public was also very hearty and welcoming through-out my four-year stay there, with never a single protest.



Participez au Grand Concours CNLS-L'Union. 10 millions FCFA de prix. GRATUIT Page 5

INTERDIT A LA VENTE

PREMIER QUOTIDIEN GABONAIS D'INFORMATION

# l'union

VENDREDI 2 AVRIL 1993 - 19EME ANNÉE - 12 PAGES - N° 5168 - 150 F CFA

**OMAR BONGO DANS LE WOLEU-NTEM**

Le président de la République, M. Omar Bongo se rend se matin à Oyem où il présidera la cérémonie d'inauguration de la succursale locale de la Banque gabonaise de développement (BGD). Le président de la République visitera également les localités de Bitam et Minvoul. Son retour à Libreville est prévu dimanche prochain.

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PRÉSENTATION DES LETTRES DE CRÉANCE DE L'AMBASSADEUR D'AFRIQUE DU SUD

## L'AXE LIBREVILLE - PRETORIA ÉTABLI



**Pour moi quoi...**

*Bientôt, il ne restera plus un seul milliard à Monsieur "Coffre-Fort" alias Streap Tease, qui pose à moitié nu dans les journaux, une grossière scarification sur le ventre (plein d'ascaris et de bourrelets) en guise de canon de beauté. Sa dernière gâterie de milliardaire (le plus rapide du Gabon, pour pomper l'autre), ce sont les deux bolides blindés payés 150 briques rubis sur l'ongle. Qu'il claque son argent sale, pour assouvir ses caprices de petit parvenu des bords de la Sébé, passe encore. Mais qu'il mette maintenant ses milliards pour fomenter des coups d'Etat constitutionnels, alors là, ça devient sérieux.*

*Jules-la-Bourde, qu'il materne et saoûle à coups de pétro-CFA, semble-t-il, aurait décidé, sur ses conseils, de se re-présenter à l'élection au Perchoir. Il compterait, pour ce faire, sur les voix d'une quinzaine de députés pédégistes félons, qui défilent ces derniers temps sur les hauteurs de Plein Ciel pour la signature du marché (la prochaine fois, je donnerai des noms). L'offre est tellement alléchante qu'à la fin, ce n'est plus quinze mais tout le groupe parlementaire PDG qui débarquera chez "Coffre-Fort". Ces voix pédégistes ajoutées à celles de certains parlementaires codistes garantiraient inévitablement, dit-on, la réélection de Jules-la-Bourde et on peut déjà imaginer la suite des bouleversements politiques que la nouvelle majorité parlementataire va entraîner.*

*Moi, Makaya, je ne suis pas contre un tel scénario. C'est la démocratie. Mais j'exige simplement que le vote se déroule à main levée et que l'on envisage, juste après, une dissolution de la présente législature. Et on va voir ce qu'on va voir quoi.*

Makaya

Le chef de l'Etat, M. Omar Bongo, a reçu hier matin, au palais présidentiel, les copies figurées des lettres de créance accréditant M. Willem Steenkamp, en qualité d'ambassadeur extraordinaire et plénipotentiaire de la République sud-africaine auprès de la République gabonaise. Le diplomate sud-africain, qui résidera à Libreville, est le premier ambassadeur de son pays au Gabon.

L'arrivée de l'ambassadeur Steenkamp illustre la volonté de la République sud-africaine de retrouver ses lettres de noblesse sur la scène politique internationale. Elle marque aussi, à coup sûr, une redynamisation de l'axe Libreville-Pretoria.

**Page 2**

*Front page of the main local newspaper, taken up by my LoC presentation, as well as page two (below), where my accreditation topped the reporting of that same day's visit to Gabon by the then German Foreign Minister.*

GABON-AFRIQUE DU SUD

# L'ambassadeur Steenkamp a présenté, hier, ses lettres de créance

*Poser les prémices du renforcement de l'axe Libreville-Pretoria*

***Nommé, en janvier dernier, aux hautes fonctions d'ambassadeur extraordinaire et plénipotentiaire de la République d'Afrique du Sud auprès de la République gabonaise, avec résidence à Libreville, M. Willem Steenkamp, a présenté hier au palais présidentiel, les copies figurées de ses lettres de créance au chef de l'Etat.***

Zoff Blanchard MINANG

APRES le geste symbolique et protocolaire, le président Omar Bongo a accordé un bref entretien à son hôte avant que ce dernier ne signe le livre d'or de la présidence de la République. Les deux hommes ont certainement mis à profit ce tête-à-tête pour faire un rapide tour d'horizon des questions d'intérêt commun.

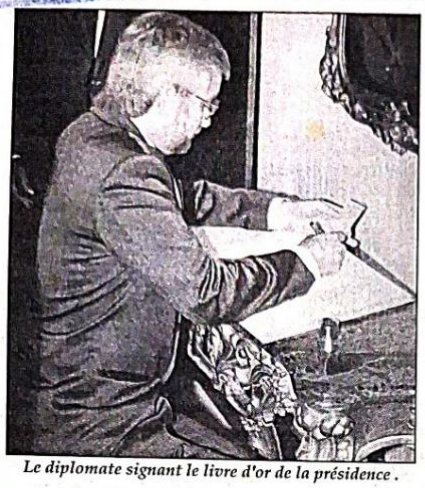
M. Willem Steenkamp est le premier ambassadeur sud-africain en poste à Libreville. Mais les deux pays ont toujours entretenu de bons rapports, surtout sur le plan commercial. En revanche, le pied des relations diplomatiques a quelque peu lâché l'accélérateur, au moment où la communauté internationale tout entière fustigeait, avec la plus grande rigueur, la politique d'apartheid institutionnalisée pendant longtemps par le régime de Peter Botha.

L'arrivée au pouvoir de Frédérik De Klerk a jeté les prémisses d'une nouvelle Afrique du Sud.

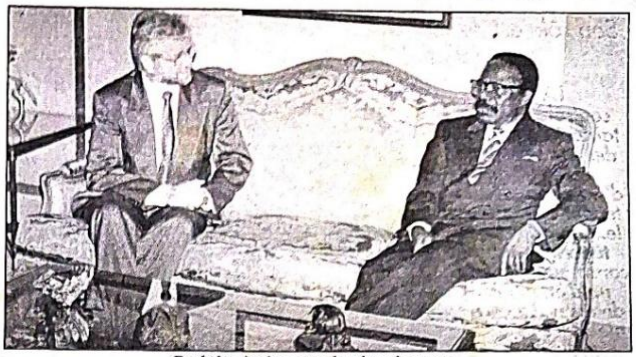
Le démantèlement de l'apartheid, la libération de Nelson Mandela et d'autres prisonniers politiques ayant contribué à donner un coup de fouet à cette dynamique nouvelle. Ce n'est d'ailleurs pas un simple hasard du calendrier si, au moment même où se déroulait la cérémonie de présentation des lettres de créances, les négociations de la CODESA (Convention pour une Afrique du Sud démocratique) reprenaient au pays de l'ambassadeur Willem Steenkamp.

Certes, ce ne sont pas les divergences de fond qui manquent, comme, par exemple, le fait que le parti zoulou Inkhata réclame le principe d'un Etat fédéral au sein duquel le territoire du Kwazulu garderait d'importants pouvoirs. Mais la réalité reste aussi que les deux principaux partenaires, le gouvernement et l'ANC (Congrès national africain) ont réussi à trouver un terrain d'entente sur les principes de l'élection d'une Assemblée constituante.

C'est, à l'évidence, avec une Afrique du Sud qui retrouve progressivement ses lettres de noblesse dans l'arène internationale que le Gabon a choisi de coopérer en encourageant les réformes initiées depuis plus de deux ans et qui se poursuivent normalement. Avec les représentations diplomatiques, il va sans dire que cette coopération va se fructifier. De même qu'elle va, cela ne fait l'ombre d'aucun doute, renforcer davantage l'axe Libreville-Pretoria.



*Le diplomate signant le livre d'or de la présidence .*



*Bref tête-à-tête entre les deux hommes.*
*(Photos Joseph Manianga)*

## Willem Steenkamp, un polyvalent

Le premier ambassadeur d'Afrique du Sud au Gabon est né le 16 décembre 1953 dans la ville côtière de Durban, fréquent théâtre des affrontements meurtriers. Ce qui, heureusement n'a pas empêché Willem Stennkamp, d'obtenir brillamment son baccalauréat dans cette ville en 1971. Cette année-là, il remporte d'ailleurs le concours national sud-africain de débat public pour les lycéens.

C'est donc un brillant orateur, taille svelte, toujours élégamment vêtu, qui débarque à l'Université de l'Etat libre d'Orange (à Bloemfontein) et à l'Université d'Afrique du Sud à Prétoria. Il en sortira titulaire d'un DEA en Sciences politiques. Après avoir passé des examens du Barreau, il est devenu avocat auprès de la Cour suprême d'Afrique du Sud. Nous sommes en 1985.

Après le service national obligatoire, M. Stennkamp entre au ministère des Affaires étrangères en 1986. De 1987 à 1990, il est Premier secrétaire d'Ambassade à Paris. En 1991, il est directeur de l'Institut des Hautes Etudes du ministère des Affaires étrangères. Il occupera ce poste jusqu'à sa nomination au poste d'ambassadeur au Gabon.

L'ambassadeur *Willem Stennkamp est marié et père de trois enfants. Son épouse, Rina Steenkamp est journaliste de* profession. L'époux de notre consœur est aussi un romancier très prisé, un excellent photographe et un grand sportif. Bref, un homme ayant plusieurs cordes à son arc.

COOPÉRATION ALLEMAGNE-GABON

# Hommage à la démocratie gabonaise

*Le ministre d'Etat allemand aux Affaires étrangères, SE Helmut Schäfer, a salué, au cours de sa rencontre hier avec les leaders des partis, l'esprit démocratique qui règne au sein de la classe politique de notre pays*

Berthe NZANG NANG

LE ministre d'Etat allemand, aux Affaires étrangères , M. Helmut Schäfer, qui effectue depuis le 31 mars dernier, une visite de travail et d'amitié dans notre pays, a rencontré hier après-midi à l'hôtel Intercontinental Okoumé Palace de libreville tous les partis politiques reconnus par la loi. Cette rencontre jugée "enrichissante et fructueuse" par les leaders politiques gabonais, a eu lieu en présence du chargé d'affaires d'Allemagne au gabon, du chef de cabinet du ministre ainsi que du sous-directeur pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre au ministère allemand des Affaires étrangères.

Les discusions, ont porté sur l'évolution du processus démocratique dans notre pays. Processus qui s'est mis en place au terme de la Conférence nationale ayant réuni, en mars 1990, toutes les forces vives de la nation. Le ministre allemand qui n'a pas caché son admiration pour la démocratie telle qu'elle s'exerce au Gabon, a profité de cette rencontre pour informer les chefs des partis politiques de l'assistance que son pays pourrait nous apporter dans l'organisation des élections présidentielles prévues en principe, dans moins de dix mois. Le chef de la diplomatie allemande a rassuré ses interlocuteurs que l'aide de son pays ne ferait pas défaut. Afin de permettre un bon déroulement de ces élections.

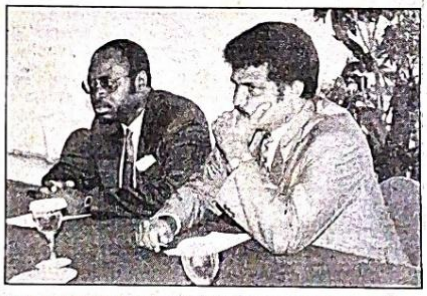
Les représentants des différentes formations politiques —comme d'habitude— ont, une fois de plus, exprimé leurs inquiétudes quant aux imperfections susceptibles d'entacher ces élections. C'est pourquoi, ils ont réitéré des garanties de transparence. Afin, ont-ils fait remarquer, d'éviter des troubles sociaux qui surviendraient au lendemain des présidentielles si on ne tenait pas compte de leurs craintes. Aussi ont-ils émis le vœu de voir des observateurs internationaux présents pendant tout le déroulement du scrutin. Enfin, ils ont présenté à M. Helmut Schäfer et à la délégation qui l'accompagne, la situation socio-économique du pays qui, selon eux, est "dramatique".

Le Secrétaire général du PDG (parti majoritaire au pouvoir), M. Jacques Adiahénot a quant à lui, lancé un appel à l'opposition en l'invitant à adopter une attitude responsable en éduquant et en sensibilisant sans passion ses militants sur l'importance des enjeux de décembre 1993. Il a en outre demandé à ses dirigeants d'attirer chaque fois l'attention du gouvernement sur leur préoccupations qui, a-t-il souligné, sont également les mêmes que défend le PDG. A savoir, "oeuvrer dans la transparence pour l'unité du peuple gabonais"



*Le ministre allemand entouré de ses collaborateurs(ci dessus), lors de l'audience collective accordée aux leaders des partis politiques de notre pays (photos du bas).*
*(Photos Adjai)*





## Centre culturel américain

**10h00 - 12h00 15h00-20h30:** ouverture de la bibliotnèque.

Inscriptions gratuites et immédiates pour emprunter des ouvrages américains en anglais mais aussi en français ; entrée libre pour cosulter journaux, magazines, dictionnaires et ouvrages de référence.

**18h00** Film in english "A room with a view"

Les inscriptions au cours d'anglais du Centre culturel américain ont débuté à partir du 22 mars 1993. Eles auront lieu du 22 au 10 avril 1993. Les inscriptions pour le TOEFL ont également débuté.
Renseignement teL. 74-33-32

My first official ministerial meeting was with the Gabonese Defence Minister, the effective number two in Gabon's power rankings. Stepping out of his office, the main TV channels and media were waiting there and quite openly interviewed me, asking about future defence cooperation between South Africa and Gabon – despite the then still very much in force UN Arms Embargo. This was the first of many cordial and productive meetings I was to have with the Defence Minister, annoying the French with our intrusion in their "back-yard" regarding maintenance contracts for military hardware (*the photo below is of one such subsequent visit, introducing senior personnel from SA's armaments company DENEL, which occurred in the middle of a spat between students of the local university and their rector, who they were holding hostage in his office – from there the minister jokingly posing with two phones in hand)*.





*Dr Niël Barnard as new DG of Constitutional Development and Planning (CDP) understood the importance of African outreach – on this photo a senior team from CDP was visiting Libreville in 1993 to brief the Gabonese on progress in the transition and to obtain their input on constitutional principles (myself = grey back of head, sitting at the head of the conference table).*

For those who can understand French (or who don't mind reading English captions) here's a short video which shows what we at the Embassy were up to back then, promoting trade between South Africa and Gabon:

https://www.facebook.com/GabaoVintage/videos/la-toute-1%C3%A8re-semaine-sud-africaine-au-gabon-en-1994-gabon-gabaovintage/2207236139436911?referrer=grok.com




The French officials in Gabon weren't exactly sure how to handle the new South African presence on "their" turf. On the one hand, France obviously desired very good relations with the New South Africa, since we've always been a large market for them (especially regarding armaments) and we paid promptly and in full. On the other hand, they could sense that we could also be very stiff competition for them in the African market, because of our proximity and much lower costs (and Africa was indeed important to the French economy – not so much because of a huge volume of sales, but because of the exorbitant profit margins they could maintain, thanks to the monopolistic control they exercised by all kinds of devious means).

The Gabonese soon enough confided in me (once we had built up close brotherly relations), that the French ambassador had initially tried to cast a bit of a shadow over me with Bongo and his senior aides, whispering to them that I was a (former?) NIS member and that – horror of all horrors – my father was a former commanding general of the SAP-SB.

In other words, trying to play the stereotypical "Boer Apartheid securocrat" card…

What the Frenchman didn't realise was how that kind of news would be received by an African leader who was looking over this first, very young, representative that the South African head of state had chosen to send his way. Thinking about their own way of doing things, this news didn't strike the Gabonese as anything that should work against me – quite the contrary. It enhanced my credibility enormously, because obviously I wasn't the typical European diplomat they'd become used to receiving in their palaces – an over-the-hill, milksop professional also-ran sent out to pasture in Africa in the twilight years of his career.

To them, the choice of me with my personal background as ambassador, spoke of the fact that South Africa regarded their country and region as important during a critical time in our history.

Something that then started working against the French and in our favour, particularly with the all-important Gabonese security forces – being by far the closest of all state entities to the president – was the fact that the South African armaments industry was fully capable (and actually licensed by the French) to maintain French-made weapons systems such as the Gabonese Mirage fighter jets.

Since our priorities at the embassy had been largely shifting from playing political defence to promoting trade and the capabilities of the South African industrial and services sectors, we very early on had brought our armaments industry into contact with the Gabonese defence force, particularly as regards the maintenance of their planes and ships.

One of our senior Gabonese contacts had conspiratorially told us, on the day after the first Denel delegation had arrived in Libreville, that the French military attached had that first day phoned France 44 times in a state of high alarm (they were, of course, tapping his phone). We quickly deprived the French of their Gabonese maintenance contracts, and at a personal level we became blood brothers.

When the celebrations for President Mandela's investiture came round, the Gabonese Navy kindly made available one of their officers, in full dress uniform, to hoist the new South African flag for us, as a Gabonese choir sang Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika (our own designated military attaché had at that time not yet arrived in Libreville).

The celebratory reception, held in the gardens of the fancy local Meridian hotel, was a splendid affair attended in person by the Gabonese Prime Minister. The pride and joy that the other Africans so obviously felt in the miracle birth of the New South Africa, was something special to behold.



That huge flag we so proudly raised had a bit of a story to it – the final design of the new national flag had been approved so late that enough of them could not be fabricated in time to supply to the embassies abroad; therefore, with the design in hand, we went to a renowned local tailor in Libreville to make us one, in the huge ceremonial dimensions. They could source all the needed colours in clean cloth, except for the blue; for that exact shade of blue, they needed to re-purpose a bedsheet – which was embossed with a raised floral motif!

Luckily, at a distance this floral motif was not perceptible, as can be seen on this photo.

I was deeply struck by how sincerely I was accepted and appreciated as being fully African, by the Gabonese and by other regional leaders, as well as by my fellow African ambassadors in the local diplomatic corps – despite my skin colour and the awful propaganda of the preceding years. They were all far better informed about what had really been going on in South Africa than I had initially imagined they would be, and also far more realistic and sympathetic. There was an enormous pride in South Africa as fellow African country, because of our capabilities and the contribution we could make, plus their evident hope that the cross-identification that was solidifying would make other continents aware of Africa's potential (on the basis of what South Africa had already demonstrated itself to be capable of, for example as regards technology).

An example of the esteem in which South Africa was held, and of the full acceptance that we personally had enjoyed, was that my wife (herself a former SAP-SB officer) was unanimously elected as the chair of the association of ambassador's wives in Libreville…

One of the funniest aspects of our experiences there on the equator, was the way in which we were regarded by the Africans and the Europeans, respectively. As said, the Africans (such as the other African diplomats) took pride in our Afrikaner Africanness and at get-togethers among ourselves as Africans, would complain to us and about the condescending, insincere attitude of our European counterparts. When we moved among the European diplomats, however (the diplomatic corps there consisted basically only of Europeans and Africans, with very few representatives from Asia and the Americas) those whites would regard us as “one of them” on the basis of our skin colour and would unburden themselves freely about what they really thought about Black Africans in general – an eye-opener, indeed! (The favourite theme of either side at cocktails and the like, was to complain about the “other side”).

Another interesting experience was when I accompanied future president Thabo Mbeki on a visit to the palace to meet with President Bongo (this was well before the 1994 election). The first thing that had struck me, was that when we South Africans wanted to discuss something confidentially among ourselves but within earshot of the Gabonese, our language of communication instinctively switched from English to Afrikaans. The other striking thing was to hear Bongo say to Mbeki that they will be receiving on a platter a fully working country, the best functioning on the continent, and that they should understand that South Africa’s greatest asset was its white population who should be cherished as such.

Moments of shared pride that I will never forget came with the victory of the Springboks in the 1995 rugby world cup. Francophone Africans are typically avid rugby followers on TV (despite their equatorial environment not being exactly conducive to playing such a quintessentially winter sport themselves). On French TV such as that broadcast to Africa, rugby is a big thing. There had been a great build-up of expectation, around the fact that an African team would be playing in a world cup final – against the mighty All Blacks, at that. The match had been long, since it had gone into overtime, with everybody glued to their screens.

When the final whistle at last blew and we had won, I had immediately rushed out onto the terrace to strike down the normal flag and hoist instead the huge ceremonial flag up the flag-post we had affixed to the top of the 12-storey building – the highest and thus most visible flag in all of the city (my official residence was a double-storey penthouse with a nice terrace, atop this building).



*View of Libreville, Gabon, in the early 1990s (arrow marks Embassy Residence penthouse)*

After having been stuck so long inside in front of their TV’s, lots of Gabonese were by that time also catching a bit of fresh air on their apartment balconies. When they saw me joyfully hoisting that enormous flag a great spontaneous cheer went up, with lots of whistling, hooting, handwaving and thumbs-ups in my direction.

It was hugely heart-warming to experience that shared pride in the achievement of a fellow African nation. (I will relate in a later chapter, some of the lessons I had learnt whilst serving as ambassador to that that region, about constitutional models and real-world politics).

### 11.5.4 A LIST OF HOW SA DIPLOMATS RE-ESTABLISHED FOREIGN RELATIONS, 1991 - 1994

South African Government diplomats weren't sitting on their hands during the negotiations/transition – they were actively establishing and re-establishing diplomatic relations with the bulk of the countries on the planet, as the list below shows. This progress was important, in that it signalled to the ANC/SACP (but also the NP Government) that the world was invested in and expected a positive outcome, which limited the leeway that any of the two main protagonists enjoyed to simply walk away or needlessly obstruct. The ANC/SACP could, in the light of this progress, no longer see the NP Government as totally isolated or itself as the world's automatic choice, should it at any stage have been deemed to be acting unreasonably:

Hungary: 24 July 1991
Estonia: 4 November 1991
Latvia: 4 November 1991
Lithuania: 20 November 1991
Romania: 21 November 1991
Poland: 18 December 1991
Japan: 13 January 1992 (re-established after partial suspension)
Kyrgyzstan: 26 January 1992
Bulgaria: 2 February 1992
Russia: 28 February 1992
Kazakhstan: 5 March 1992
Ukraine: 16 March 1992
Serbia: 2 April 1992
Azerbaijan: 29 April 1992
Tajikistan: 5 May 1992
Turkmenistan: 11 May 1992
Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire): 21 May 1992
Lesotho: 21 May 1992 (re-established)
Moldova: 15 June 1992
Armenia: 23 June 1992
Uzbekistan: 12 August 1992
Democratic Republic of the Congo: 30 September 1992
Gabon: 15 October 1992 (Embassy established in Libreville, December 1992 – 1st in Africa)
Turkey: 12 October 1992
Slovenia: 9 November 1992
Croatia: 9 November 1992
South Korea: 1 December 1992
Czech Republic: 1 January 1993
Slovakia: 1 January 1993
Malta: 10 February 1993
Belarus: 4 March 1993
Republic of the Congo: 22 March 1993
Georgia: 23 April 1993
San Marino: 30 April 1993
Equatorial Guinea: 5 May 1993
Comoros: 14 May 1993
Peru: 28 July 1993
Central African Republic: 23 August 1993
Bahrain: 13 September 1993
Jordan: 28 September 1993
Eswatini (Swaziland): 1 October 1993 (re-established)

Ireland: 5 October 1993
Mozambique: 11 October 1993
Singapore: 11 October 1993
Mexico: 27 October 1993
Philippines: 1 November 1993
Seychelles: 4 November 1993
Malaysia: 8 November 1993
India: 22 November 1993
Venezuela: 3 December 1993
Mauritius: 7 December 1993
Thailand: 9 December 1993
Cyprus: 10 December 1993
Vietnam: 22 December 1993
Albania: December 1993
Barbados: 4 January 1994
Liechtenstein: 12 January 1994
New Zealand: 19 January 1994
Madagascar: 27 January 1994
Holy See (Vatican City): 5 March 1994
Sao Tome & Principe: 10 May 1994
(This list is in addition to the 39 mostly Western countries with whom South Africa had maintained diplomatic relations before President De Klerk's 2 February 1990 speech).

Those four years that I spent in West-Central Africa till early 1997 still provide me with some of my fondest memories (as promised I will not repeat the often-lurid detail here – if interested, you can read all about my experiences in our free ***NONGQAI*** e-book, with the link below).

Quaint tales of extra-ordinary and plenipotentiary doings such as wrestling a prize merino ram in the mud and manure on the model farm we ran high up in the neck between two volcanic peaks on Bioko Island in Equatorial Guinea. Or having to unceremoniously escape from my pants at an official function in Lambarene in Gabon, when some large, toothy red ants had started making their way up to the ambassadorial ball, uninvited. Snake-dancing with an excellent Zulu traditional dance troupe through the midnight streets of Bangui in the Central African Republic (not to mention doing the same with a band of pygmies, deep in the jungle of the C.A.R.; or being "ambushed" by machinegun-toting "highway robbers" in another part of that forsaken country).

As mentioned earlier, those who are interested to read more about my "extraordinary and plenipotentiary" experiences in equatorial Africa, can click on this link to read our ***Nongqai*** eBook (in Afrikaans) dedicated to my adventures (and humorous mishaps) there:

**Ex Africa semper aliquid novi**

(Please allow time for it to download and be sure to have an e-pub reader installed – they're free).

In the next sub-section of this current chapter on the negotiation/transition phase, we will now assess the why's and wherefores behind the manner in which the events (tabulated in the preceding timelines) unfolded in the manner that they did, leading to the consequences we are all familiar with. We will of course be doing so with the great benefit of hindsight (and the *ex-post-facto* appearance of wisdom which that invariably endows authors with).

Of equal importance, though, is that we will be interpreting the events (as earlier time-lined) against a conceptual framework based on the fundamental principles of negotiation theory – which latter the NP Government gave rather scant evidence of having studied or understood, especially initially. However, we will not indulge in airy-fairy theorising based upon esoteric, hypothetical "solutions" or "strategies" dreamt up three decades after the fact, by an over-inventive imagination unconnected from the complex practical realities that the actual negotiators had had to grapple with.

To answer questions such as whether the NP negotiating team under Roelf Meyer consisted of “weaklings”, and whether fundamentally different outcomes than that with which we sit to this day could conceivably been successfully negotiated, we will stick to actual positions that the NP Government over the course of the negotiations had in fact adopted. All we will do in this “war-gaming” exercise at the end (when I will provide an alternative text for the 2 February speech – more in line with standard negotiation theory), will be to re-arrange the chronology with which those positions were brought into play by the NP...

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# CHAPTER 12:
# AN ANALYSIS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS/TRANSITION: WHY IT HAPPENED AS IT DID

## 12.1 A 'HEADS UP" ON THE MAIN STRATEGIC CHOICES MADE, AND THE THEORY RELEVANT TO IT

As mentioned before, this "fireside chat" of mine about South Africa's negotiated transition consists of three main parts: Firstly, the historical run-up to the transition, in which we have covered that which – during the eras of John Vorster and PW Botha – had really happened (as well as what had been left undone).

Part Two covered the actual events that occurred during the transition, which we had mostly presented in the form of timelines.

Part Three (which we have arrived at now), will complete the loop by analysing and interpreting the "why's and wherefores" behind that which we had seen happen during the transition. To better comprehend the causes, we will be looking briefly also at the core tenets of the relevant scientific theory. Considering here what the basic theory teaches is important, since it may help us more fully understand what lessons to take from the negotiated transition (especially with a view to a future in which coalition governance across all levels seem to be ever more likely).

This current chapter (#12) will serve to identify the key strategic choices that the NP Government had been confronted with, at the outset of FW de Klerk's presidency. As said, it will also briefly introduce – as a "heads-up" orientating readers about what is to come in the following chapters, the relevant theory that ideally should have been taken into consideration when making those strategic choices (but which had mostly not been taken cognisance of, often leading to less-than-optimal outcomes).

Because this is a fireside chat and not an academic dissertation, I will try not to overburden you with theory or academic language. Rather than having one "heavy" chapter setting out at length a conceptual reference framework incorporating all of the theorical concepts together at once, I will instead be weaving the theory into the narrative of Part Three, as and when appropriate, using layman's language. But, just as I had done in the earlier parts, I believe that it will be of value to readers if I foreshadow here what is to come, especially regarding my own hypotheses about what could have theoretically been done better, and why. Again, as in earlier parts, the objective is to enable you as reader – with that background nestled already in your mind – to better follow as I then roll out the arguments, allowing you to test for yourself whether you agree or not.

With the same purpose of learning, throughout this part I will be presenting "what if" illustrations of alternatives that had theoretically been available as "better" strategic choices (an established scientific testing and learning tool). This will be centred on the aptness of the NP's chosen **adversarial approach** (comparing it to strategic cooperation), the achievability of its **initial goals**, the procedure it had decided upon for conducting the negotiations (favouring a "Big Bang" rather than an incremental, step-by-step procedure), the lack of **proper preparation** (with the system for strategy formulation having been seriously dysfunctional), and which **model** to have based the constitution on (USA or UK). All of this likely finds its best illustrative expression in the presentation of an hypothetical alternative text for De Klerk's 2 February 1990 speech.

That said, I would like to start this section with a few extracts from a personal "secret diary" kept by a senior police officer closely involved at the time with the then National Security Management System (NSMS). These extracts are from notes he had made in February 1989. These provide an apt introduction to my own thoughts on the main

causes for the "manner of death" of the "Old South Africa" – because in this section I will be focusing specifically on understanding how the negotiation/transition process brought an end to the "old" and gave birth to the "New South Africa".

The officer in question (identified here by name, with his permission) is my good friend and ***Nongqai*** colleague Brigadier Hennie Heymans – then an SAP representative on the NSMS at its national head office in Pretoria, and himself the holder of a master's degree in Strategic Studies – so that he was both well qualified and also centrally positioned to know and understand what was really going on at the heart of our so very dysfunctional system of national security strategy formulation.

Brigadier Heymans had, quite prophetically, qualified the purpose of him keeping his "secret diary" in one of the first inscriptions he had made in it. What he wrote, was: *"The purpose of this diary is not to gossip about officers, but to use it one day at the autopsy,* ***the post mortem of the Republic of South Africa****…"*

Which is exactly the reason why he recently shared it with me, because of him understanding that this eBook is precisely such a *post mortem.* In this eBook, as in any *post mortem*, I first had to dissect the body of evidence, which led to me giving in Part Two a clinical review of the evidence found (relating to the "**what**" and "**when**" of that which had occurred, recounted in the form of the time lines presented earlier). Now, in this final part – again, as a pathologist does in a *post mortem* – I am interpreting that evidence so as to identify the underlying causes, the "**why**" of the demise, with the aim that we may hopefully learn from it and better deal with the challenges accumulating on the horizon. Just as a pathologist interprets the evidence his dissection produced by means of reference to medical theory, we need some Political Science and Behaviouralist theory about negotiations and power politics to correctly understand what the factual evidence means, in terms of cause and effect.

Here are some of Hennie's key observations at the time:

- *"We don't know what kind of 'war' we are fighting. We don't know what kind of weapons to use. You shouldn't be shooting at a swarm of bees with a shotgun!!! We can only win the battle in two ways, namely through the 'hearts and minds' or through the barrel of a gun. The last option is out, but we are doing nothing about the first option. Once again, the reason is clear:* ***we don't know what we want to do****…*
- *"The National Party and the other parties* ***must become multiracial****. In South Africa we must no longer be conscious of colour but of values. Values must become the determining factor…*
- *"There is a lot of work to be done, but we have two problems:*
  *- Weak politicians: They do not think, do not create new policies;*
  *- Weak officials: They are not self-developed (to be thinking holistically, in terms of national security)*
- *Weak politicians and weak officials are a good 'team', actually a gang, because they protect each other."*

### 12.1.1 AN IMPORTANT QUALIFICATION: HINDSIGHT IS ALWAYS EASY…

Let me state again, here up front (since I'm going to be pontificating in this part about theoretical "errors" committed in the negotiation process) that it is obviously true that it is always very easy – especially when enjoying the benefit of 20/20 hindsight – to try to be clever after the fact.

I must therefore qualify at the outset that I am very much aware of exactly how complex and difficult the dying years of the old order was, presenting unique circumstances with no self-evident "good" solutions – challenges with which leaders at the time (being only human, after all) had earnestly grappled, doing so with the best of intentions. But not always – as we will see – with the best preparation, nor with sufficient insight into or understanding of the fundamental scientific theory underpinning **negotiations as process**, nor with regard to the **strategic planning necessary** for it, or the key behaviouralist considerations regarding **what your strategic approach should be** to your specific counterpart (adversarial or cooperation?), nor regarding **which constitutional model** would optimally serve the interest of the constituency you represent (the USA constitution, or the English Westminster system?).

Having stated up-front that caveat about hindsight being self-evidently facile, all the more credit is due here for the level of insight displayed already at that time by the likes of Hennie Heymans, as quoted above…

### 12.1.2 ANOTHER QUALIFICATION: A FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT OUTCOME UNLIKELY, BUT "BETTER"? POSSIBLY YES

In the course of this analysis and interpretation, a number of significant strategic "errors" on the part of the NP Government (as measured against the then available best theory, which we will be explaining) will of necessity feature prominently. Especially as made at the dawn of the negotiation process. Nevertheless, There is an important qualification that needs to be emphasised here at the outset. This is that, even should the NP Government **not** have committed these "errors" and had done everything perfectly, by the textbook (in complete accord with what hindsight now permits us to see may actually have been best), that "perfect execution" **would not have meant** that the fundamental nature of the actual outcome as in fact achieved, would or could have been significantly different.

Yes, the NP may have enjoyed better leverage at the negotiation table, and they may have obtained better tweaks of the eventual constitution, if they had based it on a more apt model – but at its heart, the process would inevitably still have resulted in the outcome we saw: majority rule within a unitary state model, with the same president and ruling party (Mandela and the ANC) emerging victorious.

Because the key problem wasn't the fortitude of those Roelf Meyer-led negotiators who were on the playing field during the "second half" of the negotiation test match, nor how they went about their task, but the **weak cards** that they had had to play, by the time that the NP had belatedly decided to negotiate (and then having kicked it off wrongly).

In short – the NP Government had finally opted for negotiating a political solution DECADES TOO LATE, when its leverage had already been fatally weakened, and then it initiated it with quite the wrong strategic approach, process, goals, and model.

However, although the core immediate outcome of the transition would not have been fundamentally changed by "better" negotiation on the part of the NP Government, what could theoretically have been achieved with better leverage and strategy (in terms of the aptness of the constitution, future safeguarding of vital interests, better post-transition governance, and future influence over decision-making) could indeed have been very significant for our future, so that it is in my opinion worthwhile to review it here. Because it holds valuable lessons for the era of significantly increased coalition governance that we have clearly entered into since 2024.

Last but not least, understanding that which had theoretically been done less than optimally, will help dispel many of the hoary conspiracy theories nowadays doing the rounds as supposed "explanations of what had gone wrong".

### 12.1.3 STRUCTURE OF THIS CHAPTER

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a concise conceptual framework that will allow one to identify where and how the transition may have been approached and handled more optimally by the NP Government, so as to draw lesson for the future from such analysis. Such a conceptual framework requires a basic understanding of the textbook theory related to how best to conduct negotiations, as well as of modern theory regarding human political behaviour and the aptness of the main constitutional systems (more specifically, the American and the English Westminster ones) that could have been used as model upon which to base and refine a new South African constitution.

Once having introduced the key choices that could have been made differently, plus the theory relevant thereto, I will concretely illustrate what I mean by presenting an alternative version of De Klerk's 2 February 1990 speech, for learning purposes – particularly to underscore the point that, had the NP prepared better before launching the transition, there indeed had existed alternatives that may have improved the final outcome (not in terms of its core nature or the immediate result, but importantly in terms of in later years countering serious structurally-induced problems and enhancing safety and security).

Because we will be measuring the "what and how" of that which in fact had been done, doing so against best theory, this chapter will consist of five main sections:

- An explanation of the basic principles underpinning what is viewed as standard theory on negotiation;
- Application of these principles to the 1990-1996 negotiations, to identify the "why's and wherefores" of the way in which that process unfolded and the outcomes it did and/or didn't produce;
- A brief introduction to the question of the appropriateness of the NP's initial goals, choice of procedure, strategic approach, and choice of model to base the new constitution on, together with the associated theory.
- The original 2 February 1990 speech and critique of it in terms of standard theory of negotiation; and
- An alternative version of the 2 February 1990 speech (based this time on best negotiation theory, but still using the exact positions that the NP in the end had adopted, just in different time order), which will serve to illustrate the theoretical principles, as well as leave you to ponder how better adhering to theory could have (possibly, marginally?) affected the outcome of the negotiation/transition process.

# 12.2 BASIC THEORY OF NEGOTIATION

## 12.2.1 A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In looking at negotiation theory as it applies to political transitions, one can look at the subject through an academic lens, or view it in a very down-to-earth, "realpolitik" manner. An example of the latter is a summation given in January 2026 by Richard Wolff (a Marxist "realpolitik" exponent) in a YouTube clip about the transition emerging in Cuba – you can decide for yourself how reflective his observations are of what transpired in South Africa in the 80s and 90s:

*"Let's start from the point that almost no one wants to say out loud. Regimes do not fall when the opposition shouts louder, they fall when the inner circle concludes that the cost of resisting is greater than the cost of change. That's the rule.*

*"An express transition does not begin with a speech on television, it begins with small, discreet, nervous meetings, it begins with exploratory contacts, it begins with emissaries who do not appear in photos, it begins with the most feared word in any regime,* ***exit****. Imagine the moment, not as a movie, but as a calculation, a closed table, a small group, the civilian leader, the security chiefs, the economic operators, those who manage the port, those who control imports and someone blurts out the phrase that no one wants to say: If we stay, we sink.*

*"At that moment the regime ceases to be a bloc. It becomes two sides: one side, the hardliners. Those who believe that giving in is dying, those who prefer to burn the country down rather than hand over control, those who live off the idea of resistance. Side two, the pragmatists, those who are not democrats by conviction, but negotiators by instinct. Those who understand that a controlled transition can save them personally and save part of the structure. If that second camp grows, the transition becomes possible. If the former dominates, repression increases. It's that simple.*

*"Now let's talk about the internal fight because that's where the real drama lies. The hardliners would see a transition as treason and in regimes like this treason is punished. So, the biggest risk of a transition is not the street, it is an internal war within the regime. Purge, arrests, accusations, conspiracies. If the pragmatists advance, the hardliners try to slow down.*

*"Therefore, if they were to negotiate, they would want to do it with dignity. They would like to sell it as a sovereign decision, as an historical updating, as an orderly transition. They would like to control the image and that is where it becomes a battle of storytelling. Is it surrender or is it modernization? Is it defeat or is it a new beginning? In the official discourse they would paint it as evolution. On the street people would call it by its real name: '****it's over****'."*

In-between Wolff's brutally honest "realpolitik" take and the more measured teachings of academic theorists, sits Donald Trump (*"Art of the Deal"*). Although the focus of Trump's negotiating at the time was business, more specifically property deals, the "Elements of the Deal" that he identified in Chapter Two of his book resonate

absolutely with principles dating back to the Chinese strategist Sun Tzu and the later, more scientific approach of academics such as Harvard University's William Ury.

Trump stressed the importance of having a well-planned and prepared fallback position, saying "protect the downside, and the upside will take care of itself". Meaning, that the first priority is to minimize risks and potential for losses. This reflects the basic truth that if you cannot walk away from negotiations (because you don't have a fall-back alternative prepared) then in the political context you are essentially negotiating the terms of your own capitulation, and not a win-win compromise. In layman's terms: you've climbed on the back of a tiger without preparing a way to get off, in case it proves that you cannot tame it.

Trump then added elements such as know your market, be flexible and maximize your options, as well as build and employ leverage. Because the best deals come from possessing true strength, which needs to be correctly understood by yourself in terms of its limits, as well as by your counterpart, in terms of its potential. Having such real-world leverage is your biggest advantage, whilst lacking it – especially if this "nudity" of yours is understood by your counterpart and the rest of the world – is your biggest weakness.

Leverage is thus closely tied in with having a viable fall-back position, which helps ensure that you do have options. As Trump says: never appear desperate and always negotiate from a position of power.

Both Sun Tzu ("*The Art of War*" – 5th century BCE) and the doyen among modern academic theoreticians, William Ury of Harvard ("*Getting to Yes*" – 1981) agree that before you try to "win," you must ensure you cannot be "beaten." In *The Art of War*, Sun Tzu made it clear that defence and offense are not just two options, but a chronological sequence. You **first secure yourself**. As he stated in Chapter 4 on tactical dispositions: "The good fighters of old first put themselves beyond the possibility of defeat..." Also of vital importance is Sun Tzu's dictum "know yourself and know your enemy". This knowledge – realistic and objective – is the only possible basis for avoiding chasing after unachievable goals which waste time and resources and inevitably leads to loss of face. (Henry Kissinger's realism-based approach similarly stressed that objectively assessing the actual balance of power at the very outset was vital, to restrain overreach and find pragmatic equilibria).

William Ury (along with Roger Fisher) introduced the concept of always needing a **BATNA** (Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement) in "*Getting to Yes"*. Your BATNA is the course of action you will take if the current negotiation fails. Ury argues that without a strong BATNA, you are desperate. Desperation leads to bad concessions: *"The reason you negotiate is to produce something better than the results you can obtain without negotiating... Your BATNA is the only standard which can protect you both from accepting terms that are too unfavorable and from rejecting terms it would be in your interest to accept."*

Other key principles underpinning the theory of negotiation identified by William Ury (the co-founder of Harvard University's Program on Negotiation – PON) are:

- **Focus on Real Interests, Not Political Policy Positions**: Base your negotiation strategy on a clear understanding of your side's real fundamental interests, and not on cherished policy positions. As regards the other side, dig beneath stated demands to uncover shared needs to enable win-win outcomes.
- **Generate Options for Mutual Gain**: Brainstorm creatively before deciding; before launching negotiations, "war-game" extensively the likely outcomes of the different strategic options available, considering also the other side's likely responses to each, so that you can enter upon the negotiations in a planned and prepared manner. In plain language: you cannot approach negotiations like a chess player that only considers his own objectives and relies on a single inflexible game plan, with no regard to the opponent's reactions and possible alternative strategies.
- **Insist on Objective Criteria**: Use fair standards (laws, precedents) to legitimize agreements and reduce power imbalances.
- **Separate People from the Problem:** Set aside emotions and relationships to avoid personal animosity; build rapport across cultural divides.

Another important theoretical perspective already available well before FW de Klerk launched the negotiations, was William Zartman's "Ripeness Theory". Zartman, a conflict resolution scholar, developed "ripeness" in works like "*Ripe for Resolution"* (1985/1989), arguing that stalemates make parties ready for talks. By 1990, this was a core concept in peace studies, applied to African conflicts (e.g., Angola, Mozambique). South Africa's situation by the end of the 1980s exemplified such a stalemate which made both sides ready to negotiate – the white government could not stabilise the country and protect the economy, while the liberation movements could not conceivably overthrow the powerful white state by revolutionary means, leading to what Zartman called a "mutually hurting stalemate". Key elements of his thinking were:

- **Identify Ripeness**: Negotiate only when both sides see stalemate as painful and perceive a "way out" (e.g., shared recognition of the unsustainability of both Apartheid and armed struggle).
- **Pre-Negotiation Management**: Use "talks about talks" to build commitment and to address peripheral parties acting as spoilers.
- **Timing and Mediation**: Involve external mediators (e.g., business leaders or international observers) who can "push" ripeness by highlighting the costs of delay.

In order not to delve too deep into the theory, one can conclude by mentioning the works that two other thinkers produced in the 1960s and 70s: Thomas Schelling (Game Theory and Strategic Bargaining) and Herbert Kelman (Track-Two Interactive Diplomacy). Schelling's "*The Strategy of Conflict*" (1960) introduced game-theoretic tools to the development of strategy for political and diplomatic negotiations. Kelman's social-psychological approach, developed in the 1970s, emphasized unofficial dialogues to humanize adversaries, thus laying the groundwork for what became known as Track-Two or Backchannel Diplomacy.

The point of mentioning here these works on the theoretical foundations for properly planning and preparing one's negotiation strategy and showing that these were readily available well ahead of when the NP Government finally opted (at the end of 1989) to focus on "settle" rather than "shoot", is to illustrate that – once that decision to seek to negotiate was taken – it had indeed been possible (in fact, obligatory) to sit down and strategically plan and prepare for that process based on a clear comprehension of the foundational facts, plus the best theory and historical example, and not based on party-political goals and image-oriented political instincts of politicians caucusing together but with little practical experience of actually having negotiated, nor (apparently) with any real knowledge of the theoretical foundations of effective negotiation.

For the sake of learning, we will test whether and to what extent the actions of the De Klerk Government (especially during the first thirty months of the negotiations) conformed to what was actually already at the time well-known theory on how to negotiate optimally.

To what extent was there proper prior analysis, gaming of alternatives, planning, and preparation? Were there perhaps better ways of having done it – especially regarding the way in which the negotiating challenge was initially understood by the NP, strategically vs tactically approached by them, and the process set up? How did the initial phase, conceived and steered by politicians, compare to the way that the process was handled from mid-1992 on by a team consisting essentially of expert officials and academics? In a nutshell – did the NP Government heed what Lang Hendrik van den Bergh had been warning about already from the early 1970s, namely that the strategic focus should be on properly planning and preparing to hold the strongest hand of cards possible, when the Government inevitably would have to take its "seat at the negotiation table"?

## 12.2.2 DID THE NP'S INITIAL APPROACH SHOW COGNIZANCE OF THESE PRINCIPLES?

### *12.2.2.1 What, in essence, were the negotiations about?*

At its core, the South African negotiations were about who would occupy the Union Buildings.

The white NP Government held colonially inherited legal title to it (accorded by the British parliament by means of the South Africa Act of 1909 and the Statute of Westminster of 1931). But the white government by the late eighties faced moral, political, and economic bankruptcy – finding itself under ever increasing internal and international pressure that caused it to lose the ability to govern effectively and ensure the security, stability, and prosperity. It therefore risked a total loss of "ownership" of the seat of power if it did not ensure a legitimate and orderly transition

to a new dispensation that would (with "sufficient consensus") be deemed by the population to satisfactorily meet the demands that the South African political system faced.

The ANC/SACP, for its part, had come to be recognised locally and internationally as the white Government's main protagonist, but it lacked the means – at least in the foreseeable future – to install itself in the Union Buildings without the prior agreement of the NP Government as existing title holder. In the same way that the NP Government had the ideological albatross of Apartheid round its neck, so too was the ANC/SACP alliance tainted by its long-standing adherence to Marxist-Leninist ideology and ties to the USSR. In part, the outcome of the political transition to majority rule would thus depend on which party most successfully could distance itself from its prior ideological platform.

Because, when looking beyond ingrained ideological posturing, what the ANC/SACP and its supporters at heart dearly wanted was the keys to the Union Buildings (for the power and perks which that would entail), whilst the NP Government and its supporters feared losing the entirety of their power and perks if they handed over the keys without a deal in place containing guarantees ensuring their real core interests (regarding individual and property rights in a Western-style liberal, free-market democracy anchored in a principled and independently adjudicated "state of laws").

#### *12.2.2.2 What the development of a strategy and process procedural parameters require*

The key principles mentioned earlier which underpin negotiation theory (as applicable to developing a sound own strategy) can be summed up as follows:

- Define and understand your BATNA (because it's essential that, as foremost priority, you be able to avoid ending up worse off than you were before you started negotiating). As proven from war to rugby, defensive strength usually determines who wins; don't be seduced into a singular focus on your own offense.
- Distinguish between real interests and policy positions.
- Don't be unrealistic in your expectations – know what is achievable by knowing yourself, your opponent, and the forces at play in the socio-economic and political environment.

As regards defining a suitable process and methodology, the key principles are:

- De-personalise and de-politicise, to promote objectivity, realism, and practicality.
- When at all possible, it's always better to develop a mutually beneficial partnership approach looking for a win-win, rather than adopting an adversarial approach seeking to impose.
- Be clear about the value of, and need for confidential "Track-Two / Backchannel" talks to achieve an early consensual broad framing of the essentials regarding both substantive content and matters of procedure; know when and to what extent to stage part of the negotiations in public as multilateral showcase events (for the sense of inclusivity and transparency) but understand that the essential preceding as well as day-to-day groundwork (without which such public events are unlikely to succeed and may blow up) of necessity must take place bilaterally between the main protagonists, in confidentiality.
- Exploit the benefit of structuring an approvals hierarchy for your team, meaning that the actual negotiations take place at a lower level (not between principals) and always on an *ad referendum* basis, meaning that there is hierarchical distance and consequently a fall-back (so that the lower levels can say: "*this looks fine to me in principle, but I have to take it to the boss for the final OK*").
- Be aware of the inherent risk of social interaction dynamics (the wish to get along and make progress) that may take over in "drafting by committee" – meaning, lawyers resorting to nice-sounding, less definitive compromise phraseology; constantly check their eloquent and often woolly formulations against the real world consequences that different possible later interpretations may lead to, doing so with the aid of experts not only from the field of legal drafting, but also from the worlds of political science, economy etc.

In order to obtain prior clarity about the interaction of all these considerations with your own negotiation goals and challenges, it is absolutely imperative that embarking upon negotiations be preceded by extensive, in-depth, and clinically objective situational analysis (SWOT – knowing your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats).

Building then upon such analysis and the database produced thereby, a disciplined and coldly fact-based process of generating the broadest possible spectrum of alternative negotiation strategies must follow as phase two, to be managed in a focused and ordered manner.

Phase Three of proper strategic planning and preparation for negotiation will then be to subject the strategy alternatives so generated to extensive testing and refinement in realistic simulations of real-world negotiation scenarios (i.e., "war gaming"). These "games" need to pit against each other knowledgeable teams of experts from across the full spectrum of relevant disciplines (economy, finance, national security, sociopsychology, Political Science, and Communication Studies) who are charged with representing and acting out as if the main protagonists. Apart from gaming the predictable, it must also include unpredictable "black swan" events and the accommodation of possible future changes in the environment (such as changes in superpower leadership). Such simulations need to be managed and evaluated by expert, ideologically neutral adjudicators – nowadays AI (artificial intelligence models) can be of enormous help in this.

I could find no evidence of the NP (as either party or government) having commissioned any such analysis, option generation, and strategy gaming prior to the 2 February 1990 speech.

#### *12.2.2.3 What were the initial positions adopted by the NP regarding the procedural aspect?*

What we saw actually happen, was that the new De Klerk administration – having lost faith in PW's military-dominated NSMS national security management system and the "total onslaught" strategy it produced – had decided to "revert to cabinet rule". In other words, politicians making decisions essentially in terms of their political instincts. As a consequence of which, they became seriously adverse to being counselled by any outside expertise, of any origin or persuasion – a less than logical attitude, given that their annoyance was with the earlier domination by a specific faction of the military. They could have eliminated that specific domination, and still have ensured that their decision-making benefit from the wise counsel and expertise available to them from other parts of the security/intel-community, the Civil Service (such as Foreign Affairs and Constitutional Development and Planning), as well as civil society sympathetic to them, with among the latter the likes of friendly business, academia, and the Broederbond.

After all, the negotiations were going to be about much, much more than the future of the NP and/or cabinet, going much wider even than just politics – it would impact the lives of South Africans from all segments of the population and all societal and economic sectors for decades to come.

Instead of being by guided by the tenets of negotiation theory and/or the expertise available to them as outlined above, De Klerk and his cabinet – who undoubtedly had made the right decision in opting at last to seek a negotiated settlement, rather than continue preparing to shoot things out – had then approached the preparation and planning (such as it was) for the upcoming challenge of negotiating a new dispensation mainly by their own lights as party politicians, who had been formed by and were accustomed to the Westminster parliamentary system. They caucused among themselves at a cabinet "***bosberaad***", the get-together in the bush held over a weekend around 5 December 1989, where they confirmed the decision to negotiate. Then De Klerk went ahead and drafted his pivotal 2 February speech essentially on his own, consulting only with his immediate circle – and his golfing buddy…

No matter that this speech would absolutely lay the foundation for both the structure of the negotiation process and for the NP's initial strategic approach to the negotiations as such. (This reality was amply demonstrated in the timelines earlier presented, as well as in De Klerk's own autobiography "*The Last Trek*" where he clearly and honestly explained how that speech had come to be drafted by him, with the cabinet only given insight at the last minute).

Without first eliciting input from the broadest possible spectrum of interest groups, the NP had set up a negotiation process limited exclusively to participation by political entities – till reality forced them, half-way down the line, to involve civil society and business in different, parallel forums.

It is also noticeable that the two key issues to negotiate, namely a new constitutional dispensation and a peace deal, were not kept procedurally separate. Negotiating the new constitution should have been the task of the parties, but in the end the NP was represented by the Government's negotiating team consisting mostly of career civil servants or experts contracted to government.

Reaching a peace deal between the state and the non-state actors who had declared themselves at war with the statutory forces (such as the SACP/ANC-MK) then got mixed in with this broader negotiation, whereas peace and the suspension of violence should have been a separate accord which from the start needed to have been separately negotiated between the state and non-statutory forces as predicate for all-round normalisation and "welcoming back into the house" to conduct politics in a "normal" manner. (Notice how, when the NP Government in the eyes of many had failed to negotiate an optimal new constitutional dispensation, people like De Klerk, Barnard, and Meyer had started emphasising as principal outcome the "peace" that they undoubtedly helped achieve whilst de-emphasising the outcome of the constitutional negotiations – a slight of hand allowed by the initial error of not having clearly differentiated between these two processes).

Instead of implementing the consensus that Niël Barnard had reached with Nelson Mandela in their prison talks regarding the structuring of the process (i.e., that it should be essentially bilateral and confidential) the NP initially insisted on the talks being multilateral and conducted in public – the ill-fated CODESA – in a rather transparent attempt to reduce the ANC to being "just another party". Till reality – namely, the virtual collapse of the talks after 30 months of hiatus – by mid-1992 forced them to revert to the Mandela/Barnard formula of the confidential, bilateral "Channel". Which then saw a team consisting essentially of senior Civil Service and academic experts led by Roelf Meyer (including the likes of Niël Barnard, Fanie van der Merwe, Prof Fanie Venter and advocate Jan Heunis, and with cabinet ministers such as Dr Dawie de Villiers and Leon Wessels lending their support to Meyer) save the day.

Instead of the NP Government at the outset basing themselves on the consensus about fundamental constitutional principles reached between Mandela and Barnard (majority rule within a unitary state) the NP initially publicly clung to their ill-defined policy position of constitutionally protecting the even less defined notion of "group rights", which understandably was rejected as just being "Apartheid light". Thus, they did not from the start identify and build their strategy around the true fundamental interests of the constituents they were elected to represent – until overwhelming opposition (both from abroad and from across the spectrum inside the country) forced them, 30 months down the line, to revert to the Mandela/Barnard consensus that majority rule within a unitary state was inevitable (upon which they then allowed the Meyer team – with the noteworthy contribution of Fanie Venter – to develop the concept of a "State of Laws" as a truer and far more practical and effective protection of the real fundamental interests of the bulk of the NP's constituents).

Also of considerable importance regarding the choices the NP Government made about how the negotiations should be procedurally set up, is the choice of pushing hard for a "Big Bang" style kick-off, to be marked by De Klerk's speech, then Mandela's release, and hopefully arriving quickly at the public convening of CODESA, for all the world to see. Because the NP (having chosen an adversarial approach to the ANC) had not before launch attempted to negotiate, pre-emptively, by means of confidential bilateral talks with the ANC the basic principles that would govern the process, nor sought to reach "in principle" agreement on the foundational elements of the new dispensation, this had made it easy for the ANC to stall (demonstrating their effective veto). This procedure initially chosen by the NP (to try and portray the ANC as "just another party") furthermore had as consequence that the final outcome, having been made into a package deal, would remain up in the air till the very last "t" was crossed and "i" dotted – exponentially increasing the uncertainty and stress that surrounded the process. In effect, the NP Government had also neutered the main component of its leverage – the fact that it was the statutory government, controlling the constitutionally-in-place legislature – through its choice of strategy regarding what procedure to follow.

The question that logically arises is whether the way in which the NP Government had procedurally tried to steer the negotiated transition, was the only way, or even the best way, to have attempted to do it. We will deal with this question in greater detail in the next chapter where we will offer, as illustration of what could instead have

been, an hypothetical alternative procedure that broke up the process tasks into bite-sized chunks, implemented sequentially.

### *12.2.2.4 What were the NP's initial strategic approach and policy positions?*

Instead of building upon the cooperative approach that Barnard and the NIS had been developing with the ANC, President De Klerk in particular persisted in seeing Mandela and the ANC in typical Westminster adversarial terms. Which would lead to the break-up of his party over De Klerk's decision to precipitously leave the GNU, followed just a few years later by the venerable NP disbanding entirely and its members joining the ANC.

All because a key practical question was not sufficiently considered at the outset by the NP politicians sharing De Klerk's adversarial inclinations: "*which political party would be able, after the coming non-racial elections, to govern effectively and ensure peace and stability*?" To which the obvious answer (at least to many of the civil servants, academics, and intelligence analysts within the NP's orbit) had from the start self-evidently been that only the ANC under its moderate faction led by Mr Mandela would be able to ensure effective governance and peace.

This necessity, correctly perceived by many, namely that it was in fact in the best interest of the country for Mandela and the ANC to win convincingly (which most in any event believed would happen), meant that an adversarial approach would simply guarantee complete exclusion of the NP/Afrikaner from having any influence over the future exercise of political power, whereas a partnership approach would at least create opportunity for Afrikaner views to be heard at the seat of power. Which difference of opinion over adversarial or partnership approach had, under the table, led to decidedly different "best interest" assessments and consequently conflicting views on best strategy among the NP Government's broader team (i.e., including the members of cabinet) during key phases of the negotiation process. This lack of consensus became increasingly evident between those NP politicians who supported De Klerk's adversarial approach, versus the non-politician advisers who came to form the core of the Meyer team working "the Channel" from 1992 on…

To me it seems to be beyond doubt that what had principally motivated De Klerk in the framing of his famous speech were his instincts as a hustings politician schooled in the adversarial Westminster system. He approached the challenge not from the perspective of defining a negotiation strategy, but rather with the aim to gain the political initiative by making an unexpected "big bang" move designed to catch the Left off-guard and generate media impact – from there the emphasis on secrecy, so that nothing would prematurely leak out and thereby weaken the impact.

De Klerk also was keen to entice the ANC/SACP to the negotiation table (knowing that, without their participation, any attempt at a negotiated new dispensation would be stillborn). He therefore wanted to "normalise" the country so that there would be no excuse for the ANC/SACP not to agree to negotiate. Furthermore, as a person of moral conviction he had clearly abhorred the image that his party and its supporters had acquired, especially under his abrasive predecessor, and dearly wanted that to change – in other words, to show that he was a "nice guy".

As quintessentially a politician, De Klerk saw the crisis the NP Government found itself in as one principally of image, which he had to do his best to improve. In this he was not entirely wrong – but he clearly did not take into account that what he as politician (because of being head of state) would be doing in that capacity as typical politician on 2 February 1990 to gain the initiative, entice the ANC to negotiate, and change the image of himself and his party, would simultaneously lay down the parameters for the existentially important negotiations to follow – which were to be about much, much more than merely his party's future. Had he, in framing his speech, primarily taken into account the need to correctly set up the coming negotiations, he could in fact have packaged his messaging even more impactfully and simultaneously have strengthened significantly the leverage enjoyed by his party, people, and government (as we will soon show, with the promised alternative draft).

Instead, what he did and said that day, quite quickly proved to have boxed him, his government, his party, and his constituency into a cul-de-sac, both procedurally and substantively. The road map he had laid down indeed did sound good (and came as a huge relief after the disaster of PW's 1985 Rubicon speech) but nevertheless was – in relation to the negotiations – heedless of theoretical principles, unrealistic in its expectations and assumptions, wrong in its approach, lacking in proper prior negotiation-focused preparation and planning, and thus severely

debilitating of his party's future leverage. This, despite the accolades he justly received for his good intentions to break with the past and facilitate an equitable new dispensation – which initiatives undoubtedly had required great political fortitude and moral rectitude.

The truth of this admittedly critical assessment was amply borne out by the sequence of events that we subsequently saw unfold, as recounted in the earlier-presented timelines…

De Klerk believed that "normalising" as quickly as possible the country that had been accused of being an "abnormal" society, was the correct and quickest way of improving the image of his government and people. What he did not sufficiently consider was that the contest for political power set in motion by his speech would not be conducted "normally", as if under Queensberry rules. He did not sufficiently comprehend that, in terms of negotiation theory, full "normalisation" should be the reward that resulted from reaching a definitive peace deal, not a concession used to get the other main protagonist to come to the table. Because unless and until all the main parties had committed themselves to play by the Queensberry rules, "normalisation" would in practice open the field for the ANC/SACP to employ their "Green Book" people's war strategies to gain the upper hand politically in the townships – exactly as it in fact did, at great cost in human lives.

What De Klerk thus was trying to do, was to already start the transition, away from the "Old" South Africa of his predecessors to his envisioned the "New" South Africa, without waiting for the negotiations to first be concluded. Doing so whilst his key strength (upon which his BATNA largely depended), was that he started out holding in his hand the full power of the state and was now diluting that power without a quid-pro-quo having been agreed.

It is virtually unheard-of that anyone involved in existentially important negotiations would willingly start transitioning himself out of that power in order to show what a nice guy he is, given that he was thereby inevitably weakening his on leverage before a binding accord was concluded. This simultaneous running of both negotiations and transition was not the model that had been followed in Zimbabwe, and certainly not in the case of SWA/Namibia – even though SWAPO had always been a legal political party in the Territory, its armed wing PLAN was not allowed back in until the New York Accord was signed and sealed, and then only on the agreed date (1 April 1989) to allow them to participate in the agreed time-limited window for electioneering. By contrast, critically important parts of South Africa's negotiations dragged on literally right up to the start of voting in the 1994 election, well beyond key moments when the "normalising" NP Government had been obliged to about-turn on its initial positions (such as when it signed the Record of Understanding with the ANC already in 1992, and then agreed to be supervised by the Transitional Executive Council from late 1993 on – seriously weakening its leverage).

De Klerk, with the best of intentions, had set out in 1990 to rapidly "normalise" (essentially by means of his government saying so shall it henceforth be) a country that was dealing post-haste with the inherent abnormality of having to transition from a race-based colonial legacy to a liberal, non-racial democracy. He was emphasising "normalising", trying to use it as a carrot, with insufficient regard to the inflamed emotions and jostling that the upcoming oh-so-pivotal electoral contest would inevitably bring – while extreme political animosities existed on the ground between political movements not used to conducting themselves democratically.

Given the circumstances on the ground, what tying his flag to "normalisation" did, was to set the bar extremely high for his own government to jump over, since it was the entity statutorily responsible for maintaining "normality" (i.e., peace and order) and would be held responsible for any lack there-of. In a political contest where propaganda was the key weapon of his opponents, De Klerk had inadvertently set himself and his government up for a fall – making himself and his government an easy target for being continuously accused of coming up short, of not living up to its own undertakings regarding normalising the country, because of setting an idealistic goal in an environment that he could not fully control. Nor could he set the definition as to what would constitute sufficient "normality" – it would be defined by his opponents, always in a manner that he could not hope to meet...

Given the historical context, it was in any event always highly doubtful whether any NP Government, however well-intentioned, could have succeeded in elevating itself to being seen as the "nice guys" while the political contest was still ongoing. Rather than chasing a forlorn hope, De Klerk would have been better advised to have built his leverage on the real tangible interests of the main international role-players, as well as of those internally who

were aspiring to be handed the keys to the Union Buildings (something that I believe that the alternative draft of the 2 February speech which I will present, will demonstrate had indeed been possible).

Considering the theoretical framework outlined earlier, the NP Government's BATNA of necessity had to revolve around visibly retaining the ability to continue occupying the Union Buildings till such time as a satisfactory deal was signed, sealed, and duly guaranteed. Not primarily by means of brute force (as had only months earlier still been envisaged by the total onslaught adherents with their strategy of investing all in enhancing the white ability to "shoot"). Rather, by means of being identified by key international and national role-players as the indispensable facilitators and able administrators of an equitable and peaceful process of fundamental transformation to a just and democratically legitimate new non-racial dispensation.

Just as importantly, for the NP Government to have established itself as the key party that could be trusted to ensure that the international stakeholders' own strategic interests be taken care of – such as, for example, regarding South Africa's nuclear arsenal, and avoiding civil war that would hugely damage their large South African investments and lead to an exodus of refugees that would overrun their countries. (After all, Angola had descended into chaos precisely because its transition to independence had lacked the presence of such a competent peace-keeping and administrative force as the NP Government clearly could be for South Africa).

That said, there can be no mistaking the importance for the Government's BATNA (and thus for its leverage), of the security forces being able to maintain law and order during this process of negotiation and transition (if ever push should have come to shove). Not by overtly playing the "security force" card (as earlier discussed, that would have been highly counter-productive, as well as unnecessary) but merely by means of all and sundry of course being fully aware of the capabilities of the forces to intervene if so required.

What did the De Klerk Government's idealistic pretentions at "normalisation" of the state's means of maintaining order achieve, being (as it was) as a risk-fraught image-building exercise not preconditioned on the other parties committing to similar "normalisation" of the manner in which they would be conducting their political competition?

What De Klerk's "cart before the horse" carrot approach *i.a.* did was to alienate the Government from its own security forces, and to fuel the discontent and desperation of white right-wingers, pushing many rural Afrikaners into radicalisation – because they were ever more fearful precisely due to the emphasis on "normalisation" whilst the country had visibly entered the most destructive and deadly phase of its modern history…

De Klerk's identification of "normalisation" as an immediate image-enhancing goal, and not treating it as a promised outcome contingent upon the conclusion of a signed, sealed and duly guaranteed deal (as had been done in Zimbabwe and SWA/Namibia), had negatively impacted perceptions about the Government's BATNA and leverage in six key ways through:

- weakening that core relationship with the security forces;
- sacrificing law and order in key townships;
- alienating parties that the NP had earlier cultivated as potential allies (such as the IFP),
- further unsettling and dividing the NP's core Afrikaner constituency;
- weakening confidence and thus further weakening the economy; and
- providing fodder for the propaganda machine, in that any and all failures at achieving "normality" would be attributed to it, such as Boipatong.

To this end, it would have been wise to make a clear distinction between the Government acting as government (facilitating the process and maintaining the just and stable environment within which the negotiations can take place) and the NP as the party-political entity (distinct and functionally separate from the Government). The NP as party had had to be the actual negotiating interlocutor, as an equal to the other participating parties. We will show how the failure to maintain this distinction and separation harmed both the NP (and particularly its constituency) as well as the Government.

If it had wanted to have any BATNA at all, what the NP Government had to avoid at all cost was that "*the prospective new tenant install itself in the premises and start changing the locks before a definitive deal had been*

*signed and sealed and the check guaranteed*" (the analogy with which one of the AI's – artificial intelligence models – described to me what it believed that De Klerk's image-focussed "immediate normalisation" strategy in fact resulted in). After all, no-one selling a house would allow the prospective buyer to install himself before the deed of sale is finalised and irrevocably signed, and the guarantees for the purchase price are in hand!

What the NP also had had to do, if it wished not to be seen to be continuously back-tracking on policy positions (something which in fact had stigmatised and weakened it during the entirety of the negotiation process) was to have defined at the very outset the fundamental interests that in the end it did arrive at thanks to the Roelf Meyer team, and built its strategy around that from the start. Instead, it had initially based its public posture on ill-defined policy positions appearing to be merely "Apartheid light" (in the form of it initially having been wedded to "Group Rights").

The ANC/SACP, by contrast, had from the start jettisoned the albatross that was their prior Marxist-Leninist policy position by accepting the Western liberal free-market democratic model, thus making a virtue out of what was an unavoidable practical political necessity.

The NP, however, did not definitively step away from the ethno-nationalist ideological basis of its albatross (Apartheid) till the talks completely stalled by mid-1992. This failure to have based their negotiation strategy on the principle of defining and promoting real underlying interests rather than postulating policy positions, cost them a critical 30 months and the political initiative that De Klerk as politician had strived so hard to own (made all the more regrettable by the fact that Mandela and Barnard had already in 1989 arrived at a consensus about majority rule in a unitary state – and not "group rights" – needing to be the basis for seeking agreement on constitutional principles).

So, how could (and should) the NP under De Klerk have approached the development of a proper, planned and prepared for negotiation strategy, before jumping in the deep end and setting out on a course which thereafter would be exceedingly difficult to alter without loss of credibility and leverage? How could they have properly defined their BATNA, identified their true underlying interests (as opposed to feel-good policy positions), and set themselves realistically achievable goals, to be pursued via a theoretically sound negotiation strategy?

To answer this question, it is essential to understand that we are I reality talking about two parallel strategies that need to be developed. The first one can be termed your **goals strategy** – meaning, what outcomes do you wish to achieve through negotiating? To illustrate: what kind of constitution, on what terms and with which protections?

The other strategy can be called your **means strategy** – meaning, your strategy aimed at maximising your means of exerting influence (i.e., your leverage) within the inner workings of the negotiation process, so as to give yourself the best chance of achieving the outcomes you desire. In other words, not the **what** that you wish to achieve, but the **how**: defining how you can best interact with the process in order to increase your power, your leverage (and weaken that of the other side, thwarting their strategy) so as to influence the debate within the negotiation process in your favour.

The answer, for both strategies, is by means of a proper, expertly done SWOT analysis, followed by brainstorming to try and generate a broad range of viable strategy options, which then have to be thoroughly war-gamed and refined. In terms of your **goals strategy**, defining objectively the true fundamental interests of South Africans that you want to see protected in the outcome, rather than parroting party-political policy positions. In terms of your **means strategy**, defining with equally cold objectivity (based on a clear understanding of your strengths and weaknesses as well as those of your antagonists) by what means of leverage you are most likely to move the negotiation process to delivering the outcomes you desire. To illustrate: through an adversarial approach designed to impose your will (if the balance of power allows that), or through a partnership approach emphasising shared interests, cooperation and compromise? By setting up a "good cop / bad cop" scenario? By depriving the other side of their allies, while strengthening your own alliances? By managing and channelling the influence coming from the national and international political, social, and economic environment? By managing public perceptions about your image as well as that of the other side (through propaganda?) By exploiting and managing the passing of time? Above all, through correctly anticipating and countering your opponent's strategic moves…

The development of these two inter-related strategies is cross-pollenating, in that the better you understand your enemy and your own strengths and weaknesses (for your means strategy) the better you are able to realistically formulate your goals strategy.

By trial and error, the NP Government team (as reconstituted in 1992), eventually had come to evolve better goal definition and more functional strategies regarding means, but they could not recoup the thirty months lost, or off-set the polarisation that had deepened over that fruitless period, nor recover the leverage that had slipped away. The time lost would later prove critical, when the interim constitution and the list of binding constitutional principles had to be rushed…

Could the negotiation process have been set up in a more functional manner regarding procedure, and could the goals + means strategies of the NP Government have been better formulated from the outset, whilst still achieving (and even exceeding) the positive media impact that De Klerk had strived for with his 2 February 1990 speech? After all, by then De Klerk had been leading the NP for exactly a year and had been State President for almost six months. Given the obvious urgency, this had been a sizeable window of opportunity for the foundational analyses, strategic option generation, and the refining "war gaming" – especially if the absolute need for it had been sufficiently understood and if all the friendly expertise available in the intelligence community, civil service, academia, business, and organised civil society had been mobilised to that end (instead of seeing it as the prerogative of the head of state, in consultation – somewhat, sometimes – with members of his cabinet).

It needs to be mentioned here that observers with insight into the process and personalities have remarked that it was a great pity that Minister Chris Heunis (Constitutional Development and Planning) had shortly before retired, since he – and the leading academics in his department – had had a much more theoretically informed and better structured approach to what the negotiation process would of necessity require. You can be the judge of that…

### 12.2.3 OTHER KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES THAT COULD HAVE BEEN HANDLED DIFFERENTLY

We will now come back to the other key strategic choices the NP Government had made that we've flagged in the introduction to this chapter as ones that could – at least in terms of theory – have been handled more optimally:

- whether to be adversarial or cooperative,
- whether to have aimed at negotiating a package deal instead of breaking up the components that would make up the transition into digestible tasks and handling them sequentially, and
- whether the English Westminster model, even though familiar to South Africans, had actually been the most appropriate one upon which to base the development of the new South African constitution when compared to the American constitution.

As said earlier, these questions will be dealt with in detail in the next chapters, when we will look at the causes for the NP to have lost all power, with the ANC winning it all. These issues are mentioned here, now already, merely as "heads-up" to indicate their importance in what clearly was a highly inter-related and interdependent process.

The questions of whether to have approached the negotiations adversarially or cooperatively, and of whether the outcome had to be set up as one package deal that needed to be fully concluded, or rather as a sequence of tasks that could have been individually accomplished, are relatively self-explanatory and don't require much further explanation here in this orientation, in order to be easily understood as to their nature and import (again, stressing that they will be dealt with in detail in the next chapters).

The question of the appropriate constitutional model is less self-evident (in relation to understanding what it is all about). One may ask – isn't it merely a case of one or the other tickling the personal preference of jurists, as practically a beauty contest among textbook models?

No!

Because of its huge significance in Behavioralist terms (more so than purely in terms of normative-legalist preferences) I will now briefly explain why it actually is so hugely important in relation to the most fundamental interests of the citizen – the safety of his family and property. As mentioned with regard to the other two questions,

we will in the next chapter be dealing also with this issue in much more detail. Here, in this introductory orientation, I will simply explain what it is all about. It is necessary to do so now, because of the mentioned interdependence of components. Therefore, when we will be discussing the other issues, having already a broad brush-stroke comprehension also of this particular issue (i.e., of which constitutional model would have been most apt to our needs) will better allow readers to follow the rest of this narrative as it unfolds.

Why am I of the opinion that basing South Africa's new constitution on the American one (or the quite similar Orange Free State Republic's constitution – at its time widely and rightly regarded as an admirable model of constitutional craftsmanship, in itself a true "*Regstaat*" – if we wanted to give it a more homespun feel) would have been more appropriate than tweaking the Westminster one? It goes way beyond just personal-legalist preference. The importance of this choice is also far more significant, in real-world terms, than just choosing between to models from a textbook on constitutional law (as if choosing between two fashion styles of the same kind of shoe from an online sales catalogue).

It relates to the fundamental Behaviouralist questions of how these two systems respectively came into being, conceived for what purpose? (i.e. who created them, to achieve what, in terms of the challenges they were respectively designed to meet?).

In the case of the **English Westminster system** (which doesn't have any written constitution), it was conceived to serve the interests of the sovereign and ruling nobility. It is based on a king having subjects, not citizens, who find themselves of that subjected status because of the happenstance that the territory they happen to live on having been militarily conquered by the English kingdom, irrespective of whether they share the same culture or natural allegiance.

It is a system that arose on a small, dense territorial footprint (not the sparsely populated vast expanses of the new world outside Europe) therefore all within easy reach of the king's sword and sheriffs.

The purpose it served was to ensure that those diverse subjects (English, Welsh, Cornish, Scots, Irish) were physically kept in line, pay their taxes, and render military service when called upon. It was by definition highly centralised, with London the unique centre of all power, and with the sovereign at the head of every branch of state. When notions of democracy relatively recently started to creep in, the system was presented to non-English minorities as actually being exceptionally fair and equal, because is it not true that each of them, as individuals, all enjoy exactly the same rights as any individual Englishman?!

In short, Westminster is a highly centralised system designed to allow the English majority to "legitimately" dominate and keep in line the non-English minorities – exactly what any majority group anywhere would like to have, in order to enjoy in practice virtually unfettered control over all key levers of power in a highly centralised manner, allowing them to lord it over minorities (as the English lords did, with them with impunity expropriating land, imposing onerous taxes, and ignoring disasters that killed or forced into emigration millions, such as with the potato famine and the de-population of the Scottish Highlands).

The American constitution came about very differently, with as impulse a political version of Newton's laws of reaction (to exactly the English crown's excesses) and with precisely the opposite objectives. It was created by citizens who wanted to be free from such royal oppression, with the objective to curb central government overreach and protect their own back yards and homes (through strict separation of powers, maximal devolution of power to lower levels, and empowering the citizens by guaranteeing their right to bear arms). It is a system conceived for the reality of sparsely populated, vast expanse of land where scattered local communities in real-world terms needed to be able to practice self-care, because of not being able to rely on a distant central authority to intervene in time to save them.

To sum up the fundamental difference: the English system was conceived to allow an all-powerful sovereign to effectively rule his often recalcitrant subjects, whereas in the American system the central government is

constrained by separation of powers and devolution, designed to serve (not rule over) the freedom-loving citizens – with sovereignty vesting in the people.

The English system is one originally designed to **keep the subjects in line**, whereas the American one is designed to **keep the government in line**.

The core message here is that constitutions shouldn't be drafted on the basis of someone realising that it would be an "in" thing to have and then setting out to craft a literary masterpiece that will sound as eloquent and *avant garde* as possible, serving essentially to demonstrate what nice, erudite guys the drafters are. Constitutional dispensations are (or at least, should be) designed to effectively respond to and manage clearly perceived real threats and safeguard vital interests.

Threats that had to be scenario-gamed and analysed before – in real-world Behaviouralist terms, not legalist-normative ones – to identify and comprehend them, and understand what would best serve to effectively counter them, if ever push comes to shove. In terms of modern African history, threats like military coups, mass riots and looting (like the July 2021 Zuma ones), internecine tribal conflicts, expulsions of ethnic groups, and even deliberate genocide and systemic collapse leading to failed states where central governance cease to function. In other words, real-world situations, in the mist of which having a model "woke" constitution counts for very little in the moment of need, because it is equally useless to run then to court for an interdict, or to call the national police…

We will look at this in more detail in Chapter 13, where I will test with you, my hypothetical alternatives about both the procedure followed during the negotiations (especially as the NP initially tried to do it) and the models that could have been considered as template for the new constitution.

## 12.3 THE ORIGINAL 2 FEBRUARY 1990 OPENING OF PARLIAMENT SPEECH, IN FULL

### 12.3.1 TEXT OF THE ACTUAL SPEECH DELIVERED BY PRESIDENT FW DE KLERK ON 2 FEBRUARY 1990

*Mr Speaker, Members of Parliament.*

*The general election on September the 6th, 1989, placed our country irrevocably on the road of drastic change. Underlying this is the growing realisation by an increasing number of South Africans that only a negotiated understanding among the representative leaders of the entire population is able to ensure lasting peace.*

*The alternative is growing violence, tension and conflict. That is unacceptable and in nobody's interest. The well-being of all in this country is linked inextricably to the ability of the leaders to come to terms with one another on a new dispensation. No-one can escape this simple truth.*

*On its part, the Government will accord the process of negotiation the highest priority. The aim is a totally new and just constitutional dispensation in which every inhabitant will enjoy equal rights, treatment and opportunity in every sphere of endeavour - constitutional, social and economic.*

*I hope that this new Parliament will play a constructive part in both the prelude to negotiations and the negotiating process itself. I wish to ask all of you who identify yourselves with the broad aim of a new South Africa, and that is the overwhelming majority:*
** Let us put petty politics aside when we discuss the future during this Session.*
** Help us build a broad consensus about the fundamentals of a new, realistic and democratic dispensation.*
** Let us work together on a plan that will rid our country of suspicion and steer it away from domination and radicalism of any kind.*

*During the term of this new Parliament, we shall have to deal, complimentary to one another, with the normal processes of legislation and day-to-day government, as well as with the process of negotiation and renewal.*

*Within this framework I wish to deal first with several matters more closely concerned with the normal process of government before I turn specifically to negotiation and related issues.*

*1. FOREIGN RELATIONS*

*The Government is aware of the important part the world at large has to play in the realisation of our country's national interests.*

*Without contact and co-operation with the rest of the world we cannot promote the well-being and security of our citizens. The dynamic developments in international politics have created new opportunities for South Africa as well. Important advances have been made, among other things, in our contacts abroad, especially where these were precluded previously by ideological considerations.*

*I hope this trend will be encouraged by the important change of climate that is taking place in South Africa.*

*For South Africa, indeed for the whole world, the past year has been one of change and major upheaval. In Eastern Europe and even the Soviet Union itself, political and economic upheaval surge forward in an unstoppable tide. At the same time, Beijing temporarily smothered with brutal violence the yearning of the people of the Chinese mainland for greater freedom.*

*The year of 1989 will go down in history as the year in which Stalinist Communism expired.*

*These developments will entail unpredictable consequences for Europe, but they will also be of decisive importance to Africa. Those who seek to force this failure of a system on South Africa, should engage in a total revision of their point of view. It should be clear to all that it is not the answer here either. The new situation in Eastern Europe also shows that foreign intervention is no recipe for domestic change. It never succeeds, regardless of its ideological motivation. The upheaval in Eastern Europe took place without the involvement of the Big Powers or of the United Nations.*

*The countries of Southern Africa are faced with a particular challenge; Southern Africa now has an historical opportunity to set aside its conflicts and ideological differences and draw up a joint programme of reconstruction. It should be sufficiently attractive to ensure that the Southern African region obtains adequate investment and loan capital from the industrial countries of the world. Unless the countries of Southern Africa achieve stability and a common approach to economic development rapidly, they will be faced by further decline and ruin.*

*The Government is prepared to enter into discussions with other Southern African countries with the aim of formulating a realistic development plan. The Government believes that the obstacles in the way of a conference of Southern African states have now been removed sufficiently.*

*Hostile postures have to be replaced by co-operative ones; confrontation by contact; disengagement by engagement; slogans by deliberate debate.*

*The season of violence is over. The time for reconstruction and reconciliation has arrived.*

*Recently there have, indeed, been unusually positive results in South Africa's contacts and relations with other African states. During my visits to their countries I was received cordially, both in private and in public, by Presidents Mobutu, Chissano, Houphouet-Boigny and Kaunda. These leaders expressed their sincere concern about the serious economic problems in our part of the world. They agreed that South Africa could and should play a positive part in regional co-operation and development.*

*Our positive contribution to the independence process in South West Africa has been recognised internationally. South Africa's good faith and reliability as a negotiator made a significant contribution to the success of the events. This, too, was not unnoticed. Similarly, our efforts to help bring an end to the domestic conflict situations in Mozambique and Angola have received positive acknowledgement.*

*At present the Government is involved in negotiations concerning our future relations with an independent Namibia and there are no reasons why good relations should not exist between the two countries. Namibia needs South Africa and we are prepared to play a constructive part.*

*Nearer home I paid fruitful visits to Venda, Transkei and Ciskei and intend visiting Bophuthatswana soon. In recent times there has been an interesting debate about the future relationship of the TBVC countries with South Africa and specifically about whether they should be re-incorporated into our country.*

*Without rejecting this idea out of hand, it should be borne in mind that it is but one of many possibilities. These countries are constitutionally independent. Any return to South Africa will have to be dealt with, not only by means of legislation in their parliaments, but also through legislation in this Parliament. Naturally this will have to be preceded by talks and agreements.*

*2. HUMAN RIGHTS*

*Some time ago the Government referred the question of the protection of fundamental human rights to the South African Law Commission. This resulted in the Law Commission's interim working document on individual and minority rights. It elicited substantial public interest.*

*I am satisfied that every individual and organisation in the country has had ample opportunity to make representations to the Law Commission, express criticism freely and make suggestions. At present, the Law Commission is considering the representations received. A final report is expected in the course of this year.*

*In view of the exceptional importance of the subject of human rights to our country and all its people, I wish to ask the Law Commission to accord this task high priority.*

*The whole question of protecting individual and minority rights, which includes collective rights and the rights of national groups, is still under consideration by the Law Commission. Therefore, it would be inappropriate of the Government to express a view on the details now. However, certain matters of principle have emerged fairly clearly and I wish to devote some remarks to them.*

*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. However, it is clear that a system for the protection of the rights of individuals, minorities and national entities has to form a well-rounded and balanced whole. South Africa has its own national composition and our constitutional dispensation has to take this into account. The formal recognition of individual rights does not mean that the problem of a heterogeneous population will simply disappear. Any new constitution which disregards this reality will be inappropriate and even harmful.*

*Naturally, the protection of collective, minority and national rights may not bring about an imbalance in respect of individual rights. It is neither the Government's policy nor its intention that any group - in whichever way it may be defined - shall be favoured above or in relation to any of the others.*

*The Government is requesting the Law Commission to undertake a further task and report on it. This task is directed at the balanced protection in a future constitution of the human rights of all our citizens, as well as of collective units, associations, minorities and nations. This investigation will also serve the purpose of supporting negotiations towards a new constitution.*

*The terms of reference also include:*

** the identification of the main types and models of democratic constitutions which deserve consideration in the aforementioned context;*
** an analysis of the ways in which the relevant rights are protected in every model; and*
** possible methods by means of which such constitutions may be made to succeed and be safeguarded in a legitimate manner.*

*3. THE DEATH PENALTY*

*The death penalty has been the subject of intensive discussion in recent months. However, the Government has been giving its attention to this extremely sensitive issue for some time. On April the 27th, 1989, the honourable Minister of Justice indicated that there was merit in suggestions for reform in this area. Since 1988 in fact, my predecessor and I have been taking decisions on reprieves which have led, in proportion , to a drastic decline in executions.*

*We have now reached the position in which we are able to make concrete proposals for reform. After the Chief Justice was consulted, and he in turn had consulted the Bench, and after the Government had noted the opinions of academics and other interested parties, the Government decided on the following broad principles from a variety of available options:*

** that reform in this area is indicated;*
** that the death penalty should be limited as an option of sentence to extreme cases, and specifically through broadening judicial discretion in the imposition of sentence; and*
** that an automatic right of appeal be granted to those under sentence of death.*

*Should these proposals be adopted, they should have a significant influence on the imposition of death sentences on the one hand, and on the other, should ensure that every case in which a person has been sentenced to death, will come to the attention of the Appellate Division.*

*These proposals require that everybody currently awaiting execution, be accorded the benefit of the proposed new approach. Therefore, all executions have been suspended and no executions will take place until Parliament has taken a final decision on the new proposals. In the event of the proposals being adopted, the case of every person involved will be dealt with in accordance with the new guidelines. In the meantime, no executions have taken place since November the 14th, 1989.*

*New and uncompleted cases will still be adjudicated in terms of the existing law. Only when the death sentence is imposed, will the new proposals be applied, as in the case of those currently awaiting execution.*

*The legislation concerned also entails other related principles which will be announced and elucidated in due course by the Minister of Justice. It will now be formulated in consultation with experts and be submitted to Parliament as soon as possible.*

*I wish to urge everybody to join us in dealing with this highly sensitive issue in a responsible manner.*

*4. SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS*

*A changed dispensation implies far more than political and constitutional issues. It cannot be pursued successfully in isolation from problems in other spheres of life which demand practical solutions. Poverty, unemployment, housing shortages, inadequate education and training, illiteracy, health needs and numerous other problems still stand in the way of progress and prosperity and an improved quality of life.*

*The conservation of the physical and human environment is of cardinal importance to the quality of our existence. For this the Government is developing a strategy with the aid of an investigation by the President's Council.*

*All of these challenges are being dealt with urgently and comprehensively. The capability for this has to be created in an economically accountable manner. Consequently, existing strategies and aims are undergoing a comprehensive revision.*

*From this will emanate important policy announcements in the socio-economic sphere by the responsible Ministers during the course of the session. One matter about which it is possible to make a concrete announcement, is the Separate Amenities Act, 1953. Pursuant to my speech before the President's Council late last year, I announce that this Act will be repealed during this Session of Parliament.*

*The State cannot possibly deal alone with all of the social advancement our circumstances demand. The community at large, and especially the private sector, also have a major responsibility towards the welfare of our country and its people.*

*5. THE ECONOMY*

*A new South Africa is possible only if it is bolstered by a sound and growing economy, with particular emphasis on the creation of employment. With a view to this, the Government has taken thorough cognisance of the advice contained in numerous reports by a variety of advisory bodies. The central message is that South Africa, too, will have to make certain structural changes to its economy, just as its major trading partners had to do a decade or so ago.*

*The period of exceptionally high economic growth experienced by the Western world in the sixties, was brought to an end by the oil crisis in 1973. Drastic structural adaptations became inevitable for these countries, especially after the second oil crisis in 1979, when serious imbalances occurred in their economies. After considerable sacrifices, those countries which persevered with their structural adjustment programmes, recovered economically so that lengthy periods of high economic growth and low inflation were possible.*

*During that particular period, South Africa was protected temporarily by the rising gold price from the necessity of making similar adjustments immediately. In fact, the high gold price even brought prosperity with it for a while. The recovery of the world economy and the decline in the price of gold and other primary products, brought with them unhealthy trends. These included high inflation, a serious weakening in the productivity of capital, stagnation in the economy's ability to generate income and employment opportunities. All of this made a drastic structural adjustment of our economy inevitable.*

*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. In this process, preference has to be given to allowing the market forces and a sound competitive structure to bring about the necessary adjustments.*

*Naturally, those who make and implement economic policy have a major responsibility at the same time to promote an environment optimally conducive to investment, job creation and economic growth by means of appropriate and properly co-ordinated fiscal and monetary policy. The Government remains committed to this balanced and practical approach.*

*By means of restricting capital expenditure in parastatal institutions, privatisation, deregulation and curtailing government expenditure, substantial progress has been made already towards reducing the role of the authorities in the economy. We shall persist with this in a well-considered way.*

*This does not mean that the State will forsake its indispensable development role, especially in our particular circumstances. On the contrary, it is the precise intention of the Government to concentrate an equitable portion of its capacity on these aims by means of the meticulous determination of priorities.*

*Following the progress that has been made in other areas of the economy in recent years, it is now opportune to give particular attention to the supply side of the economy.*

*Fundamental factors which will contribute to the success of this restructuring are:*
** the gradual reduction of inflation to levels comparable to those of our principal trading partners;*
** the encouragement of personal initiative and savings;*
** the subjection of all economic decisions by the authorities to stringent financial measures and discipline;*
** rapid progress with the reform of our system of taxation; and*
** the encouragement of exports as the impetus for industrialisation and earning foreign exchange.*

*These and other adjustments, which will require sacrifices, have to be seen as prerequisites for a new period of sustained growth in productive employment in the nineties.*

*The Government is very much aware of the necessity of proper co-ordination and consistent implementation of its economic policy. For this reason, the establishment of the necessary structures and expertise to ensure this co-ordination is being given preference. This applies both to the various functions within the Government and to the interaction between the authorities and the private sector.*

*This is obviously not the occasion for me to deal in greater detail with our total economic strategy or with the recent course of the economy.*

*I shall confine myself to a few specific remarks on one aspect of fiscal policy that has been a source of criticism of the Government for some time, namely State expenditure.*

*The Government's financial year ends only in two months' time and several other important economic indicators for the 1989 calendar year are still subject to refinements at this stage. Nonetheless, several important trends are becoming increasingly clear. I am grateful to be able to say that we have apparently succeeded to a substantial degree in achieving most of our economic aims in the past year.*

*In respect of Government expenditure, the budget for the current financial year will be the most accurate in many years. The financial figures will show:*
** that Government expenditure is thoroughly under control;*
** that our normal financing programme has not exerted any significant upward pressure on rates of interest; and*
** that we will close the year with a surplus, even without taking the income from the privatisation of Iscor into account.*

*Without pre-empting this year's main budget, I wish to emphasise that it is also our intention to co-ordinate fiscal and monetary policy in the coming financial year in a way that will enable us to achieve the ensuing goals - namely: -*
** that the present downturn will take the form of a soft landing which will help to make adjustments as easy as possible;*
** that our economy will consolidate before the next upward phase so that we will be able to grow from a sound base; and*
** that we shall persist with the implementation of the required structural adaptations in respect, among other things, of the following: easing the tax burden, especially on individuals; sustained and adequate generation of surpluses on the current account of the balance of payments; and the reconstruction of our gold and foreign exchange reserves.*

*It is a matter of considerable seriousness to the Government, especially in this particular period of our history, to promote a dynamic economy which will make it possible for increasing numbers of people to be employed and share in rising standards of living.*

*6. NEGOTIATION*

*In conclusion, I wish to focus the spotlight on the process of negotiation and related issues. At this stage I am refraining deliberately from discussing the merits of numerous political questions which undoubtedly will be debated during the next few weeks. The focus, now, has to fall on negotiation.*

*Practically every leader agrees that negotiation is the key to reconciliation, peace and a new and just dispensation. However, numerous excuses for refusing to take part, are advanced. Some of the reasons being advanced are valid. Others are merely part of a political chess game. And while the game of chess proceeds, valuable time is being lost.*

*Against this background I committed the Government during my inauguration to giving active attention to the most important obstacles in the way of negotiation. Today I am able to announce far-reaching decisions in this connection.*

*I believe that these decisions will shape a new phase in which there will be a movement away from measures which have been seized upon as a justification for confrontation and violence. The emphasis has to move, and will more now, to a debate and discussion of political and economic points of view as part of the process of negotiation.*

*I wish to urge every political and community leader, in and outside Parliament, to approach the new opportunities which are being created, constructively. There is no time left for advancing all manner of new conditions that will delay the negotiating process.*

*The steps that have been decided, are the following:*
** The prohibition of the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress, the South African Communist Party and a number of subsidiary organisations is being rescinded.*
** People serving prison sentences merely because they were members of one of these organisations or because they committed another offence which was merely an offence because a prohibition on one of the organisations was in force, will be identified and released. Prisoners who have been sentenced for other offences such as murder, terrorism or arson are not affected by this.*

** The media emergency regulations as well as the education emergency regulations are being abolished in their entirety.*
** The security emergency regulations will be amended to still make provision for effective control over visual material pertaining to scenes of unrest.*
** The restrictions in terms of the emergency regulations on 33 organisations are being rescinded. The organisations include the following:*
*National Education Crisis Committee*
*South African National Students Congress*
*United Democratic Front*
*Cosatu*
*Die Blanke Bevrydingsbeweging van Suid-Afrika.*
** The conditions imposed in terms of the security emergency regulations on 374 people on their release, are being rescinded and the regulations which provide for such conditions are being abolished.*
** The period of detention in terms of the security emergency regulations will be limited henceforth to six months. Detainees also acquire the right to legal representation and a medical practitioner of their own choosing.*

*These decisions by the Cabinet are in accordance with the Government's declared intention to normalise the political process in South Africa without jeopardising the maintenance of the good order. They were preceded by thorough and unanimous advice by a group of officials which included members of the security community.*

*Implementation will be immediate and, where necessary, notices will appear in the Government Gazette from tomorrow.*

*The most important facets of the advice the Government received in this connection; are the following:*
** The events in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, to which I have referred already, weaken the capability of organisations which were previously supported strongly from those quarters.*
** The activities of the organisations from which the prohibitions are now being lifted, no longer entail the same degree of threat to internal security which initially necessitated the imposition of the prohibition.*
** There have been important shifts of emphasis in the statements and points of view of the most important of the organisations concerned, which indicate a new approach and a preference for peaceful solutions.*
** The South African Police is convinced that it is able, in the present circumstances, to combat violence and other crimes perpetrated also by members of these organisations and to bring offenders to justice without the aid of prohibitions on organisations.*

*About one matter there should be no doubt. The lifting of the prohibition on the said organisations does not signify in the least the approval or condonation of terrorism or crimes of violence committed under their banner or which may be perpetrated in the future. Equally, it should not be interpreted as a deviation from the Government's principles, among other things, against their economic policy and aspects of their constitutional policy. This will be dealt with in debate and negotiation.*

*At the same time I wish to emphasise that the maintenance of law and order dare not be jeopardised. The Government will not forsake its duty in this connection. Violence from whichever source, will be fought with all available might. Peaceful protest may not become the springboard for lawlessness, violence and intimidation. No democratic country can tolerate that.*

*Strong emphasis will be placed as well on even more effective law enforcement. Proper provision of manpower and means for the police and all who are involved with the enforcement of the law, will be ensured. In fact, the budget for the coming financial year will already begin to give effect to this.*

*I wish to thank the members of our security forces and related services for the dedicated service they have rendered the Republic of South Africa. Their dedication makes reform in a stable climate possible.*

*On the state of emergency I have been advised that an emergency situation, which justifies these special measures which have been retained, still exists. There is still conflict which is manifesting itself mainly in Natal, but as a consequence of the country-wide political power struggle. In addition, there are indications that radicals are still trying to disrupt the possibilities of negotiations by means of mass violence.*

*It is my intention to terminate the state of emergency completely as soon as circumstances justify it and I request the co-operation of everybody towards this end. Those responsible for unrest and conflict have to bear the blame for the continuing state of emergency. In the meantime, the state of emergency is inhibiting only those who use chaos and disorder as political instruments. Otherwise, the rules of the game under the state of emergency are the same for everybody.*

*Against this background the Government is convinced that the decisions I have announced are justified from the security point of view. However, these decisions are justified from a political point of view as well.*

*Our country and all its people have been embroiled in conflict, tension and violent struggle for decades. It is time for us to break out of the cycle of violence and break through the peace and reconciliation. The silent majority is yearning for this. The youth deserve it.*

*With the steps the Government has taken it has proven its good faith and the table is laid for sensible leaders to begin talking about a new dispensation, to reach an understanding by way of dialogue and discussion.*

*The agenda is open and the overall aims to which we are aspiring should be acceptable to all reasonable South Africans.*

*Among other things, those aims include a new, democratic constitution; universal franchise; no domination; equality before an independent judiciary; the protection of minorities as well as of individual rights; freedom of religion; a sound economy based on proven economic principles and private enterprise; dynamic programmes directed at better education, health services, housing and social conditions for all.*

*In this connection Mr Nelson Mandela could play an important part. The Government has noted that he has declared himself to be willing to make a constructive contribution to the peaceful political process in South Africa.*

*I wish to put it plainly that the Government has taken a firm decision to release Mr Mandela unconditionally. I am serious about bringing this matter to finality without delay. The Government will take a decision soon on the date of his release. Unfortunately, a further short passage of time is unavoidable.*

*Normally there is a certain passage of time between the decision to release and the actual release because of logistical and administrative requirements. In the case of Mr Mandela there are factors in the way of his immediate release, of which his personal circumstances and safety are not the least. He has not been an ordinary prisoner for quite some time. Because of that, his case requires particular circumspection.*

*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 organisations.*

*Without conceding that violence has ever been justified, I wish to say today to those who argued in this manner: -*
** The Government wishes to talk to all leaders who seek peace.*
** The unconditional lifting of the prohibition on the said organisations places everybody in a position to pursue politics freely.*
** The justification for violence which was always advanced, no longer exists.*

*These facts place everybody in South Africa before a fait accompli. On the basis of numerous previous statements there is no longer any reasonable excuse for the continuation of violence. The time for talking has arrived and whoever still makes excuses does not really wish to talk.*

*Therefore, I repeat my invitation with greater conviction than ever: -*

*Walk through the open door, take your place at the negotiating table together with the Government and other leaders who have important power bases inside and outside of Parliament.*

*Henceforth, everybody's political points of view will be tested against their realism, their workability and their fairness. The time for negotiation has arrived.*

*To those political leaders who have always resisted violence I say thank you for your principled stands. This includes all the leaders of parliamentary parties, leaders of important organisations and movements, such as Chief Minister Buthelezi, all of the other Chief Ministers and urban community leaders.*

*Through their participation and discussion, they have made an important contribution to this moment in which the process of free political participation is able to be restored. Their places in the negotiating process are assured.*

*CONCLUSION*

*In my inaugural address I said the following:*

*"All reasonable people in this country - by far the majority - anxiously await a message of hope. It is our responsibility as leaders in all spheres to provide that message realistically, with courage and conviction. If we fail in that, the ensuing chaos, the demise of stability and progress, will for ever be held against us.*

*"History has thrust upon the leadership of this country the tremendous responsibility to turn our country away from its present direction of conflict and confrontation. Only we, the leaders of our peoples, can do it.*

*"The eyes of responsible governments across the world are focused on us. The hopes of millions of South Africans are centred around us. The future of Southern Africa depends on us. We dare not falter or fail."*

*This is where we stand:*
** Deeply under the impression of our responsibility.*
** Humble in the face of the tremendous challenges ahead.*
** Determined to move forward in faith and with conviction.*

*I ask of Parliament to assist me on the road ahead. There is much to be done.*

*I call on the international community to re-evaluate its position and to adopt a positive attitude towards the dynamic evolution which is taking place in South Africa.*

*I pray that the Almighty Lord will guide and sustain us on our course through unchartered waters and will bless your labours and deliberations.*

*Mr Speaker, Members of Parliament.*

*I now declare this Second Session of the Ninth Parliament of the Republic of South Africa to be duly opened.*

### 12.3.2 ANALYSIS OF THE ORIGINAL SPEECH, FROM A NEGOTIATION THEORY PERSPECTIVE

Analysing the original speech (which the ANC/SACP is certain to have done, and in great detail) leaves one with the clear impression that President De Klerk had two main goals in making it in the way that he did. The first goal was to achieve a "big bang" media impact, in order to try – on the one hand – to seize the political initiative, and on the other hand, to provide the likes of the UK and USA governments with justification for easing up on sanctions and other punitive measures (it will be noticed that the speech concludes, in its very last paragraph before beseeching the Almighty Lord to guide and sustain the work of Parliament, with: "*I call on the international community to re-evaluate its position and to adopt a positive attitude towards the dynamic evolution which is taking place in South Africa*."

In terms of capturing world-wide positive media attention, the speech undoubtedly succeeded. It also – at least for a brief period – gained for the NP Government the political initiative, depriving the ANC/SACP of many of the stock accusations that they had hitherto deployed and obliging them to re-assess their strategy.

These positives were, however, of a tactical rather than a strategic nature, and therefore of a limited duration.

The parts of the speech that affected the strategic equation fundamentally, were those in which De Klerk seemed to concede the obvious, namely that South Africa's political playing fielded needed "**normalisation**", and then set out to remove "**obstacles**" (created by previous NP Governments) so that everyone be placed "…*in a position to pursue politics freely."* (Note that he did not qualify that statement with an insistence that such pursuit should be peaceful and in accordance with democratic norms of conduct).

The issue with the way that "normalisation" was dealt with is not the evident need for "normalisation" at some stage as the country transits from the old to the new. It was the time context, the sequencing into which De Klerk had cast the process of normalisation, effectively himself elevating it into a pre-condition for participation by his main opponent, without definition of what it would entail and reality being that his own government would always be held

responsible for every transgression of normalcy – perceived or real – that may crop up at the hand of whichever non-government party. In other words, what he had done was to proffer his opponents a rod with which to perpetually castigate his own backside, propaganda-wise. Unfortunately, it also provided his opponents with an excuse offered them by De Klerk himself for not speedily joining the negotiations (clearly, they were always going to play for time, to organise and to force the hand of the time-bound government). All they needed to do was to claim that there had not yet been enough normalisation, and help create the conditions on the ground that would seem to back up their assertion – since the government as government would be held to blame.

So, **why** did De Klerk, the consummate politician, go this route? Leaving aside the issue of clearly inadequate prior preparation and planning, and of inadequate familiarity with standard theory, there seems to have been two main sets of reasons for him having chosen this route: the one related to personality and tone, and the other to procedural tactics.

Regarding the "tonal" drivers of NP tactics (and De Klerk's evident mind-set when he drafted his 2 February 1990 speech) an important factor clearly was image perception – being De Klerk's wish for himself and his government to be seen as reasonable, pragmatic, moral, and committed to an entirely new way of thinking about South Africa's future. In short, to be seen as being "nice guys" (as opposed to the image that had become ingrained about his predecessor, PW Botha: aggressive, dour, unreasonable, inflexible, and unyielding in his commitment to maintaining white supremacy). The impact that the decades of vilification and ostracization of the white South African regime had had, together with the threat of reprisals in Nurnberg style with measures such as the UN "blacklist", should not be under-estimated.

As regards the "tactical procedural" considerations, five drivers (or rather, De Klerk's assumptions about these five issues) seemed to drive the approach he adopted in his 2 February 1990 speech:

- As politician, he remained wary of alienating his Afrikaner power base, striving to keep his cabinet and party together (adopting a "cards close to the chest" approach to the drafting of his speech, so as not to allow time for others in his party or cabinet to start real debate about what he wished to announce).
- As politician, he wished to gain the initiative and thus was inclined to a "big bang" approach seeking maximum media impact (this tied in with point one – because of how, in 1985, Pik Botha's manipulative prior pitching of PW Botha's "Rubicon" speech had turned that into catastrophe, FW was seen as justified in maintaining tight prior secrecy, to avoid leaks).
- With an eye on the negotiations, De Klerk wished for the ANC to be seen as "just another party among many", not as the other principal protagonist, alongside the NP itself (therefore, he insisted on a multiparty format, to be conducted in public – not via the confidential bilateral deal-making that in the end was proven to have been essential).
- In what seems to me, upon analysis, to have been a bit of a knee-jerk reaction, there was an assumption in NP Government circles that it was very important for the talks to be held inside South Africa, with no foreign interference. This issue – together with the problematic fifth tactical procedural challenge below – were at the heart of what obliged the emphasis on "normalisation"; because of its formative impact on the negotiations and the contest for political power, this will be discussed in detail (regarding whether it was ever realistic to imagine that the international community could be excluded, whether it was even beneficial to the NP Government to predicate their tactics upon that desire, and whether there weren't better, more nuanced options that could have achieved the best of both worlds).
- The fifth "tactical procedural" consideration that loomed over everything else, was the political "fact of life" that, without ANC participation, any unilateral attempt at negotiating a new dispensation that could restore peace to society and save the economy from the ravages of isolation and punitive measures was doomed to being stillborn – which reality effectively gave the ANC veto-like power.

When De Klerk's speech is analysed, this fifth challenge is the proverbial underskirt that hangs out very clearly – he understood the overriding necessity of enticing the ANC into participating in his project (as being fundamental to its success – which is undeniable) and was willing to make concessions in order to achieve this. Not necessarily to please the ANC, but to be able to show to the likes of the USA and the UK that his hands were clean, that he was doing everything possible to create an environment conducive to negotiations. This need impacted the "tonal"

side of his speech, which was replete with repeated pleas for participation. This, however, did not give the speech a tone of launching the new initiative from a position of strength, but rather from one of self-acknowledged weakness, with thus a willingness to make concessions being signalled. Unfortunately, this gifted the ANC/SACP enormous leverage through simply running out the clock and demanding ever more "normalising" concessions in exchange for their participation…

The lasting psychological impact of the style and tone of De Klerk's speech, once the initial euphoria had died down, should not be disregarded. Here is an aggregation of extracts of all the instances in the original speech where De Klerk essentially pleaded that he has now fully set the table and that all must now please, pretty please come and take their seats:

*However, numerous excuses for refusing to take part, are advanced. Some of the reasons being advanced are valid. Others are merely part of a political chess game. And while the game of chess proceeds, valuable time is being lost.*

*Against this background I committed the Government during my inauguration to giving active attention to the most important* ***obstacles*** *in the way of negotiation. Today I am able to announce far-reaching decisions in this connection.*

*I believe that these decisions will shape a new phase in which there will be a movement away from measures which have been seized upon as a justification for confrontation and violence. The emphasis has to move, and will more now, to a debate and discussion of political and economic points of view as part of the process of negotiation.*

*I wish to urge every political and community leader, in and outside Parliament, to approach the new opportunities which are being created, constructively. There is no time left for advancing all manner of new conditions that will delay the negotiating process.*

*These decisions* (the unbannings etc) *by the Cabinet are in accordance with the Government's declared intention to* ***normalise*** *the political process in South Africa…*

*Our country and all its people have been embroiled in conflict, tension and violent struggle for decades. It is time for us to break out of the cycle of violence and break through the peace and reconciliation. The silent majority is yearning for this. The youth deserve it.*

*With the steps the Government has taken it has proven its good faith and the table is laid for sensible leaders to begin talking about a new dispensation, to reach an understanding by way of dialogue and discussion.*

*The agenda is open*

*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 organisations.*

*Without conceding that violence has ever been justified, I wish to say today to those who argued in this manner: -*

** The Government wishes to talk to all leaders who seek peace.*
** The unconditional lifting of the prohibition on the said organisations, places everybody in a position to pursue politics freely.*
** The justification for violence, which was always advanced, no longer exists.*

*These facts place everybody in South Africa before a fait accompli. On the basis of numerous previous statements there is no longer any reasonable excuse for the continuation of violence. The time for talking has arrived and whoever still makes excuses does not really wish to talk.*

*Therefore, I repeat my invitation with greater conviction than ever: -*

*Walk through the open door, take your place at the negotiating table together with the Government and other leaders who have important power bases inside and outside of Parliament.*

What we see is that a very substantial part of the speech consisted of such pleadings. This, for any theoretician on negotiation (or intelligence analyst), reflected the fact that De Klerk's underlying concern was to get talks going asap. As said, the reason behind this desire was clear and logical enough – only through inclusive constitutional negotiations concretely kicking off could the NP Government conceivably escape from the suffocating external and internal pressure that was pushing the white government to the limits of survivability. This being the case, the repeated pleadings in the speech calling on the extra-parliamentary parties to begin talking and the apparent willingness of De Klerk to make concessions in order for that to happen, provided those parties – principally the ANC – with clear indication of where the fundamental weaknesses of the NP government lay, and upon which their own strategy should accordingly be targeted: use participation as lever – stall, and demand more concessions.

The inherent strategic weakness of De Klerk's approach (to himself predicate talks on the political playing field first being "**normalised**" to the satisfaction of your opponent) lies in the fact that what exactly "normal" would consist of was not for De Klerk alone to determine. By not saying let's start negotiating first to reach an accord on exactly how that playing field should be constitutionally configured, he accepted the obligation of having to "jump over the normalisation bar" before the other side (principally the ANC) would be obliged to start talking, apparently not realising that it would not be not he, but the ANC – with its strong local and international media support – who would in the public perception be setting the height of the bar.

When would a country as complex as South Africa be regarded as "normal enough"? How many concessions would need to be made before his opponents deigned to even sit down at the negotiation table, in order to achieve that fickle, subjective standard? How many months or years of "freely pursuing politics" (in their revolutionary "people's war" manner), strengthening their organisation on the ground, exploiting every propaganda opportunity and weakening the NP Government's negotiation leverage could the ANC/SACP wrangle out of De Klerk by holding him to his ill-conceived yet self-chosen norm, forcing him to keep jumping higher and higher before they would concede to join the negotiations?

Highlighting here that De Klerk's emphasis on "normalising" and admitting this as pre-requisite for negotiations to start in earnest, was an inherently problematic way of trying to do things (in practical terms, because of giving away the initiative and weakening the NP's leverage) does not mean that it was morally wrong, nor that De Klerk should have stuck to PW Botha's guns, or that the aspiration to move the country to normalcy asap was as such not independently important as objective. The essential point about it, is that there were other ways of skinning the cat that appear not have been adequately considered.

The real problems in behavioural terms (in the context of getting the negotiations started) were firstly how De Klerk was approaching the ANC (adversarially) and secondly, how he was procedurally setting up the negotiations, without either proper prior analysis and planning, or engaging first – prior to the public unveiling of the negotiations – in preparing the ground, so that you don't commit to negotiation as course on the basis of "a wish and a prayer". What negotiation theory recommends is that you reach out first, via back-channels (ideally cooperatively, not adversarially), to explore common ground and build confidence as well as bridges, sorting out procedural issues and making sure of constructive participation before you publicly bet the house on achieving a negotiated transition (as De Klerk effectively did on 2 February 1990).

Imagine what could have resulted if FW de Klerk had first built a constructive, workmanlike personal relationship with Nelson Mandela (as the latter had wanted) and had continued with the confidential, bilateral discussions that Mr Mandela and Dr Barnard had reached consensus on, to thereby establish beforehand in principle agreement – as being clearly the two principals in the coming formal negotiations – on matters of procedure as well as the outlines of an outcome that both could broadly support… (as we will later show, this had indeed been possible, if only it had been tried – after having done the essential proper strategic planning first, of course).

When analysing from the perspective of standard negotiation theory, the manner in which De Klerk's speech was framed, it should be understood that is not a question of judging the undeniable underlying "goodness" of what he was trying to initiate (as viewed from a moral perspective). What we are looking at is not the moral substance – for which he rightly was co-awarded the Nobel Peace Prize – but the impact of the how that he had chosen, namely, the manner in which the negotiation process and contest for political power was set up by the speech.

To get a complete picture about the handling of these tactical considerations that underpinned his speech (as bullet-pointed earlier), it is also essential to do a similar tactical analyses regarding the ANC/SACP's position (it is valid to ask to what extent De Klerk had – as he should have, as "political chess player" – considered what the ANC/SACP's strategic and tactical moves and counter-moves to his own likely would be; in particular, how they could be expected to react to his initiative).

The strategic considerations that could and should have been foreseen by the NP to likely dominate thinking within the ANC/SACP alliance at the beginning of 1990, can be summarised as being centred around the following:

- Having been banned from the country for more than three decades, they would need time to re-establish and organise (militating in favour of a strategy of stalling as long as possible before truly engaging).
- Not allow the NP to seize the political initiative nor the moral high ground in terms of image.
- How to deal with the reality that their main international sponsor had abandoned them and that the ideology they had pinned their flag to, had spectacularly collapsed for all the world to see (again militating in favour of stalling, in order to put time ad space between themselves and those events and allow themselves to credibly re-brand).
- What the ANC likely believed could happen in the international arena, if they could stall long enough, that could in future strengthen their leverage (or at least weaken support for the NP Government), being in particular political developments in the USA and UK away from the Reagan/Thatcher dominance to less resolute and even centre-left leadership there.
- The political reality that if De Klerk could be prevented from rapidly progressing his initiative into concrete results, especially by stymieing rapid visible progress around the negotiation table, then there would naturally follow a weakening in De Klerk's credibility and support (which again favoured a strategy of stalling).
- The inevitability of any and every instance of violence that tears at the fabric of society being thrown by a supportive media before the NP Government's door, creating propaganda opportunities that will weaken the NP Government's image and leverage (again favouring stalling, in order to allow more time for this attrition to play out through Black Swan events and provocation).
- In the contest for political supremacy within the only electoral cohort that really mattered (i.e., the black African population) to overcome the IFP as the only real opponent of substance.
- Given the need to prevent the NP Government from repeating the alliance-building success of Dirk Mudge in Namibia (which had almost derailed SWAPO's ambitions there) a strategic focus on making the key potential NP ally – the IFP – politically toxic through playing on the legacy fear of domination by traditionalist Zulu forces allied with the whites (that was omnipresent among the other black tribes), exploiting that fear so as to unite those other blacks behind the ANC as the only force strong enough to prevent the AmaBula (Boers) and AmaZulu from together running the country.
- How best to exploit the ANC's effective veto power built up through years of astute positioning abroad by Oliver Tambo and Thabo Mbeki, which "veto" enabled stalling to be a strategic option for the ANC ("veto" meaning that, without ANC participation, any government effort at launching negotiations would be stillborn).

In short, the ANC/SACP at beginning of 1990 understood full well that they were, in fact, highly vulnerable and organisationally weak (failed ideology, failed armed struggle, no structured presence on the ground). Mandela knew this, hence his focus on building up the ANC's organisational structures inside South Africa, thanks to his clear understanding of the utility of deliberately running out time before truly engaging.

Coming back now to the strategic and tactical considerations and options that FW de Klerk at the time of drafting his speech had to consider: De Klerk had evidently understood the threat (and likelihood) of stalling on the part of the ANC/SACP, as can be seen in the lengths that he went to in his pleadings and concessions – but these were, in my humble opinion, the wrong tactical route for him to have chosen.

Was it optimal for De Klerk to be looking at the challenge of getting the likes of the ANC to the negotiation table only from the perspective of the carrot, of pleading for their participation? Were there no proverbial sticks (leverage) that could also be brought to bear – particularly from the side of the superpowers, not necessarily the NP Government as such – that would have pushed the ANC to the table? (Indeed, there were means of incentivising the likes of the USA, UK and the USSR to do just that, as I will illustrate in my alternative draft of De Klerk's speech).

The fundamental error in the conceptualisation of the NP Government's negotiation strategy was the notion that the country needed first to be "normalised", allowing the "free pursuit of politics", before any **talks** can begin. Whereas the logical position (such as illustrated in the case of SWA/Namibia) was that the normalised "free pursuit of politics" was needed in Phase Two, to allow **a fair electoral process**, not necessarily already during the preceding negotiations as such – with the negotiations in fact having as purpose precisely to define and put in place the legal framework that would constitute the modalities of such "normalisation" with a view to permitting proper free electioneering.

What thought process had likely inspired this erroneous notion of needing prior "normalisation? In my mind, it originated with another erroneous notion – one that was in practical terms somewhat naïve to believe could be possible to actually achieve, as well as having been short-sighted, because of the advantages that the NP Government could in truth have unlocked for itself thereby. What I'm referring to is the idea that it is absolutely essential that the international community be entirely excluded from the negotiation process (because of the belief that they would inevitably be biased and would put their finger on the scale to benefit the ANC). This had inspired the notion that the negotiations must absolutely take place inside South Africa, which in turn inspired the idea that the country therefore needed to be "normalised" beforehand...

This perceived necessity flowed from the logical consequence of obliging the negotiations to take place inside South Africa, namely that the ANC/SACP would need to be placed in a position where they could freely and securely (for them) come and participate from day one – thus, the need for prior "normalisation". Which did not consider whether the international community couldn't be moved (as the USSR had been, and as Margaret Thatcher had demonstrated in the case of SWAPO's 1 April 1989 incursion) to constructively engage and actually exert pressure on the ANC to come to the table first, precisely in order to agree how to normalise.

Through a lack of properly gaming out alternatives, there also had not been enough prior planning attention to creative solutions, such as having confidential bilaterals and showcase events initially take place across the border in Gaborone and the Valley of the Kings near Mbabane, Swaziland (as eSwatini was then known). The three top South African-operated hotels located then already in the Valley, all within walking distance of each other and with a large conference facility and enough beds, would have been capable of hosting a gathering such as CODESA.

The other trap that the NP Government had set up for itself was its insistence on the negotiations taking a multilateral format, conducted in public (as with CODESA). This was of course contrary to the consensus that had been reached between Mandela and Barnard, namely that the negotiations between the ANC and the NP as main protagonists, should be held bilaterally and confidentially. This initial attachment on the part of the NP Government to the idea that the negotiations had to be open and multilateral stemmed from two motivations. On the one hand, the Government wanted the public showcase multilateral events to show progress to the world, which would then

assumedly justify a reduction in sanctions and other punitive measures. On the other hand, the NP wanted the ANC to be seen as being just one among many parties.

It is a matter of record that – after 30 wasted, critical months – the NP Government had by mid-1992 to revert to the bilateral, confidential format (the "Channel Bilateral" between Cyril Ramaphosa and Roelf Meyer and their teams) in order to save the entire concept of achieving a negotiated transition…

What this fixation on having the negotiations inside South Africa did, was to make it that much easier for the ANC/SACP to stall matters – there was no way that the Government could stage a multilateral showcase event without them present, and then still have the event be deemed credible and legitimate. The NP Government's attempt to deny that the ANC/SACP was the only real other protagonist was simply to deny reality. Very importantly, the lack of initial engagement via confidential bilateral talks also robbed the NP Government negotiators of the opportunity that such intensive, one-on-one engagement would have presented to influence ANC/SACP to start thinking about how to perceive of the NP and the means it controlled – what benefits cooperation could bring for itself, such as protecting the transition (and a future ANC government) against a right-wing coup or attempted secession – a dynamic which quickly came to the fore when eventually in 1992 the two sides started working closely together.

To illustrate: Joe Slovo did not propose his famous "sunset clause" because he suddenly in late 1992 developed a fondness for white civil servants, soldiers, and policemen and had sensed a moral obligation to protect their jobs and pensions; through the intensive exposure to reality via the "Channel Bilateral", he realised that those public servants and security forces (controlled by the NP Government) were the only ones who could put down the radical far-right if ever push should have come to shove – and that the ANC/SACP thus absolutely needed them.

The net result of the NP Government's initial erroneous tactics of insisting on talking inside South Africa in multilateral format, and thereby opening the door for stalling about whether the country was yet "normal" enough, was that 30 months were lost without any real progress. This severely damaged the NP Government's credibility and leverage, and also saw the international environment become decidedly less favourable to it with the departure of Margaret Thatcher in the UK, followed by Bill Clinton being elected in the USA.

Eventually the NP Government was forced into signing the Record of Understanding bilaterally with the ANC/SACP in September 1992, after intense confidential bilateral negotiations between Roelf Meyer and Cyril Ramaphosa through the newly (re)established Channel Bilateral. This brought the negotiations back on track, but the very visible climb-down on the part of the Government (which the agreement to resume had required), left the NP's Government's new negotiation team with very few cards to play. It also effectively destroyed any possibility of the NP forming alliances at the negotiation table, leaving it in the end standing alone, isolated and alienated.

In relation to forming alliances, it had clearly been the initial intent of the NP Government to form such an alliance with particularly the IFP (as fact was shown in the timelines presented earlier). Those behind this strategy were mostly the "shoot" option faction that had calculated (from a pure physical power perspective) that Boer & Zulu together were by far the two dominant fighting tribes, who undeniably could physically take power and hold it. What those who favoured this fantasy did not factor in, though, was that aiming for pure physical domination would not solve anything – there would not be international recognition of such a "strong man" regime, and there would be no peace. Sanctions and insecurity would go on, further undermining the economy.

What needs to be understood, is that there exists a fundamental difference between the underlying politico-ethnic realities in SWA/Namibia and in South Africa. In the former the Wambo's were the outright majority tribe, causing the others to band together to try and prevent out-and-out SWAPO/Wambo domination. In South Africa, where no tribe constitutes a majority (but with the Zulus the largest and the Afrikaners then the most powerful in terms of means), the possibility of an alliance between these two groups (given also the historical baggage carried by both, due to the Mfecane and Apartheid) had made them to be a unifying factor for the rest. In reality, the ANC thus effectively became South Africa's DTA, uniting the rest against "Boer commandos and Zulu impis" in the same manner that Mudge had exploited fear of Wambo domination to unite the rest of SWA/Namibia against the

essentially Wambo organisation SWAPO. The other difference between the two countries is that in South Africa's case this ANC-orchestrated "alliance of others" could indeed muster a numerical majority to beat an NP + IFP alliance at the ballot box.

The reality that the NP was unlikely to ever be able to build a politically beneficial alliance with the IFP (as well as being ill-advised to try and do so, in the first place, for the reasons mentioned above), could and should have been foreseen, long before the De Klerk team itself had belatedly come to that conclusion. By avoiding any hint of such a possible strategy from the outset, the fertile ground among non-Zulu Blacks that the fear of this had provided the ANC's propaganda and mobilisation could have been greatly reduced, if not entirely avoided. In my opinion, the right approach would have been to place the emphasis on the NP Government's role as representing the "moderate middle", making a virtue of its obligation as government to facilitate and protect the negotiation and transition process in even-handed manner. The most appropriate course would therefore have been to publicly stress ideological non-alignment with any particular group or alliance, but openness to patriotically cooperate with all (including the ANC/SACP) in all that is good and right for the country.

Pre-emptively finding a *modus vivendi* with the likely future governing party (the ANC) was the only viable strategy for the NP if it was to retain at least some future influence over decision-making, post-transition. Adopting such a strictly "non-aligned" but cooperative approach, instead of an adversarial one, would firstly have alleviated ANC/SACP fears that the NP Government would seek to build an alliance against it. Secondly, stating a willingness to cooperate with all from such a non-aligned, workmanlike position as central facilitator and custodian of the process, by being eminently logical and reasonable, would have provided political cover – among its own base - for the NP's unavoidably necessary cooperation with the ANC/SACP (especially when undertaken confidentially, bilaterally). Done in this manner, it would not have been seen by the bulk of the NP's own voters as a case of their leadership suddenly and inexplicably "jumping ship" to yesterday's enemy.

The ultimate irony is that the need to strategically partner with the ANC was finally understood and acted upon by the NP, but only once FW de Klerk with his commitment to an adversarial approach, had finally left the scene. Then the NP disbanded itself (which could have been avoided, had the approach outlined above been followed from the outset of the transition) and its members joined the ANC…

One can but guess at what the outcome could have been, if the choice had early on been made by De Klerk to first continue the talks conducted between Mr Mandela and Dr Barnard, as well as continue the talks between the NIS and the external ANC, growing this confidentially and bilaterally in a cooperative manner, into the kind of trust and bridge-building pre-negotiations that negotiation theory recommend. This could have delivered an in-principle "meeting of minds" between what were clearly the two principal protagonists (the only two that really matter, as later events would confirm) on both what kind of substantive outcome and which procedural format the process should take. That very likely could have avoided the 30 months lost through De Klerk's adversarial approach. Ditto for what could have been achieved if the GNU had been allowed by De Klerk to run its full five-year course, in a cooperative manner.

As regards playing the so-called security force card, the real (indirect) way to have kept that in play was through stressing from the start – to both the ANC and the West – the NP's indispensable role as the non-aligned occupiers of the moderate middle, being unquestionably the only viable democratic guarantors of stability and of the faithful execution (and protection) of any accords reached. In positioning itself at and as the centre, it would then have benefitted the NP to highlight (to the ANC and the world) the threat from the combined right – the threat that events towards the end of the negotiations had proved to have been very real, in terms of the AVF's coup threats and the IFP's talk of secession.

A fundamental truth about the real power equation in South Africa that the ANC/SACP understood all too well, was that only the NP Government (in control of the SADF & SAP) could conceivably defeat the far-right if ever push came to shove – definitely not the frankly laughable ANC/MK.

This meant that the two best negotiation cards that the NP Government actually held, were that it firmly held the keys to the Union Buildings in hand and that it controlled the only force capable of maintaining peace and protecting the transition and, eventually, the new democratic government – i.e., the ANC – against being overthrown by the far-right.

Denying the ANC/SACP any reasonable justifications for stalling indeed needed to be NP's top tactical priority – but not via premature "normalisation". What had been needed was a continuation of the confidential bilateral talks which had started with Mandela still in prison and then expanded by the NIS to the external ANC, aimed at building patriotic strategic cooperation based upon the really powerful reality of **mutual indispensability.** The ANC clearly needed the NP Government to firstly protect the negotiation and transition against insurrection from the right, secondly for the NP to then voluntarily hand over the keys to the Union Buildings that the ANC so dearly wanted (and which the NP very securely held, to the extent that the ANC had no real hope of taking the keys off the NP), and finally to help protect the fledgling ANC Government through its influence over the statutory security forces.

What the NP for its part needed from the ANC, was its participation in and seal of approval for the transition plus for the final deal. This was essential in order for the restive internal population and the world to accept a new constitution and government as legitimate – which were, in turn, the prerequisites for achieving the NP's real fundamental objectives on behalf of its own constituency: the restoration of peace and stability, the lifting of all punitive measures, and the rehabilitation of the image of white South Africans (and the Afrikaner in particular).

What derailed everything that had been set up in prison and in Switzerland was the knee-jerk attitude on the part of the new De Klerk government against international involvement, its insistence, therefore, on holding the talks inside South Africa (insisting also on a multilateral, public format for the process) which inherently made prior "normalisation" a prerequisite (and handy justification for the ANC stalling), plus De Klerk adopting an adversarial approach to Mandela, without however being able to make it stick.

First continuing the pre-negotiations, bilaterally and confidentially and building upon what had been achieved in prison and in Lucerne, held for example in Gaborone, would have allowed the NP maximum use of its initial leverage over a then most vulnerable ANC and could have early on produced a time-saving and angst-reducing framework for the pre-negotiations morphing into the kind of progress we saw after the "Channel Bilateral" was instituted in 1992, confirmed in something akin to the RoU signed between the ANC and NP in September of that year. Formal accords involving the multiparty contingent at intermittent public multiparty gatherings in the Valley of Kings in eSwatini to sign off on finished tasks could then have followed at regular intervals (in a process structured as a succession of digestible chunks, rather than an "all or nothing" package deal). This would have allowed the NP Government to all the time stress its indispensable role at the "moderate middle" to facilitate and protect, thereby maintaining momentum, optimising its limited leverage, and keep on polishing its image abroad.

What such an approach would have required (in addition to the necessary prior analysis and planning that would have confirmed it as the most viable option available – as confirmed by the 1992 switch back to the "Channel Bilateral), was that it needed to have been based on a willingness to be the unavoidably necessary (if not mutually loving) strategic partners that the transition's actual course had quickly enough confirmed the process needed for it to succeed. Locked into such a cooperative, mutually dependent (and beneficial) practical patriotic arrangement the ANC would have found it very difficult to stall, especially if international pressure had been effectively mobilised by the NP Government (via utilising matters of serious concern to the West, such as South Africa's NBC arsenal and its potential economic cooperation with Russia, plus the need to not alienate the NP Government in the light of the very real threat of right-wing Afrikaners and Zulus attempting a take-over).

If the NP Government had opted not to **plead** for the ANC's participation, but had rather gone the route of placing the ANC before a choice between stalling (and thereby risk losing out on an opportunity to receive the keys early and peacefully, plus also having to fend off the radical right themselves thereafter) or accepting a hand offered in cooperation, them having to make such a choice could have led to severe internal strain within the ANC between their moderates and radicals. That such strain indeed existed was clearly evidenced by the radicals' abortive attempt at a power grab by means of their mass action "Leipzig" option.

So, what was the cost of the NP's wrong strategic choices at the outset? Considering that the NP had an effective deadline to complete the negotiations and transition before the next white election would fall due in 1994, **the loss of those thirty months was very significant**. It caused the constitution drafting negotiations that followed the signing of the belated RoU to be necessarily rushed, thereby not attending to key issues such as a ensuring proper separation of powers via a directly elected presidency.

If the NP politicians had been more situationally aware at the start, and had better prepared in advance a properly gamed strategy, they could have accepted much earlier on the realities with which they in the end in any case had had to make peace. They could have made a virtue of the necessity to base the new dispensation on majority rule in a unitary state, just as the ANC/SACP had wisely done regarding abandoning their Marxist people's republic ideal and accepting Western free marker democracy. Having done that at the outset would have allowed the NP Government time and opportunity to focus their efforts on the best possible version of such a unitary majority rule system being negotiated, pushing for an American-style constitution rather than weakly tweaking the Westminster model, with a clearer division of powers been the legislature and a directly-elected executive president, more devolution of real powers down to lower levels (in other words, a more federalist approach than Jan Smuts' centralist system that in the end persisted) and better provision for future coalition governments when no party achieves an outright majority).

Over the longer run, accepting reality, swallowing hard and building – through confidential bilateral talks – a workmanlike strategic partnership between the NP and the ANC moderates could have strengthened the moderate faction around Thabo Mbeki and avoided the near catastrophe of Jacob Zuma as president and the state capture which that resulted in.

Accepting reality is what the ANC/SACP did when they opted to abandon their earlier "people's republic" dreams and made this necessity into an ideological re-making virtue, which rid them of that potential albatross. From the ANC's perspective, what they principally had to strategically achieve were two key objectives. The first was to weaken the NP Government's BATNA and thus leverage (as described above). The second was to avoid that De Klerk could replicate what the Vorster/Van den Bergh team had achieved in SWA/Namibia through the astute and able Dirk Mudge, namely an alliance similar to the DTA. A bonus outcome for the ANC was that the NP Government's own floundering on strategy had alienated it from a significant part of its own Security Forces and much of its erstwhile Afrikaner rural constituency.

It is evident that the 2 February speech did not benefit from a proper prior SWOT analysis nor from the necessary extensive scenario gaming (De Klerk's own autobiography makes this clear, indicating that he had mostly drafted it himself, and only presented it to his colleagues at the last minute to preserve secrecy and thereby avoid leaks that would ruin its media impact).

It is also clear that none of his cabinet ministers had said to De Klerk: "*Mr President, you are indeed announcing important steps. In that, you are doing immeasurably better than PW Botha had with his Rubicon speech. But, with all due respect, when analysts, opponents, and even our own voters read this which you have drafted they are going to sense that you are bordering on desperation for negotiations to begin. This makes you seem to want to transition to a New South Africa almost at any cost. You have put the cart before the horse, in terms of the sequencing of the process. You are opening the door for us to be extorted, for our leverage to be continuously weakened. And you are not telling your audience what exactly it is that you will be negotiating for, because you are not giving any real indication of how you wish to see the New South Africa to be, beyond what will be regarded as platitudes, such as undefined "group rights". This will leave your constituents and potential allies uncertain and in doubt, and it will allow your opponents to fill in the blanks you left by imputing to you, damaging intentions that you do not actually have – namely, that your real wish is merely to re-impose Apartheid in a disguised form. As we have already seen with the failure of PW's tricky, formulaic tricameral constitution, that kind of lawyer-style cleverness is seen through and will not fly – the time has come for us to accept reality and grab the bull fully by the horns, accepting the unavoidable consequences. To do that properly, we first need a process of proper strategic planning, before we venture into the most existentially important venture in our history since Van Riebeeck landed. That requires a proper SWOT-style analysis and generation of the full range of options that need*

*to be considered, plus comprehensive, expert scenario gaming to enable use to make informed choices among those available strategy options.*"

The consequence of this catastrophic dysfunction in strategic decision-making, this profound failure in planning and preparation, was that – after the initial "sugar high" that followed immediately after the speech – the parameters that De Klerk had inadvertently laid down for the process had trapped his government and party in a bitter thirty months hiatus which resulted in an increasingly rapid weakening of the NP Government's already severely limited leverage and credibility, as well as requiring humiliating about-turns and concessions. Till the new negotiation team under Roelf Meyer in 1992 most fortunately managed to salvage the process, but then with no real BATNA left and with not much leverage at their disposal.

With better strategic decision-making, preparation and planning, could it have been different?

To some extent, yes – as I will now try to illustrate. Keeping in mind what I have said before regarding the weaknesses of the original speech, what you will notice in the hypothetical text are attempts to address exactly those weak points in the original:

- Projecting at the outset greater strength. This is done by celebrating that South Africa had successfully withstood the Cold War onslaught (and that it was that victory, largely thanks to the Security Forces, that had made it possible to now shift the focus to negotiating a transition to a new dispensation). Furthermore, by revealing the country's nuclear capabilities as well as how Moscow's approach to Southern Africa had been successfully turned around (the latter indicating to the ANC/SACP that they can no longer count on their erstwhile main sponsor, and to the West that South Africa has other strategic options than just to depend on the West).
- Stronger emphasis on the voters having mandated the negotiation of a fundamental changed constitutional dispensation in the election held a few months earlier.
- Making clear that the Government <u>as such</u>, and the NP <u>as party</u>, have distinctly different functional roles to play in the coming negotiation process, with the Government to be responsible for the enabling framework plus security and stability, but the NP as party participating in the actual constitutional negotiations.
- Making clear that there are in fact two accords that need be reached. On the one hand, a Peace Accord between the State and the non-state actors who have declared themselves to be engaged in an "armed struggle" against the white state (in which negotiation, the Government as government, representing the State, will be centrally involved). On the other hand, the multi-party constitutional negotiations for a new non-racial dispensation, in which all political parties will be invited to participate and which the Government will facilitate, in conjunction with similar multilateral forums to be held on the economy and on cultural and community matters, in which the private sector and civil society will be invited to participate.
- Setting out that the process will of necessity entail extensive **bilateral, confidential** negotiations between the main protagonists, in order to facilitate the earliest possible finding of common ground, with the **multilateral** forums serving subsequently to demonstrate, at the end of each task cycle, that sufficient consensus exists in favour of such common ground proposals emanating from the bilateral talks.
- Explaining that the process will necessarily be phased, with the first phase aimed at reaching binding agreements on the legal framework in terms of which non-racial elections can be held. Once such a deal has been signed and duly guaranteed, then the second phase – a sufficient period for electioneering leading up to the elections – will start, during which latter phase the playing field needs to be level to allow peaceful, free participation in electoral politics by all parties (adhering to the terms of the preceding Peace Accord and Interim Constitution agreed during the first phase).
- Eliminating the problem of being held hostage to "immediate normalisation" (stemming from the NP Government having wanted the entire process to play out exclusively inside South Africa's borders because they wanted to avoid international influence – which they suspected would likely have been prejudicial to the NP), by pro-actively accepting international and African involvement, but in an observer capacity (as in fact happened) and staging the confidential bi-laterals in Botswana and the showcase CODESA-style multilateral events in the more than adequate Valley of the Kings in Swaziland, thus also constructively involving our African neighbours (the NP Government's relationship with Swaziland in

particular was in any case such that ensuring security would not have been a problem). Again, a case of making a virtue of necessity.

- Anticipating that the ANC/SACP may logically attempt to stall so as to gain time to organise, requiring that a multi-faceted strategy be put in place to bring them expeditiously to the negotiation table – not only through pleading and concessions, but also by having pressure be brought to bear on them from the Superpowers (in which regard the question of timely disposal of the nuclear arsenal, made contingent on the talks getting started and culminating in the NP Government's security concerns being adequately addressed in such peace and constitutional accords, is seen as a powerful means of focusing attention on realities important to the Superpowers, thus increasing the Government's leverage – the manner in which De Klerk had actually played the nuclear card had entirely failed to employ it as a means for leverage, only serving to burnish his image as a "good guy"). The other means of moving negotiations with the ANC/SACP forward, is the earlier mentioned acceptance of continuation of the confidential bilateral talks of the kind which the NIS had already initiated and which Mandela had already expressed his preference for in his consensus with Barnard, rather than the NP Government insisting that talks need to occur in the public eye in a multi-party format – the latter, an approach very easy to stall. This problem of the ANC stalling was exacerbated by the NP's strong focus on the political dimension (around the constitution) and thus on political parties; a broad groundswell in favour of negotiating holistically a new socio-political dispensation could have been stimulated by immediately setting up the forums on economic affairs and societal/cultural matters, which could have started running with the ball even without ANC participation (which they in any event would have been unlikely to withhold, for such fora). Another procedural way of moving the process on expeditiously, would have been to not be locked into achieving a global package deal, but to divide up the challenge into its constituent tasks and deal with these step-by-step.
- A fundamental need was for the NP Government to accept, from the very outset, political reality and from the word go embrace what should from the start have been evident as being inevitable – namely a unitary state with majority rule – and then focusing every effort and all available time on perfecting that system as much as possible, including devolution of power to the lowest level, federalist-style (as in the USA constitution), and ensuring a clear separation of powers, with provision for the future likelihood of coalition governments – stating clearly to voters what the NP would be negotiating for, rather than waffling on for thirty months about ill-defined notions like group rights and power sharing, creating unachievable expectations leading only to a growing sense of deception among supporters.
- To seek, as preferred approach, not a Westminster-style adversarial relationship (as De Klerk unfortunately clung to through-out) but to rather develop a strategically-necessary partnership, in a businesslike manner and with petty politics set aside (in line with the initial positive disposition of Mr Mandela, plus later developments during the Mbeki presidency and the eventual break-away of Zuma and the MK Party do constitute proof enough that such a mutual needs-based partnership had indeed been possible, because of the moderate faction in the ANC all along knowing full well that they needed partners to keep their radical wing at bay and to enable optimal delivery and growth.

## 12.4 AN HYPOTHETICAL ALTERNATIVE TEXT FOR THE 2 FEBRUARY 1990 SPEECH

*Author's note: This hypothetical alternative text isn't an attempt to be "cleverer than though". So-called "what if" scenarios is a recognised Behaviouralist scientific means of illustration and explanation; furthermore, it has obviously been drafted with the immeasurable benefit of hindsight (and gamed by me with AI, which back then evidently did not yet exist).*

### 12.4.1 MY PURPOSE WITH PRESENTING HERE AN ALTERNATIVE TEXT: A "WHAT IF" EXPLANATORY EXERCISE

The alternative positions included here are based on what the NP Government soon enough had ended up willy-nilly supporting, in the first few years immediately following upon the original speech. My purpose is to illustrate how that original speech could have been alternatively framed – if it had been better "SWOTted" and gamed – in order to better attune with the basic principles of negotiation theory and to demonstrate that this had indeed been

possible, which would (at least according to AI assessment) have actually enhanced its mediatic and diplomatic impact and thus the leverage of the then Government.

It is not intended for this academic exercise to be seen as criticism of Mr De Klerk, or as an attempt to detract in any way from the immense significance and inestimable merit of the original. When people nowadays criticise De Klerk's speech, the animus is most often buyer's remorse, with those who criticise being to the right of De Klerk in political persuasion. In my case, on the contrary, I was immensely proud of our New South Africa, being convinced (as I still am) of its huge potential. I cherished as an exceptional privilege the opportunity to have represented it as ambassador.

Personally, I will forever be grateful to De Klerk for having had the courage and insight to set aside the failed policies and strategies of his predecessors – for having firmly elected to settle, rather than shoot.

However, as political scientist and intelligence analyst, I cannot be blind to the errors that standard negotiation and Behaviouralist scientific theory point to – errors that were principally due to the seriously dysfunctional decision-making system of that era, more than to the men involved and their good faith efforts under challenging circumstances. I am, therefore, pointing out and explaining what could (theoretically) have been done better for the sake of learning – those lessons need to be understood, particularly now when all the political stars point to a future where government by negotiated coalition will likely be the norm, at all levels in the country.

It needs to be always kept in mind that, in assessing where we are today, our present reality cannot and should not be ascribed primarily to the De Klerk government, nor solely to what had occurred over those brief few years of the negotiations and transition. By the time that Mr De Klerk took over the presidency, the die had essentially already been cast, through the acts and especially the omissions of his predecessors over many years, who had allowed the hourglass to have run virtually empty – a legacy which had deprived the De Klerk team of any real alternatives or leverage. The great merit of De Klerk was that he had the courage and insight to at last act decisively.

### 12.4.2 ALTERNATIVE 2 FEBRUARY 1990 SPEECH: MY HYPOTHETICAL "WHAT IF" TEXT

*Mr Speaker, Members of Parliament.*

*Our world is witnessing rapid, fundamental change. South Africa as well. As government, it is our historic responsibility – and, let me stress, our opportunity – to meet the new challenges of our times and lead the process of change that will enable us to seize those very opportunities that it present. This session of parliament I am now opening, will thus be one dedicated to initiating a process of negotiated transition to a New South Africa, and the complete, systematic dismantlement of what the world has known as Apartheid.*

*My government is committed to freeing our country from conflict and discrimination. It is to this end that we have decided that the so significantly changed new circumstances now reigning in the world, plus sound reasons of practicality and morality, allow us to complete the process started by my predecessor of dismantling all remaining vestiges of racial discrimination. We desire a negotiated new constitutional dispensation for our Republic: democratic, non-racial, unitary, and with all South Africans of voting age enjoying equal voting rights. We are inspired in this regard by the constitution of the United States of America.*

*Why now?*

*Because of the opportunity that our Security Forces have won for us. By defeating the onslaught that we had faced from international communism. The Berlin Wall has fallen, and communist rule in Eastern Europe has collapsed. We are the ones still standing. The erstwhile Soviet proxies have been driven back from our borders, with their nearest base camps now in Uganda. Successive NP governments have demonstrated to those who have chosen to challenge us with revolutionary armed struggle, that they will NEVER be able to impose on us here a Marxist people's republic.*

*We have shown the world that sanctions, boycotts and isolation, harmful as they clearly are to all sectors of our population, cannot break this Government's will, nor deprive us of the means to prevail and continue prevailing.*

*We have demonstrated that we are here to stay. That the people we proudly represent in this parliament are an integral part of this land – as the name we gave ourself, "Afrikaner". so eloquently and sincerely proclaims.*

*We ourselves have experienced imperialist oppression, including the horror of concentrations camps in which more than fifty per cent of our Boer Republics' youth under 15 had died. We, like our black African neighbours, and fellow countrymen, know what it was like to be treated as 2nd class citizens in the land of our birth. We were the first freedom fighters of this continent and to this day are the ones who had sacrificed most, numerically in terms of lives, as well as materially, in the struggle against imperialism.*

*We therefore understand the aspirations of our non-white countrymen.*

*Over the course of the past decades of Cold War, which had often been very hot here in our part of the world, we have not been fighting primarily against our fellow countrymen, but against the sinister foreign communist forces who were cynically exploiting them as proxies, to try and get their hands on this land with its riches and strategic location.*

*Truth therefore is that, in terms of shared historical experience and the shared interest of our children, all those born in this land have much more in common than what divides us. The time has come to exploit the historic opportunity we are now living, and reap the benefit of our victory.*

*In terms of the international threat, the changes that we all are witness of, mean that there is no longer an existential threat against us posed by Moscow.*

*We are also witness to fundamental change in our country itself, brought about over four decades of National Party rule. What we have built up is no longer even comparable to the South Africa of 1948.*

*We are now a sovereign republic, no longer under the British crown. That long battle, also, we have won.*

*In financial terms, the JSE is now one of the top ten bourses in the world. Our economy is robust and self-sufficient. It is many orders of magnitude larger, more diverse and less dependent on a foreign imperial centre to provide us with technology and skills, than what it had been in 1948 – thanks to the activist developmental policies of a succession of NP governments.*

*Our population today is also very different to what it was back in 1948. Then, less than 600 black South Africans sat the matric exam. Today it exceeds 255,000 per year, thanks to the targeted upliftment policies of NP governments. This logically means that the factual reality that had inspired certain policies back then – policies that have become known as Apartheid – is no longer anywhere near being the factual reality that our policies today need to be based on. Requiring that our policies must, accordingly, be fundamentally revised.*

*Back then it would have been true to say that practically all black people were un-educated, as opposed to all white people having enjoyed then already a good basic education. Today, such a black vs white distinction no longer holds true.*

*In 1948 a large proportion of blacks still lived in either traditional rural huts or in unhygienic peri-urban shanty towns such as Cato Manor and Sophiatown. Today, that also is no longer true – again, thanks to the dedicated housing programmes of NP governments. Consequently, South Africa's growing middle class today cannot any longer be simplistically equated with skin colour.*

*Today's South African economy is inextricably integrated, depending as much on the black man as the white man. Our current reality is that our bustling industrial metropoles, the engines of our economic growth and strength, are*

*now home to millions, drawn from all race and language groups. Those wealth-producing metropoles have, whether we like it or not, been thoroughly and permanently scrambled, impossible to unscramble – to think otherwise, is to engage in dreams untethered to reality.*

*The black South African of today is no longer the uneducated and impoverished hut or shack-dwelling "colonial native" of 1948, and the integrated economy of today's South Africa makes it unrealistic to imagine that our country could be divided up into black man's land and white man's land – it is time to recognise that this is our shared homeland.*

*This is the modern-day reality that Destiny has determined for us, and it is our responsibility as government and as citizens to accept it, and to say a final farewell to policies designed in 1948.*

*We have to do onto others as we had always wished should be done onto us – a basic truth taught us by Scripture and one that we ourselves had held so dear that we had fought for it more fiercely than most.*

*The "quantum leap" that I announced as our intention a year ago when I became NP leader, and about which I will share more detail today, is therefore the consequence of the fundamental changes that we have seen accelerate around us, as well as of our victory over the existential threat from internationalist communism that our Security Forces had so bravely and successfully faced down during the Cold War.*

*We are adapting and modernising not because of pressure, but out of moral conviction born out of our faith and our own historical experience of imperialism. The time has come for white, brown, and black South Africans to take hands – after all, the Afrikaners that I represent had lost many more of their near and dear in fighting against other whites than ever in conflicts with blacks...*

*Today should be a day of celebration for all, whites included, because we are starting the final liberation of all of us from the last vestiges of an often-traumatic colonial past – in the case of us whites, a liberation from the stigma that that legacy has saddled us with.*

*The National Party's aim is a non-racial, just, and secure New South Africa in which every inhabitant will enjoy equal rights, treatment, and opportunity in every sphere of endeavour – constitutional, social, and economic. Where all can enjoy the benefits of living in a peaceful, prosperous true democracy with a free market economy.*

*In this spirit, it is my intention to recommend to my party's Federal Executive and Congresses that membership of the National Party should henceforth be open to all South Africans who support these values, irrespective of race.*

*In the general election held on September the 6th, 1989, the voters had placed our country irrevocably on the road of exactly such fundamental modernisation. They mandated a transformation aimed at peace, full democracy, and the protection of fundamental human rights for all. Where each and all can be sure of the legal protection of their inalienable individual right to security of life, limb, and property, as well as freedom of association. Where all enjoy equal political participation in a state governed by laws – as we say in Afrikaans: a "*Regstaat"*. Where the Constitution is supreme and is applied by an independent judiciary, which will hold those in power accountable, measured against the binding prescripts of an agreed new constitution.*

*Underlying this common desire for an orderly yet rapid and fundamental re-alignment of our constitution with the realities of our modern age, is the growing realisation by an increasing number of South Africans that only an inclusively negotiated understanding among the representative leaders of the entire population can ensure lasting peace and prosperity.*

*The alternative is ever-growing isolation, violence, tension, and conflict. That is unacceptable and in nobody's interest. The well-being of all in this country is linked inextricably to the ability of the leaders to come to terms with one another on a thoroughly updated new dispensation. No-one can escape this simple truth.*

*On its part, the Government will accord the process of negotiation the highest priority. I see it as the function of my government not to dictate or interfere in the substance of this process, but to create and maintain the necessary enabling and facilitating environment for it. Above all, to maintain peace and stability in the country, and to set up and maintain the infrastructure through which all the political parties and political entities who have significant following among our people, can inclusively, freely and urgently get down to what needs to be the top priority of all of us – to start negotiating a new constitutional dispensation.*

*It will thus be the responsibility of the National Party as party to engage with the other political entities and parties in the talks about a new constitution for our Republic, whilst the Government as government lends the process its full support.*

*The constitutional legacy we have inherited from the imperial era has, for better or for worse, entrusted this government with the patriotic duty of serving as facilitator and custodian of the process of negotiation and transition that I will be setting out today. This National Party Government constitutes the "moderate middle" and is legally responsible for enabling and protecting the process upon which we are about to embark. We understand that we need to do this in a politically neutral, even-handed manner. Therefore, the NP, both as government and as party, herewith pledges that it will stay non-aligned, not seeking to build alliances or to join any. It will cooperate with all, in all that is good and beneficial for our nation and state. It will deal with all other bona fide democratic political parties one-on-one, with confidentiality, because the circumstances pertaining to each are different and will naturally result in different debates.*

*The Government as government will stay above the party-political interaction around the drafting of the new constitution and not seek to influence it, focusing instead on facilitation by providing logistical support and security.*

*However – what the Government, as the executive arm of the State, will definitely and determinedly be engaged in, in parallel to the constitutional talks, is the necessary process of negotiating and reaching a Peace Accord between the State and those non-state actors who have – in their own words – been waging war against the State. So that violence shall cease, and all citizens can freely exercise, in peace and security, the new rights that they will be accorded, such as freedom of speech and of free association. So that they will be able to fully enjoy these without fear of intimidation. Because I believe we can all agree that, self-evidently, there cannot be true democracy, nor free and fair elections, if society is not first freed of political violence.*

*This violence has historically had two main origins. The one was the view held by some that only by resorting to armed force could previous NP governments possibly be convinced to earnestly engage in meaningful negotiations for a just New South Africa. As stated, my government is determined to show, by our concrete legislative deeds during this session of parliament, that that argument is no longer valid. The door is open; the table is being set.*

*Secondly, the "armed struggle" had been ideologically inspired by and linked to the Cold War, which now fortunately has ended. In fact, the Soviet Union itself is on record as now favouring a negotiated solution to South Africa's internal challenges. The "Red Threat" no longer exists – a momentous and hugely welcome new reality which came about also thanks to determined efforts under my predecessor to turn around Moscow's previously hostile position regarding Southern Africa.*

*It is a well-known axiom that states do not have friends, just interests.*

*We ourselves learnt that lesson painfully, when our erstwhile friends – for whom our fighting men had bled and died in their wars – turned their backs on us in recent years. South Africa and the Soviet Union, on the other hand, have very many, very real interests in common. Russian volunteers had formed an important part of the international brigades that fought alongside our people during the Second Anglo-Boer War. Our two countries, between them, for example control 95% of the world's vanadium reserves, 94% of manganese, 94% of all platinum-group metals, 84% of its chrome reserves, 70% of its gold and nearly 60% of its andalusite-group minerals. We both are also important diamond producers.*

*In plain business terms, therefore, it makes absolute sense for both the USSR and our Republic to cooperate in the marketing of these resources, as well as to extend our business ties far beyond this. Given this logic, I can reveal today that since the mid-eighties South Africa has, at our initiative, developed and formalised, firstly, confidential intelligence cooperation between the KGB and our National Intelligence Service, which relationship then expanded into general business cooperation, ably facilitated by our Department of Foreign Affairs and our private sector.*

*Such is the confidence of the Soviet leadership in our earnest intention to rapidly bring about a New South Africa, that this non-ideological economic cooperation based on clear mutual business interests, has now extended into industrial co-development projects. As a concrete example of this, I can reveal that, as I speak, a team of top South African aeronautical engineers are working together with their Soviet counterparts in Moscow, co-designing adaptations to Soviet technology to make it fit our needs. Furthermore, Moscow is not the only Russian city where this level of cooperation is happening.*

*In the fulness of time, more details will be released. Suffice it to say now that Moscow is no longer our enemy – it is poised to become one of our key suppliers, once the international legal regime around sanctions and arms embargoes permits.*

*In talking about armaments and the fundamentally changed world and threat environments we now live in, it is opportune here to also reveal that, in recent days, I had invited the ambassadors and military attaché's of leading Western Powers with an interest in nuclear matters, to accompany me to South Africa's space launch and mission control facilities in the Southern Cape, where the honourable minister of defence gave them a detailed briefing on South Africa's inter-continental missile capabilities as well as our existing nuclear arsenal and delivery systems.*

*Thanks to the very changed international environment, I can today publicly confirm that South Africa has, over the past number of years, produced an arsenal of operational, fully battlefield-ready nuclear bombs plus the necessary means to deliver them. We now possess what my government regards as a sufficient number of these weapons.*

*The development of these nuclear bombs with our own unique enrichment process was indeed a necessary deterrent during the Cold War. Today, that has become superfluous. Accordingly, I yesterday signed an executive order that no more of these weapons must be built. It is my opinion that all of these weapons should be dismantled, in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency. It is also the desire of my government for the Republic to accede to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. However, since this is a national asset, a final decision on this matter should rightfully be taken by the participants in the negotiations that will lead to a New South Africa.*

*Which I hope can be prioritised and taken very soon, and which serves to illustrate an important point about the appropriate procedure to adopt for the coming negotiations. Namely, that there will be matters of an urgent, free-standing nature that could and should be handled as individual tasks, to be wrapped up as expeditiously as possible without having to await a global package deal. Apart from the future of the nuclear arsenal, I can think of issues such as the adoption of a charter of human rights, which this parliament can make an addendum to the existing constitution, and the revision of our judicial system, so that a Constitutional Court can be created to help oversee the political process around the negotiations and the elections that should result from that process.*

*Reverting for a moment to the nuclear arsenal - let there be no doubt that developing such a deterrent had indeed been prudent and necessary. While Moscow was still committed to the world-wide expansion of communism, the Soviet Union had indeed been an existential threat to us, considering precisely the strategic convergences such as control of the Cape Sea Route and the minerals and metals we jointly possess that I referred to earlier. In the seventies and early eighties international communism had made huge gains, which we dared not have ignored. Many countries in Asia and Africa were placed under the yoke of Marxist-Leninist regimes in so-called "People's Republics". We saw that happen to formerly wealthy countries to our north. We saw Cuban troops plus East German and Soviet military advisors deployed against us in Angola, with the declared final goal of making of South Africa another such Marxist "people's republic".*

*Building our own nuclear deterrent was therefore justified, as a strategic necessity.*

*Thanks to the foresight, planning, and perseverance of my predecessors, plus the truly formidable fighting skills of our warriors, ably augmented by the genius of our home-grown armaments industry, South Africa could remain standing when others fell. The pressure was intense, but in the end, Moscow saw that they were throwing scarce money into a bottomless pit, with no possibility of being reimbursed, because of there being no realistic chance of defeating our security forces.*

*This nation will forever owe a huge debt of gratitude to the men and women of our security and intelligence community, for having averted that South Africa became victim to such a revolutionary overthrow, in the manner that so many others did. It is the very fact that they have shown themselves to be unbeatable, that has obliged those on the other side to now also talk of peaceful solutions through negotiation.*

*Let me be very clear – the South African Security Forces had fought these past decades because it was an existential imperative to defeat the Cold War's revolutionary communist threat, precisely in order that we can reach a point where democratic dialogue is not only essential, but also becomes possible. These forces are not there to enforce Apartheid, and I am absolutely sure that they will successfully protect the negotiation process with the same consummate professionalism, party-political neutrality, and determination, that they have displayed over the past decades.*

*All who may have considered South Africa an easy target, a push-over, need to seriously reconsider in the light of the information I have shared here today. All should also reflect on how momentous the historic project that we propose to embark on in reality is – for the first time in history, a nuclear power may be willing to voluntarily do away with its entire arsenal. For the first time in history, a nuclear-armed government is willing to embark on a process that will see it peacefully hand over power to a new government constituted under an entirely new constitutional dispensation…*

*Thanks to the opportunity to achieve a New South Africa through peaceful dialogue, which was won for us by our security forces and by the collapse of the Red Threat, my government will pivot away from the huge military investment that had been needed in recent years. We will instead apply those means to the upliftment of disadvantaged communities and to the facilitation of the negotiation process, primarily by means of maintaining a secure and stable environment. To that end, the police will be prioritised for greater investment.*

*In this regard I have to caution the ANC, SACP and MK that, from its inception, their supposedly secret Operation Vula has been known to us. It is an operation aimed at infiltrating arms and operatives into the country, to tilt the political balance in their favour by means of conducting in the townships an intimidatory so-called "people's war", based on the teachings contained in the Vietnamese-inspired "Green Book". It is a scheme broadly similar to what SWAPO had abortively attempted on 1 April last year. I call on the ANC leadership to suspend this project, now that the door to the negotiation chamber is wide open. It is simply going to end up the same way as SWAPO's misguided project and will therefore rebound very negatively on the image of the ANC, at a futile and unnecessary cost in human lives.*

*Our commitment to negotiations and to the downward adjustment of the Defence budget does not mean that we will weaken our Security Forces. We obviously cannot naively trust that a Peace Accord and a Constitutional Settlement will without doubt be reached. However, it is my sincere hope that all sides will suspend the use of violence. Firstly, because of the inherent immorality of conducting negotiations and party politics with weapons instead of ideas. Equally, though, because our forces have so clearly demonstrated their ability to easily contain any such threat, so that violence simply is not a realistic option for those aspiring to receiving the keys to the Union Buildings.*

*Those keys will only be handed to the winners of our country's first non-racial, fully democratic elections, to be held in terms of a pre-agreed, immutable set of constitutional principles that needs to be unambiguously recorded in a signed and sealed accord reached with sufficient consensus among all parties, with ironclad guarantees. After*

*all, no-one hands over to a future co-owner a set of keys to the farm gate until the exact terms of the future partnership has not been definitively agreed and signed, with all necessary guarantees for its due implementation in place…*

*It is my belief that the time has come for us all to be less focussed on political policy positions and posturing, and focus instead on the real, fundamental interests of our people.*

*We need to grasp that, in reality, we are all shareholders in a joint venture – in "South Africa Incorporated". Human rights are important – indeed, vitally so – but it is nevertheless true that no-one can fill his or her stomach with philosophical concepts alone. Our people want tangible benefits to flow from the transition to a New South Africa, meaning that we have to adopt a businesslike mind-set. Because of our shared interests, I believe that we will then find that there is much more that unite us than divide us.*

*Whether we like it or not, Destiny has dictated that we – all South Africans – are partners in our common enterprise, the aforesaid South Africa Incorporated. All have a right to share equitably in the wealth that this land is so exceptionally capable of generating, blessed as it is with riches. All must have a fair and equal say in the governance and use of its assets, and all must put the interests of our jointly owned business venture first, if we are to maximally profit for many years to come from its undoubted potential.*

*We are indeed fortunate to be sons and daughters of such a majestic, munificent land – but we must approach its development and utilisation with businesslike objectivity and unity of purpose, setting petty politics aside. Because in unity lies strength – also of purpose.*

*In the New South Africa the government will need money – and lots of it – to do for our people that which they have a right to ask of us, especially the historically disadvantaged. Which indeed means that we have to see our land as a jointly owned business. Because the art of making and managing money is, after all, called business, not politics.*

*For that reason, my party and my government are ready to adopt a realistic, cooperative, partnership approach to the negotiations and future governance – not the adversarial approach so typical of party politics in the Westminster system. Our hand of cooperation is extended to every party and movement which agrees that it is now our solemn duty to put "South Africa Incorporated" first.*

*During the term of this new Parliament, we shall have to deal not only with the normal processes of legislation and day-to-day government, but most importantly with the urgent need to facilitate the process of negotiation and renewal. The legislative programme and governance should therefore be focussed on expeditiously and definitively doing away with what has been proven to be unworkable and unjust in the old model, as well as being nowadays irrelevant because of the vastly changed realities we face. We should be focussed on laying the groundwork for transiting to the New South Africa through negotiations – but without Parliament or the present government pre-empting the outcome of that process, which needs to be open and be inclusive of all South Africans.*

*Within this framework I wish to deal first with several matters more closely concerned with the normal process of government before I turn specifically to the negotiations and related issues.*

*1. FOREIGN RELATIONS*

*The Government is aware of the important part the world at large has to play in the advancement of our country's national interests.*

*Without contact and co-operation with the rest of the world we cannot promote the well-being and security of our citizens. As indicated, the dynamic developments in international politics have created new opportunities for South*

*Africa as well. Important advances have been made, among other things, in our contacts abroad, especially where these were precluded previously by ideological considerations.*

*I hope this trend will be encouraged by the important change of climate that is taking place in South Africa.*

*In Eastern Europe and even the Soviet Union itself, political and economic upheaval surge forward in an unstoppable tide. The year of 1989 will go down in history as the year in which Stalinist Communism expired.*

*These developments will entail unpredictable consequences for Europe, but they will also be of decisive importance to Africa. Those who seek to force this failure of a system on South Africa, should engage in a total revision of their point of view. It should be clear to all that it is not the answer here either.*

*The countries of Southern Africa are faced with a particular challenge: Southern Africa now has an historical opportunity to set aside its conflicts and ideological differences and draw up a joint programme of reconstruction. It should be sufficiently attractive to ensure that the Southern African region obtains adequate investment and loan capital from the industrial countries of the world. Unless the countries of Southern Africa rapidly achieve stability and a common approach to economic development, they will be faced by further decline and ruin.*

*The Government is prepared to enter into discussions with other Southern African countries with the aim of formulating a realistic regional development plan. The Government believes that the former obstacles in the way of a development conference of Southern African states have now been removed.*

*Hostile postures have to be replaced by co-operative ones; confrontation by contact; disengagement by engagement; slogans by deliberate debate.*

*The season of violence is over. The time for reconstruction and reconciliation has arrived.*

*Recently there have, indeed, been unusually positive results in South Africa's contacts and relations with other African states. During my visits to their countries, I was received cordially, both in private and in public, by Presidents Mobutu, Chissano, Houphouet-Boigny and Kaunda. These leaders expressed their sincere concern about the serious economic problems in our part of the world. They agreed that South Africa could and should play a positive part in regional co-operation and development.*

*Our efforts to help bring an end to the domestic conflict situations in Mozambique and Angola have received positive acknowledgement. Similarly, our positive contribution to the independence process in South West Africa has been recognised internationally. South Africa's good faith and reliability as a negotiator made a significant contribution to the success of the events. This, too, was not unnoticed.*

*From our side we have taken note of the support that the international community – ranging from London and Washington to Moscow – gave us for responding with corrective measures when SWAPO illegally and unwisely breached the signed accords with their attempted incursion into Ovamboland on 1 April last year. It is clearly no longer the case that the international community will blindly side with the so-called liberation movements against us in all circumstances, irrespective of merit.*

*This important concrete example of the new international reality makes my government amenable to having the international community be engaged in a supportive role in the coming process of negotiations and transition, because they clearly have means and expertise to contribute that can benefit our nation without defiling our national sovereignty. In this regard, our neighbours in Southern Africa especially, also could and should have an opportunity to assist.*

*It is my hope that the negotiations and transition in South West Africa / Namibia, which by all accounts is going exceptionally well, can serve as validation for the fact that we as Africans are indeed capable of resolving our differences among ourselves, around the negotiation table, despite years of preceding Cold War inspired conflict.*

*I believe that the process now reaching a conclusion in Windhoek will soon show that we can arrive at African solutions for African challenges – all that really was required there, was that the malign impact of the Cold War be removed from the equation.*

*In the spirit of cooperation and of broadening our engagement with the wider world, my government has given the Department of Foreign Affairs instructions to reach out to the Commonwealth to start preparing the way for our re-admission to that family of nations to which we had historically belonged. In the same spirit, our eventual accession to the Organisation of African Unity should also be on the table. The Department of Foreign Affairs has furthermore been instructed to explore with the Secretary-general of the United Nations the many ways in which that body can support the endeavour we are launching today – for example, with funding, expertise, and observers. As regards our regional neighbours, it is evident that they, in particular, are geographically and by common interest in a position to facilitate and even help host in part – especially initially – the negotiation process envisaged.*

*2. HUMAN RIGHTS*

*Some time ago the Government referred the question of the protection of fundamental human rights to the South African Law Commission. In view of the exceptional importance of the subject of human rights to our country and all its people, I wish to ask the Law Commission to accord this task high priority.*

*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.*

*The Government is requesting the Law Commission to undertake two further tasks and report on it. The first task is to assess and recommend which constitutional architype – referring here to models like federation, confederation, consociation and the like – will best ensure that administrative and legislative power in the New South Africa will everywhere be devolved as closely as possible to the people. These options will be evaluated against the broad consensus that already exists in favour of a country that's again to be a unitary state with one nationality, based on universal suffrage and majority rule with strong protection of individual human rights. In the vast expanse and diversity of South Africa, optimally effective governance demands that powers not be needlessly centralised but be exercised at the lowest and thus closest level possible, so as to be maximally in tune with the needs and preferences of the communities being served.*

*The second task will be to investigate which constitutional models best ensure a true and effective separation of powers between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. Should the president as chief executive be directly elected by the voting public? Is our emphasis on individual human rights best served by a system of proportional representation, or by the traditional "first past the post" system of constituencies? Or the system of primaries, tried and tested in the USA? How can a constitution be best configured to facilitate coalition governance, in the event that no single party obtains a majority, whether nationally, provincially or locally?*

*This investigation will not be prescriptive, serving the purpose of helping inform negotiations towards a new constitution.*

*3. THE DEATH PENALTY*

*The death penalty has been the subject of intensive discussion for some time. On April the 27th, 1989, the honourable Minister of Justice indicated that there was merit in suggestions for reform in this area. Since 1988 in fact, my predecessor and I have been taking decisions on reprieves which have led, in proportion, to a drastic decline in executions.*

*It is clear that the abolition or not of the death sentence is a highly sensitive and contentious issue that goes to the heart of the moral and human rights values of the New South Africa that we wish to build. It should therefore be finally decided as part of reaching broad national agreement on a new constitutional dispensation. In the interim,*

*however, Government has decided to suspend, with immediate effect, the execution of any and all death sentences. This decision was reached after the Chief Justice was consulted, and he in turn had consulted the Bench, and after the Government had noted the opinions of academics and other interested parties.*

*4. SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS*

*A changed dispensation implies far more than political and constitutional issues. It cannot be pursued successfully in isolation from problems in other spheres of life which demand practical solutions. Poverty, unemployment, housing shortages, inadequate education and training, illiteracy, health needs, and numerous other problems still stand in the way of progress and prosperity and an improved quality of life for all.*

*The conservation of the physical and human environment is of cardinal importance to the quality of our existence. For this the Government is developing a strategy with the aid of an investigation by the President's Council.*

*All of these challenges are being dealt with urgently and comprehensively. The capability for this has to be created in an economically accountable manner. As said, we have to apply a practical, businesslike rationale, and not an ideological one, to all decisions related to the management of the affairs of our South Africa Incorporated. Consequently, existing socio-economic strategies and aims are undergoing a comprehensive revision.*

*From this will emanate important policy announcements in the socio-economic sphere by the responsible Ministers during the course of this session. We fully comprehend that there is an urgent need for concretely addressing the historic imbalances in the benefits that our citizen shareholders derive from this bountiful land. The historically disadvantaged must be prioritised, now that a significant re-direction of state resources has become possible thanks to the fundamental changes that have occurred in the world and which have significantly lowered the threats we had to face during the Cold War.*

*The State cannot possibly deal alone with all of the social advancement our circumstances demand. The community at large, and especially the private sector, also have a major responsibility towards the welfare of our country and its people. In this regard, we are fortunate to be able to tap into the lessons learnt from the Afrikaners' successful self-upliftment by means of planned programmes of community solidarity, after the devastation wrought by imperial subjugation. This is just one of many areas in which we Afrikaners can be of valuable assistance to our fellow countrymen in a New South Africa.*

*5. THE ECONOMY AND STATE FINANCES*

*A new South Africa is possible only if it is bolstered by a sound and growing economy, with particular emphasis on the creation of employment. With a view to this, the Government has taken thorough cognisance of the advice contained in numerous reports by a variety of advisory bodies. The central message is that South Africa, too, will have to make certain structural changes to its economy, just as its major trading partners had to do a decade or so ago.*

*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. In this process, preference has to be given to allowing the market forces and a sound competitive structure to bring about the necessary adjustments.*

*By means of restricting capital expenditure in parastatal institutions, privatisation, deregulation and curtailing government expenditure, substantial progress has been made already towards reducing the role of the authorities in the economy. We shall persist with this in a well-considered way.*

*This does not mean that the State will forsake its indispensable development role, especially given our particular societal circumstances. On the contrary, it is the precise intention of the Government to concentrate an equitable portion of its capacity on these aims by means of the meticulous determination of priorities based on sound business principles and our desire to promote social justice.*

*The Government is very much aware of the necessity of proper co-ordination and consistent implementation of its economic policy. For this reason, the establishment of the necessary structures and expertise to ensure this co-ordination is being given preference. This applies both to the various functions within the Government and to the interaction between the authorities and the private sector.*

*This is obviously not the occasion for me to deal in greater detail with our total economic strategy or with the recent course of the economy.*

*I shall confine myself to a few specific remarks on one aspect of fiscal policy that has been a source of criticism of the Government for some time, namely State expenditure.*

*In respect of Government expenditure, the budget for the current financial year will be the most accurate in many years. The financial figures will show:*
** that Government expenditure is thoroughly under control;*
** that our normal financing programme has not exerted any significant upward pressure on rates of interest; and*
** that we will close the year with a surplus, even without taking the income from the privatisation of Iscor into account.*

*It is a matter of considerable seriousness to the Government, especially in this particular period of our history, to promote a dynamic economy which will make it possible for increasing numbers of people to be employed and share in rising standards of living.*

*6. NEGOTIATION AND TRANSITION TO A NEW SOUTH AFRICA*

*I wish now to focus the spotlight on what will be the greatest national priority during this and coming years. I am referring to the process of negotiation and transition to a fundamentally new, non-racial South Africa.*

*At this stage I am going to deliberately refrain from discussing the individual merits of any of the numerous political questions which undoubtedly will be debated during the next few weeks. The focus, now, has to fall on negotiation.*

*Practically every leader agrees that negotiation is the key to reconciliation, peace, and a new and just constitutional dispensation. However, numerous excuses for refusing to take part, are made. Some of the reasons being advanced are valid. Others are merely part of a political chess game. And while the game of chess proceeds, valuable time is being lost. I wish to urge every political and community leader, in and outside Parliament, to approach the new opportunities which are being created, constructively. There is no time left for advancing all manner of new conditions that will delay the negotiating process.*

*Against this background I committed the Government during my inauguration to giving active attention to the most important obstacles in the way of negotiation. The time has come to do that, and to lay the foundations for fully inclusive, legally mandated negotiations that will enable all South Africans of good will to engage together in a fully representative national dialogue over an open agenda exploring all proffered options, with a view to arriving at a sufficient consensus on what the binding principles should be that need to be incorporated in a new constitution.*

*To understand the main legislative programme that I am about to outline for this session, I need to share with you the background to the negotiations that have already taken place. I also need to share how my government sees the transition to a New South Africa unfold, without however being prescriptive about the detail of the process, which will have to be jointly agreed by the participating parties.*

*When looking at modern experience of successful negotiations, there are certain principles underpinning best practice that are discernible. These include the reality that there cannot be a "one size fits all" approach to negotiation, such as with one rigid mould enforced across all phases, all topics, and in relation to all participating entities. Interaction must therefore be tailored to each specific circumstance, without advantaging unduly any parties in the process of doing so.*

*What had emerged in negotiation theory over recent decades is the value of so-called Track-Two or Backchannel negotiations conducted bilaterally and in confidentiality, to reach early agreement on process and principles. Such negotiations also facilitate and speed up the adoption of key provisions by the other component of the overall negotiations, which is a multiparty forum convening in public session to mandate the final position on any given issue by means of a mustering of sufficient consensus.*

*As a practical example of such so-called "Backchannel" preparatory or exploratory talks, members will be aware, from information provided by my predecessor, that he has met with Mr. Nelson Mandela. That meeting was an adjunct to an intensive series of almost four dozen confidential meetings held over a period of more than a year between Mr Mandela and a group of four top government officials, which were held at Mr Mandela's villa on the premises of the Drakenstein agricultural penitentiary in the Paarl/Franschhoek Valley. These meetings had as goal to ascertain Mr Mandela's willingness to participate in the envisaged peaceful negotiations for a democratic, non-racial New South Africa and to canvas whether broad consensus can likely be found with him about the how and what of such negotiations.*

*I am pleased to be able to inform that it was reported to me that Mr Mandela was indeed favourably disposed to participation by himself and his movement in peaceful negotiations. This report I could confirmed for myself when I also recently met with Mr Mandela at my office in Tuynhuys.*

*You will furthermore be aware that the National Party has been meeting regularly with the Inkatha Freedom Party and other similar South African entities. I am pleased to say that the vast majority of the statutorily recognised South African political parties are eagerly anticipating the start of such constructive, peaceful, and democratic negotiations for a non-racial New South Africa.*

*It is only realistic to anticipate that confidential Track-Two negotiations will continue through bilateral backchannels, as it is the proven most effective manner in which to address difficult issues without being hampered by soap-box political posturing that may result from public gatherings in front of the enticing eye of the television cameras. These confidential bilateral meetings will not serve to hide anything from the public or media, because clearly the final binding decisions reflecting a sufficient consensus will be taken by multilateral forums meeting in public.*

*Apart from already having ascertained the willingness of Mr Mandela to participate in peaceful negotiations, it was evidently also necessary to confirm that the external wing of the SACP/ANC alliance was indeed similarly inclined. You will be pleased to hear that this was recently confirmed first-hand, through such Track-Two talks held confidentially in a secret location in Europe between top government officials and senior members of those movements.*

*There is understandably much still to clarify and consider about the functioning of the multi-party negotiating forum which will eventually need to mandate the binding fundamental principles upon which a new constitution should be based, after the necessary preparatory bilateral negotiations have given shape and substance to a viable set of proposals. However, it is an evident truth that our challenges involve much more than just a new constitution regulating political life. It will therefore be important to set up an array of parallel multi-lateral forums also with regard to socio-economic matters and cultural and community life, to feed inputs developed there into the process of broad-based constitutional modernisation.*

*Therefore, it is vitally important that not only political parties prepare themselves to participate in the broader negotiation process. The organised private sector, as well as cultural and religious organisations, academics, representative community bodies and organised civil society clearly also have valuable contributions to make. Particularly also with regard to one of the most urgent of all our priorities, namely that of arriving at a National Peace Accord and setting up a broad-based National Peace Committee to oversee its implementation.*

*How can such a negotiated transition potentially be phased? Any transition to a new non-racial constitutional dispensation must, as a matter of legal necessity and principle, be based on the concept of state continuity. This*

*principle will ensure that the state will, for example, continue to meet its pe-existing financial obligations and international engagements after the transition to a New South Africa.*

*Based on the state continuity principle, it will of course fall to this current parliament to adopt the necessary transitional constitution that will legally enable the holding of the country's first non-racial elections. Phase One of the transition will thus be the negotiations dedicated to arriving at a new non-racial constitution that will be aimed at enabling such elections based inclusively on universal suffrage in which all parties can take part, peacefully and democratically on a level playing field. As has happened in our neighbouring states, the conclusion of a Peace Accord and passing of the interim constitution will then ring in Phase Two of the transition, which will be an agreed period of free electioneering for the election of the new parliament which will, sitting as constituent assembly, debate and adopt the final constitution incorporating those pre-agreed principles, subject to an envisaged new constitutional court certifying the compliance of the new constitution with those universal principles of individual human rights.*

*In that very democratic, non-racial and inclusive manner, South Africa's broad electorate will therefore have the fullest opportunity to themselves give their mandate to the new constitution, through the members they elected to the non-racial successor to this current parliament.*

*The exact procedural details regarding the manner of conducting the process of negotiations will, of course, not be dictated by government but need themselves to be negotiated expeditiously with all concerned.*

*I therefore do not wish to speculate here about the exact where, when, and how of the envisaged bilateral and multilateral forums meeting, apart from stating that my Government – through the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning – will naturally render all possible assistance to ensure that the necessary infrastructure and funding is provided, and to facilitate in all manner required that these meetings can expeditiously and successfully commence to be held, whether inside South Africa or in our neighbouring capitals.*

*It stands to reason that, till a binding Peace Accord is reached with accompanying indemnities, there may be South Africans currently abroad who will fear that they may have legal reason to avoid returning home to participate in talks. It is also true that the momentous changes that we will be negotiating for South Africa, will be of great consequence for our neighbours, our region, and our continent. My Government will, accordingly, welcome it if one or more of the BLS countries will be positively disposed to making available suitable venues where the initial phases of such multilateral and bilateral meetings can be securely held, till the circumstances have been negotiated and are in place for all South Africans to be comfortable to meet on South African soil.*

*These neighbouring countries are within very easy reach for South Africa-based delegates, and I am sure that currently self-exiled South Africans will feel themselves sufficiently secure in, for example, Gaborone, Mbabane, and Maseru. Especially since I am giving, here and now, a solemn guarantee that the Security Forces will absolutely respect the negotiation process as well as the sovereign territory of these bordering states.*

*As said earlier, the Government as government will limit itself to facilitating the constitutional process, so as not to tilt the playing field in favour of any party. It will be the National Party as party that will engage in the negotiations on a new constitution, together with other parties and political entities. The only part of the substantive negotiations that the Government as government will of necessity be directly involved with, is the negotiation of a Peace Accord between the State and the non-state actors who have declared themselves to be "at war" with the South African state.*

*It is self-evident that reaching such a peace accord is an urgent necessity, because it cannot be realistically envisaged that the proverbial "last lap" period of democratic, peaceful electioneering for the country's first non-racial elections can safely be allowed to commence until and unless such an accord is in place in a guaranteed and enforceable manner.*

*My government will therefore continue to prioritise the reaching of such a binding peace accord involving the relevant non-state actors, through the outreach channels that have already been established with them. More than that, though, it will be necessary to establish, as part of such a Peace Accord, a National Peace Framework at all community levels throughout the country – an endeavour for which the participation of our churches, business and community leaders, as well as neutral observers sent by the likes of the United Nations Security Council, for example, will clearly be both important and valuable.*

*It is parliamentary tradition that the head of state, at the opening of a new parliamentary session, outlines the programme of legislative and executive actions that his government will be pursuing that year. Let me now proceed to list the key legislative actions that we envisage.*

- *The passing of an Act of Parliament Abolishing all forms of Racial Discrimination – in other words, of formally doing away with all remaining vestiges of what had become known as Apartheid. Among the measures to be repealed in this act on the abolition of racial discrimination will, for example, be the existing legislation on separate amenities.*
- *An enabling act on a National Peace Accord and Peace Framework, which for example will empower my government to consider and extend pardons as well as indemnities, both criminal and civil, to South Africans identified as necessary participants in bona fide negotiation teams but who are currently incarcerated for crimes committed in the furthering of their political objectives.*
- *Passing an omnibus enabling act, to be called the "Enabling Act on a Negotiated Transition to a non-racial, democratic, and unitary New South Africa based upon Universal Suffrage and Majority Rule with Constitutional Protection of Individual and Property Rights in a State of Laws" or, "The Transition Emabling Act" for short. This legislation will encapsulate a firm promise, a legal trigger, that if agreement is reached with sufficient consensus on a new, non-racial constitution, then this parliament and this government shall be automatically and legally bound to implement it. As regards practicalities, it will for example mandate the expenditure by the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning on the facilitation of the negotiation process, as well as give formal recognition to the negotiation forums and processes to be established. This envisaged Transition Enabling Act will also contain necessary law amendment provisions aimed at establishing a level political playing field. This Act should, furthermore, make it a criminal offence for any member of the Civil Service, including the security forces and/or the intelligence community to abuse his or her office by attempting to exert political influence on the negotiation process or on any participant therein. Most importantly, and this bears repeating, it will legally bind this parliament and government to fully and faithfully implement any and all accords duly agreed by the negotiation forums to be set up in terms of this enabling act.*

*Among the executive steps that have been decided, are the following:*

- *The establishment of a standing judicial commission of enquiry into political violence, to be headed by a judge to be appointed by me after broad consultation, with the remit to investigate all incidents of alleged politically-inspired violence of whichever origin – thus including the investigation of allegations of state-sponsored violence suspected of having been committed by members of the security forces and/or intelligence community, as well as by members and/or supporters of one political party or movement against members and supporters of another such movement or party.*
- *The establishment of an independent, expert commission of enquiry to review all covert operations currently being conducted by any organ of state so as to ensure that none of these in any way can serve to unduly influence the negotiation process and/or the political allegiance and perceptions of South Africans around politics.*

*These two measures are motivated by the reality that the failed "armed struggle" waged by the SACP/ANC alliance has always been, first and foremost, armed propaganda. This is clearly stated in their own doctrine, and it can be safely assumed that they will, as seasoned politicians, continue to wage a relentless propaganda campaign during the negotiation and transition phase. It thus behoves us to ensure that this propaganda machine is not inadvertently fed by misguided actions on the part of anyone associated with the state. Furthermore, it needs to be ensured that the true facts about any alleged incidents are rapidly and credibly established with legal impartiality, and that such reliable information be shared with the public.*

*In this regard, the South African Police and the Department of Foreign Affairs have been instructed to explore with countries that share our law enforcement values and heritage, such as for example the United Kingdom, the possibility of experienced police officers of theirs being seconded to the SAP's Inspectorate division as observers. As the envisaged engagement with civil society regarding support for a National Peace Initiative gets formalised, the same principle of nominating observers can then be extended locally by invitation to our churches and the like.*

*The following list of measures, taken by me in terms of existing executive powers, have become possible due to the earlier-mentioned fundamental changes brought about by the end of the Cold War. These measures are motivated by my government's earnest desire to ensure that South Africans of all political persuasions can participate in the peaceful negotiations we envisage:*

- *The African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress and the South African Communist Party is being given legal standing as recognised political parties for the purpose of participating equally in the negotiations being envisaged, and will for that same reason each be allowed to establish a head office inside South Africa to facilitate contact.*
- *The prohibition on membership of the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress, the South African Communist Party and a number of subsidiary organisations is being rescinded, except for their armed wings such as MK, which will also be unbanned once a Peace Accord has been signed and guaranteed.*
- *People serving prison sentences merely because they were members of one of these organisations or because they committed another offence which was merely an offence because a prohibition on membership of one of the organisations was in force, will be identified and released. Prisoners who have been sentenced for other offences such as murder, terrorism or arson are not benefitted by this.*
- *The media emergency regulations as well as the education emergency regulations are being abolished in their entirety.*
- *The security emergency regulations will be amended to still make provision for effective control over visual material pertaining to scenes of violent unrest – as distinct from peaceful, legitimate protest.*
- *The restrictions in terms of the emergency regulations on 33 organisations are being rescinded. The organisations include the following:*

  *National Education Crisis Committee*
  *South African National Students Congress*
  *United Democratic Front*
  *Cosatu*
  *Die Blanke Bevrydingsbeweging van Suid-Afrika.*
- *The conditions imposed in terms of the security emergency regulations on 374 people on their release, are being rescinded and the regulations which provide for such conditions are being abolished.*
- *The period of detention in terms of the security emergency regulations will be limited henceforth to six months. Detainees also acquire the right to legal representation and a medical practitioner of their own choosing.*

*These decisions by the Cabinet are in accordance with the Government's declared intention to systematically facilitate the negotiation process in South Africa without jeopardising the maintenance of the good order, and to start preparing the levelling of the playing field for the eventual period of electioneering that is logically to come, after a national accord on the new constitution's content has been signed and guaranteed. These changes I've just announced were preceded by thorough and unanimous advice by a group of officials which included members of the security community. Implementation will be immediate and, where necessary, notices will appear in the Government Gazette from tomorrow.*

*The most important facets of the advice the Government received in this connection; are the following:*

- *The events in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, to which I have referred already, weaken the capability of organisations which were previously supported strongly from those quarters.*
- *The prohibition on individual membership, which is now being lifted, because of the very public abject failure of the ideologies concerned means that membership of these organisations no longer entail the same degree of threat to internal security which initially necessitated the imposition of the prohibition.*

- *There have been important shifts of emphasis in the statements and points of view of the most important of the individuals and organisations concerned, which indicate a new approach and a preference for peaceful solutions.*
- *The South African Police is convinced that it is able, in the present circumstances, to combat violence and other crimes perpetrated also by members of these organisations and to bring offenders to justice without the aid of prohibitions on organisations.*

*About one matter there should be no doubt. The lifting of the prohibition on individual membership of the said organisations does not signify in the least the approval or condonation of terrorism or crimes of violence and political intimidation committed under their banner or which may be perpetrated in the future. These measures are taken to permit normal, peaceful, democratic political participation in the envisaged negotiations by individuals of all persuasions, as a contest of ideas, not of force. For that reason, all censorship measures banning publications of those organisations and ideologies such as communism, are also revoked.*

*As regards the current legal constraints on those organisations to organise and mobilise as political parties, the litmus test will be that such movements must comport themselves as peaceful, democratic political parties. Once they have definitively suspended their use of violence and fully committed themselves to the democratic process by joining the negotiations and signing up to the envisaged National Peace Accord, converting themselves thereby into normal democratic political parties conducting themselves peacefully, from such moment on those organisations as such will then be allowed to freely organise and engage in political mobilisation on the ground, inside and across the country. Till then, they are legally recognised as participants in the negotiation process, but because they – by their own words and deeds – cannot yet be equated with normal peaceful democratic political parties, their right to organise and mobilise inside the country of necessity must remain limited in order to ensure fair competition with other, bona fide political parties. By the time that we as a nation arrive at the Second Phase, namely that of the formal period of electioneering preceding the first non-racial elections, all use of violence must have visibly and durably ceased so that all prohibitions on mobilising and organising can and will then be lifted.*

*We are not imposing a condition that these organisations must first abandon entirely their attachment to the concept of armed struggle. We understand that they will, like us, first want to see that the negotiation and transition process come to full fruition, irrevocably, before they permanently abandon what they regard as their fall-back position. Just as there can be no question of us now simply disbanding the state's security forces. What we do suggest, however, is that all sides now officially SUSPEND the use of violent means of conducting politics, in order to give peaceful negotiation the chance that it deserves.*

*The destiny of the ANC, PAC, and SACP is therefore now squarely in their own hands – choose to become normal, genuine democratic political parties, or continue their failed posturing with guns in search of an already disproven "strong man" image. In choosing, they have to keep in mind that – if they persist in choosing weapons over a democratic, peaceful contest of ideas – then they will inevitably weaken the moderate centre that's willing to accommodate the just political aspirations which they claim to want to represent. Then, as logical counterpoint, there will be a natural tendency among voters towards answering one extreme by empowering the opposite extreme – a right-wing extreme that we all know will be more than willing and capable to answer in kind, any continued violence from the left…*

*I wish to emphasise again that the maintenance of law and order dare not and will not be allowed to be jeopardised. Not from any quarter. The Government will not forsake its duty in this connection. Violence from whichever source, will be fought with all available might. Peaceful protest may not become the springboard for lawlessness, violence and intimidation. No democratic country can tolerate that.*

*Strong emphasis will be placed on even more effective law enforcement. Proper provision of manpower and means for the police and all who are involved with the enforcement of the law, will be ensured. In fact, the budget for the coming financial year will already begin to give effect to this.*

*I wish to thank the members of our security forces and related services for the dedicated service they have rendered to the Republic of South Africa. Their dedication now makes reform in a stable climate possible.*

*On the state of emergency, I have been advised that an emergency situation, which justifies these special measures which have been retained, still exists. There is still conflict which is manifesting itself mainly in Natal, but as a consequence of the country-wide political power struggle. In addition, there are indications that radicals are still trying to disrupt the possibilities of negotiations by means of mass violence. In this regard, it is noticeable that the political violence increasingly being perpetrated is nowadays not so much against the so-called white state but is mostly occurring among our black population as the political contest for future electoral support is heating up. I am determined that our statutory forces shall be seen by all of our population as the indispensable neutral guarantors of peaceful negotiations, of a stable and orderly transition, and of free and fair elections. However, as the saying goes: it takes two to tango. The government cannot guarantee a peaceful environment if the sides to the growing black-on-black conflict do not abandon violence as deliberate tactical means of intimidation and elimination of opponents.*

*It is my intention to terminate the state of emergency completely as soon as circumstances justify it and I request the co-operation of everybody towards this end. Those responsible for unrest and conflict have to bear the blame for the continuing state of emergency. In the meantime, the state of emergency is inhibiting only those who use chaos and disorder as political instruments. Otherwise, the rules of the game under the state of emergency are the same for everybody.*

*Against this background the Government is convinced that the decisions I have announced are justified from the security point of view. However, these decisions are also justified from a political point of view as well.*

*Our country and all its people have been embroiled in conflict, tension and violent struggle for decades. It is time for us to break out of the cycle of violence and break through to peace and reconciliation. The silent majority is yearning for this. The youth deserve it.*

*With the steps the Government has taken it has proven its good faith and the table is laid for responsible leaders to take their seats and begin talking about a new dispensation, to reach an understanding by way of dialogue and discussion.*

*The agenda is open and the overall aims to which we are aspiring should be acceptable to all reasonable South Africans.*

*Among other things, those aims include a new, democratic constitution; universal franchise; no domination; equality before an independent judiciary; the protection of minorities through the strong, judiciable protection of individual rights; freedom of religion and of association; a sound economy based on proven economic principles as well as private enterprise and private property rights; dynamic programmes directed at better education, health services, housing and social conditions for all.*

*South Africans may rightly ask: what will the core proposals be that the National Party will be making to the negotiation process that we are initiating today? As leader of the NP, I believe that it is in the vital interest of all South Africans that our new constitutional dispensation not be modelled on the Marxist "people's republics" that we've seen disastrously fail around the world, including right on our doorstep. Neither should the new dispensation merely be so-called "Apartheid Light". It should not entrench what divide us, but rather protect that which we all have in common, namely our inalienable rights as universally recognised in international law.*

*What we will be proposing is the world's greatest proven success model, namely Western-style democracy within a free-market economic system. A system in which property rights are guaranteed, as well as the fundamental human rights of the individual. A "regstaat", a state of laws, meaning that the constitution is supreme and is applied by an independent judiciary.*

*Given the reality of our very diverse population composition, some will ask about so-called group rights. Some will even be asking for an own "*volkstaat*" – a separate geographic entity accorded to a specific perceived group. Others will favour power sharing, with minorities accorded some form of veto power over the will of the majority. These longings may be understandable, but we have to be honest – in practice they have proven not to be workable, despite the best efforts of my predecessors. The history of the Tricameral Parliament has undeniably shown that clever formulistic approaches fail to gain popular legitimacy and are in fact incendiary. Destiny has dictated that our country has evolved into an integrated economic whole, with the bulk of the population now geographically concentrated as dictated by economic opportunity, no longer in terms of historic roots.*

*Stating this obvious reality of the practical unworkability of basing a new constitution on the notion of "group rights" does not mean that one ignores the reality of diversity or the need to protect groups, especially minorities. After all, this concept is part of international law, in the form of Article 27 of the UN's* ***International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966.*** *Such protection remains so important that we are bound to approach it with practical efficiency, without emotional distraction. And the truth is that the best practical protection for group interests lies precisely in maximum protection of the fundamental human rights of the individual. First and foremost, by means of the individual's right of freedom of association with any one or any group of his or her choosing.*

*Truth is that we as individuals are never part of just one group. We may speak a given language and thus be part of that linguistic group, but not all members of that linguistic group will be part of the same church group, for example. The key is individual freedom of choice. If we go straight to the point, with regard to our own cultural and political context: how do we define the "group" most often spoken about, namely the Afrikaner? Do all who speak Afrikaans as mother tongue belong to that group, or just those who also happen to possess a certain level of skin pigmentation? Or should we forget about language and culture, and instead of focussing on Afrikaner define the group that we wish to identify with and protect simply on the basis of skin colour – as being "white"? South Africans? That approach will certainly not satisfy me. Who, after all, speaks "white"?*

*And if we cannot even logically define the basis of the "group" that we wish to have protected by the new constitutional model, how do we expect such protections to work in practice? Given that international law about the protection of minorities will in any case be incorporated into our law by the treaty system?*

*The same applies to a Volkstaat.*

*Our people live spread across the length and breadth of the country. In not a single district are we a majority. If we all have to move into a certain sliver of land – where will that be located? Will that really, truly be in the interest of the vast majority of us who live outside some such designated area? What will it mean for most people's most important investment, namely their house? Their jobs? Their church, their kids' school?*

*Is it not the sacred duty of my government and my party to look beyond nice-sounding theory at practical reality, at the real fundamental interests of the vast majority of our constituents as individual human beings, and promote the system that will most efficiently protect their biggest personal investment, their careers and their community roots wherever that happens to be located across the face of this beautiful land? I, for one, am not willing to forsake my birthright claim to every centimetre of this land. For that reason, my party and I will be negotiating for the guaranteed protection of the individual rights of every one of our constituents, whoever and wherever they may be, leaving it up to them themselves to decide – with their right to freedom of association – which groups they want to associate themselves with, and with their right to freedom of movement, to decide where they wish to live.*

*Of course, we will negotiate for maximum protection for each of the languages that forms part of our country's rich heritage – a richness precisely due to our diversity.*

*In a nutshell, what we need to negotiate for is a true democracy with guaranteed individual human rights within a state of laws and with a free market economy. That is the best way of guaranteeing through peaceful negotiation our real underlying interests, which are the restoration of peace in our land, the rehabilitation of our image, and the guaranteed protection of our individual and property rights.*

*That said, it is evident that Mr Nelson Mandela could play an important part in the search for a peaceful, negotiated transition to a non-racial New South Africa. The Government has noted that he has declared himself to be willing to make a constructive contribution to the peaceful political process in South Africa.*

*I wish to put it plainly that the Government has taken a firm decision to very shortly release Mr Mandela, and will do so unconditionally. This will happen as soon as the necessary logistics are in place, plus measures to ensure his safety – all of which he is being consulted about.*

*Many will ask: why am I doing this? I know full well that Mr Mandela is an exceptionally capable politician and a leader of particular stature. I am using my power of pardon precisely because of the qualities that he possesses – the simple truth is that this country, at this time, and in the process we are embarking upon, needs all of the men like him that we can bring together around the negotiation table.*

*I cannot on my own, merely through presidential dictate, ensure the success of what we all must appreciate is a once in a lifetime opportunity to now endow our country with what it needs for a just and peaceful shared future. My government and I will evidently need capable partners from across the spectrum. I am, therefore, not merely ordering the prison door to be opened for Mr Mandela. I am also offering my hand in patriotic cooperation – to him and to all South African leaders who share a longing for a non-racial, peaceful, prosperous, democratic New South Africa achieved through negotiation.*

*The National Party and the African National Congress are the two oldest surviving political movements in South Africa. They have survived this long, probably due to the fact that both are nationalist at heart – which most South African patriots of all stripes also are. To my mind, the time has come for Afrikaner nationalism and black nationalism to take hands and march into the future together as South African nationalists, patriots all.*

*A few years ago already, the honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs – my colleague Mr Pik Botha – had stated in this house his willingness to serve under a black president. I want to make clear that, when we have the new non-racial constitution based on universal suffrage that I envisage and if then the elections subsequently held there-under democratically produce an elected president of whichever skin colour, then of course I myself – and I believe all the members here present of the party that I lead – will be willing to serve under such a democratically elected new head of state, no matter his or her skin colour.*

*Having placed that commitment on the record, no-one must be blind to reality. We will be embarking on a highly fraught endeavour. The whole world seems to be anticipating a bloodbath in South Africa, as if national reconciliation and a peaceful transition to the kind of system I have sketched is an impossible dream. Which assumption they base on the violence we have lately seen in our country, and on examples elsewhere – similar seemingly interactable and endless conflict over whose land it is, that we have seen play out in so many other former colonial situations, such as in the case of Israel and the Palestinians. Many in South Africa may be bothered by the same thoughts. It would be utterly naïve to try and deny this possibility.*

*Nevertheless, this is precisely the kind of circumstance in which leaders are called upon to boldly lead, rather than to merely follow. This is not the time for me to seek the political convenience and risk-avoidance of allowing myself to be led by the lowest common denominator. I am perfectly aware of the risks – as we all should be. If we cannot expeditiously conclude the negotiations, then all of us who had supported this essential, yet risky endeavour will no doubt lose all credibility and also lose political power.*

*Which will result in hard-liners then facing off against each other, with no chance for progress for many years to come.*

*The hand I offer here today, therefore represents a unique opportunity – made possible as if by Destiny, due to the remarkable, unexpected changes that we have recently seen in the world, as well as to the fact that our Republic could persist, standing strong, whilst our main adversary, international communism, is in disarray and thoroughly discredited as ideology, for all the world to see. This unique opportunity that I'm offering should be*

*seized and utilised to the full, because in a volatile world, those who hesitate to now engage with us may find themselves faced by a different reality. My Government and I are deeply committed to making this work. My Government and the resources it has at its disposal, are in truth the only plausible custodians of such a process. The world and our fellow South Africans should not underestimate the importance of having the competent and committed National Party Government behind the levers of power at this critical juncture, willing and able to facilitate this transition from the centre.*

*Let there be no doubt – in the rapidly-changing world that we live in the current political power configuration in and around our country could very suddenly change. Unpredictable so-called black swan events can occur, especially when many on both ends of the political spectrum still rely on guns to acquire or influence political power. The risks of failure are indeed great, which is why only the National Party Government with its experience and means, occupying the moderate middle, and through even-handedly stabilising and facilitating the negotiations and transition, can make this process work. The risks emanating from the radical extremes of the spectrum will only rise further, if we do not now, all together, make rapid, visible and credible progress with the negotiations.*

*If the hope which I believe that this initiative will bring to all patriotic South Africans of good faith, is extinguished due to political bloody-mindedness and lack of cooperation on the part of key actors, locally and abroad, then our beloved country may well descend into a no-holds-barred existential conflict for survival between equally radical extremes.*

*The very bloodbath that so many fear.*

*If real progress is not expeditiously made, then many will, with reason, believe that the hand which I offer here today is being deliberately slapped away. Such foot-dragging will be seen by many as confirmation that those lurking on the ends of the spectrum still prefer to shoot it out rather than settle. To try and take power by means of violent revolution.*

*My government is determined to hold the centre. Anyone who thinks of challenging us instead of taking the hand we offer must think twice. We are descended from a people who had resisted the mighty British Empire so skilfully and tenaciously that London in the end had to sit down and negotiate and grant the Boers at the Peace of Vereeniging the political victory they had held out for. We, their descendants, with the same tenacity and skill, had successfully resisted everything that that international communism had thrown at us. We now possess a resilient, self-sufficient economy, an indigenous armaments industry, and weaponry much more fearsome than at any time during the last century. Possessing as well, the combat experience gained through having successfully resisted the Cold War onslaught.*

*There is a choice to be made: take the open hand that we extend – or force us, by your intransigence, into making it into the fearsome fist it is equally capable of being.*

*The keys to the Union Buildings will not be plucked from our hands by force. It will only change hands by means of legitimate transfer, on peacefully negotiated terms. Undermining my government by means of continued international punitive measures and propagandistic vilification will only serve to weaken the moderate, competent centre so indispensable to stability. It will only thrust the country into chaos where those on the right and left of us, hard men not disposed to peaceful compromise, will do battle over whose land this is, instead of negotiating how to share it justly. Only my government with the state's disciplined statutory Security Forces can avoid that kind of mayhem and ensure an orderly transition to a negotiated new dispensation.*

*If that kind of cataclysmic conflict is what the world and the so-called liberation movements still want, despite all that I've announced today, then all who aspire to someday hold the keys to the Union Buildings will have to prepare for a very, very long wait. Likely not ever, because then – without peace and a negotiated new constitution – we will have no choice but to resist any power grab, as we've successfully resisted the British and Soviet Empires. With very many dying futilely in the process, and this country's wealth permanently destroyed – as well as that of all who have invested in it from abroad, or who depend upon it, regionally. Resulting in refugee streams counting*

*in the millions. With the entire Southern Africa destabilised and unpredictable leaders potentially gaining control over weapons of mass destruction…*

*All that for nothing, really. Because – in the radically new circumstances brought about by the fundamental changes we have recently seen in the world – my government is now on record as being prepared to peacefully and democratically hand over those keys. That is, of course, if we should lose such non-racial elections. Our only condition – one which is supported by al peace-loving South Africans, I believe – is that we first sit down and talk, so that we can arrive, together, at an exemplary new constitution. One that will simultaneously give the majority a dispensation that we all recognise to be fair, just, and typical of best democratic practice, but which will also guarantee the rights of the individual and protect minorities through the proven mechanism of a Regstaat, a state of laws. A dispensation in line with proven best practice and endowed with rights that are universally recognised under International Law, as bindingly stipulated in United Nations treaties…*

*I therefore invite my fellow South Africans and leaders from our region and the world who want to see the kind of change to which I have today committed my party and government: take the open hand of peace being offered. Do not slap it away. Recognise that, without the National Party Government facilitating this process and using all means and energy at its disposal to maintain the law and order that such a process will need for it to succeed, the likely alternative would be too ghastly to contemplate.*

*Do not risk that alternative. Do not allow this unique opportunity to slip through your fingers by prevaricating and stalling.*

*As more proof of our good faith and commitment, my predecessor and I have begun releasing some of Mr Mandela's fellow prisoners already some time ago, in order to facilitate negotiations. I give here the assurance that all designated members of core negotiations teams who are currently incarcerated, will be set free so as to be able to participate in talks.*

*These actions I've announced today place everybody in South Africa and the wider world before a concrete new reality. There is no longer any reasonable excuse for the continuation of violence, nor for refusing to negotiate. The time for talking has arrived and whoever still makes excuses does not really wish to talk.*

*Therefore, I repeat my invitation with greater conviction than ever: -*
*Walk through the open door, take your place at the negotiating table together with the National Party and other leaders who have important power bases inside and outside of Parliament. Let us expeditiously reach agreement on the binding principles upon which our new non-racial constitutional dispensation needs to be founded. Let us do so, preferably as patriotic partners rather than as adversaries, setting aside petty politics in the interest of our shared home and asset, our South Africa Incorporated. Once we as leaders have fulfilled our duty to negotiate such a just new democratic dispensation, then it will be the turn of our broad electorate to give it the blessing of their vote, after a suitable period of free and fair electioneering.*

*Henceforth, everybody's political points of view will be tested against their realism, their workability and their fairness. But, we must put first things first – the time for negotiating a peace accord and a non-racial new constitution has now arrived. Today, before the world, I have publicly committed myself, my government, and my party to even-handedly facilitate that process and to respect and implement its outcome.*

*To those political leaders who have always resisted violence I say thank you for your principled stands. This includes all the leaders of parliamentary parties, leaders of important organisations and movements, and all of the other Chief Ministers and urban community leaders.*

*Through their participation and discussion, they have made an important contribution to this moment in which the process of free and inclusive political participation can lead us to a just new dispensation. Their places in the negotiating process are assured.*

*CONCLUSION*

*In my inaugural address I said the following:*

*"All reasonable people in this country – by far the majority – anxiously await a message of hope. It is our responsibility as leaders in all spheres to provide that message realistically, with courage and conviction. If we fail in that, the ensuing chaos, the demise of stability and progress, will for ever be held against us.*

*"History has thrust upon the leadership of this country the tremendous responsibility to turn our country away from its present direction of conflict and confrontation. Only we, the leaders of our peoples, can do it.*

*"The eyes of responsible governments across the world are focused on us. The hopes of millions of South Africans are centred around us. The future of Southern Africa depends on us. We dare not falter or fail."*

*This is where we stand:*
** Deeply under the impression of our responsibility.*
** Humble in the face of the tremendous challenges ahead.*
** Determined to move forward in faith and with conviction.*

*I ask of Parliament to assist me on the road ahead. There is much to be done.*

*I call on the international community to re-evaluate its position and to adopt a positive attitude towards the dynamic evolution which is taking place in South Africa.*

*I pray that the Almighty Lord will guide and sustain us on our course through unchartered waters and will bless your labours and deliberations.*

*Mr Speaker, Members of Parliament.*

*I now declare this Second Session of the Ninth Parliament of the Republic of South Africa to be duly opened.*

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# 12.5 ASSESSMENT

In reflecting upon the alternative strategic approach to initiating the negotiation process (which I illustrated by means of the revised speech offered above), five further aspects need to be assessed in conclusion, to extract full learning value from what occurred:

- Why was the original speech presented as it was, and not the “alternative” way?
- What broader negotiation strategy should the speech have been part of?
- How would the alternative approach likely have played out?
- What form of BATNA would have been strengthened by it?
- Is it realistic to imagine today, that it had been politically and practically feasible back then, to have written the 2 February 1990 speech in the alternative manner that I have illustrated above?

## 12.5.1 WHY WAS THE ORIGINAL SPEECH PRESENTED IN THE FORM THAT IT WAS?

My own analytical assessment about why the speech was presented in the way that it was is of course based on personal opinion, informed by my analytical and academic training, my own knowledge of the workings of the then public service and the dysfunctional decision-making system, and after having considered the circumstantial evidence available in the memoirs of those directly involved at the time. Because no-where that I could find, did FW de Klerk explicitly state his reasons.

My first conclusion is that De Klerk had started out from the assumption that what he's faced with, is crafting his first "opening of parliament" speech. This opportunity he wanted to use (coming exactly one year after he assumed the leadership of the NP) to make as big a media impact as possible in order to seize the political initiative and start rehabilitating the image of himself, his party and government, as well as his people. To my mind, he did not at the time sufficiently factor in the extent to which this speech would set the parameters for the negotiating process he was hoping to embark upon, and thus did not consider sufficiently that the speech needed to be more than a public relations coup – it had to form in integral, parameter-setting part of a fully thought-through, comprehensive negotiation strategy.

I further believe that the drafting of the speech was hamstrung by two other constants of our dysfunctional decision-making system: excessive secrecy and groupthink. With De Klerk knowing first-hand how early leaking had contributed to the disaster of PW Botha's 1985 Rubicon speech, he played his cards very close to his chest through-out the drafting process. This had begun as a personal thinking-through exercise after the D'Nyala "*bosberaad*" of early December 1989, with the actual drafting starting in earnest in January 1990. He only finalised the last revision at midnight, hours before the actual speech (whereupon he had phoned the UK ambassador to tell him to convey to Mrs Thatcher that she will be pleased with what he'll be announcing – showing clearly who his most important target audience was, how much the draft had been his work, how late he had finalised it, essentially on his own). The final text was only shared with his own cabinet on the morning of the 2nd of February 1990, and his own caucus had received no prior briefing at all, nor did his Defence and Police Chiefs.

Part of the motive behind this secrecy was certainly force of habit – the way things used to be done – with the other parts having been fear of leaks that could water down the mediatic impact, and fear of potential negative reaction among some of the more conservative members in his own caucus and cabinet.

The "group think" and "reverence for the leader" causal elements were tied in with the secrecy, in that practically nobody were permitted prior sight of the draft and could thus not offer De Klerk the benefit of critical input. Those in De Klerk's immediate circle, such as his personal assistant Dave Steward, were by training and experience public relations orientated and thus interacted with the drafting process from that perspective. Aspects of the speech, in particular regarding the unbanning of the SACP, were indeed discussed with Security Force and Intel-representatives, but not in the context of how it would fit into a holistic negotiation strategy. De Klerk's insistence that the "politicians" would under his leadership again be in charge of policy formulation (as based on his own distaste for the oversized role that especially the military had played during the PW Botha era) meant that there had been no prior SWOT analysis or scenario gaming. Nor was there due consideration of standard theory on negotiation. The groupthink and leader reverence contributed to no-one alerting De Klerk to the fact that these were egregious oversights that could cost him and his party dearly – as the subsequent history of about-turns and waning leverage was to demonstrate so clearly.

What was evidently not sufficiently appreciated was that the desired secrecy and the cabinet's role (correct as it may have been) as final decision-maker did not imply that expertise available in the security/intel-community, civil service, academia, business, and organised civil society should or could not have been tapped into in the SWOT and gaming phases, without risk of leaks or appropriation of decision-making authority. After all, the experts would have provided data inputs, options and gaming outcomes, refining the knowledge base available to the cabinet, who then could have made their choices among the options – but then at least with proper situational and theoretical awareness, not just based on their politicians' instincts.

In my view the baby was thrown out with the bath water when cabinet's decision-making role was reasserted in such manner, as if that needed to preclude proper canvassing of inputs – especially given that the Rubicon "leak" was not a secrecy breech but a deliberate effort by Pik Botha to pre-emptively "spin" PW Botha into a corner, which then disastrously backfired; similarly, the gripe against PW's securocrats was not that they provided data input, but that they in effect had usurped the traditional prerogatives of cabinet to actually determine policy.

As regards FW's fear of alienating his own base, he had needed to not look back at what and who that base was, but forward to which base he had to appeal to in future, once the transition was under way – and address them. It

became a notable characteristic of FW's leadership style that he seldom involved his caucus in key decisions (for example, his decision to call the 1992 referendum without consulting them), and his cabinet was more a vehicle with which to try and keep different tendencies within his party on board through affording them portfolios and making them co-responsible, rather than there having been a practice of meaningful prior consultation – see the history of how the pivotal RoU came to be approved by him, literally overnight, as an example.

Given all of these factors at play in the "inner circle" drafting environment, it is therefore clear that the crucial strategic decisions reflected in the original speech – its emphasis on "normalising" the country as effectively a prerequisite for talks, and opting for multiparty negotiations in the open instead of bilateral talks held confidentially – had not been subjected to proper prior analysis and game-testing at all. With hindsight, the reasons for these oversights are also clear: excessive secrecy, group think, leader reverence, legacy of the PW Botha era, ignorance of standard negotiation theory, and FW's personal inclination to take it upon himself to forge ahead with little consultation lest his initiatives get bogged down in intra-party squabbles – in short, a continuation of a thoroughly dysfunctional national decision-making system…

### 12.5.2 WHAT BROADER NEGOTIATION STRATEGY SHOULD THE SPEECH HAVE BEEN PART OF?

What had marked the reaction of his cabinet and caucus to FW's speech was a palpable sense of relief that the promised "quantum leap" away from the no-hope quagmire in which the NP and the country had so visibly become stuck under PW Botha, had at last been made. What seemed at that moment to have mattered most, was how far that jump had been (in terms of putting as much distance between the party and its self-made past as possible). With not much, if any, attention to the optimal direction of the jump, nor whether it had, in the overall context of achieving the ultimate goal, the jump had in fact been long enough to have actually reached the opposite cliff edge, in terms of accepting the politically inevitable…

This initial "sugar high" was understandable, given the many years of Nürnberg threats, vilification, isolation, punitive measures, and increasing self-doubt and anxiety.

It was undoubtedly necessary for De Klerk to announce his commitment to inclusively negotiating over an "open agenda" an entirely new constitutional dispensation, and to publicly foreswear his party's past raced-based policies in favour of non-racialism and equal universal suffrage for all in a unitary state. However, it clearly was not optimal to announce such bold steps in what amounted to merely a once-off "big bang" media event without a planned and prepared series of substantive follow-through acts, ready to go (i.e., not just releasing Mandela the weekend after). Acts demonstrating implementation, that had needed to have been aimed particularly at maintaining momentum long-term, as well as at engaging and involving his own broad base and the country at large in the process. Most particularly, the speech had needed to have been part of such a properly planned, comprehensive strategy that had been well thought-through using all available expertise, properly analysed and scenario gamed, so that the speech would have been the strategic plan's seamlessly integrated launching part.

The foregoing implies that there had needed to have been much, much more of a "before, as well as an after" to the context of which the original 2 February 1990 speech had had to be a part.

It is evident that under De Klerk the New Nats had gained the upper hand in the party. What they saw as essential, was to abandon the "shoot" option that had reigned supreme under PW Botha and the military, in favour of "settle" – to negotiate. In this they were clearly and incontestably correct. Urgently so.

However, simply opting for negotiating was not in itself sufficient as strategy. Having decided to turn to negotiation, the key questions that needed urgent answering were "HOW" and "FOR WHAT OUTCOME". Which answers, it should have been clear, could only be derived from extensive analysis of the SWOT type so that you are thoroughly situationally aware of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Then the broadest possible range of options should have been generated through brainstorming uninhibited by groupthink. Which options then needed to have been subjected to rigorous testing and refining by means of assessment against the basic principles of negotiation theory and through realistic scenario gaming, before the politicians made their final choice regarding the configuration of the strategy that they rightly had the final say over.

This could indeed have been done – in an intensive, structured, systematic, and task-targeted manner, over the nearly six months between De Klerk having been sworn in as acting president in August 1989 and delivering the speech on 2 February 1990. Without diminishing De Klerk's prerogatives as regards the final choice of words or compromising the secrecy of the final text.

What was being contemplated was, after all, the engineering of the most fundamental shift in the regional political power equation since the landing of Jan van Riebeeck in 1652. Embarking on a course of action of truly existential significance – not only for De Klerk's government and party but for the country and all its peoples. Did this not require taking those pivotal political decisions based upon the best possible data analysis, with maximal situational awareness and the likely future evolution foreseen as best as humanly possible? Could occasionally meeting in committees and a weekend "bosberaad" conceivably have sufficed – or was an "all hands on deck", dedicated and structured process of strategy development logically essential?

The NP Government had had at its disposal the Afrikaner Broederbond (which had been looking at negotiation as likely way forward for half a decade already) as a kind of in-house think-tank, if it didn't want to entrust such a process to the state's security/intel-community. Not that I ever was a fan of the AB, but why were they (and the expertise from the non-governmental side which they undoubtedly could have mustered) so deliberately kept out of the preparatory investigations? Why had well-disposed business, academia, and the churches been so totally sidelined?

The entire history of Apartheid, promoted and guided by a succession of NP politicians, had been one of unrealistic wishful thinking and lack of fortitude to take decisions that those politicians (such as John Vorster and PW Botha) knew were unavoidably necessary, choosing rather to crucify the messengers, such as Hendrik van den Bergh and Eschel Rhoodie. And let us be frank – over the years the political leadership pool had in general become steadily less competent and less truly brave (as distinct from bravado). In retrospect, it is puzzling that FW de Klerk entrusted the crucial first years of the existentially important negotiation process to his cabinet (of course he had seen them as more situationally aware than the military-led securocrats with their "total onslaught" dogma had been, but that was like rejecting the blind in favour of the one-eyed. Meanwhile, in the intelligence community proper (especially the NIS and DFA), Civil Service (Treasury, Justice, Constitutional Development and Planning), organised business, academia, and organised civil society there had been very many with both eyes wide open, who could have expertly advised…).

What was the result, in terms of the NP's internal political dynamics? (i.e., as distinct from the serious consequences in terms of the less-than-ideal outcomes that starting off on the wrong foot had significantly contributed to, having trapped the NP Government in policy positions and procedural formats which led to one U-turn after the other, resulting in severe loss of time, leverage and credibility). FW de Klerk became isolated within his party and cabinet when it came to decision-making. He alone was left to shoulder responsibility every time push came to shove. His top party leadership was of no great assistance, as De Klerk himself bemoaned in his autobiography.

Hernus Kriel (the Cape NP leader) never was heart and soul into the negotiation project, as his own later writings demonstrated. Pik Botha (who succeeded Barend du Plessis as Transvaal NP leader) was not seen by FW as a safe pair of hands and accordingly wasn't much involved with the negotiation process. The Free State NP leader, Kobie Coetsee, was enmeshed in his own mysterious machinations, looking out for the proverbial #1. Barend du Plessis and Gerrit Viljoen had soon enough dropped out for health reasons. Officials who were closely involved with the negotiation process and could observe the NP cabinet ministers from close up, would later opine that Gerrit Viljoen (as minister of Constitutional Development and Planning and thus the NP's supposed lead negotiator up to early 1992 when he resigned) had been completely out of his depth.

The memoirs of De Klerk himself, as well as those of key observers such as Niël Barnard, Maritz Spaarwater, and adv Jan Heunis (who all had been closely involved with the NP Government's negotiation machinery, therefore with excellent vantage points from which to observe it in action and possessing as well the academic background to be able to assess its functionality) are revealing, when analysing the negotiation/transition process scientifically.

One is left with an overall impression of a poorly thought-through, unstructured, haphazard effort that in the end had more of firstly a "try your luck" approach regarding the policy positions initially adopted, and then – regarding procedure and process – a "fire brigade" character (trying to put out blazes as they flamed up), rather than that of a situationally aware, data-informed, realistically planned and structured coherent guiding strategy in place from day one…

### 12.5.3 WHAT A "THEORETICALLY CORRECT" PLANNING PROCESS TO UNDERPIN ANY NEGOTIATION STRATEGY MUST CONSIST OF

Once the NP Government had taken the decision that it wished to settle South Africa's internal conflict by means of inclusive negotiation, what became urgent was to devise a functional and properly structured process designed to comprehensively inform cabinet about the data, considerations, and options that they needed to be mindful of when deciding upon a negotiation strategy. In order to limit the conformist, group-think dynamic typically associated with committees and their natural tendency towards compromise (especially so within the broad civil service, and particularly when charged with coming up with a single solution supposedly representative of their "best" combined thinking) the function of informing the cabinet in preparation for the ministers taking the strategic decisions that would guide the existentially important negotiations should have been spread among a variety of task teams, all working on a clearly-defined set of essential tasks.

Such teams should have purposefully been constituted from not only the ranks of public service officialdom, but well beyond – involving the expertise of business, academia, and organised civil society, and deliberately also tapping into known contrarian thinking. These teams should then have had as agenda the tasks that I will list below, to be tackled in phases that logically build towards a complete picture regarding considerations and options that cabinet should consider in configuring the final, comprehensive guiding strategy.

Approaching the challenge of ensuring adequate preparation in this structured manner would inherently have guaranteed two of De Klerk's stated needs: that cabinet be the final decision-maker, and that the eventual text of his speech be incapable of leaking. In this manner the speech would still have remained his, for him to draft, but just fully informed and situationally sensitised. Because there would have been multiple teams, tasked with making input regarding strategy and not a speech, no-one but De Klerk would have been privy to his final text (which, incidentally, was the problem with PW' Rubicon effort – also no real preparation in order first to clarify the strategic situation and positions to be taken in that regard, with inputs that in 1985 had been requested for PW's speech to the Natal NP congress, rather than for defining a strategy of which the speech logically needed to form part).

Note that this teams/tasks approach is the exact antithesis to the PW Botha era NSMS (the National Security Management System, which had served principally to coercively "manage" the state bureaucracy into marching in lockstep along a line dictated by the "total onslaught" believers). FW de Klerk had rightly understood that the NSMS as system was fundamentally incapable of generating the kind of input that he and his cabinet required for formulating a negotiation strategy.

To illustrate this teams/tasks approach that I and others whom I have consulted (with experience of strategic decision-making) believe should and actually could in practice have been followed, let's look first at a hypothetical array of such teams, before we identify the tasks. (What must be kept in mind is the difference between the State's need for a strategy with which to facilitate, logistically maintain, and secure an environment conducive for such negotiations to succeed, and the National Party's separate need as participating political party to define appropriate policy positions – my focus here will be on the former, though clearly the one set of needs will impact the other, since the NP cabinet simultaneously did form the State's executive, as well as the leadership core of the NP as party; this confounding of roles was particularly significant in South Africa's somewhat peculiar case, where up to that point the state had been equated with white interests and faced the additional challenge of non-state forces seeing themselves as literally at war with the statutory forces).

The first thing that needs to be stressed when identifying potential teams, is that each and every one needed to be given the same tasks, with the same broad holistic scope of addressing all angles – in other words, not one team to look only at the business dimension, another at only the security considerations, and yet another at

possible constitutional models. All required the same remit, with emphasis on the same freedom to think originally, critically, and comprehensively – thus tasked with covering the entire spectrum of negotiation-relevant determinants, bringing into play their particular expertise and experience.

Most of the teams would clearly have depended for their funding on the State, and would therefore nominally have functioned under the auspices of some or other government department. This would also have permitted classifying their deliberations and product under the Official Secrets Act. One exception would have been the Broederbond (AB), due to its independent resources and stance; given the close ties between cabinet members and members of the AB leadership, Prof De Lange could obviously easily have been requested by FW de Klerk to form such an independent, multi-disciplinary team of its members from outside the civil service, to deal with the same tasks – I am in retrospect quite sure that the AB would have jumped at the chance – they had, after all, been looking at a negotiated settlement for half a decade, and were later to complain bitterly about their enforced exclusion.

In terms of teams functioning under the auspices and with logistical support of government departments (but not limited to civil servants as members), one could easily imagine a repeat of the 1987 "*Skrik vir Niks*" exercise of the "civilian" departments, coordinated by Constitutional Development and Planning.

The expertise residing in academia and civil society could have been tapped into via the HSRC (Human Sciences Research Council – in the same discreet manner as I've earlier indicated the intelligence community had done with regard to the negotiation process in SWA/Namibia at the end of the seventies).

Insights from the business sector could have been mobilised via a task team supported by the departments of Finance, Economic Affairs, and Trade and Industry. (In other words, participants from outside the civil service would be selected and invited to participate, not nominated by an external entity such as the Sakekamer)

The KIK (Coordinating Intelligence Committee – chaired and facilitated by the NIS) could easily have brought together an expert team from the components of the intelligence community. The NIS could furthermore have been tasked with confidentially bringing together (from the ranks of its covert contacts, using a suitable front to provide them with the necessary cover for their absences) a team of trusted patriotic but free-thinking contrarian experts from academia, media, the churches, and business to provide a balancing viewpoint.

All of these teams could have been constituted and set to work simultaneously, already in the early Southern spring of 1989. As with any exercise requiring intellectual rigour and scientific method, their first task should have been to establish a theoretically sound conceptual frame of reference for their endeavours.

Let's look now at the tasks that could have been assigned to these teams:

- what do you regard as the basic principles of generally accepted negotiation theory that should be kept in mind in the formulation of the Government's strategy regarding the negotiation process?
- Upon analysis of the environment within which negotiations are to take place and the likely evolution thereof, what are the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of which the Government should be situationally aware when formulating a comprehensive, long-term negotiation strategy?
- What are the outcomes that the Government can realistically hope to achieve via negotiations?
- What are realistic fall-back positions (BATNA's) that the Government should look to develop, in order to strengthen its leverage at the negotiation table?
- What procedural format for conducting the negotiations would be most conducive to beneficial outcomes?
- What should be anticipated as the likely ANC/SACP strategy for the negotiations and with the aim to win political power, in terms of the minimum outcomes they will seek, the leverage they will employ, and the most important threats and opportunities that they will perceive from their viewpoint?
- By means of free-thinking brainstorming, generate and list as many potential strategic options across the spectrum, describing the pros and cons of each.

- Game the different strategies that the cabinet wants tested, and report comprehensively thereupon, listing pros, cons, and likely ANC/SACP countermoves.

As said, addressing these tasks needed to be phased. Firstly, identifying the basic principles that would underpin a theoretically sound conceptual framework. Secondly, the analytical (SWOT) phase could and should have been completed by end November 1989, to inform the D'Nyala bosberaad of early December that year.

The third phase, that of generating strategy options and aggregating these should have been finished by the first week of January 1990, with the fourth phase of the gaming sessions to test and refine these options conducted the week thereafter – for example, by bringing together expert groups selected form the participating teams, each then constituted into opposing "blue" and "red" teams tasked with "playing" the government and ANC roles. These intensive gaming sessions could have been held under KIK/NIS auspices at secure facilities such as D'Nyala, Jakkalsbessie, and the NIS's island facility in the Vaal Dam.

The fifth and last phase should have been De Klerk and his drafting team putting their pre-delivery draft of the speech a week or so before 2 February to a team of top-level experts drawn from senior cabinet ranks as well as from across the preparatory process and representing knowledgeability on the international dimension, security, finance and economics, as well as on the ANC/SACP's thinking, so that this "sounding board" team could provide feed-back on how the draft is likely to be received, what counter-moves it is likely to generate, and how any identified weaknesses in the draft can be addressed and its strengths maximised. Such critical analysis and feedback would have allowed final fine-tuning, especially if it had been done intensively in secluded "bosberaad" style, in an inter-active brainstorming and scenario gaming format.

It stands to reason that, at the beginning of such a comprehensive process of preparation, the government agencies such as the NIS, DCDP, SADF, the DFA and those forming the finance and economics cluster would likely first have conducted full in-house versions of the entire exercise within their own departments as a means of informing their own representatives on the combined teams. This in-house brainstorming would thus have formed the broad base of the phased, pyramid-shaped aggregation process.

It is logical that there would have been at the end of every phase a central aggregation team (drawn from the analytical branch of the NIS, DCDP, DFA, and the finance/economics cluster) that would collect and collate the inputs from the different teams into a digestible format, but under clear instruction not to omit any input, nor to modify any – just a factual report in compendium form to be submitted to cabinet. Ideally, this should then have caused cabinet to ask for any elucidations or additions they required, so as to make the process truly interactive with a built-in feedback loop.

The process of aggregation of inputs across the phases would therefore have been pyramidal, and would not have reached the cabinet from each team separately, as a jumble of mostly repetitive inputs.

By defining tasks and setting up different teams, the cabinet's prerogative to make final choices and the confidentiality of the exact options chosen for inclusion in the final text of the 2 February 1990 speech would not have been compromised, no matter how many individuals had participated in the process (after all, by that stage it was no secret any more that the NP Government had committed itself to finding a negotiated solution to the country's challenges). By looking correctly at the challenge as one of broad strategy formulation – rather than merely the traditional "making inputs to a presidential speech" – the fiasco of PW's 1985 Rubicon speech could have been avoided.

In truth, such an approach of first defining strategy, and then drafting the speech to fit within the context of that strategic framework was the only way through which the many negatives (besides the many more positives) that flowed from FW's actual 2 February speech could have been anticipated and likely avoided.

A recurring contributing factor that severely limited the necessary broad-based strategic preparation that should have preceded the 2 February speech was undeniably our overblown attachment to secrecy. This undoubtedly

militated against following the participatory approach outlined above, both psychologically and in terms of ingrained institutional practice. Because this fixation on secrecy (together with the apparent lack of knowledge of negotiation theory and of Behaviouralist tools for strategy refinement?) prevented proper prior analysis and scenario gaming, and inhibited tapping into the broadest possible spectrum of inputs. Done correctly, FW de Klerk could still have maintained secrecy about the exact final content and choices for media impact purposes – the real problem was that, in preparing his speech, he didn't first avail himself of the broadest possible spectrum of inputs and gaming before finalising his approach, strategic goals, substantive content and the procedure that the negotiations he proposed ideally should have followed.

The points made here don't serve to suggest that De Klerk wrote his speech entirely on his own, without any consultation. You may well remember from the earlier timeline that he indeed had asked his security chiefs for their views on the sensitive issue of unbanning the SACP simultaneous with that of the ANC. However, that happened in a typical Civil Service interdepartmental committee setting with the drafting of his speech as context – thus, nothing like the structured task force approach focused on informing the development of a comprehensive negotiation strategy that I've been alluding to. In any event, De Klerk was looking for political cover in relation to his own base with regard to the one issue that he most feared could have negative repercussions for him among white voters, namely the handling of the SACP. He had engaged with his security chiefs principally in order to be able to say in his speech that he had indeed consulted them and that they were in agreement with his intended announcements – as he then pointedly did in his speech.

What I'm suggesting isn't therefore that there had been no consultation at all; the point is that what there had been had had the wrong focus – eliciting inputs to an annual speech, instead of developing a comprehensive strategy – so that, as strategy development process, it had lacked the correct goal focus, whilst also lacking a sound foundation in relevant theory, and well as behaviouralist understanding of the appropriate procedural structure – which, taken together, meant that as strategy formulation effort it had consequently entirely lacked functionality.

That said, it would also be totally wrong to ascribe the problems that subsequently flowed from the original 2 February speech exclusively to the lack of sufficient prior preparation and strategic contextualisation. Many problems quickly arose in the period after the speech because of the lack immediate as well as sustained follow-through to maintain momentum (again, because the need for this had not been anticipated with sufficient clarity, and thus substantive actions had not been pro-actively readied with which to retain and exploit the political initiative that had temporarily been captured). I will now briefly discuss these post-speech omissions.

It had rightly been foreseen by Niël Barnard that, had Mr Mandela been released simultaneous with the speech, then the release would have dominated the media with De Klerk's important other announcements in such case receiving scant coverage. For that reason, the release was delayed by a week. However, the fact that the world-wide media attention given to Mandela's release was correctly anticipated should have sensitised the NP Government to the need to have follow-up actions planned and ready so as not to cede the front pages entirely to Mr Mandela over the coming weeks and months. Apart from that, if the speech had been correctly understood as being part of a strategy and not just a once-off mediatic "big bang", and if the NP Government had wished to effectively type-cast the ANC/SACP as just "one party among many", then it had been necessary to launch the multi-faceted settlement and peace process immediately – especially regarding the National Peace Accord, the Business Forum and the like (and not wait for more than a year for private individuals to begin driving these critical aspects of the overall transition).

Furthermore, the NP Government should have embarked on an extensive internal outreach to its own constituency, to the South African public in general, and institutionally (through having a legislative programme ready to table) to explain its strategy and obtain broad engagement with the process. This likely could best have been done through a series of weekend "*bosberade*" with stakeholder groups, to make them part of the broader national initiative and to get forums such as those on business and peace off the ground asap. Key groups to target for such intensive engagement and briefing at leadership level (for example, in a first round over the weekend that immediately followed Friday the 2nd of February) would have been NP-friendly business, media, academia, civil society – the likes of the AB, FAK, the Afrikaans churches, followed over the course of the next

week by the civil service, including the security forces, leaders of statutory institutions such as the homelands and the "Coloured" and Indian chambers of parliament. A second round of *bosberade* could then have been held the next week-end with leading figures in business, churches, media, and civil society not necessarily part of the NP's usual Afrikaner-based constituency.

In short, the metal had needed to have been forged while still hot, and before Mr Mandela's coming release completely hogged the headlines. Such exclusive gatherings at leadership level could and should have been pre-arranged across the country for key stakeholder and influencer groups to hear firsthand where the NP Government wished to lead the country, and such was the climate of expectation that such invitations would have been eagerly snapped up – it could have helped greatly to foster enthusiasm, concretise the government's commitment in these leaders' minds, stimulate participation and thus exerted pressure on the ANC/SACP to itself get speedily engaged with and committed to the negotiation process.

Similarly, one of the first things that had needed to have been done was to engage with the international community (via extensive briefings to resident ambassadors, with special sessions with the USA & UK) to fully acquaint them with the Government's strategy. This was essential in order to provide them and their governments with a context in which to understand the speech. Otherwise the speech risked remaining just a speech (as in fact occurred) without these influential governments being briefed firsthand about the strategic considerations that the SA Government saw as paramount and which those governments needed to take into account in terms of their own national interests at stake (especially so, of course, if something akin to my "alternative" draft had in fact been delivered, with its built-in reference to levers such as nuclear bombs and ICBM's, as well as ties with Moscow).

The manner in which the nuclear bomb matter was in fact handled, when eventually done years later, boggles the mind. No strategic use was made of this psychologically omnipotent lever – instead, it was treated by Mr De Klerk as if a hidden family shame. Again, also wrapped in overblown secrecy (given the fact that the Soviets and USA were perfectly aware of the programme, thanks to Dieter Gerhardt's spying).

Making known already at the outset the fact that white South Africa possessed these means (but was in principle ready to disassemble it) could have provided geostrategic leverage in relation to the superpowers. It would also have been psychologically valuable in the public arena – both locally and abroad, impacting the thinking of both friend and foe – by proving that the NP Government's conversion to negotiation was indeed based on strength, with the timing motivated by the intent to seize a unique opportunity (brought about by the disintegration of the Soviet bloc) rather than due to desperation. Evidently any mention of the nuclear and ICBM programmes in the speech would have needed to have been supplemented with expert briefings asap thereafter (ideally before, for the USA and UK, as alluded to in my alternative draft), including the making available of pre-prepared media packs with data and photographic evidence. All of this would have enormously enhanced the desired "Big bang" media impact of the 2 February speech, as well as having strategically enhanced its positive impact on the NP Government's leverage.

At the political level, what had needed to be brought home was the NP Government's total commitment to what the key Western powers regarded as full-blown, "normal" democracy (i.e., without clever tricks tried by PW in 1983 with the Tricameral Parliament constitution). With that commitment roundly and credibly established (as done in the alternative text) because there clearly were suspicions and concerns about the NP's real intent, nurtured by talk of "group rights" and "minority protection", the NP Government then had to make plain that achieving that ideal of a full "normal" democracy would <u>need to be defended</u> against radical demands or even attempted armed interventions from the extremes on the hard left and right.

What in reality constituted the NP Government's strongest leverage and therefore had to be stressed was the white government's absolutely vital role as peacekeeper holding the "moderate middle" and statutorily possessing the only real physical means with which to keep the extremes in check, especially on the white right. Stressing that it was therefore necessary for influential governments to exert pressure on the likes of the ANC to speedily engage with the process – because otherwise, without progress, the political window of opportunity could rapidly close, and the negotiation-willing New Nats may lose power to the very much unwilling conservative Afrikaner

right... Furthermore, stressing that a strategic “patriotic partnership” between the two principal protagonists was essential, because the ANC in truth needed the NP as much as the NP needed the ANC.

These countries therefore had to be convinced to convey the message (which their intelligence services could have confirmed for them – as evidenced by the CIA assessments quoted earlier) that the white-governed South African state wasn’t at the point of collapse and could likely resist an armed take-over attempt by the Left indefinitely by means of its formidable security forces, as well as survive stringent punitive measures – especially if economic cooperation should bloom between it and countries like the USSR and Turkey.

Equally important was that the (moderate) Left be made to understand that the opportunity for an acceptable negotiated settlement was – for the moment, under De Klerk – truly there for the taking, and that it was precisely those security forces that constituted the Left’s only concrete guarantee of protection against the one force that could overturn the apple cart, namely the white hard right (which the ANC/SACP themselves had no plausible means of countering on their own).

In other words, a message which the NIS for example had understood already a number of years earlier: white South Africa needed a moderate ANC government under Mandela as the only political force that conceivably could peacefully govern a united, non-racial New South Africa, whilst that same ANC needed the New Nat Government’s forces to enable the transition to that new dispensation and to protect it against a right-wing coup and/or secession. Thus, requiring a strategic partnership based on patriotism, if not policy convergence – no matter what had gone before, nor what differences on vision and policy remained.

With the USA and UK especially, it was time to put the cards on the table, eye-to-eye at a venue like Jakkalsbessie, and make clear what the NP Government needed from them (in terms of them prevailing upon the ANC/SACP to join the process) as *quid-pro-quo* for us being, in turn, considerate of their national interests.

Thinking back, ask yourself this: what exactly had happened, of any real substance, for months on end after De Klerk’s speech? Mandela was released and from that moment on dominated the headlines, with the NP Government scurrying to “normalise” – so that the ANC/SACP would pretty please deign to attend, together with them, symbolic photo-ops such as the Groote Schuur meeting – but in reality just pushing the bar across which the government had to jump ever higher, and lambasting the NP ever more strongly for any perceived failure in normalcy…

Yes, somewhat of a “big bang” was indeed achieved on 2 February 1990, but then the universe did not expand apace. There was not enough that had been pre-planned and ready to go, to sustain the momentum and put pressure on the ANC/SACP so as to convince them to not do that which they were logically inclined to: namely, to stall in order to strengthen their organisation, dissipate the NP’s initiative and momentum, and build their own leverage...

A last point to consider with regard to the manner in which the 2 February 1990 speech was packaged and presented, relates to distinguishing between policy and procedure. In Afrikaner history the emphasis has, almost always, been on being elaborate about preferred policy positions (the “WHAT” that we wished to achieve) with often scant attention to procedure and means (the “HOW” that actually determines whether the wished-for outcomes can be achieved in practice, in the real world).

To illustrate: Since the NP wanted the ANC to be reduced to “just another political party” the answer was not the multiparty negotiations trick, it was to avoid them having time and a free run inside the country (still as an armed liberation movement) to implement their Green Book “people’s war” strategy with virtual impunity. Proper scenario gaming is the only way with which to correctly anticipate likely countermoves. (The lesson: don’t try and play chess just based on your own goals and objectives, as if your opponent doesn’t have a mind and options of his own).

In order to amplify this exercise aimed at illustrating that, theoretically, there had indeed existed real alternatives to the self-harming way in which the NP Government had initially chosen to initiate negotiations, I need to answer

a logical question: If something akin to this alternative approach had been adopted at the start, then how would it likely have played out?

Assuming, therefore, that the theory-based task force approach with its SWOT analysis and scenario gaming of generated options had been followed and my alternative speech had actually been given, what could have happened? What this alternative speech (and the overall strategy it launched) in principle would have avoided, was the need for the Government – over the space of 30 months of critical time egregiously wasted – to have learnt the hard way, running face-first into successive brick walls of reality, things that could have been anticipated through a proper system of strategy formulation.

What such a theoretically sound, systematic, and comprehensive strategy would likely have resulted in, would have been that the NIS-initiated talks between the NP Government and ANC/SACP (at a minimum, the crucial confidential bilateral ones), would not have been interrupted, gaining enhanced status but being in effect a continuation based on the consensus already reached between Mandela and Barnard's team during their in-prison talks, and in the dialogue between the NIS and external ANC/SACP in Switzerland. In other words: confidential bilateral negotiations between the ANC/SACP and the NP Government in the context of a limited strategic partnership instead of adversarially – exactly in the form of the "Channel Bilateral" talks that eventually came into being in the latter half of 1992. This would have meant that it would have been much more difficult for the ANC/SACP to stall, probably leaving more than sufficient time at the end to finalise important constitutional issues such as a directly elected president (as the Namibian constitution has – which probably would have avoided Zuma ever becoming president).

Setting up such confidential bilateral talks to continue in Gaborone would have been practical, logistically. Arranging for the symbolic, publicly platformed multilateral talks to kick off asap in Swaziland would also have been very doable in practical terms – the ANC/SACP would have found it very hard to refuse participation. By staging the negotiations just across the border the NP Government would, crucially, have been able to avoid the trap of immediate "normalisation" (working towards that goal for the second phase of actual electioneering and making it contingent on a functioning peace accord being in place). Because, by having the talks take place in Gaborone and Mbabane, the only need would have been to free those incarcerated ANC/SACP members who were officially designated as actual talks participants.

A strategic cooperation approach from the start, with acceptance by the NP of the inevitability of majority rule within a unitary state, would have created a totally different atmosphere than what in fact resulted from De Klerk's adversarial stance; there would have been every likelihood of successfully finalising the general amnesty that the ANC/SACP in fact had at the start offered (at the talks at the Old Presidency in Pretoria). The climate would also have been much more conducive for compromises to be reached on devolution of government to the lowest level, plus a proper separation of powers between the executive, legislature, and judiciary – especially if the NP had sought American support for the new constitution to emulate the characteristics of the USA constitution.

Evidently, the chances of having a GNU of some durability and functionality would have been considerably strengthened if the negotiation/transition process had kicked off on the conciliatory basis of a strategic "patriotic partnership" rather than on the typical Westminster parliamentary basis of institutionalised opposition and confrontation, which De Klerk had persisted in favouring till his retirement.

On the NP Government's own side of the fence, the broad-based process of strategy formulation which I've outlined would also have led to much broader engagement and buy-in on the part of the public service, security forces, and civil society. All that the initial "go it alone" attitude of the NP politicians achieved, was in fact to leave them all alone in the end – no allies, considerable loss of confidence among their traditional base, and soured interpersonal relations with what in reality constituted their BATNA: their security forces.

If a properly structured, systematic approach had been followed, then the large number of useless cabinet ministers would have been sidelined from the negotiation process much earlier on, limiting their ability to do

damage (De Klerk could then have continued to simply keep them at the feeding trough for the sake of keeping them inside the proverbial tent, pissing out, rather than risk pushing them outside and have them then pissing in).

By going adversarial against the ANC/SACP, the NP Government and De Klerk in particular, in practice confronted the outside world with an unavoidable need to "pick a side" (which would not have been the case if a strategic partnership had been built). Of course, considering their own long-term interests, the world powers opted to support the ANC's positions. One should also assess, before making someone your adversary, whether you can indeed best that opponent – was De Klerk, squaring up with Mandela, really capable of doing that?

So, why were things not done the proper way?

The unavoidable conclusion is that it was due to the abysmal dysfunction in national strategic decision-making that had marked successive NP Governments. With focus on form rather than function. Enforced group think. Unfamiliar with theory on policy formulation as well as negotiation strategy. The appointment of, and then listening only to *gatkruipers*. Consequently, hearing what you wanted to hear, not what you needed to hear. Overdone secrecy and exclusion of civilian input. Not taking on the leader when he is clearly wrong. The leader excommunicating the messenger when he doesn't find the message convenient. Less than stellar politicians nevertheless believing they know it all…

In the end, it wasn't a lack of fortitude on the part of Roelf Meyer and his "2nd half" team that led to the outcome we are all familiar with. They in fact saved the process, in the nick of time.

The real problem was the dysfunction in decision-making during the initial phase, so that the process under De Klerk had kicked off on the wrong track, necessitating one U-turn after the other. Which then resulted in the ruination of the NP Government's credibility and leverage…

Again, the 2 February speech as delivered demonstrated a well-established Afrikaner characteristic: we have often been tactically very good on the day of battle, winning short-term gain, but we have mostly been very, very weak on effective long-term strategy with which in the end to win the wars that mattered…

### 12.5.4 WHAT TYPE OF BATNA COULD THE ALTERNATIVE PROCESS AND SPEECH HAVE STRENGTHENED?

Turning back now to standard negotiating theory and its lessons, one should remember that William Ury defined the whole goal with, and reason for negotiating as "ending up better off than before".

We all know what the NP Government's situation was in 1989, when FW de Klerk took over as leader: vilified; ostracised; image in the gutter; punished with isolation, sanctions and boycotts; the greater part of the population in open revolt against it; life for everyone unstable and increasingly insecure with ever more pessimistic future prospects; the economy tanking; the albatross of racially discriminatory policies still round its neck; and, a leadership under PW Botha and the "total onslaught" coterie in the military that was hell-bent on preparing to shoot it out – to "go down hard-arsed like a proud people should" – even spending millions on building nuclear and biological weapons of mass destruction and the intercontinental ballistic missile delivery means to go with it…

So, what BATNA (Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement) of substance could and should FW de Klerk have aimed to construct with his 2 February 1990 speech? Keeping in mind that, what a BATNA in essence boils down to, is the ability to go your own way should negotiating an acceptable agreement prove impossible, what he needed in place in order to be able to step back (at least for as long as it took to get everybody constructively on board again) were that:

- His *bona fides* be accepted by the superpowers, who needed to believe that he would, and had truly tried to carry through towards a just new non-racial dispensation in a responsible and reasonable manner.
- The downward spiral in the public image of NP Governments be stopped.

- A broad belief be fostered that he was acting from a position of relative strength, not desperation – that he was in terms of timing exploiting a windfall opportunity (with the fall of the Berlin Wall), rather than being forced into abandoning the policies of his predecessors by irresistibly pressing dire circumstance.
- An understanding be instilled among the superpowers (and his opponents) that the De Klerk government and its capabilities were in fact essential to seeing the democratisation project succeed, because of his willingness to transition plus his government's unique ability to facilitate the process from the moderate middle, committed to doing so in even-handed manner as well as to ensuring the vital stability and security without which there could be no such negotiated transition.
- A belief be instilled that De Klerk was the best partner likely to be produced by white South Africa's political dynamic, meaning that – if his efforts were refused – then resolving the South African dilemma would become much harder, not easier.
- The world and the ANC be confronted by a reality check regarding the actual balance of power, leading them to understand that the NP Government indeed possessed the determination, *nous,* as well as the physical means that made it highly unlikely that the white-led government could be forced from power other than through negotiated agreement.
- An understanding be created on the part of the superpowers that there would be significant cost involved for themselves if this opportunity is passed by and South Africa descends into out-and-out conflict, with leaders far less amenable to compromise than De Klerk then controlling the levers of state power.
- A belief be cultivated among De Klerk's own supporters and moderate South Africans in general that De Klerk knew what he was doing, that he and his team were negotiating from the basis of a cogent, well thought-through strategy with an acceptable outcome in sight, and were not going to be making constant U-turns and concessions under pressure (as, lamentably, in fact then happened) because his government had properly planned to have sensible modern-day solutions readily to hand on key policy issues such as how to accommodate diversity and minority rights (the latter by protecting individual rights, especially freedom of association and property rights, plus physical security, as well as ensuring clear separation of powers and maximum devolution to the lowest levels of governance, following the example of the USA's constitution).
- There was clear indication for all to perceive, that De Klerk had a fail-safe procedural roadmap in place for conducting the negotiation process (ideally pre-agreed with Mandela) that would ensure that he and his government could not continuously be extorted into ever more concessions.

I believe that the strategy outlined in the alternative speech would have led to the above conditions all being met, providing the NP negotiation team with much more leverage than it in actual fact enjoyed and thus would have allowed them to focus on aspects such as separation of powers, devolution, amnesty and all that unfortunately in the end went un-attended in the actual real-world history now being lamented by most all, on both sides.

The strategy outlined in my version of the 2 February 1990 speech would have practically immediately stopped the decades-long slide in the NP Government's international position because it would have decisively begun the rehabilitation of its image. Doing so through outlining a clear commitment to universally accepted democratic gaols that could not be impugned as Apartheid Light. By taking ownership of this new beginning as a self-owned virtuous stance, voluntarily arrived at by a new government with a drastically different vision to that which its predecessors had held. Furthermore, by combining then this commitment to a just new dispensation with an offer of cooperation, to build a strategic patriotic partnership. Whilst all the while underlining the NP Government's indispensable role as holder of the "moderate middle" and as controlling the only force capable of facilitating and protecting the negotiation and transition process, as well as guaranteeing its outcome, plus eventually ensuring the survival of a new government against the threats emanating from the radical ends of the political spectrum. This would have forced a re-appraisal of the NP Government by both the international community and the ANC/SACP (or at least their realist moderate element).

Internally, involving all of the "NP-friendly" elements in civil society, business, academia, the church and the security forces in the foundational analysis, development, and gaming of such a strategic plan, explaining its rationale and objectives, and then doing extensive post-speech briefings and follow-up media events to maintain momentum (as described earlier), would have installed much-needed confidence among De Klerk's own base.

Firstly, that there is at last a real plan with which to turn around the dangerous slide that had marked previous years, and secondly, that this strategy had been thoroughly thought through, meaning that it had a real chance of providing the NP Government with fresh leverage – at least as much as it was realistically possible to achieve under the circumstances. I personally believe that if such an "internally inclusive" road had been followed, with the communication effort extended into proper engagement with the own base, then the security force leadership would have come fully on board and many of the problems that in actual fact surfaced during the transition could have been avoided.

Equally on board would have been the bulk of English-speaking South Africans as well as the "Coloured" and Indian communities, plus many conservative and even moderate Blacks.

The main problem with how things actually went, was that the likes of the AB, influential academics and the security force leadership in particular suspected – through the lack of engagement and communication with them – that there had not been the necessary proper prior planning on the part of De Klerk's team of politicians. The speech as given suggested that De Klerk (still a bit of a novice) and the politicians around him (many of whom who were not highly thought of) had come up with the text reactively, on the fly (as at heart just an "opening of parliament speech" that needed to be boosted into a media happening) but without it being part of a proper strategic plan providing a clear and realistic blueprint for conducting the negotiations that needed to follow. (Remember how I recounted in the earlier timeline how the Chief of the SADF and the Commissioner of Police, sitting side by side in the public gallery of parliament listening to De Klerk's 2 February 1990 speech, had turned to each other in surprise, not having known what was coming).

The strategy formulation methodology and alternative speech text that I have outlined above would (imho) have improved the De Klerk Government's international image even more than the original speech did. It would have projected realism and strength, rather than the speech consisting of a litany of seemingly desperation-driven pleadings for the initiation of peace talks. It would have avoided the reactive style that the original reflected, which, for many, had come across as somewhat desperately seeking to pre-emptively negotiate the terms of surrender of power. Of dearly wishing to convince that "we are actually very nice guys, a totally new team, who have seen the light" instead of projecting an image of rational and reasonable actors who are willing to, from a position of relative strength, exploit a historic window of opportunity to peacefully and realistically negotiate a win-win constitutional compromise whilst standing on internationally-accepted democratic and economic principles (the alternative text being, in any case, based exactly on what De Klerk and his party in fact had accepted less than three years later, when eventually they agreed through the "Channel Bilateral" and signed with the ANC, the RoU of September 1992…).

In geo-strategic terms the alternative approach I've outlined would also have positioned De Klerk's government as the indispensable, trustworthy, moderate middle – the only force capable of managing and protecting the negotiations and transition, as well as protecting the new government to follow. Which would have allowed De Klerk to say: "*Here I am – ready, able and willing to give my all so that we can, within this unique window of opportunity, together peacefully and democratically transition to a non-racial, inclusive, unitary New South Africa based on universal franchise and majority rule. My party and I have definitively and completely broken with the past and now support a constitution as configured as a Western-style democracy, preferably based on the American model, with a free-market system and the protections afforded individual and property rights. This I believe should be entrenched in a State of Laws in which the agreed constitution will be supreme, adjudicated by an independent judiciary.*

*I have my made my choice, for a truly democratic New South Africa of complete non-racial equality and no special privileges for any particular group. Which I fully understand and accept will likely lead to Black majority rule. In fact, I have made peace with the likelihood that it could be you who will take my place in the Union Buildings. I am, therefore, offering all that anyone who puts country above self can reasonably ask of me and my government.*

*Now, please make your choice. You can either choose to talk to me, starting bilaterally and confidentially, thereby taking the hand that I offer, so that we can patriotically cooperate to peacefully achieve this together for the common good.*

*Or you can adversarially choose to stall, oppose, and undermine me. But then you will have to take your chances with whoever you may, as a consequence, end up having to face in my place.*

*In considering your choice, please keep a key reality in mind: without the agreement of my government and the protection of the forces that I command (to protect both the process and you), you will not obtain power. And even beyond the transition, you will not be able to maintain yourself in power (if you ever attain it) against the forces that the radical Right will be able to muster if you do not ensure that we together reach a settlement that will keep the statutory forces on side.*

The BATNA would therefore have been that the strategy outlined above would have permitted De Klerk to – if necessary – hang tougher on the political/constitutional dimension while ramping up the other talks involving business and civil society regarding a peace accord and its infrastructure, as well as an economic forum. The enhanced BATNA would have enabled this, because the image slide was halted and greater realism had been instilled in the superpowers about potential cost vs the opportunity on offer. De Klerk would have been able to hold out and deflect until the ANC/SACP accepted the hand being offered in partnership, without his government having to jump through rings to try and prematurely "normalise" while the ANC/SACP had the run of the country to organise and deploy their "people's war" strategy (he would, for example, have been able to let the law run its course somewhat longer with the Operation Vula operatives, as lesson, before then pardoning them so that key interlocutors such as Mac Maharaj could play the role they actually did in facilitating the eventual settlement).

Better procedures and better employment of the levers of persuasion at his disposal would have ensured much more international pressure on the ANC/SACP to join early. It would also have taxed the internal cohesion of the ANC/SACP due to confronting them with polarising choices (part of the stalling on the ANC's part had been the differing views in the alliance that Mandela had to accommodate, until the "Leipzig" option's failure and Slovo's "sunset clause" intervention had given the moderates the clear upper hand, freeing up Mandela to press ahead). The strategy outlined above would have brought the ANC's "Leipzig vs sunset" internal decision moment forward by many months.

As regards his relationship with the security forces, by having in my model properly engaged with them from the start, De Klerk would have had the security force leadership much more enthusiastically at his side.

## 12.5.5 WAS AN ALTERNATIVE SPEECH AND STRATEGIC APPROACH REALLY POSSIBLE IN EARLY 1990?

As a final reflection, I fully admit that what I have set out above (to illustrate that the essential problem had been dysfunctional decision-making, not individual "treachery" or "weakness") is the product of 20/20 hindsight. One may therefore well ask: is it at all realistic to think that what I've illustrated as a potential alternative, was in the run-up to 2 February 1990 practically possible to foresee? Was it even remotely capable of practical implementation, back then?

After all, one cannot expect of politicians to be clairvoyant…

True as that may be, politicians – precisely because they are not themselves clairvoyant – have access to systems designed to serve as best available "crystal balls" to assist decision-making.

In all of the timelines and evidence that I've presented throughout this eBook, did you see much evidence that our system for national strategic decision-making had ever been truly functional, and that it had been utilised appropriately by the political leadership under De Klerk (or any of his predecessors, for that matter)? Did you see him insisting on proper prior analysis, option generation, and then refinement through scenario gaming – to the extent theoretically required in terms of standard theory on decision-making and negotiation preparation?

The simple answer is: NO

That, despite the fact that De Klerk at the beginning of 1990 had found himself in the most existentially important and determinant moment regarding the exercise of political power since the establishment of white control at the Cape in 1652. A truly lamentable oversight, when faced with complex decisions of which the consequences would last for the foreseeable future, into the very long term…

And yes, I do believe that a proper process of prior analysis of all determinants, followed by the generation of options through brainstorming, and then the weeding-out and refinement by means of gaming would and could have foreseen most everything that I've incorporated in the alternative speech. After all, Mandela and Barnard had already provided the template well before De Klerk announced the flawed procedural framework that he initially opted for, and the NP itself had soon enough (through hard experience) arrived at those same positions that I've included – which belated realisations of reality then forced them into repeated about-turns costing credibility and leverage.

Had the De Klerk cabinet fully mobilised the expertise back then available to it from the ranks of the civil service, intelligence community, private sector, academia and organised civil society, and systematically processed it as indicated by standard theory on strategic decision-making and negotiation preparation, then I firmly believe that my illustrative text above could have been rather close to the actual end product of such a disciplined process. I am quite sure that, had the talent available been properly utilised, theory properly applied, and the overblown instinct towards secrecy been tamed, then practically all that I've come up with would likely have been foreseen and utilised (after all, didn't the NP in any event soon enough come to those self-same positions, after having run head-first into reality?).

Would it have made a difference? Undeniably, yes. But only on the margins – leading to a better version of majority rule in a unitary state. Perhaps the American model (with a directly elected president, governors, and mayors and thus proper separation of powers, citizens entitled to bear arms, states in charge of their own policing, education, health, transport and even having an own national guard reserve); packaging and marketing-appropriate language matters, also in politics – saying you want to implement the American system is likely to get a very different reception, locally and abroad, than saying we want to protect "group rights" through clever legalistic formulae.

However, what difference it could have made would probably not have extended to an entirely different constitutional model, for example including racially defined groups and minority veto's, as some may fancifully still wish to believe had been actually possible...

Because the hard truth is that the die had been cast and the clock had run out long before De Klerk took the reins and then very bravely, with great merit and determination, had stepped away from "shoot" as option, to genuinely embrace "settle".

So important and impactful was this at the time, that I can very well remember how we were all just so immensely relieved and happy that he had actually made that quantum leap, that he had so undeniably put the process in motion, breaking definitively with the stagnation under Vorster and the disturbingly aggressive contrariness under PW Botha, that nobody at the time cared to question how "theoretically-correctly" or not he had come to his stance.

For me, personally (despite what I've illustrated above and the criticisms it imply) President FW de Klerk will always remain a hero for the guts and insight that he had showed. He averted a genuine national disaster which had been in the making for many years – which is not to underplay the role of the other hero who had made it possible, President Nelson Mandela.

The country was indeed blessed by Destiny to have had two such leaders when it mattered most.

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# CHAPTER 13.

# THE POLITICS OF POWER: HOW AND WHY THE NP LOST IT ALL (TO THE POINT OF DISBANDING)

## 13.1 A CONCEPTUAL REFERENCE FRAMEWORK FOR THIS CHAPTER

### 13.1.1 ORIENTATION AND STRUCTURE

*"Is there any other example in world history where a group of people 'willingly negotiated themselves out of power'? I don't know of it."* (Niël Barnard in a post-transition interview with the historian Padraig O'Malley).

While preceding chapters have dealt exhaustively with the historical chronology of the negotiations and the legalistic constitution drafting – in other words, the issues that on the face of things seemed to have logically dominated the transition – this chapter will cut to the real, raw substance of the transition: **the actual driving forces behind the transfer of political power**.

We will analyse the tough, real-world contest for political power that played out in parallel to the formal talks, serving as their essential backdrop and driver. It was the ebb and flow of this parallel contest that established the decisive determinants of the transition, dictating its eventual outcome.

By the "real-world contest for actual political power," I do not mean the formal debates around the Kempton Park negotiation table regarding the different sides' philosophical views about the **normative rules that *should ideally* govern** a non-racial South Africa (i.e., the legalistic arm-wrestling over constitutional syntax). Rather, I refer to the empirically observed, warts and all **actual political behaviour** of the contestants – the tactics, levers, and raw means mobilized by the National Party (NP) government and especially by the ANC/SACP alliance to shape and influence the dynamics of the political "battlefield."

### 13.1.2 THREE MAIN SETS OF DETERMINING FACTORS LED TO THE EVENTUAL OUTCOME

Specifically, this chapter investigates (through a real-world Behaviouralist lens), the three sets of factors that determined the outcome of the contest for political power:

- **Firstly, the broader environmental forces and realities which formed the global and local settings within which South African politics played out** and by which it was impacted. This includes immutable realities such as the ethno-demographic balance, economic integration and globalisation, and fundamentally changed values and mores around the world (with the latter making it a historical inevitability that fundamental change would come also to South Africa, as a consequence of the wave of decolonisation and de-racialisation that had been sweeping the planet after the Second World War).
- **Secondly, the intra-sphere of the mind – meaning the impact of the respective heritages of group acculturation that had formed the mind-sets about, and theoretical understanding of politics and political power.** This had shaped the distinct approaches of the NP and the ANC/SACP to the transition and to he framing of the new constitution**.** Issues that will feature here are the influence exerted by the respective ideological foundations, cultural customs and worldview, plus the experiential learning and academic formation of the two sides, and how these underlying pre-dispositions had influenced their political behaviour.
- **Thirdly, what the parties had done (and – very importantly – failed to do), in preparation for and during the negotiated transition**. Here we will look at how well they had done, firstly, the essential preparatory situational analysis, SWOT-style (expertly assessing, as comprehensively and objectively as possible: **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats). Secondly, how effectively they had – in a creative, lateral-thinking manner through comprehensive and unrestricted brainstorming – generated the entire range of conceivable strategic options available. Thirdly, whether they thoroughly scenario-gamed each of this spectrum of options, in order to arrive at the optimal strategic approach to follow, including

then designing a coherent plan for implementing the chosen approach. Finally, once launched (ideally in accordance with such a pre-strategised plan) how well they executed, as well as were able to responsively adapt to the contingencies that the real world was bound to unexpectedly present in the give-and-take of the contest for political power.

### 13.1.3 A "HEADS UP" ABOUT THE CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS I WILL PRESENT – PLUS, THE LESSONS TO BE LEARNT FOR THE SOUTH AFRICA OF TOMORROW

Having assessed the issues listed above, I will share then share with you my personal conclusions about what lessons should be learned. Therefore, not merely criticising that which actually had been done – or had been neglected to be done – so as to sound like a know-it-all (because it remains true that what had so admirably been achieved against all odds has rightly been described as a miracle, despite the "errors" that we may now identify with the benefit of hindsight). The purpose must be to learn from what had occurred, identifying and understanding the why's and wherefores behind the outcomes, with a view not so much to the past as to today's South Africa and its immediate future – given the likely increasing need for coalition governance and thus negotiated cooperation between parties and interest groups.

One could rightly argue that both sides – the NP Government and the ANC/SACP – had needed those initial 30 months of stalemate that endured till mid-1992, to experience and intellectually absorb reality, only thereafter being humanly able to transition first themselves and their constituents from formerly cherished ideological postures to positions of real-world viability, before they could then, together, embark on the national transition. In other words, that there actually (quite necessarily) occurred **two transitions** – first the respective intra-party policy transformations, and then from mid-1992 onwards the joint national transition. The ANC evidently had internally navigated these formative processes better, with their key leadership on board much earlier with regard to the fundamental realities which they had needed to accept and factor into their strategy on the basis of making a virtue out of necessity – this, despite the advantages that the NP as government initially held. Which is part of the reason why the ANC acquired all power and the NP in the end disbanded itself.

What is needed for understanding, is to extrapolate from the past experience, those future factors that will shape tomorrow, not only in South Africa but in the world at large. Societies the world over will increasingly wrestle with the same problems, and it seems to me that South Africa will most likely once again be used as example of "how not to do things". However, this time not based on pious value judgements but on empirical behaviouralist evidence of the many objective failures that our current constitutional model in practice has caused over the past thirty years, especially in terms of governance (meaning, exercise of power with integrity and efficiency) despite our constitution having been normatively lauded as a "model".

What I have seen emerge in Africa and in Central America, is that common indigenous folk increasingly value the skills, means, and higher levels of integrity that those formed by Western culture tend to be able to contribute to society – in the likes of business, wealth creation, and academia but also in governance and political leadership. That ability to add tangible value for the masses to experience, is the real strength that Afrikaans-speakers and other South Africans of whatever race who share West-European heritage (or have made it their own) should leverage, united and thus free of the race albatross. Doing so in patriotic cooperation with our fellow South Africans of whatever other cultural heritage, by actively engaging with them in an effective relational manner – so as not to be perceived again as threatening and supremacist, nor as adversaries or secessionists, but as a valuable asset, willing and able to promote the common good (this latter aspect will be the theme of Chapter 14, where I will recount what I had personally experienced in West-Central Africa, also in microcosm in Franschhoek, as well as in Central America, as proof that race need not negatively dominate politics and progress).

## 13.2 THE DOMINANT INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL DETERMINANTS THAT SHAPED THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

### 13.2.1 ETHNO-DEMOGRAPHIC NUMBERS AND THE REALITY OF ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Two key realities above all pre-determined the outcome of the South African transition – the population numbers (trending towards ever faster marginalisation of the white minority), and the irreversible integration (and

accordingly interdependence) that the economic heartland manifested. These were immutable realities that the NP Government under De Klerk finally accepted it could neither legislate away nor suppress with the statutory power of the state. For decades, the Apartheid dream was maintained under the illusion that white political will could indefinitely override the laws of demography and economic integration, and that South Africa could somehow be insulated from the consequences of the global evolution of human values away from racism and colonialism. By the dawn of the 1990s, these systemic currents had converged, rendering the preservation of white minority rule a mathematical, economic, and historical impossibility.

**The Cold Calculus of Demography**: The clear ethno-demographic trajectory of the era underscores that it was delusional to continue with long-term white minority survival strategies based upon “clever” racial quota proportionality such as had been tried with the Tricameral Parliament. Because, in truth their numbers were the most fundamental weakness of the whites, which furthermore was trending ever weaker. By 1990, the total population of greater South Africa had reached an estimated 37 million people, but its internal equilibrium had fundamentally shifted from when the Union was formed, and even from when the NP came to power in 1948 on the promise of reversing Black influx into the notional “white” areas. The white population group (which had constituted roughly 20% of the national total in 1946) had steadily shrunk to a mere 13.5% by the start of the negotiations. Conversely, Black Africans comprised approximately 75% to 76% of the population, with Coloured and Asian communities making up the remaining balance.

More critically, the internal momentum of these groups was completely asymmetrical. The Black African population was expanding at a robust 2.8% per annum, driven by a youthful pyramid where a massive portion of the population was under the age of 15. In stark contrast, the white demographic had by then already stagnated to a growth rate of just 0.8% per annum, presenting the classic profile of a rapidly aging, Westernized society.

The white state’s security apparatus would (if “total onslaught” thinking as under PW Botha had been maintained) ever more disproportionally have been that of a shrinking, greying minority attempting to suppress the natural aspirations (supported by the world) of a deeply aggrieved, youthful, and highly urbanized non-white majority with exploding birth rates (today, thirty years on from the transition, whites make up barely 7% of the total population). No counter-insurgency doctrine or constitutional veto could have permanently contained this raw biological arithmetic.

**The Shared Metropolitan Economic interdependency**: This disadvantageous demographic weight did not exist only in isolated rural pockets; it was an integrated reality present inside the vital organs of the South African economy. Apartheid's grand strategic design had sought to achieve a strict race-based geographical partition, imagining a white-governed core ringed by independent black homelands. This ideological ambition collided head-on with the realities of the labour needs generated by South Africa’s then rapidly growing modern free-market system, as it manifested in industry, trade, the services sector, the important labour-intensive mining and agricultural activities, and even in most white homes that relied heavily on non-white domestic labour. By the early 1990s, the heartbeat of the nation’s economy was highly centralized within just a few shared, multi-racial metropolitan areas.

The premier engine of growth and wealth that sustained the white state’s fiscus as well as the nation’s well-being, was the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging (PWV) complex – today’s Gauteng. The PWV region alone produced over 50% of the country’s total net manufacturing and industrial output, while generating (and needing) more than half of its formal employment. When combined with the coastal metropoles of Durban, Port Elizabeth-Uitenhage and the Cape Peninsula, these shared urban spaces contributed by far the bulk of South Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Crucially, these metropolitan engines were structurally indivisible. The highly specialized machinery, basic iron, steel, and financial sectors of the PWV could not survive a single operational day without their integrated non-white workforce. The white-governed politico-economic system had become a hostage to its own success: it required the heavy, concentrated urbanization of non-white labour to function, yet that very urbanisation in practice made the political myth of white geographic sovereignty a real-world impossibility. Corporate South Africa knew what the NP politicians (and those further to the right) had long failed to grasp or wilfully ignored: a siege-style,

minoritarian state could not survive because the keys to its economic and fiscal survival were permanently located in cities that were already fundamentally shared and interdependent.

### 13.2.2 THE DESTINY-DETERMINING FORCE OF WORLD-WIDE SOCIETAL MEGA-TRENDS

Apartheid South Africa's challenges, especially that of race, were not unique. The were emblematic of core challenges that had increasingly begun to also impact Western societies after the 2nd World War – manifesting as a disruptive element in the own internal politics of those countries as well. This was evident in especially the USA, the UK, and Western Europe, where issues of race, immigration, and integration began dominating their internal political discourse (especially after the "Red Threat" fell away at the end of the 1980s). Which meant that, within their own internal politics, South Africa wasn't a distant, irrelevant issue, but one that resonated societally in these countries. So that South Africa became a precursor as well as a lightning conductor, serving to deflect attention away from own internal problems and allowing politicians there, to engage in virtue-signalling in advance of what lay ahead for themselves.

Beyond the key demographic and economic determinants encountered within South Africa's own borders (as mentioned above), the irresistible need for a negotiated transition was, therefore, being swept along by an international transformation of values that made the Apartheid *status quo* completely obsolete, converting it in truth into being, itself, the main threat to the country's stability and prosperity. The post-WWII global landscape was defined by an ongoing wave of decolonization and de-racialization that systematically dismantled European empires across Asia and Africa. By the late 20th century, this historical movement had solidified into a solid, global moral consensus: statutory racial discrimination and minority ethnocracies were no longer viewed as merely "alternative" political systems, but as illegitimate violations of international law, as well as being intolerably offensive to the new values and norms that Westerners (freshly converted from centuries of benefiting from empire, conquest and exploitation) now liked to associate themselves with.

Following the collapse of the Soviet bloc, the Western powers – led by the United States and a unifying Europe – were eager to institutionalise a globalised, liberal-democratic order based on the universal franchise and free-market access. In this new global setting, an isolated, white-ruled republic at the southern tip of the Black continent was a glaring anomaly with potential repercussions within the internal politics of these Western states, as well as in their international relations with Africa and the Third World.

International pressure for South Africa to align with global values, already seriously strong by the end of the 1980s, therefore potentially could go much deeper than threats of isolation, disinvestment, embargoes and trade sanctions. As General Constand Viljoen had recognised, and others in the intelligence community had argued (including myself), far stricter punitive measures, both economic and military – including the deployment of a Balkans-style NATO conventional intervention force – had been a very real threat, had the NP Government chosen to continue to defy and challenge the world's sensibilities. The global change in mores was all-encompassing. It meant that the international community as a body, as well as Western politicians driven by their own internal political considerations, would not and could not, under any circumstances, tolerate a minoritarian political dispensation based on race or ethnic group privileges in South Africa.

This had made the ultimate transition of South Africa (with its highly open, internationally-exposed economy), to a non-racial democracy based on equal universal franchise for all leading to majority rule, **an absolute historical inevitability**. This had been foreshadowed by what had equally inevitably already occurred in Zimbabwe and Namibia (which had left white-ruled South Africa in the untenable position of, by the dawn of the 1990s, being the proverbial "last man standing" in Africa and the world, of formerly colonial race-based minority regimes).

### 13.2.3 THE SANDS OF TIME HAD IRREVERSIBLY RUN OUT, LONG BEFORE 2 FEBRUARY 1990

When FW de Klerk launched his negotiation initiative on 2 February 1990, it had in reality come two decades too late. The "window of opportunity" for the negotiation of a new non-racial constitution that would protect both individual and group rights (as such) in a somewhat balanced manner, had already closed long before.

Simply put, such an idealistic outcome was no longer realistically achievable in the 1990s.

I personally suspect (as a mere gut feel, obviously with no real proof) that, had the NP's "Damascus road conversion" come two decades earlier, and had Premier Vorster at the end of the 1960s launched a non-racial initiative based on voluntary association such as General Van den Bergh back then already had favoured, putting it to a constitutional convention similar to the CODESA talks (but held in the early seventies, not nineties), it may very well then have proven viable. In other words, a **non-racial** dispensation, but one recognising the ethno-cultural plurality of South African society and explicitly protecting group rights as well as individual rights, because these two concepts are not mutually exclusive.

Furthermore, it could then have resulted in a new system with power devolved down to the lowest possible level (much mire so than in the current constitution), but still within one state that recognised the reality of South Africa being a single integrated economic entity. Thus, it could have been an equally "new" South Africa, based on voluntary association and freedom of choice, with a second-level territorial dimension to ethno-cultural (not racial) group rights only where and when historically justified as well as locally democratically mandated, paired with a recognition that the economic heartland is shared territory which needed to be governed as such, non-racially.

Such downwardly devolved powers (linked to a patchwork of group-centred territorial footprints as second-level government within the over-arching single state), could probably back then still have been achieved. It could have taken different, locally attuned forms, as may have been differently appropriate for distinct ethno-cultural groups such as the Zulu, the Afrikaner, and the Xhosa (encompassing a mix across the range of options from urban boroughs to rural districts to larger regional entities such as the Transkei, as an own province). But not based on enforced removals, nor being forced into the absolutist mould of entirely separate, sovereign states, or of losing citizenship of South Africa itself. Footprints big and small, available for all tribes on the basis of every individual's freedom of choice, serving as geographic expression of and safe haven for the fostering of their respective group cultural identities. With the rest of South Africa then recognised as the shared part of the common land and governed accordingly.

Why I believe that the adoption of such an approach was – at the very last – still possible only up to the end of the sixties, is because of the circumstances which then prevailed within South Africa as well as internationally. Inside South Africa the SAP-SB under General van den Bergh had effectively eliminated the ANC/SACP as a political force. Even had the ANC and SACP then been legalised so that they could participate in such a constitutional convention, the ANC had back then not enjoyed general appeal because they were then still very much stuck in their Marxist ways and tactically had not yet come up with the idea of waging a people's war. Mr Mandela was not yet an international martyr-hero, and the West was at that stage (with Vietnam then going badly wrong for the USA) very much in fear of and focused on countering Soviet expansion as immutable core of their foreign policy.

With South Africa's strategic value to the West in the Cold War context then at its height, a non-racial, individual rights plus ethno-cultural group-rights based model such as described above and supported by a majority of local groups (importantly then by Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi, who had at that time favoured precisely such an approach) would quite likely have garnered sufficient international support to overcome in practice, the opposition to it that could be anticipated from the USSR and its allies. Being part of such a broader Western anti-communist alliance (thanks to democratic non-racial legitimacy), an early 1970s New South Africa would then have been in a position to legitimately contain, with its security forces where necessary, any attempt at revolutionary insurrection by a die-hard ANC/SACP or PAC.

What would also have contributed significantly to the chances of success then, was that South Africa's economy at that time was exceptionally strong. White South Africa still had its psychological bubble of invincibility intact around it, and there had not yet been the polarisation and radicalisation that had followed upon the unrest in Soweto in 1976 (which then spread out across most of the metropoles across the country and which, because of being sustained for years, required ever harsher emergency measures to control it, thereby building a poisonous legacy of a deeply polarised and radicalised society). Furthermore, newly independent Black Africa had, back then, offered an important olive branch to the NP Government in the form of the Lusaka Manifesto of 1969, which signalled clearly a willingness to compromise and find unique solutions to South Africa's complex challenges.

These thoughts are, of course, nothing more than hypothetical in nature. Whether it could have worked back then, is also not the real point being made here, either. The essential point being made here, is that political decision-making is very much an issue of **appropriate timing** – whether in the lives of individuals or of governments. One cannot sit around in hope, while the sands of time run out – as the unfortunate Jews of Europe had found out to their cost, when those who had not left in time were overwhelmed by the horrors of the Holocaust.

Truth of the matter is that, by the time FW de Klerk (himself a cabinet minister since Vorster) had come round to accepting the need to settle and actually had started doing something about it, **the sands of time had long run out**. Objectively speaking, it was simply too late then for the NP to aspire to shaping the country's future constitution along "group rights" or "power sharing" lines, or to hope to itself be able to win an electoral majority.

What was very real, in terms of South Africa's hourglass, is that the Carnation Revolution in Portugal in 1974 and its fall-out in regional geo-strategic terms in Southern Africa, plus PW Botha's Savannah adventure and then the 1976 Soweto unrest, had definitively closed the window of opportunity that had existed up to the dawn of the seventies.

It can thus be legitimately argued that by the 1990s (with all that had happened in the latter half of the seventies and during the eighties in South Africa and in the world), it had already been entirely unrealistic for the De Klerk government to have launched their negotiated transition with as their initial goals the creation of a group-based constitutional dispensation, as well as building a conservative alliance through which to win power at the ballot box. Given this reality (which had clearly crystallised by 1993), the NP Government had of necessity by mid-journey to execute a fundamental about-turn and limit its objectives to what then in practice had become patently evident regarding what was practically achievable (as opposed to what they had initially desired).

Perforce, the NP then had to define new priorities of a more short-term, tactical nature commensurate with what was then still feasible, given how the ANC had used those thirty wasted months to establish themselves in the "normalised" New South Africa, and how the international environment had changed, with Margaret Thatcher gone, Bill Clinton in the White House and Nelson Mandela dominating perceptions abroad and locally, firmly ensconced in minds there and here as the presumed future president.

All befalling the well-intentioned De Klerk and the New Nats for two main reasons: because of the wrong choices made by his predecessors, which saw the only real window of opportunity the NP already close by the mid-1970s; and secondly because De Klerk's initial negotiation team had at the outset (before starting the transition), failed to properly analyse and scenario-game what had been realistically possible and had thus launched with a strategic approach, objectives, and procedural framework that simply never could work…

All avoidable, if by the early seventies latest (when it was already evident that Grand Apartheid was a pipe dream, as Vorster himself had privately admitted, and that settling was the only realistic option – with the alternative rightly said by him to be "too ghastly to contemplate") the NP and the "Super Afrikaner" cohort influencing it had listened to the likes of Hendrik van den Bergh and Eschel Rhoodie, understood that clinging to racism was tantamount to suicide, and had back then invested every effort and means in preparing to negotiate (again, what would those NP politicians have done, if they could have looked just twenty years into the future and seen what was coming…?).

I know that ***NONGQAI's*** motto is recording history "without malice", and I have myself earlier on explained that now laying blame has no sense after three decades – that we should be focused on learning from the past, not re-litigating it. But one of the insufficiently studied aspects of our 20th century history is the lamentable role which that abominable species, the "Super Afrikaners" (as John Vorster was the first to derisively name them) had played in getting us to where we are today.

They, with their self-aggrandising, self-serving posturing, forever trying to outdo each other in situationally senseless dogmatism and conservatism, unwilling to countenance change because of fearing that it would be perceived as weakness on their part. They, who as a group had taken virtually total control over state institutions, church, academia, and party. They, who through their stubborn ignoring of reason and reality (being too afraid to

lose face in their circle by daring to give recognition to the obvious), had allowed to let go to waste the international admiration that the freedom-loving Afrikaner earlier had enjoyed and let slip the opportunity we accordingly had, as Africa's first anti-imperialist freedom fighters, to have been leaders in post-colonial renewal (as earlier Premier Hertzog had been, together with his Irish and Canadian counterparts, in the dominions' struggle to break the shackles of Empire).

Not only had these obtusely arrogant specimens – PW Botha in particular – ensured that those windows slammed shut, un-exploited. What had they achieved with their gutless obstinacy? (actually, not being tough, but hiding from reality and leadership responsibility, driven by fear for their image among equally ignorant peers). What they did additionally achieve – again, PW Botha in particular – was to ensure that Afrikaners were, through expert propaganda exploiting our every error, made into the polecats of the world. Whilst all the while fritting away the few cards we still then held, such as through pricking our earlier psychological bubble of invincibility with Savannah and through choosing evidently inappropriate strategic options such as preparing to shoot rather than settle, with valuable time running out whilst the circumstances were ever more rapidly and seriously turning against us…

Let me qualify this – if I'm not allowed to expressly blame the "Super Afrikaners", then there's no denying that I had, from childhood, abhorred them with a passion. For their baseless, prepotent self-invested sense of superiority, whilst in fact they were uncritical, insular group-thinkers, mostly brown-nosers with little understanding of the real world and human political behaviour, due *inter alia* to one-dimensional dogmatic education and minimal experience of, nor exposure to the rest of our planet.

One important lesson that should, therefore, be taken from the history of our people during the period that the singularly meritless "Super Afrikaners" had held sway over Afrikanerdom (mostly through group social coercion), is that in future we need to be very careful about following people and policies that may in theory sound self-servingly great, but which have no relation to the art of the possible, nor to moral imperatives, and only temporarily serve to self-benefit while the party lasts…

And if you think this judgement is harsh, just imagine what could – with the wealth and potential of that beautiful land – have been achieved by our erstwhile leaders, if they had implemented early enough that which they in the end in any case had to do. Then compare that which could have been, to where they caused us to actually end up.

**The scoreboard doesn't lie…**

# 13.3 MIND-SETS FORMED BY CULTURAL HERITAGE, LIVED EXPERIENCE, AND SCHOOLING RECEIVED

## 13.3.1 ORIENTATION – WHAT THIS SECTION WILL BE ABOUT

In this segment about how the protagonists understood power, we will be focusing on six critical dimensions:

- **Cognitive Frameworks:** The extent to which each side was equipped – by virtue of experience, ideology, and academic formation – to correctly comprehend the fundamental nature of political power; more specifically, how it is gained and maintained in a transitioning society of the characteristics of 1990s South Africa.
- **Strategic Prioritization:** How heavily each faction prioritized the acquisition or retention of absolute political power in their own goal setting and resource allocation.
- **The Leveraging of the Masses:** How the NP government's (unavoidable) decision to commit to a non-racial, fully democratic unitary state had, in and of itself, created in the country **an entirely new and very different political power equation** to the white political paradigm which had previously existed. This new balance of power of necessity resulted from elevating the numerically far superior formerly disenfranchised non-white masses into the ultimate arbiters of legitimacy – and thus transforming the allegiance of the masses into a formidable tool of political leverage for the ANC.

- **Strategic Alignment:** The situational appropriateness of the NP and ANC's respective strategies for contesting for political power, as well as the two main contestant's real-world use of the behaviouralist tools of power projection.
- **The Limits of Physical Force (the "military card"):** The extent to which hard military means and prowess could – or, in fact could not – be translated into real political gain.
- **The Key Role of Propaganda in determining who would win political power:** From a Behaviouralist perspective, influencing public perception is THE key determinant in deciding the outcome of contests for political power based on universal franchise balloting; in this sphere, the NP Government was entirely outclassed by the ANC/SACP, both in terms of means as well as basic understanding of the criticality and nature of this determinant.

From the outset of the transition in early 1990, the NP was confronted by four parallel tasks on behalf of its white, mostly urban Afrikaner constituency: securing an effective peace accord; maintaining a stable and secure enabling environment for the negotiations and transition; drafting a new constitution; and – crucially, as ultimate objective – to retain for their base some meaningful influence over the future exercise of political power in the governance of the land. While these tasks were intrinsically interrelated, the first three were fundamentally precursors to the fourth, which latter would be decisive over the longer term.

To navigate this landscape successfully, the NP required a clinically realistic, situationally aware understanding of the mechanics of power. It needed to answer four foundational questions:

1. **Is power ever really divisible?** Could the exercise of sovereign political authority actually be "shared" via mathematical formulae between historical adversaries, or was power inherently unitary?
2. **Who would inevitably win the popular mandate?** Given South Africa's demographic reality, which party would inevitably emerge via the first non-racial election as the dominant force within a fully participatory democratic system? On which side would the South African media complex position itself?
3. **What was the core threat faced by the NP's traditional white constituency?** Given that power in one's own hands is a means, but in the hands of an adversary is a threat, what did future stability require? Which political leader or faction could be expected to responsibly and most effectively exercise authority, and what political dynamics would subsequently pose the greatest existential threat to future security, stability and prosperity?
4. **What was the optimal strategy for enjoying influence over future government policy?** What would, in terms of real-world practical options, be the most workable means of securing a degree of influence over the future exercise of political power? (i.e., assessed in terms of human behaviour, rather than attempting to rely on theoretical legalistic models and numerical formulas). What were the real strengths of the white community – the contributions they could make that would most benefit the masses – and therefore the true bargaining chips that the NP could offer in exchange for future influence? (i.e., the capital, expertise, managerial and entrepreneurial experience, integrity, and capacity to deliver). Should the NP be attempting to constrain the future majority through rigid, built-in constitutional vetoes (the adversarial Westminster approach, relying on theoretical legalistic models based on numerical quotas), or should it focus on human political behaviour instead and embrace a consensual African approach, seeking to strategically partner with the likely majority from the outset, on a *quid-pro-quo* basis leveraging the real bargaining chips the whites could contribute (to try and help shape policy from "within the tent"?).

In brief, was basing the NP's strategy upon numerical quotas and the notion to act legalistically as brake, not a case of trying to build your attempted leverage on what was in fact your group's greatest weakness – precisely its numbers – instead of leveraging its indisputable tangible advantages (the things it could concretely contribute).

As demonstrated in earlier chapters, the NP entered the transition with a rather deficient grasp of standard negotiation theory, resulting in reactive positioning, frequent U-turns, and forced concessions. This chapter will demonstrate that the party suffered from an equally fatal deficit in its theoretical understanding of the nature and practice of political power in terms of modern Behaviouralist theory (i.e., the theory that explains political power and conduct in real-world terms, as focused on how it actually manifests and what drives it, rather than looking normatively at how one would ideally like the world to be).

Consequently, once the NP was obliged to enter upon a totally new political reality (through the entire populace becoming entitled to vote, with entirely new players entering the contest) it possessed no realistic strategy for contesting power at the ballot box, nor for acquiring and maintaining durable leverage during the talks, or – most critically – for realistically setting itself up to in practice enjoy a measure of influence over policy formulation in the new government of the post-election state.

This failure was deeply rooted in the boxed-in intellectual and experiential background of the NP leadership. Their political experiential "education" was confined to the insular dynamics of the white, Westminster-style parliament – an experience set that was wholly inadequate for dealing with the revolutionary dynamics of a post-colonial transition.

Furthermore, the De Klerk NP Government's top tier had been academically formed at conservative Afrikaans universities (most notably Potchefstroom and Bloemfontein). These institutions taught a normative curriculum within their *Staatsleer* (statecraft) departments – teaching theological and philosophical abstractions about how the state *ideally should* function in a perfect world. They disdained the empirical, behavioralist methodologies of modern Political Science.

Fixated on legalist formalism and idealistic, norms-based "ideal solutions," these politician-lawyers operated under the illusion that reducing text to paper could serve as means with which to shackle the realities of political power. They failed to grasp an empirical truth proven over millennia of political history: **political power naturally tends toward indivisibility, seeking unification at the apex of a hierarchical, pyramidal structure.** As history's graveyard of failed triumvirates and co-consulships attests, executive power cannot be permanently shared via mathematical spreadsheets.

Compounding this intellectual deficit, the NP government lacked a shared strategic vision. Its negotiation team was internally paralyzed by significantly divergent threat assessments, which led to fundamentally different interpretations of the national interest and thus of goals to prioritise. This friction was most acute between career politicians and intelligence officials, particularly those latter who hailed from the National Intelligence Service (NIS).

While the NP politicians focused on not losing their existing electoral base to the white Right and cared very much about their "personal rehabilitation" (so as not to be "Nürnberged"), the intelligence analysts looked toward post-transition stability. The NIS leadership recognized that only a government led by ANC moderates under Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki, enjoying a clear electoral majority, would be able to govern legitimately and effectively and thereby ensure peace and future security, and thus stability.

For the intelligence apparatus, the primary long-term threat was not majority rule itself, nor the ANC as future government. It was the risk that the ANC's radical wing might oust the moderates from the party's leadership, take over the ANC from the inside (it being the parliamentary majority party, with all those privileges) and thereby entirely capture the levers of state power, to then launch an unchecked "National Democratic Revolution."

This realistic threat assessment demanded a profound strategic choice: Should the NP treat the ANC **adversarially** – with the NP thereby condemning itself to the marginalized role of a permanent minority "official opposition"? Or should it instead, from the very outset, adopt a traditionally Africanist **cooperative approach** to the ANC? By forging a strategic "patriotic partnership" with the ANC moderates, the NP could have reinforced the center while operationalizing its constituency's immense levers of real influence: institutional know-how, administrative expertise, organized capital, and the expertise and means for maintaining law and order (which latter the ANC knew it entirely lacked, leaving it initially totally vulnerable to the threat of violent overthrow by the Right).

The NP's obvious own key vulnerability was its traditional support base's huge demographic deficit. This numerical reality alone should logically have caused the NP to shun any strategy aimed at achieving mandatory power-sharing based upon numbers-based constitutional formulae. The mathematics were impossible. Seeking formulistic "solutions" fixed in law was to actually make your greatest weakness the foundation of your strategy for

seeking future political influence – while simultaneously taking out of play your very real strengths that everyone knew you could contribute, if you had instead opted for a strategic partnership approach…

Furthermore, as the modern Swiss model demonstrates, consociational constitutional models can at most determine who all get to stand on the ship's bridge, but in final analyses they do not dictate where the bow is pointed; policy direction is always at its core determined by the political dynamics of public mobilization and legitimacy. By chasing a formulaic veto, the NP negated the tangible, behavioralist levers that the white, Coloured, and Indian communities could have offered to an ANC moderate faction that urgently needed competent partners to deliver on its promises to its historically disadvantaged constituents, to thereby fend off its own internal radicals.

Ultimately, the NP politicians were guided not by an objective, behaviouralist reading of the national interest, but by a legalist fixation with models and structures, whilst being driven by what they believed their constituency wanted to hear. They sought to manage their traditional electoral base by cloaking the absolute transfer of political power that was about to happen, in the soothing, ill-defined vocabulary of "Group Rights" and "Power-Sharing" – verbal palliatives designed to placate a terrified white constituency. Simultaneously, they were haunted by the spectre of a Nuremberg-style historical reckoning, making their own political and moral "rehabilitation" an important personal priority.

The resulting hotch-potch of “strategies” was neither fish nor fowl. The concessions the NP leadership were forced to make to secure their own political rehabilitation were fundamentally irreconcilable with what the conservative core of their traditional base could tolerate.

Driven by these determinants, the conceptual stage was set for the real-world clashes over political power that we saw during the transition. To understand how this collision adversarially unfolded, we must now examine the ideological and strategic foundation of the NP's main adversary, the ANC/SACP (whereafter we shall return to a more detailed look at the causes for the NP’s initial miscalculations and then their eventual capitulation, followed soon after by their complete absorption into the ANC).

# 13.4 THE ANC/SACP’S UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERIENCE OF POLITICAL POWER

## 13.4.1 MARXIST-LENINIST IDEOLOGICAL INFLUENCE

To understand how the ANC had viewed political power in the run-up to South Africa’s negotiated transition, one has to look at the synthesis of two dominant frameworks that shaped their thinking: Marxist-Leninist vanguardism (via their close alliance with the South African Communist Party) and traditional African concepts of consensus and authority.

When FW de Klerk initiated the transition, he as lawyer-politician viewed the process as essentially being one of negotiated, compromise-based constitution drafting. His thinking was grounded in a classic Western, legalistic view of "power-sharing," of checks and balances, captured in careful institutional design.

The ANC, however, viewed political power through a completely different lens. To them, winning political power (in other words, the untrammelled ability to dictate the course of the country) was the foremost goal in and of itself. This was due to their desire to fundamentally transform society, and such power was the essential tool for that. What the ANC/SACP also understood (in line with traditional Marxist-Leninist thinking) was that acquiring total political power encompassed two necessary phases: firstly, loosening the grip on power of its current holder, and secondly its winning – as illustrated by the twin revolutions in Russia in 1917, and the twin revolutions in Cuba).

A not negligible component of the ANC’s very real-world formation with regard to how to win political power in practice, was the intellectually and operationally formative brainstorming and scenario-gaming opportunities that their leadership’s lengthy sojourns at the “**University of Robben Island**” gave them. Unlike the NP leadership’s typically abstract, normative-legalist university education, the ANC’s leadership at Robben Island had years of opportunity to think through and test strategy during many long nights of exhaustive discussions, in the course of

which they were bouncing around and scenario-gaming ideas about what they needed to do in return, if and when the NP Government came up with this, that, or the other thing…

To the ANC, the negotiated transition was not about developing a set of everlasting normative rules set in stone, forever to serve as checks and balances on the future exercise of political power; it was first and foremost an opportunity to emerge as the dominant political force in the land. What the NP's switch from "shoot" to "settle" made possible, was the opportunity of gaining such power without any longer having to physically fight the white state's formidable security apparatus for it.

Being guided in their thinking by coldly clinical communist realism about political power (i.e., as a function and product of organised, goal-driven human **behaviour**, rather than as a desire to conform to abstract, idealist **normative** moral rules) the ANC saw the winning of maximum political power at street level as the essential means needed to enable them to achieve three goals:

- domination at the negotiation table,
- winning the coming election, and thereby
- gaining total control over the governmental levers of political power, to be able to totally transform the country.

In terms of strategic pacing, they understood that arriving at total transformation need not be achieved in one fell swoop: the first strategic goal was to deprive the existing holder of political power (the NP Government) of its hitherto unshakeable monopoly hold on it, even if this required some initial compromises to induce the NP Government into agreeing to give up power.

During a second phase, executed at an opportune later moment (in accordance with the classic Marxist-Leninist methodology of staging two revolutions in succession) there would then be opportunity to focus on enabling the launch of the ultimate transformation – the second transformation being then their so-called "National Democratic Revolution", which still today is being aspired to on the Left.

Here is how the convergent Marxist and Africanist traditions shaped the ANC's understanding of political power and their consequent positioning on key issues such as centralization versus decentralization, on the NP's illusion that power is capable of being "shared", and the real-world operational route to acquiring political power, to then utilise at the negotiation table and at the electoral hustings.

Through decades of exile and close alignment with the Soviet bloc, the ANC's strategic thinking was deeply influenced by Marxist-Leninist theory. In Marxist-Leninist ideology, political power is viewed as strictly **monolithic**. It is not capable of being divided and shared around, leading to the core tenet of communist state organisation which is euphemistically called "**democratic centralisation**".

In Marxist thought, political power is the product of, and finds expression in, class dominance and state control. It is binary: either the communist-aligned "democratic forces" hold power, or the "counter-revolutionary forces" do. Therefore, the NP's proposal of mathematical "power-sharing" (like rotating presidencies or minority vetoes) was viewed by the ANC not as a democratic compromise in a pluralist society, but as inherently a structural contradiction – one that flies in the face of human experience, so that the NP's motivation for proposing it could only be deemed to be to box in a future majority government and deny it the opportunity to truly transform South African society.

An ingenious form of "Apartheid light" therefore, as the Tricameral Parliament had been…

What the ANC/SACP held to, was a Zero-Sum View: You cannot "share" the state's executive power because accepting a permanent coalition or a minority veto meant castrating the revolution before it even began.

Centralization was seen as imperative – Marxist ideology dictated that once the ANC as liberation movement captured political power, it needed a highly centralized, powerful executive to smash the pre-existing structures of Apartheid, redistribute wealth, and transform the economy. A decentralized, fragmented state (with strong federal

provinces or weak central executives) was seen as a trick by the NP with which to paralyze the new central government's ability to enact radical change.

### 13.4.2 THE INFLUENCE OF AFRICAN TRADITION

African traditional culture was seen by many in the ANC as showing significant parallels to Marxist ideology. African political tradition of governance, like Marxism, favoured a strong, centralised, sovereign executive run on the basis of obligatory consensus. The "fit" between these two worlds was often described by leaders like Julius Nyerere (Tanzania) and Léopold Sédar Senghor (Senegal) as colonized Africa's embracing of Marxist ideology being a return to African philosophical roots, rather than it being a departure from them:

- **The Land:** In many traditional African societies land was owned communally, not privately, held in trust by the chief or community elders for the benefit of all. The concept of private ownership was a colonial imposition. Marxism's call for the **abolition of private property** felt like a restoration of the pre-colonial "natural order" where the Earth was a shared resource.
- **The "We" over the "I":** Marxism's focus on the collective (the proletariat) mirrored the African social fabric. As the saying goes in many Bantu cultures: *"I am because we are"* (*Ubuntu*). This directly opposed the Western liberal focus on the individual.
- **Democratic Centralism:** The Leninist model of "Democratic Centralism" (diversity in discussion, unity in action) bore a striking resemblance to traditional village governance. In many African cultures, elders would debate extensively until a **consensus** was articulated by the leader; once so decided, the community was expected to move as one.
- **The Vanguard and the Elders:** The Marxist "Vanguard Party" (the enlightened elite leading the masses) mapped easily onto the role of the Council of Elders – a group whose authority was derived from their perceived wisdom and commitment to the collective survival.
- **"Classlessness":** Many African leaders argued that African society was inherently "classless" before colonialism. They viewed the "Bourgeoisie vs. Proletariat" struggle not as an internal African problem, but as an **external colonial problem**. Marxism provided a vocabulary to explain why their societies had been disrupted by imperialist capitalism.
- **Economic Development as a Moral Crusade:** self-serving Western capitalism was associated with the rapacious exploitation of African labour and resources, leading to an unequal and slow down-trickle (if any) of developmental benefits to the masses, whilst Marxism-Leninism seemingly offered a model for rapid across-the-board modernisation to the benefit of all (the Soviet Union, and latterly China, had transformed from peasant societies to industrialised nuclear superpower status within decades – this supposed "fast-track" to wealth and dignity was intoxicating for newly independent nations escaping from colonial exploitation).
- **Total Decolonisation:** It wasn't just about kicking out the white man; it was about uprooting the *logic* of the West. Embracing Marxism was the ultimate intellectual "middle finger" to the former colonisers.

In traditional African political philosophy, power is deeply tied to legitimacy derived from royal bloodlines and a striving for consensus in council. However, in African reality political power is ultimately determined by actual strength – the physical ability to take power and hold it (exactly as in traditionalist societies the world over, including the West prior to the relatively recent phenomenon of election-based allocation of political power).

In African tradition, political power is embodied in, and centrally executed by a single apex individual who holds absolute power (the Chief or King, advised by a council – which latter's opinions he is obliged to seek and listen to, but with ultimate decision-making authority vesting in him as sovereign; all council members are then obliged to accept, support and execute the consensus as articulated by the sovereign).

The ANC itself heavily utilized the tradition of the *lekgotla* – a traditional African forum of elders where everyone debates a topic intensely. However, once the top leader had articulated the final decision, from then on, the group must speak with one voice. Therefore, the entire concept of a formal, permanent "loyal opposition" or a mathematically divided executive splitting votes in a cabinet was culturally alien and institutionally messy to the ANC's traditional Africanist as well as Marxist political instincts.

In their worldview, executive political power is to be exercised by and under the direction of the sovereign (in the New SA, the president). It is indivisible. Sovereignty cannot be neatly carved up into percentages. A leader who wins a clear majority in national elections has the mandate to rule on behalf of, and binding of all the people. The NP's legalistic approach of trying to split power into complex constitutional fractions clashed directly with the view that the incoming president must be able to give effect to the will of the electoral majority, which holds sway over the unified, undivided territory and people.

Both in Marxist states and traditionalist Africa, anyone persisting in opposition after consensus has been articulated, is viewed as unconforming to core values and thus as a potential threat – especially if that opposition is organised as a political force which is patently intent on replacing the actual holder of state power…

Because of its original Marxist/Africanist worldview, the ANC did not initially see a constitution emerging from the negotiation table as being the *source* of political power. Real political power was something organic, found at street level and not on a piece of paper, to be accumulated across what they called the Four Pillars of their Revolution:

- Establishing underground organisational structures as part of an internal politization and logistical network within South Africa.
- Armed Struggle by *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) – though militarily almost insignificant, the fact that the ANC as party possessed a "military wing" (and other parties not) did carry political/psychological significance, both symbolically and as tool in armed propaganda.
- Mass Mobilization: Rendering the country "ungovernable" by the white state, through strikes, boycotts, and civic action.
- International Isolation: Sanctions and diplomatic pressure to bankrupt the white state and render it vulnerable to armed overthrow.

When FW de Klerk publicly came out in favour of a negotiated settlement and a non-racial New South Africa on 2 February 1990 and unbanned the ANC, the latter's leadership viewed CODESA not as an instrument through which there was to be imposed once again, at the southern tip of Africa, a Western-style capitalist state – even if founded on a negotiated compromise. The entering into negotiations were first and foremost seen as a consequence of their pressure. Procedurally, it was to be the mechanism through which to formalize the total transfer of political power that their Four Pillars had in their view successfully forced upon the NP Government.

Fundamental to the ANC/SACP's approach to the negotiations, right from the start of discussions between Mr Mandela and Dr Barnard, was that such negotiations had in practical reality to be between the ANC as the internationally ordained "true and legitimate representatives" of the South African masses, and the NP as the "illegitimate" current holder as based on colonial legacy. Furthermore, that the process had to have as essential theme how such power would pass from the NP to the ANC.

To the ANC, the convenient route to the Union Buildings and to gaining political power henceforth was that which the negotiations was inevitably obliged to create – a constitutional dispensation where the ballot box via universal adult suffrage would give them that power (given the overwhelming black voter majority). This served their interest because it obviated the arduous (and hitherto singularly unsuccessful) effort to overthrow the white state by force. Winning the coming non-racial election was also the quickest mechanism through which to demonstrate the absolute, unassailable legitimacy required by the West, but conformed also to Marxist revolutionary theory (the vanguard laying claim to a democratic mandate from the masses) and African tradition (the installation of an indisputably legitimate sovereign leadership democratically consented to by the majority).

For the ANC/SACP, what therefore became central to achieving the political power they desired, was the imperative need to convincingly win the election (essentially via obtaining a clear majority of the black vote) by any means necessary…

### 13.4.3 SINGULAR FOCUS ON WINNING TOTAL POWER AS BASED ON ACTUAL POLITICAL DYNAMICS, NOT PAPER

What was explained above reveals the dichotomy at the heart of the 1990–1994 negotiations:

- The NP's Illusion: FW de Klerk himself as well as many in his original initial team had for many months genuinely believed that they could negotiate a constitutional blueprint where power could be mathematically shared, diluted, and checked at every level to protect minorities such as their white Afrikaner electoral base. They weren't, therefore, focused so much on winning power through the ballot box, as they were focused on crafting a constitution that would constrain the power of the majority and protect minority "group interests".
- The ANC's singular focus: Mandela, Mbeki, and the ANC strategists understood the winning of unfettered, centralised political power to be their absolute goal. The same power that white governments had enjoyed under the highly centralised Smuts-inspired previous dispensation – which was how African tradition and Marxist ideology in any event understood political power and its exercise to be. Furthermore, they regarded holding such undiluted power as being the fundamental democratic right of those representing the electoral majority – a position that they correctly believed the West were ideologically bound to have to support. The ANC/SACP were willing, as transitional compromise, to accept some protection of individual rights, cultural identity, and language diversity, but they were entirely unyielding on the core principle: The executive power of the state could not be shared, nor decentralised; it had to be won, held, and exercised as determined by the electoral majority.

# 13.5 THE NP WAS UNPREPARED FOR CONTESTING POLITICAL POWER IN THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA

## 13.5.1 THE AFRIKANER "GROUP THINK" INDUCED BY IPC (IDENTITY-PROTECTIVE COGNITION)

Looking more closely now at the NP's historical experience of political power, and then the party leadership's evolving understanding of the new dynamics of power politics as the negotiations and transition progressed, it is necessary to understand, first of all, the state of flux into which NP thinking had sunk during the second half of the eighties.

A helpful theoretical framework for understanding the NP's shift in strategic thinking is what is called IPC: "identity-protective cognition". This is a theory that's often employed to explain how societies that feel themselves under serious threat tend to circle the wagons, close ranks, and justify for themselves policies directed at group self-preservation – despite often glaring moral shortcomings in those policies (such as the rise of Nazism in Germany; the implacable colonial settler attitudes seen in places like Algeria, Indonesia, and Kenya; or the current signs of extremism among some in the Israeli Right; and, yes: Afrikaner / white South African support for Apartheid).

IPC is in layman's terms sometimes referred to as the theory that explains "*why smart people often firmly believe in policies that in the end turn out to have been stupid*".

The theory originated with experiments done by Dan M. Kahan of Yale Law School starting in 2013. He investigated the veracity of the commonly held perception that people adopt false beliefs because they're too stupid or ignorant to grasp the truth. What he actually found was that, just as often, the opposite is true: many delusions afflict not dim minds but bright ones. He therefore set out to test the effect of intelligence on ideological bias using the "cognitive reflection test" which measures a person's reasoning ability. Kahan found that liberals and conservatives scored roughly equally on average, and that the highest scoring individuals in both groups were actually the most likely to display mind-warping ingrained political bias when assessing the truth and/or logic behind political policies.

What IPC boils down to is that individuals tend to process information in a way that protects their status as well as their acceptance within their defining cultural group *(vide*: "Super Afrikaners").

- The core motivation that emerged was that people are often more driven to maintain a sense of belonging and identity alignment with their peers, rather than to objectively evaluate policy positions held by the group, and the factual evidence around it.
- This is particularly true when an uncomfortable fact or moral argument threatens the group's unity, core identity, worldview, societal status, and sense of security – the brain subconsciously dismisses, rationalizes, or distorts that information.

Relating IPC to the South African experience, one can see how the PW Botha government had constructed their "total onslaught" narrative against the backdrop of the Cold War and Africa's often tumultuous decolonization. They framed the defence of Apartheid not as a blatantly racist policy, but as an existential struggle for the survival of Christian, Western civilization against atheistic communism.

For the average white Afrikaner, IPC operated as a powerful psychological shield:

- Protecting the tribal identity and unity – to question Apartheid was not just a political disagreement; it was viewed as a betrayal of the *Volk* (the own people). IPC ensured that dissenting information was rejected because accepting it meant both social ostracization and self-doubt setting in.
- Rationalizing privilege – IPC allowed well-meaning individuals to filter out the disturbing realities of state-sanctioned racism. By framing the conflict through a Cold War lens and adopting the justificatory notion that Separate Development was a liberating "unscrambling" of the imperialist scrambled egg, cognitive dissonance was avoided: *We aren't oppressors; we are the thin white line protecting Africa from Soviet communism, while liberating the Zulu, Xhosa, and other colonially subjected tribes so they can enjoy the same independence we Afrikaners ourselves aspire to, and which the Batswana, Swazis and South Sotho were granted by the British.*

The turning point which shattered the old IPC shield was reached due to the convergence in the late eighties of five realities from the socio-political and economic environment which fundamentally and visibly re-ordered the balance of power and thus Afrikaner threat perceptions – to the point of understanding the reality that Apartheid now threatened rather than protected the group interest. These shifts were so drastic that the psychological defence mechanisms of the old IPC could no longer hold.

- **The dissipation of the communist threat** – when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and the Soviet Union began to collapse, the NP's primary framing mechanism vanished overnight. The "Total Onslaught" narrative lost its rationalising driver. Afrikaners could no longer justify the suppression of the ANC as a necessary defence against global communism. The existential threat that had justified the identity-protective bubble was gone – as was, equally, the rationale for the West to keep supporting the white government as before, "under the table."
- **Escalating international pressure as well as internal resistance** – by the 1980s, South Africa faced crippling economic sanctions, an arms embargo, sports boycotts, and extensive internal uprisings in key metropolitan areas which were beginning to severely impact the functioning of the economy as well as investor confidence. Considering that IPC works best when it keeps the individual feeling safe and morally secure within their group, the logic behind defending white governance began to be doubted because the NP government's race-based policies were actually generating the very insecurity it was supposed to avert. When the costs became too high of maintaining by force political control in the hands of that separate identity – manifested as economic hardship, conscription of young men into a seemingly endless conflict on the borders and in the townships, and global pariah status – the practical reality of unsustainability pierced the cognitive bubble. It also became harder to feel proud of an identity that the entire world condemned.
- **The moral shift by the main Afrikaans NGK church** – for decades, the Dutch Reformed Church (NGK) had provided the theological justification for Apartheid, framing it as God's scriptural will for the subcontinent's separate nations. When the church under leaders like Johan Heyns pivoted in the latter half of the 1980s – declaring racism a sin and scripturally indefensible – it struck an important chord at the very heart of god-fearing Afrikaner Calvinist identity. When the NGK declared racism a sin, it dismantled the theology-based psychological safety net. The old IPC could no longer justify the earlier-held worldview because the Afrikaners' own in-house religious authority had redefined what could be deemed morally legitimate and what not.

- **The evident real-world impossibility of achieving Apartheid's stated goal** of turning around the influx of blacks to "white" urban areas – the pressing need for black labour in the industrial heartlands had by the 1980's made clear that black presence in supposedly "white" urban areas across the country was of necessity permanent, destroying the entire rationale behind the policy of "separate development." It also made plain the extent of the power Black workers could exercise over the economy, should they withhold their labour.
- **Confidence shaken in Security Forces' ability to maintain the old order in perpetuity**, in the face of rapidly increasing external and internal pressure – after the sobering decision had to be made by the NP Government to pull back the SADF from Angola and to accord SWA/Namibia its independence (meaning that white SA was henceforth to be the "last man standing" against the world-wide tide of decolonisation) a deeper appreciation of the impact of the arms embargo and economic sanctions on military capability forced a re-appraisal of the entire "shoot" versus "settle" strategic debate, because of the undeniably shifting real balance of power. This, in turn, led to a growing sense that negotiations had to be urgently initiated whilst the NP Government still enjoyed some actual leverage (in reality, an understanding arrived at far too late, as it turned out).

Apartheid didn't just end because people suddenly woke up one day and changed their minds; it ended because the external structures sustaining the Identity-Protective Cognition that had "justified" it collapsed. When Separate Development glaringly failed in its goals, the Cold War ended, the economy tanked, security began to crack, and the Church revolted, at that moment (which came at the end of the 1980s) maintaining by force a racially defined artificial identity and its Apartheid legal underpinnings became morally illegitimate, manifestly impractical, obviously counterproductive, and thus psychologically and socially patently illogical.

Because IPC is a phenomenon deeply associated with a sense of being under threat, what is equally fundamental to it is that there must also be present a strong belief among the group that the actual means and ability in fact does exist with which they can ward off the threats and emerge victorious – if only all in the group can steadfastly unite around a commonly-held worldview and plan of action. Once this kind of doubt-free belief in actual ability is replaced by significant doubt that perseverance is realistically possible (with perseverance on the earlier path increasingly being seen as actually the road to future doom and destruction), then the group's binding and the justification derived from IPC falls away.

Such a collapse of the "old" IPC usually means that the threat is suddenly perceived even more seriously, so that the level of *angst* increases inversely to the collapse of the old certainties. Which then typically leads to fragmentation of the group at the very moment that unity is most needed, as well as a serious lack of clarity about choice-shaping realities and viable new strategies.

Which is precisely what happened to Afrikaner thinking and political unity at the end of the eighties and through the nineties (as we had seen play out in the timelines presented earlier). With as further consequence that this Afrikaner in-fighting and disunity helped change the balance of power even more, thereby further negatively impacting the NP Government's leverage at the negotiation table, as well as having constrained the NP leadership's leeway to react rapidly and with courage and clarity to what the new reality in fact had required them to boldly accept and make a virtue of…

### 13.5.2 HOW THEIR EXPERIENCE OF WHITE PARLIAMENTARY POLITICS HAD (MIS)SHAPED NP POLITICIANS' VIEW OF POWER

Fact is that the practical experience of political power that NP politicians had had at the time, was limited to what they had experienced in the white Westminster-style parliament with its particular traditions and conventions. For

the better part of the eight decades that followed Union, NP politicians only had to contend themselves with uniting the Afrikaner vote behind them and that would then automatically constitute a parliamentary majority, because of Afrikaner numerical superiority in the white populace. Which is why, between 1910 and 1994, South Africa always had had an Afrikaner prime minister or president. This skewed, very particular experience did not really prepare them for the very different political reality that the new non-racial dynamics introduced, with its highly diverse mix of cultures and interests.

The rules of this contest for the white parliament's Westminster-style of contesting for political power were Queensberry-like. Not at all the rough-and-tumble revolutionary Marxist experience of the typical ANC politician… Whilst the white hustings sometimes did explode into fistfights, this was nothing akin to waging all-out "people's war" with fiery necklaces…

Within the chambers of the white parliament in Cape Town, the tradition was of adversarial politicking – that of government facing off against the criticizing yet loyal opposition, British style. Only once, during the Great Depression, had dire economic circumstances obliged the main parties (in effect, the two white language groups) to come together to find a way to jointly rule the country. Significantly, this was engineered through the mechanism of cooperation within a merged political party (the United Party, into which the then NP and the SA Party had fused) and not through group-based quotas or formulas.

It is self-evident that the NP's four decades (since 1948) of such tightly channelled, scope-limited experience – which furthermore had played out within one cultural context (one completely alien to its African setting, at that) did not do much to prepare the NP Government for the challenges ahead when De Klerk launched the transition to a decidedly "African" New South Africa…

So, given this lack of relevant experience, how well did the typical NP cabinet luminary's academic background prepare him for the task at hand in 1990? I will now briefly explain the theoretical grounding for understanding political power that most NP politicians and government officials involved with the negotiations had received at university.

### 13.5.3 THE IMPACT OF LEGALIST/NORMATIVE VERSUS BEHAVIORALIST ACADEMIC TRAINING

Having to discard so rapidly and totally the group-think that had dominated Afrikaner political thought for nearly half a century – swinging 180 degrees around from a race-based paradigm of separate nation-states to having to accept non-racialism within a unitary state – was certainly enough of an intellectual and psychological adjustment to have caused the extent of "groping in the dark" that we had seen so clearly reflected in the earlier timelines, resulting in a less than clear and coherent initial approach of the De Klerk Government when it launched into negotiations and transition.

However, the muddled and inadequate strategic thinking and resultant U-turns that we witnessed, were also exacerbated by another factor, beyond limited experience – the lack of a proper theoretical understanding of the politics of power as **behaviour**, due to the dogmatism that had reigned in the *Staatsleer* (statecraft) departments at key Afrikaans universities. A dogmatism that had clung to fringe fetish theocentric normative theory about how the state supposedly **should ideally be** and function, particularly that conceived by the Dutch Calvinist philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd. Academic adherents of this Dooyeweerdian dogmatism disdained the modern advances that had been made in the post-WW2 world in studying and understanding political reality **as it is**, as actual human behaviour (advances in research that led to the Behaviouralist theory that came to dominate Political Science, developed by the likes of David Easton, Robert Dahl, Gabriel Almond, and Karl Deutsch.

This modern approach – often called **Behaviouralism** – was an intellectual movement that fundamentally changed Political Science (as *Staatsleer* came to be called in the Anglosphere) from a normative study of "laws and institutions" to a study of "people and processes."

Following the horrors of the Second World War, there was a profound disillusionment with traditional normative "institutionalism." Scholars argued that looking through a value-judging lens at constitutions and legal structures failed to explain why regimes like Nazi Germany democratically rose to power. The focus therefore shifted to analysing human conduct rather than state models. The goal was to make political science a "real" science by using empirical, quantifiable hard data, rather than by abstractly theorising about normative philosophy.

Many political scientists today view Niccolò Machiavelli as the "spiritual grandfather" of the behavioural revolution, even if back then he had lacked the modern statistical tools to carry it out. Classical philosophers (Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas) were largely **normative**: they focused on the "Ideal State" and how leaders *ought* to behave to be virtuous. Machiavelli famously rejected this in *The Prince* where he reasoned that there is such a fundamental difference between how people actually live an operate (as opposed to how they supposedly ought to live and do), that those who focus their studies on what people should be doing whilst ignoring what people actually do, are preparing their own destruction rather than their preservation.

Just like modern behaviouralists, Machiavelli had prioritized empirical reality (what people actually do) over normative ideals (what they should be doing).

The dichotomy between Behaviouralism and Normativism is that of the "**Is**" vs. the "**Ought**".

On the opposite end of the spectrum from Machiavelli was Herman Dooyeweerd (1894–1977), a prominent Dutch neo-Calvinist philosopher who developed a unique own "Reformational philosophy" based on the sovereignty of God over all reality. He challenged the neutrality of academic thought, arguing that all theory is rooted in religious, extra-rational presuppositions (ground-motives). He identified 15 distinct modes or functional dimensions of reality (e.g., numerical, spatial, physical, biotic, sensitive, analytical, historical, lingual, social, economic, aesthetic, juridical, ethical, and pistic/faith).

Dooyeweerd's central concept was **Sphere Sovereignty.** He believed that different areas of life (church, state, family, school) possess their own intrinsic, divinely ordained authority and laws, and should not overstep or control one another. The Cosmonomic law-idea that Dooyeweerd proposed was that the cosmos is governed by divine laws that apply to all things. He grounded all of his philosophical work in the Christian ground-idea that the whole of the cosmos is God's creation, ordered by God's laws and norms. For this reason, Dooyeweerd referred to his philosophy as ""*de wijsbegeerte der wetsidee*""—the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea.

When young Afrikaner intellectuals studied in the Netherlands in the mid-20th century, they brought Dooyeweerd's ideas back to South Africa. However, they made a conceptual leap: they mapped "Sphere Sovereignty" onto "Racial and Cultural Groups." In the hands of NP theorists (and the then theologians of the Dutch Reformed Church), the philosophy was re-engineered through the following logic:

- **Step A: The "Volk" as a God-Given Sphere –** if the family and the church were distinct spheres created by God, then surely the "Volk" (the nation/ethnic cultural group) was also a divinely ordained sphere of existence. Because God did not create a single, homogenous humanity; He created a plurality of distinct nations, languages, and cultures (often citing the biblical story of the Tower of Babel as divine proof that God *wants* segregation).
- **Step B: The Sin of "Mixing" (Integration) –** according to Dooyeweerdian logic, if one sphere tries to absorb or fuse with another, it violates God's cosmic order. Therefore, forcing different "cultural spheres" (Afrikaners, Zulus, Xhosas) into a single, integrated political system was a philosophical and spiritual sin. It would inevitably lead to one sphere tyrannizing or "swamping" the others.
- **Step C: "Separate Development" as Divine Justice** – by redefining Apartheid as **"Separate Development,"** the NP could argue to the world (and to their own consciences) that they were not being racist; they were being *philosophically just*. They claimed they were protecting the "Sphere Sovereignty" of black South Africans by giving them their own independent territories (the Homelands/Bantustans). In these homelands, Xhosa or Zulu culture could enjoy "sovereignty in its own sphere," free from the cultural imperialism of the white man, while white South Africans enjoyed the same sovereignty in theirs.

Together with the Afrikaner's traditional reverence for Law and lawyers (and thus an inclination towards legalism and legislative "solutions" for societal challenges) the theocentric philosophical justification that Dooyeweerd's *wijsbegeerte der wetsidee* ostensibly offered for "separate development", explains why the National Party became so obsessively **legalistic** and structure-focused. If you believe you are administering a divine "Symphony of Spheres," your primary tool is the law book. You create the *Population Registration Act* to define the spheres; you create the *Group Areas Act* to give the spheres physical boundaries; you create the *Bantustan* system to give the spheres political structures.

The ultimate irony (which the "*verligte*" realists and analysts later realized), was that the NP's Apartheid policy completely violated Dooyeweerd's core warning: **the totalization of the State sphere.** Because, in order to enforce this artificial "separation of cultural spheres," the white South African state had to become a massive, intrusive, all-powerful bureaucracy. The state ended up dictating where people could live, who they could marry, what language they were educated in, and where they could work. By adapting Dooyeweerd to justify separating the "ethnic spheres," the NP created the exact monster Dooyeweerd had spent his life writing against: an omnipotent State that crushed the sovereignty of every actual human sphere it touched.

From the perspective of understanding why the NP politicians struggled to develop a coherent strategy for the negotiations they initiated, the point here is not that Dooyeweerd's Christ-centred, legalist philosophy was wrong in and of itself. Similarly, one cannot reasonably argue that universities should only teach Behaviouralism; apart from knowing and understanding how things are and why, clearly one should also be provided with yardsticks with which to measure what about it is right or wrong, and what ideals to strive for. Both approaches need to be taught (as is the modern-day practice most everywhere).

The problem at Afrikaans universities in the second half of the last century was that behavioralist analytical methods were actively shunned at Potchefstroom and Bloemfontein, and not given due attention at Pretoria (which was more into the public administration side), RAU (which initially was strongly normative / Dooyeweerd orientated) and Stellenbosch (more classicist/state-theory focused). If one includes UNISA as an essentially Afrikaans university at the time (in terms of the mother tongue spoken by the majority of the teaching staff then in their Political Science department) then UNISA was the only "Afrikaans" university where Political Science was taught with due regard for the value of the Behaviouralist theoretical and empirical toolkit for understanding the dynamics surrounding real-world politics of power. Leading figures there were professors Willem Kleynhans (head of department) and Dan Kriek – it is perhaps not surprising that they had been among the most prescient to predict that Apartheid would prove untenable (for their trouble, they were ostracized by the traditionalist Afrikaner elites).

As we know, the NP Government's negotiation team predominantly hailed from Potchefstroom and Bloemfontein in terms of their academic formation. Gerrit Viljoen was a bit of an outlier – he had studied classical languages, doing his doctorate on the poetry that an obscure Greek poet from Greece's golden era had recited at Mount Olympus; as first rector of RAU (now Johannesburg University) while also being then head of the Broederbond, he had steered his fledgling Political Science department into the Dooyeweerdian direction, as providing philosophical justification for separate development. Leon Wessels was the only later somewhat prominent member of the negotiation team who had been academically exposed to Behaviouralism at UNISA during his post-graduate studies (I remember sitting with him in a small Saturday discussion group in prof Dan Kriek's office – my own academic trajectory had started with three undergraduate years in Bloemfontein trying to make practical sense of dense Dooyeweerdian discourse, followed then by my post-graduate studies at UNISA, where during my Honours year I received a thorough grounding in modern political science which I then applied in my Masters and Doctoral studies, as well as at the BfSS/NIS and later as head of the diplomatic academy).

The normative, legalist academic background of the bulk of the NP Government's negotiation team, coupled with limited real-world experience of power politics outside of the white Westminster parliament, created an Afrikaner political class which felt that if they could just draft the "right" rules, then the "political system" would inherently work as intended (this approach of relying on laws to try and shape societal reality was, after all, what the NP had used to ordain Apartheid).

In short, the NP politicians lacked the behavioralist training to anticipate that other political actors with a different set of power-political goals would treat the crafting of the new constitution not normatively in the manner of a Dooyeweerd or St Thomas Aquinas (i.e., as a sacred contract), but in much more Machiavellian behaviouralist terms – i.e., tactically, as a phase-bound compromise instrument designed to convince/oblige the white government to give up the political power they held, and doing so without a fight. To play into the normative/legalist NP political reference framework, there were no qualms on the part of the ANC/SACP about cloaking this transitional constitution in palliative compromise phrasing that supposedly normatively oriented the new dispensation towards devolution of powers to federal-like provincial structures. However, upon analyses, what the ANC ensured that it did in behaviouralist terms, was to in actual practice allow for a highly centralized exercise of executive power by the majority faction of the majority party.

There was no-one on the NP team who had been trained to ask the key behavioralist question: ***"What can the ANC/SACP actually do with this constitution, once they are ensconced in the Union Buildings? More particularly: what will and can the radical wing and the "bad actors" of the ANC do – within (despite of?) the constitution's supposed guardrails – if they should succeed in taking, from within, majority control of the ANC as the parliamentary majority party, and from there then gain control over the levers of government power?***

The normative/legalist NP politicians were caught in a "Cartesian Trap": they believed that if you define the terms, the concepts, and the laws normatively "correctly" then society's conduct will conform to that. In other words, that the ever-present reality of parties, groups, and individuals contesting for ultimate political power – always driven by own interests – will automatically be safely channelled and constrained. They had no conceptual "toolbox" with which to analyse and understand the messy, empirical, and power-hungry nature of real-world political behaviour – especially when confronted by a liberation movement turned political party grounded in Marxist behaviouralist teaching and tactics.

That the education which helped form NP Government thinking over many decades wasn't just a matter of theoretical academic concern can easily be illustrated. Let's just look at how a normativist-legalist would react to a plan such as Verwoerdian separate development, versus a behaviouralist. The normativist-legalist would assess the policy of wanting to accord blacks their own sovereign tribal homelands as being philosophically well-founded as well as do-able in terms of law making and then stop there – because it meets his criteria for how things ideally ought to be. The behaviouralist (who may well agree that the plan honestly strives for a philosophically ideal outcome) would, however, ask whether it can in practice be made to work: is it actually capable of achieving its stated goal, considering who will then provide labour for industry, mining and farming in the "white" remainder, what is there in the homelands for blacks to return back to, what are the respective birth rates, how likely are blacks to accept such an exclusionist policy without resistance?

During the negotiations the issue that most contributed to divisions among white Afrikaners (and which, accordingly, preoccupied NP politicians, seeking to thread the needle) was that of group rights – particularly as regards the notion of an own white Afrikaner *Volkstaat*. The fear of losing their electoral base, especially in rural areas, contributed greatly to the NP's muddled initial approach to the negotiations, when they tried to channel the constitution-drafting towards being based on ill-defined "group rights" (later to be substituted by "power-sharing").

This fixation with legalistically conceived structural "solutions" that on paper appear normatively ideal, was of course symptomatic of the kind of university education that Afrikaner politicians (as jurists) had undergone. In the law faculties at Afrikaans universities (as in the "*Staatsleer*" departments), there had been a tendency to disdain trends and models that had originated in the Anglosphere and particularly in the ever-modern and thus "*volksvreemde*" (culturally alien) USA, preferring to align with German and Dutch jurisprudential philosophy. We see this in the promotion of the Germanic concept of a "*Rechtstaat*" (which doesn't equate really to a particular constitutional model, just emphasising the importance of constitutions to be the supreme law of a land, enforceable by an independent judiciary – such as the USA's system in fact is, although it is not customary to refer to it by that name).

I am still personally baffled (as lawyer and political scientist) by the emphasis that the NP had chosen to put on this idea of a *Regstaat* (as if the source of salvation), whilst ignoring the very appropriateness of the American constitution to our actual real needs. I say this, considering the nature of the real-world interests of the individuals that formed the NP's electoral support base, namely for security of their person and possessions, as well as for future government integrity and competent service delivery (as demonstrated by the Zuma riots of 2021 as well as by the corruption and overreach that marked the Zuma presidency, plus the current failures in governance – which all happened despite us now supposedly having a "*Regstaat*" in place).

I have no inherent problem with the notion of a "*Regstaat*", of supremacy of the constitution (which I support as concept) but it is the American constitutional model – itself very much a "*Regstaat*" with their constitution as supreme law – that actually would have been perfectly tailorable to the needs of South Africans in general, because of the manner in which it addresses the critical need for strong separation and devolution of powers, the prevention of central government overreach, plus empowerment of the individual citizen as well as of regions and localities (doing so concretely, by means of guaranteeing the right of citizens to bear arms and for second-level regional governments to have own police forces and national guard reserves, plus being in charge of own key functions such as education, health, transport, and the like).

All I can assume is that, when the NP had to reassure their voters after having had to abandon the notion of "group rights", the psychological impact of the term "*Regstaat*" was deemed stronger and more culturally identifiable for Afrikaners than referring to the USA's model (plus of course this mind-set that anything American is suspect as being "culturally alien" to the Afrikaner worldview).

The other side of the coin (meaning, how the American model as template would have been perceived by the ANC/SACP) may have been that resistance clearly could have been expected from them to anything smacking of America and federalism – so that the pliant, virtually unknown term of "*Regstaat*" (which could be made to apply to any model in which the constitution is supreme) was politically convenient on that side as well. It nevertheless remains, in my humble opinion, a great pity that Afrikaans jurists generally did not appreciate what the American model could have done to better protect real future interests. Of course the ANC/SACP would have resisted, but if the NP had from the very outset promoted the American model of power separation and devolution (instead of "group rights") and had understood the danger posed by the Westminster system and its centralisation of power, pressing hard for a dispensation more akin to the American than the English model would have been very worthwhile and potentially achievable – also because it would have been possible to sell this to the influential groupings in the USA and get some backing from them. After all, the Namibian constitution accepted by the ANC/SACP's ideological bedfellow SWAPO, is (like the American one) based on a strict separation of powers with a directly elected president…

Talking about constitutional models such as federalism, something that to this day is not well enough understood by many white South Africans, especially in Afrikaner circles, is that the most defining and absolute precondition for successfully giving geographically-defined territorial content to any group-based model of power devolution (as "solution" for group aspirations) is **entirely absent from South African reality**: namely, the absolute necessity for the on-the-ground demographic distribution of an ethnic group and their notional geographic jurisdiction **to physically coincide on the map**.

Classic federalism or confederalism has as its basis an identifiable group that lives within an identifiable homogenous territory, within which it forms a significant, identity-defining majority. Take Switzerland as example: obviously it was never the case that, as first step, a particular canton was geographically designated and then a specific ethnic group (who had been living dispersed all over the country) was told to move there – it always starts with recognising the group, within the actual geographical area around them that they historically have physically occupied, and then demarcating that territory on the map as their group's area of jurisdiction.

The reality of South African ethno/geographic distribution is that not a single district in the country has a clear white majority population. Not even close – and even less so for white Afrikaners.

However, the devolution of power to lower levels should not be seen as necessarily tied up in ethnic or racial geographical separation. In and of itself, devolution is a sound goal in public administration terms, to ensure responsive governance. Devolving power as low down as possible, irrespective of questions of race or group, is as a rule beneficial in order for government to be as close as possible to the people of whatever mix that it serves. However, devolution cannot within South Africa's mixed and widely dispersed reality serve to try and constitute specific exclusive geographical jurisdictions for ethnic groups, because such territories simply do not exist – at least not in relation to white Afrikaners. All that will in practice happen if such an inherently artificial ethnically or racially devolved "solution" be enforced, is that the lack of geographic homogeneity will just replicate and push down the same national-level inter-ethnic political disputes, down to the micro-level, creating a multitude of localized turf wars over resources and governance.

For federalism or devolution to act as a mechanism for conflict resolution (as it does in Switzerland with distinct linguistic cantons, or Canada with Quebec), it is axiomatic that the physical geographic space in which the members of an identity group are living together (to the exclusion of other groups), and the boundaries of their allocated own territorial jurisdiction, must coincide on the map.

South African reality is that many decades of economic integration and urbanization have created an intertwined demographic mix in virtually every municipality and district. Therefore, arbitrarily drawing lines on a map won't protect a minority; it will merely replicate the conflictual national majority-minority dynamic at every local level.

From a behaviouralist perspective, the only way to begin to address South Africa's reality of a diversity of group interests in a practical manner, is to understand human nature and fortify the fundamental human right to **freedom of association**, as well as the other inalienable rights of the individual. The solution is not a forced herding together in an artificially-designated territory, but rather a voluntarily coming together of like-minded individuals in a (non-territorial) societal vehicle of expression that's group-representative as political mouthpiece – in other words, in a **political party** (which is exactly what we are seeing happening today in South Africa, where parties increasingly represent ethno-cultural interest groups, not brought together so much by ideology as by culturally comfortable co-identification).

With a demographic/geographic and economic foundational reality as inextricably mixed as that of South Africa is, the surest way to marginalize minorities is to try and formulaically and legalistically use population numbers as basis when it comes to mathematically trying to structure and allocate them a fixed share of influence over political power. Per definition, minorities will then always lose out, because their greatest weakness lies exactly in their limited numbers.

The better way, in terms of gaining and maintaining influence, is the behaviouralist way of analysing what the majority needs and relating that to what the minority has the capability to contribute (i.e., its true bargaining chips, such as its expertise, experience, capital and other means, plus its integrity and ability to deliver) to therewith cooperatively help meet those needs to mutual benefit. In other words, by relationally creating, through the appropriate outreach and shared goal dedication rather than by means of quotas dictated by laws, a strategic patriotic cooperation between political parties that allows minorities such as Afrikaners to actually leverage their real strengths, rather than their influence being mathematically limited in proportion to their greatest weakness, namely their numbers. Such cooperation should ideally be of a de-politicised nature, based on shared interests, such as exemplified by the notional "South Africa Incorporated" shareholder analogy (knowing that shareholders aren't lovers and don't need to see eye to eye on everything – they are interdependent realists who understand that fate had chosen to throw them together in a situation where the interests of both are best served by cooperating).

I have seen in Latin America how making your minority group's skills, integrity, and ability to deliver for the common good your defining characteristics in the eyes of the majority, has resulted in numerically tiny "white" minorities prospering and continuing to contribute disproportionally to governance (in effect, making up its bulk). Because they are not seen by the majority as threatening – on the contrary, being seen by them as a valuable asset enhancing the common good (especially where such communities know through hard experience the still-lingering limitations when government is wholly in the hands of their own group). This Central American tradition of rule by

“whites” is based on the democratic choice and support of the vast non-white majority who see their tiny white minorities as a great asset, not a threat, and who wish, above all, for economic advancement, security, honest governance and integrity in the administration of justice. (I will share more about this in Chapter 14).

In circumstances such as that of South Africa, practical political reality shows that the surest way for minorities to descend into virtual irrelevance (as far as influencing political power goes) is to choose to be an adversarial political opposition, always knowing better and being vocal about it. No matter how principled and normatively “correct” that may empirically be. This truth was amply demonstrated already in the previous dispensation by the white English-speaking minority’s decades-long utter lack of any real influence over power in the former white parliament…

### 13.5.4 THE PRESSURE OF EMPIRICAL BEHAVIOURALIST REALITY AS TRUE EXPLANATION FOR THE NP’S EVER-CHANGING NEGOTIATION POSTURE

As we have seen recorded in the timelines, the NP had indeed set itself a sequence of (changing) normative goals of what it wanted to achieve with the negotiations – at first their declared aim was a constitution based on group rights, then they switched to mandatory power sharing between parties, and finally to the protection of individual rights in a *Regstaat*. Nevertheless, the NP publicly declaring itself in favour of these formulae for the most part represented the packaging of the process for public consumption. Achieving those stated goals was never the real driver behind their 1989 decision to fundamentally change course – to, instead of preparing to shoot it out, finally seek a negotiated settlement. Nor were these normative philosophical concepts of “group rights” and “power-sharing” the real determinants behind the way that the process in the end actually went.

Which is not to say that the NP politicians didn’t at any given stage believe in these normative-legalistic structural stratagems (as Verwoerd had tried to do with “separate development” and PW Botha with the Tricameral Parliament). Nor that the New Nats deliberately were misleading their constituents as regards their true intentions. However, it would be utterly naïve to believe that the NP decided to abandon Apartheid and initiate talks about a new non-racial dispensation based on equal universal franchise – the abhorred and feared “one man, one vote” – because of them having experienced some sudden moral epiphany. It clearly was driven by improved situational awareness of the practical political power realities – as were every concession and U-turn they subsequently made.

We therefore need to look now in more detail at the behaviouralist power dynamics that truly determined the course of the transition. More specifically, how this dynamic explains the NPs U-turns, shifts in objectives, and concessions. Alas, also at what could have been, if they instead had properly prepared beforehand and therefore had settled on the right approach to adopt, from the very outset…

To understand this, we have to start with a “no b/s” behaviouralist analysis of the historical power realities. Fact remains that whites invaded and systematically occupied South Africa – uninvited – during the imperialist era. They conquered the indigenous inhabitants by superior force – just as happened all over the world during the age of European colonial conquest. Over the course of a century-and-a-half, those initial whites developed an own identity, calling themselves Afrikaners. They then themselves suffered the conquest of their Cape settlement by the British, causing many of them to migrate further inland. However, the British kept following, first desiring control of the entire coastline (so as to leave no gap for the emergent Germans), then over the diamonds, and ultimately the gold found under the land conquered by the Trekkers.

This led to the Republican Afrikaners tenaciously fighting wars of independence against the imperialist British, losing more than half the population below 15 of their two republics in the process. But they kept fighting, costing and bleeding the British, till eventually a peace settlement that would give the Afrikaner political control over a united southern Africa was agreed. The unified British lands in the subcontinent were constitutionally structured to exclude the non-white majority from participation in its political processes, to prevent them from gaining political power. This exclusion was understandably objected to by Black African natives, “Coloureds”, and Indians alike, but a series of laws that were physically strongly enforced initially kept their resistance in check.

However, post-WW2 the world-wide abhorrence of racism and imperialism that emerged due to Nazi racist atrocities, initiated a rapid process of decolonisation around the planet. Especially because and when indigenous liberation movements received support from the USSR in the Cold War context. In this turmoil Africa saw the very brutal expulsion of white and Indian “settlers” by the indigenous majority, who then in many of the newly independent countries themselves succumbed to chronic instability, bloody military coups, and economic collapse. What this lamentable litany of murdered, dispossessed, and expelled whites resulted in among South African whites, was that they became convinced that the same lot awaited them if ever they should lose their exclusive control over the levers of political power…

In South Africa’s case, armed resistance to white rule was initiated in the early 1960s. This grew into mass resistance in the metropoles by especially the youth from 1976 on, after the fall of the Portuguese Empire had caused the wave of Uhuru sweeping down Africa to reach South Africa’s borders, and after the abortive Operation Savannah in Angola had destroyed white South Africa’s “aura of invincibility” in the eyes of non-whites.

The white South African response was to militarise even more, including developing NBC weapons, vowing to resist what they saw as Soviet proxy expansion with the same skill and determination with which the Afrikaners had resisted the British.

However, the liberation struggle waged by the likes of the ANC had always been essentially political, principally driven by expert propaganda (with their “armed struggle” being in truth armed propaganda). Because of the effectiveness of the ANC’s propaganda and the mobilization therewith of international opinion, resulting in ever-increasing pressure, it transpired by the end of the 1980s that the white government found itself isolated, its economy suffering under international sanctions and its military (especially its air power) hamstrung by the mandatory UNSC arms embargo. This placed in doubt the long-term ability of the white government to persist by means of force (as soberingly demonstrated in 1988, again in Angola, leading to South Africa’s withdrawal from SWA/Namibia and leaving the white government in Pretoria as the proverbial “last man standing” of the West’s erstwhile white-ruled colonial possessions).

There is no doubt that the NP’s core strategy underwent a 180-degree about-turn from PW Botha to FW de Klerk. To properly understand what drove this, it is once again essential to analyse what happened from a behaviouralist rather than a normative perspective.

If we consider the concerns stemming from heightened situational awareness that began to permeate informed Afrikaner thinking in the eighties, then it is clear that the “New Nat” movement that by 1989 had brought the PW Botha era’s kind of thinking to an end, had been nurtured by a clearer understanding of South African political reality – most fundamentally, that political change can only in practice be brought about by Afrikaners themselves FROM WITHIN the governing party. No non-Afrikaner “outsider” would have had the standing or credibility to have done it, and neither would have had an Afrikaner who had ventured outside of the NP fold to criticise from there – no matter how well-founded their criticism may have been (as demonstrated by the experience of Van Zyl Slabbert and Wynand Malan, for example).

Informed Afrikaners had realised soon enough that the mainly Anglo white opposition had had no real idea how to resolve the country’s challenges – if they were to have been placed in charge, then there would merely have occurred a repeat of Rhodesia or India or any of the other abysmal Anglo "decolonisation" stories. Furthermore, if the mostly English-speaking parliamentary opposition parties were to somehow have achieved becoming the "party-in-government" responsible for the evidently necessary fundamental change, then by pure reactive instinct the bulk of Afrikaners would have actively revolted against it (it is interesting to note that not even the most progressive white opposition had proposed unconditional non-racial majority government in a unitary state, before De Klerk made his 2 February 1990 speech).

It was also clear through experience that breaking away from the NP and forming more left-leaning parties (such as the likes of Dr Dennis Worrl, Wynand Malan and their allies had tried) offered no realistic hope of success.

So, it came to be understood that, for better or for worse, only an Afrikaner NP government making a radical about-turn would be able to politically and psychologically manage such a fundamental transition. (Similar to the example of other right-leaning leaders in recent history making peace deals that their left-leaning counterparts were unable to achieve – such as Menachem Begin in Israel making peace with his Arab neighbours, or Eisenhower stopping the Korean War, and Nixon the Vietnam War). Because if an Afrikaner NP leader had the insight and guts to opt for the truly fundamental change that the situation required, plus the leadership ability to take enough of his followers with him in support (or at least acceptance) of that, then of course parties to the left would not oppose it – leaving just the relatively marginalised white Right to contend with.

What most informed Afrikaners therefore instinctively had understood (in terms of white South Africa's ingrained political behaviour, rather than normatively), was that the needed change had to be facilitated from within the NP, because the government itself would not listen to outsiders and neither would the then white voting majority have heeded the clarion calls of a culturally "outsider" parliamentary opposition.

It is absolutely essential to understand this fundamental truth, in order to understand the difficult personal decisions that informed and enlightened Afrikaner politicians and officials increasingly had to make, with regard to the colonial legacy that they had inherited and were working within – turning their back upon the system and walking away from it to virtue-signal disapproval would inevitably have led not to change but a race war, for having left the hard-liners in charge; what was needed (as the only workable option), was to stay in, so as to stay relevant and influential, and then from within change the system's course by changing the orientation of the party leadership.

Precisely because a sufficient mass of thinking Afrikaners had chosen to stay in the NP, in organised Afrikaner civil society and in the Civil Service, striving from the inside to bring about realistic situational awareness and effect a fundamental change in mind-set, the truly gob-smacking turnaround that we witnessed, culminating in De Klerk's 2 February 1990 speech, was incrementally birthed by Afrikaners, from within, over the course of the nineteen-eighties. If these insiders had not chosen to stay in proximity to the steering wheel and take control of it – if they had all left to protest from outside – it is a certainty that no such change would have come about.

As greater situational awareness set in about the likely consequences of trying to maintain white supremacy into perpetuity purely by force, the leader of the NP's total onslaught "shoot" faction, PW Botha, was forced out by the pro-settle New Nat faction. With the USSR at the same time collapsing, the new NP leader FW de Klerk could be convinced of both the opportunity presented by, as well as the increased future threat contained in this radically changed geopolitical reality.

Reasoning that a new broadly agreed constitutional dispensation would, sooner or later, inevitably have to be negotiated, and realising that circumstances would over time just become more difficult for the white government (logically leaving it with less and less leverage), he decided to seize the coincidental opportunity presented by his taking of the reigns as president and the falling away of the Red Threat to visibly break with the past and make a fresh start. De Klerk understood the imperative need to initiate the negotiation process before he too as president became too deeply identified with the past, and before the West (also no longer under Red Threat) would entirely turn against the white regime. In addition, the moment was deemed opportune because the NP's main political adversary (the ANC) had just lost their main international sponsor (Moscow) and furthermore had had their Marxist ideology exposed as a failed system.

The first prerequisite for successfully initiating negotiations is the requirement to have in place a credible negotiation counterpart (after all, it takes "two to tango"). Experience in Zimbabwe and SWA/Namibia had conclusively demonstrated that that counterpart cannot be selected by the white government. However weak the ANC may have been ideologically and militarily in early 1990, because of the stature that their effective propaganda, international outreach, and mobilization had given them, it meant that they (and their SACP ally) could not be credibly excluded from negotiations.

In fact, the NP Government absolutely needed the ANC/SACP as counterparty, not only to give credibility and legitimacy to the process, but because there simply were no other viable counterparts: the UDM/UDF, PAC/BCM, and IFP all had fatal flaws.

The internal resistance being carried on under the banner of the UDM/UDF was highly disorganized, undisciplined, and led by big egos, so that they lacked the capacity and structure to take the black majority with them to the negotiation table – in any event, they would never have accepted to join negotiations unless the ANC favoured it and was itself present at the table. The PAC and BCM's radical Africanist policies militated against any agreement being possible with them, and they clearly lacked a broad support base. The IFP with its strong display of traditionalist Zulu values awakened in the rest of the Bantu population historical fears about militant Zulu domination.

Which logically made the NP and the ANC natural (if awkward) strategic bedfellows, at least as regards ensuring that the transition could at all be achieved – the NP could not conceivably reach a credible settlement that would bring peace, the lifting of sanctions and rehabilitation of the image of the Afrikaner without having the ANC as co-author and signatory to such an accord. Similarly, because the ANC had no prospect of unseating the white government in the foreseeable future by means of armed insurrection, the only way they could get their hands on the keys to the Union Buildings was through the NP agreeing to give it to them.

For both, the alternative was a bloody struggle that inevitably would have taken on even more racial overtones, killing untold numbers and destroying the country, to the benefit of no-one. As John Vorster had stated years before: the alternative to settling was too ghastly to contemplate…

Could the NP not rather have formed a DTA-style alliance with conservative forces such as the IFP?

The real-world Behaviouralist answer is NO, because that would not have been credible, nor be seen as legitimate. It would have alienated and hardened ANC attitudes (because what they had feared most, was exactly such an alliance being formed). Trying to ally to its right with conservative homeland-based parties would have further tainted the NP, defeating the objective of achieving peace and the rehabilitation of the image of the Afrikaner.

Political alliances are typically formed **against a perceived common threat** (in Namibia, the Wambo/SWAPO). In the case of South Africa's black tribes, it is the **Zulu** that is perceived as the common threat, with the rest at that time seeing the ANC and its allies as their only viable bulwark against Zulu domination. Undoubtedly an alliance of the Zulus and Afrikaners could have militarily reigned supreme, but such a strongman alliance of the country's two supreme warrior tribes (AmaZulu and AmaBula) would have stirred historic resentment and could never have brought legitimacy, peace, or rehabilitation. It would have seriously tainted the NP in the eyes of the Black majority, causing the Afrikaner to continue to be perceived as a grave threat. Furthermore, entering into such an alliance with the IFP would have made any cooperation with the ANC (such as through the "Channel Bilateral") a virtual impossibility, which would have made the transition as such impossible to achieve.

The simple reality that many analysts in the NIS and academia had come to understand was that only the ANC had the legitimacy, organisation, and discipline to conceivably serve as the necessary negotiation counterpart to the NP. Furthermore, that the ANC was the only viable party capable of forming, as end outcome of the transition process, an effective government capable of ensuring future peace and stability. Logically, therefore, the NP should – in terms of political reality – have seen the ANC from the outset as a necessary strategic partner, not treating it as its adversary (which ironically was the conclusion that the NP in fact eventually came to, under Marthinus van Schalkwyk's leadership).

The problem at the start was in part personal (De Klerk and Mandela certainly did not click at an interpersonal level), and in part tactical.

The fact that the had NP only opted (at long last) to negotiate when it found itself in the dire position that South Africa was in at the end of the 1980s, was akin to the earlier-mentioned analogy of finding yourself on the back of a tiger, placed there by history and destiny. The NP (and, by extension, its traditional support base) had to find an accommodation with the tiger – balancing their goal of not being eaten, with the tiger's hunger. No-one can conceivably remain on the back of a tiger forever. The position in which history had placed South Africa's whites had become untenable. In the rest of the continent the whites were either eliminated or had to flee. But, as Lang

Hendrik van den Bergh was fond of saying, unlike the Portuguese, the Afrikaners did not have any boats in the harbour (nor ancestral ports abroad where they would be welcomed).

FW de Klerk had had the good sense to see that an alliance with the IFP (which initially many in the NP had favoured and actively cultivated) would solve nothing in the long run (as General Constand Viljoen eventually also found out). However, De Klerk's personal disinclination/inability to develop a partner-like interpersonal relationship with Mandela (who he seemed to have seen, Westminster-style, as formidable political competitor, and as lawyer himself, as his "opposing learned friend" when it came to arguing the terms of the new national "contract") prevented FW from doing the obvious and cultivate a strategic partnership in the manner that Niël Barnard and Nelson Mandela had actually foreshadowed in their prison talks. Such was De Klerk's grip on the NP that his adversarial stance unfortunately prevailed, even up to and including the premature ending of the first GNU – till he eventually retired from the political scene and the NP disbanded itself, to go join the ANC...

The lack of personal chemistry between De Klerk and Mandela and the resultant adversarial relationship could however not change the political power reality on the ground. Positioning himself and the NP adversarially merely caused contestation rather than cooperation – acrimonious contests that the NP were bound to lose every time, due to the prevailing balance of power (locally & internationally). Which kept obliging the NP into concessions and about-turns.

Because the fundamental reality remained: the NP could absolutely not afford the negotiations to fail, which in effect accorded the ANC the power of veto. Clearly the NP never had the means, nor the supporting numbers around the negotiation table, with which to force the ANC to accept their preferred policy positions. (enticing them cooperatively with the *quid-pro-quo*'s of the white constituency's true strengths may have resulted in a somewhat different outcome…).

What reality, in the end, left as only option available to the NP was the old saying of: "if you cannot beat them, join them." So that the NP disbanded itself and its members joined the ANC…

# 13.6 WHAT THE NP DID (AND DID NOT DO), WHICH CAUSED THEM TO LOSE ALL POWER TO THE ANC…

## 13.6.1 DUE TO A PASSÉ MIND-SET, THE NP HAD STARTED THE NEGOTIATED TRANSITION WITH THE WRONG APPROACH, GOALS, & PROCESS

The once-mighty National Party did not lose power overnight, and not due only to FW de Klerk or Roelf Meyer (as some nowadays are wont to allege).

Considering all that we've discussed in the previous chapters of this eBook, and as an orientating "heads up" (as the Americans say) about the central message of this section, I will now firstly **sum up** what, in my opinion, were the main reasons why the NP firstly could not muster the political power it had needed in order for its initial ideas to prevail at the negotiation table and secondly could not mobilise sufficient electoral support to win the subsequent elections either. As I had done in previous sections, "showing my hand" here at the outset will hopefully enable you as reader to judge for yourself the validity of my reasoning, as you read through the detailed proof amplifying my contentions that I will present in the more detailed subs-sections to follow here-below.

It is important, though, not to get fixated only on that which theoretically is worthy of criticism.

### *13.6.1.1 An important qualification at the outset: much to criticise, but more to admire*

FW de Klerk and the NP team did not operate serenely among the pristine pages of a book on Political Science theory. They were locked in an often-dirty struggle, being constantly confronted by the vagaries and unknown pitfalls of the real world, with the stakes dizzyingly high – the most momentous decisions regarding the allocation and exercise of political power anyone had been confronted with in three-and-a-half centuries of white presence at the southern tip of Africa. Let there be no doubt – given the exceptional degree of difficulty posed by the

operational environment and the down-dragging historical legacy which they had to overcome – **overall, they did exceedingly well**.

Nowhere else has the miracle that De Klerk, together with Mandela, had wrought as yet been successfully replicated.

One must therefore give due credit for the enormous good that the NP under the exceptionally brave leadership of De Klerk indisputably did achieve – rightly described as a veritable "miracle" by informed observers – which saved South Africa from what had seemed like an inevitable race war.

Never forget that, on the brink of the precipice that PW Botha had brought the country to, De Klerk and his eventual core team succeeded in bringing peace and rehabilitation, through a relatively smooth transition, which resulted in the once headstrongly communist ANC/SACP (that for decades had been hell-bent on overthrowing the state and replacing it with a Marxist "people's republic") accepting in the end the principle of state continuity and a Western-style neoliberal democracy based on the free-market system and the principles of a *Regstaat,* with the constitution supreme and the judiciary fiercely independent, enforcing that constitution with its strong protection for individual rights.

However, since this eBook has as purpose to help its readers **identify the lessons** about what could theoretically have been handled better (with a view to the era of negotiated coalition politics we are entering), inevitably much of the text to follow will be dedicated not to eulogising De Klerk and his team (as they probably deserve much more, than being criticised), but on the lessons to be learnt from the "*ligte mistaaikies*" that inevitably occurred, as in any endeavour by mere mortals. Again, it is important to stress that – even had the De Klerk team from the outset followed a flawless textbook approach to the transition – then the end result would not have been fundamentally different from what was in fact achieved; at most there could have been somewhat better provisions against over-concentration of power, but certainly not anything approaching the right-wing fever dreams of a *Volkstaat* or the like…

Truth is that – as we have seen – the fundamental reasons for the NP's difficulties date back to long before the De Klerk era. That said, it remains true that in final analysis, the choices that were made by the NP Government from the start of De Klerk's leadership in 1989 (more specifically, the things they did **not** then do and appear not to have sufficiently understood) most directly led to them achieving a miracle that was not as complete and optimal as perhaps could have been…

### *13.6.1.2 Understanding reality before making strategic choices: Anticipating election result*

What De Klerk and his circle undoubtedly did correctly understand from the outset of his tenure, was that Apartheid and the idea of staying in power by means of force of arms had in reality become **the true existential threats** to the survival of their own Afrikaner constituency. They finally understood that the reality of an economically integrated South Africa and the new international *zeitgeist* dictated that South Africa had to be seen as one undivided (i.e. unitary) state, with the only form of government that would be internally as well as externally accepted as legitimate, being majority rule in a non-racial democracy based on universal franchise.

This logically meant that elections would in future be decisive in allocating political power.

Accordingly, the strategic approach that the NP should ideally have adopted to the coming transition had needed from before launch to have been based on a coldly clinical, objective SWOT-style analysis of the political power balance and thus **the likely election result**, plus the expert gaming of all possible scenarios and strategies, as well as careful consideration of the best theory on how to conduct negotiations and on behaviourally managing such a contest for political power in order **to have as much real influence as possible <u>after</u> the transition**.

As we know, because of a gravely dysfunctional national strategic decision-making system, such essential preparation had unfortunately not been adequately done before launch on 2 February 1990. Which absence of thorough prior expert analysis and gaming had initially resulted in the NP's choice of strategic approach being influenced by three weaknesses:

- By the then prevailing hubristic gut-feel expectations (instead of scientific analysis) about **who would likely win** such elections, as well as
- By the personal worldview plus the lack of relevant experience and the antiquated academic training of those NP politicians (who had decided to plan and drive the process themselves, instead of bringing in all available outside expertise and basing strategic planning upon best theory regarding **how to optimally negotiate, to** thereby best protect the interests of themselves and their constituents), and
- By the lack of a correct understanding of the **principal existential threat** that would face their constituents in future, namely that the radical faction within the ANC may gain control over that party. With the ANC likely to have the reigning parliamentary majority, taking over the ANC from within the radicals could thereby (as happened at Polokwane in 2007) gain control over all of the levers of government power. Understanding this, should have resulted in the NP seeing as its overriding long-term strategic objective the need to strengthen the ANC moderates and marginalise the radicals, and to gain for the NP as much influence as possible – measured in real-world behavioural terms, not merely formulaically on paper – in the future government's decision-making circles. This is what they had owed their constituents, more so than a constitution resplendent in its feel-good phraseology.

The fact that the absolutely essential prior preparation for effective strategy formulation had not been properly done, unfortunately resulted in the De Klerk Government kicking off their very laudable democratic transformation with an adversarial, legalist, group-centred strategic approach. These notions would soon enough be exposed as not being realistically feasible. Objectively assessed, neither did they optimally serve the real fundamental interests of the NP's own constituents. It is these realities that forced the NP leadership into the succession of about-turns and concessions we then did see.

#### *13.6.1.3 Consequences of having chosen an adversarial approach*

Without belabouring the point here again, the core issue was that De Klerk had opted for an adversarial approach to Mandela and the ANC, trying to legalistically box them in, rather than a cooperative approach aimed at establishing strategic cooperation through which the ANC moderates could be strengthened and real-world opportunity to influence decision-making could be bartered. Two questions arise out of this:

- why was the initial stance so inappropriate? and
- was there ever a realistic chance of making a cooperative approach work in practice?

So, why did De Klerk not set out to confidentially, bilaterally negotiate with the ANC a mutually beneficial arrangement for strategic cooperation? Especially given the positive results that had been achieved in just such pre-negotiation talks held between Mr Mandela and Dr Barnard (and confirmed 30 months after De Klerk's speech as the right approach, when the "Channel Bilateral" saved the process).

In part this could be ascribed to an inflated initial expectation of own electoral success. It was common talk at the time in the passageways of Wachthuis (SAP-SB HQ) and in Military Intelligence circles (who had wrongly predicted that Mugabe and Nujoma would lose in respectively Zimbabwe and Namibia) that the NP, together with support from the white English-speaking, "Coloured" and Indian communities, plus allies such as the IFP and homeland political parties, could actually win the election.

Yes, it is true that ANC was organisationally weak (in the beginning), Moscow as their former main international sponsor had effectively flipped sides, and the communist ideology was discredited (which they would underplay and then abandon, just retaining symbolic frills like still calling each other "comrade").

BUT they had the "freedom fighter" image, they had an armed core element with which to wage "people's war" on their political opponents in the townships, they had shown their skill at diplomacy (having the 3rd World solidly behind them, with also significant public support in the West), and they were very, very good at exploiting their propaganda advantages. Principal among the latter was the ingrained anti-NP stance of 99% of the SA English-language print media, who since 1948 had been dedicated to the fall of the NP, with little qualm about who takes over.

Fact is, that the NP Government never was truly a "white" government – it was an Afrikaner government, so that its own political relevance in 1990 was still first and foremost dependent on retaining at least the bulk of the Afrikaner vote. Which meant that the NP's media machine logically consisted of Afrikaans-language papers and that their propaganda was targeted at the Afrikaner, focused on discrediting the Afrikaner Right. Afrikaans media self-evidently had no significant impact on non-white SA opinion nor on international opinion. The English-language SA press, on the other hand, was highly influential in non-white SA ranks as well as international opinion, because of the reality that English-language reporting formed the core media feed that determined international reporting on South Africa.

Because the NP had no means nor hope to win the propaganda war, they never had any real chance of winning the contest for political power in the new non-racial arena – both in terms of negotiation leverage and the eventual elections. Objective analysis should have foreseen this obvious reality (as the surveys commissioned by Dave Steward's Information Service in fact had done) and dispelled the hubristic expectations held early on by some of the "Super Afrikaners" in positions of influence who were clinging to "group rights" as legalist/formulaic protection mechanism.

Proper analysis would also have shown that forming an alliance with the IFP would be a poisoned chalice, because of the ingrained distrust on the part of the non-Zulu Black populace of militant traditionalist Zulu tendencies to dominate (so that they came to see the ANC as their bulwark against AmaZulu + AmaBula dominance).

#### *13.6.1.4 Why FW de Klerk had opted to approach the ANC as adversaries*

It is also in my estimation very unlikely that the idea of stepping outside of his zone of political experience (i.e., the adversarial Westminster system) and attempting something as admittedly unorthodox as reaching out to Mandela and the ANC/SACP would have naturally occurred to De Klerk as possible strategy – again, because no expert SWOT analysis or scenario gaming had been done beforehand, through which it could have been generated and suggested to him. If the idea had in fact occurred to him, it likely would also have clashed with De Klerk's somewhat naïve commitment to "normalised" politics (i.e., no secret deals involving intelligence resources – only politics conducted openly among and by pukka politicians).

Furthermore, it would clearly have clashed (if conducted openly) with what De Klerk probably would, with full justification, have regarded as the tolerance limits of his own constituency, who only months before had still been exposed to the constant psychological conditioning of the preceding "total onslaught" era about the ANC being existentially dangerous and devious communist proxies. Especially since engaging with the ANC willy-nilly required accepting their SACP Siamese twin as part of the package. But of course, it wasn't necessary (or normal practice, nor aligned with theory) to conduct, out in the open for all the world to see, the kind of pre-negotiations designed to explore cooperation, build bridges and trust, and obtain in-principle agreement for a negotiation framework…

What had occurred was that short-term NP party political own interest (not to lose their constituency) had clashed head-on with the long-term strategic interest of finding with the ANC a basis for cooperation so as to retain influence. The long-term risk involved in this (as demonstrated by the NP completely ceasing to exist) could only have been foreseen if the necessary preparation of expertly analysing, generating options and game-test them, had been done… (which, as I've been stressing *ad nauseam*, had unfortunately not been the case).

This is where the convergence can be seen between the two key issues indicated above: firstly, the absolute need for always first doing comprehensive strategic preparation (to avoid starting out on the wrong foot and then be condemned to about-turns, as the NP had unwittingly landed itself in). Secondly, the question of whether an attempt to pre-emptively negotiate bilaterally, in strict confidentiality, a framework agreement with the ANC/SACP to strategically cooperate in the transition process, was ever a realistic option? Because the second question only arises if the strategic analysis and gaming had been done properly beforehand, to identify pre-negotiating such a deal as an option that was both necessary and viable, despite being so counter-intuitive in terms of politics as had then been usual.

### *13.6.1.5 Empirical proof that a cooperative approach by the NP to the ANC could have worked better – the science-based Mont Fleur initiative by organised business*

My personal belief (as analyst and as someone who had in the local microcosm of Franschhoek in practice been confronted by this challenge) is that reaching such a deal was indeed possible. I will come back to the empirical evidence from the Franschhoek experience in Chapter 14. In the meanwhile, I will now list substantive proof justifying my view from the actual history of the transition itself. This indubitable proof is from what was probably the most important dimension of the ideological cleft that had to be bridged, to set the New South Africa on a viable footing: communism versus capitalism. In other words, the Marxist-inspired nationalisation of assets and state control over the economy, versus following the free-market "Washington consensus" that so-called neoliberal capitalism was inherently the superior model.

In terms of what would most impact the fundamental personal interests of the NP's own constituency, the economic policy of the future government was by far the most important issue. However, being politicians the NP Government had been focused mostly on political issues such as group rights and power sharing. They did not set out to bring the business sector, civil society, or academia into the strategic planning process, or even into the actual Kempton Park negotiations. It fell to international economic and financial entities and SA business itself to organise own outreach to the ANC – on the SA business side by first organising themselves into the so-called Brenthurst group.

What was their approach? Not adversarial. Not preaching to the ANC. Not normative-legalist either, trying to ensconce formulas, but behaviouralist, seeking through strategic cooperation to influence the ANC to itself come to realise what would in real-world terms be workable and what not.

So, what was the first thing that the Brenthurst Group did, to kick off their engagement with the ANC on a theoretically sound footing? They roped in the renowned strategic planner and gamer of future scenarios Adam Kahane (then scenario planning guru of Royal Dutch/Shell, today famous as author of books such as: "*Collaborating with the Enemy: How to work with People you don't Agree with or Like or Trust*"; in 2022 he was named as the Schwab Foundation's *Social Innovation Thought Leader of the Year* at the World Economic Forum in Davos).

Let us look at the widely divergent ideological points of departure of the Brenthurst capitalists on the one hand and the ANC/SACP on the other, before this scientifically managed engagement between the two sides began – and contrast that original divergence with the harmony we knew was achieved in the end: namely with the ANC accepting a constitution that is four-square based on the free market. (I will illustrate how this was achieved by quoting from expert observation by others, lest you think I'm fitting the narrative to suit my own conclusions – with grateful recognition to **Johan Mostert** for having first recorded how this important development unfolded).

In his book "*Thabo Mbeki and the Battle for the Soul of the ANC*" William Gumede wrote: "*The single pillar on which the ANC's economic policy rested, even after its Harare conference in April 1990 that set out its basic economic views, was nationalisation.*"

Nelson Mandela, after more than 200 hours spent in intensive discussions with Niël Barnard and his team (which before his release included deliberate exposures to the reality of what South Africa had by the end of the 1980s become), had always been careful to toe the official ANC party line, but he had personally begun to question the viability of nationalisation and Marxist economic policy. Gumede wrote that when Mandela proposed that the ANC should abandon nationalisation "...*the rest of the leadership emphatically rejected the idea. .... Mandela was accused of betraying the Freedom Charter, and the ANC economic conference vehemently rejected his proposal*."

Eric Louw of the University of Queensland, in his 2008 review of Gumede's book, wrote: "*Gumede correctly traces the origins of the struggles for the soul of the ANC back to the early 1990s (that is, before the ANC came to power). During 1991–92 western governments, western think-tanks, the World Bank, and a range of business leaders put enormous energy into wooing Mandela and other ANC leaders with junkets and workshops where they were fed a steady diet of neoliberal economics. In addition, white South African businessmen formed the Brenthurst group that successfully wooed and co-opted key members of the ANC's leadership, including Mandela. A key moment came in 1992, when left-wing delegates at Davos persuaded Mandela that socialism was incompatible with*

*globalisation and that he needed to rethink his position on nationalising South Africa's economy. By the end of 1992 Mandela and Mbeki had been sold the neoliberal agenda. Thereafter they set to work realigning the ANC away from socialism, so as to bring it into line with the Washington Consensus."*

It is common knowledge that the ANC moderates did succeed, with the final constitution being solidly neoliberal capitalist (to the lasting chagrin of the ANC radicals – today's EFF and MKP – who still pose the greatest existential threat to middle-class wellbeing with their dogmatic attachment to a second revolution, nationalisation, and "redistribution").

Johan Mostert in 2009 rightly wrote that: *"The enormity of what had happened registered with few people. It remained under the radar. On the one hand, because the ANC did not want to trumpet that its policy had changed. It would have been grist to the mill of those who accused it of selling out the revolution. On the other hand, those who had worked to bring about the change did not want to make a big deal of it because it could be counterproductive. This would, in line with the ANC's fears, draw the attention of ANC supporters to the turnaround and increase pressure to change policy to follow a more radical course. This mutual silence has resulted in these extensive events not being properly valued in historical perspective.*"

How was this remarkable, 180-degree transformation in ANC economic thinking achieved in practice?

In a lecture titled: "*The Seeds of Change: Serendipity and Social Movements*" which Tim Costello (CEO of World Vision) delivered at the National Library of Australia on 6 October 2005, Costello explained how this was achieved, as follows: "*I alluded before to alternative histories, how the what-might-have-beens can inform our understanding of what ended up happening. And that is why examining South Africa's transition from Apartheid to democracy is what the former Johannesburg bureau chief for the Financial Times, Patti Waldmeir calls the* ***Anatomy of a Miracle****, in her book of the same name.*

*"No doubt the commanding moral presence of a figure such as Nelson Mandela played a huge role in this stunning transition. But I would like to dwell for a moment on an event where many of the key players in what was then the 'future South Africa' had an opportunity to really think about what alternative future they really wanted.*

*"(It was) 1991, a year after Mandela had been released from gaol; the competing interests in South Africa had to somehow coordinate a peaceful transition from authoritarian apartheid to racially egalitarian democracy.*

*"As Adam Kahane details in Solving Tough Problems, Pieter le Roux from the left-wing, black University of the Western Cape wanted to use corporate planning methodology for "the world's first scenario planning exercise from the left". Kahane was the head of scenarios planning for Royal Dutch/Shell, and was described by Trevor Manual of the ANC's Economics Department as "a representative of International Capital". Kahane was to provide advice on scenario planning for the gathering to be held at the Mont Fleur Conference Centre.* (Note to readers: You may recall that the Mont Fleur gathering and its scenario planning – the analogy of the four birds – was discussed in the timeline of the transition I've earlier presented: see 11.3.45 above).

*"In a bold move, Le Roux had invited leaders from all the main groups across the left-wing opposition, as well as their long-time adversaries from the white business community and academia – 'a microcosm of the future South Africa'. This was the first time Kahane had ever conducted scenario planning for a country, not a corporation, but he stuck to his conventions of getting mixed groups to break up and discuss not what each of them wanted to happen, but what could happen.*

*"'The team found this scenario game to be fabulously liberating', Kahane recalls. 'They told stories of left-wing revolution, right-wing revolts, and free market utopias.' As the Apartheid restrictions on social interactions had recently been lifted, teams were able to work across white-black and establishment-opposition lines.*

*"Initially, the sessions produced 30 stories, which were narrowed down to nine, then four. The groups were asked to take these stories covering complete social, economic, political and international dimensions back to their constituencies. The groups reconvened at Mont Fleur some months later. They were then asked to turn their*

*scenarios into a transition process. There were four very detailed scenarios, which developed the cheeky nicknames:*

- ***Ostrich**, where the white government sticks its head in the sand to avoid a negotiated settlement with the black majority;*
- ***Lame Duck,** where there is a prolonged transition which purports to respond to all but satisfies none;*
- ***Flight of the flamingos,** where all of the building blocks are put in place and everyone in society rises slowly together; and*
- ***Icarus,** where radical left-wing economic policies gradually bankrupt the economy.*

*"After much internal debate over the Icarus scenario, the Pan Africanist Congress decided to abandon their armed struggle and join constitutional negations and Joe Slovo (chairperson of the South African Communist Party) 'cited his personal experience with failed socialist programs in the Soviet Union and elsewhere' and managed to convince the ANC leadership that it was a scenario which needed to be taken seriously.*

*History reveals that for all its current faults, South Africa most closely followed the "flight of the flamingos" scenario. Yet Kahane has since tried a form of replicating a similar process between Basque separatists and the Spanish Government, in Columbia among the government, terrorists and drug barons, and among Israeli and Palestinians. Talks have broken down through mistrust and fear.*

*But as Howard Gabriels of the left-wing black National Union of Mineworkers recalled, at Mont Fleur no one acted quite as he expected. Thinking about the future in that way was extremely frightening. All of a sudden, you are no longer in your comfort zone. You are looking into the future, and you begin to argue the capitalist case and the free-market case and the social democracy case. And all those paradigms begin to fall away. Those people that I thought were quite conservative were articulating very radical futures.*

*One person attending Mont Fleur was Johann Liebenberg, who was the white executive of the Chamber of Mines. In 1987 Gabriels took 340,000 of his mine workers out on strike. Fifteen were killed and 300 not just beaten but "terribly injured", he recalls. Yet somehow he managed, with as he recalled, "those bruises still raw" to work with and trust Liebenberg in planning a better future for South Africa. Gabriels said that "Mont Fleur allowed him [Liebenberg] to see the world from my point of view, and it allowed me to see the world from his point of view". In fact, the two even ended up becoming friends."*

Johan Mostert summed up the lessons to be drawn from this as follows, showing that such outreach had both been necessary and viable, on condition that there was sufficient situational awareness to understand its necessity and potential, and the willingness to dare to act, rather than staying within the comfort of the conventional: *There was a willingness to act as an agent of change and go out to concretely tackle the challenge. Change does not come without someone physically getting up and doing something. Those who were involved as agents of change did not bow before prophets of doom who said it was impossible. The conventional wisdom was that the ANC would never abandon its commitment to socialism. The role that communism played in the ANC was referred to with trepidation. The ultimate result achieved, contradicted these reservations…*

*"The agents of change were not afraid to engage with the opponent. They did not demonize the other party and thereby undermine the possibility of negotiations. A sophisticated approach was the key."*

One can but wonder about what might have been possible, if the NP Government had followed the same scientific, Behaviouralist approach to planning their own approach and to the engaging cooperatively with the ANC/SACP. What cannot be denied, is the fruits that the business sector indisputably obtained, demonstrating that it had indeed been possible to overcome deep division by making proper use of modern Behaviouralist theory and tools, bringing in outside expertise (in all likelihood, the division over economic policy had, at the outset, been greater and more intractable-seeming between the ANC and the business community than the division over political matters had been between the ANC and the NP Government).

Google's Gemini AI gave me the following input, after assessing what had occurred on the business side to effect the change in the ANC's position that we saw. The AI called it "*The Four Behaviouralist Axioms of Transitio*n". This is how its conclusions read:

*"The profound success of the private sector's quiet intervention yields four vital lessons that expose the core strategic flaws of the De Klerk administration's insular approach:*

1. ***Human Agency Alters the "Inevitable":*** *Radical structural change only occurs when specific individuals refuse to accept a seemingly unavoidable disaster and proactively step forward as active agents of transformation.*
2. ***Reject the Prophets of Doom:*** *The conventional wisdom of the early 1990s insisted that the ANC would never abandon its deeply ingrained socialist identity. Those who successfully engineered the economic pivot simply ignored the fatalistic assertions of political commentators and securocrats.*
3. ***Political Attitudes are Not Static:*** *Ideological positions are entirely mutable when exposed to constructive, structured engagement. Human behaviour adapts rapidly when presented with clear, unvarnished systemic realities.*
4. ***Engage, Do Not Demonize:*** *The corporate architects of the economic transition were completely unafraid to sit down with their sworn adversaries. By refusing to demonize the liberation movement, they preserved the psychological space necessary to successfully guide them toward a shared, market-driven reality.*

*"Had the National Party government spent less time trying to preserve "group rights" through rigid constitutional prose, and more time using these exact behavioralist tools to build strategic, protective partnerships with the pragmatic core of the ANC, the long-term institutional configuration of the post-apartheid state might have looked entirely different."*

Given how wide the divide on economic policy had originally been and the fact that it could – with the right approach – be bridged, the question is not really whether it had been possible for the NP Government to approach the ANC cooperatively rather than adversarially, to thereby strategically establish a *modus vivendi*. What Big Business successfully did (and what Roelf Meyer and his new negotiation team succeeded in doing from when they took over in 1992) showed that it had indeed been feasible. The real question is: if Business knew what to do – and how – then why didn't the NP Government from the outset know and applied that?

The answer is that, unfortunately, the NP politicians who had, in their minds, "taken back" decision-making from the "securocrats" did not have a functional strategy formulation mechanism in place to present them with options (which they easily could have had, given the expertise available in Afrikaner civil society, academia, and business, as well as in the Civil Service and the Intelligence Community). They trusted on their instincts and limited experience, of necessity because they themselves did not have truly appropriate academic formation – resulting in a legalist approach based on normative "how things should be" theory such as that of Dooyeweerd.

Why didn't the new NP Government at the end of 1989 (when it mattered most) enjoy the benefit of a properly functional strategy formulation system? After all, the intelligence analysis and advisory framework designed by Mr Justice Potgieter and General Van den Bergh at the end of the 1960s had back then been duly passed into law by Parliament. However, PW Botha had, when the "quiet coup" had brought him to power, by decree willfully neutered that statutory system (because of the centrality it had accorded to the NIS) and had replaced it with the NSMS, which was (correctly) perceived by all as in reality a mechanism to ensure that every institution of state would march in lock-step as directed by the Military and their "total onslaught" dogma.

Further proof that a cooperative approach could from the outset have worked (on condition that it had been properly planned and managed, bilaterally and confidentially) can be found in the success that the NP Government's new negotiation team under Roelf Meyer achieved under the direst of circumstances, when upon being charged with salvaging the negotiations in 1992 they adopted a very different approach to that of the predecessor team under its first cabinet-level leader, Minister Gerrit Viljoen.

With the dynamic, clear-minded and laterally thinking Meyer appointed as the new team's cabinet-level leader and Niël Barnard installed as the new head of Constitutional Development and Planning (bringing with him a number

of top NIS analysts and operators and leaving the NIS in the very capable hands of Mike Louw, who kept pressing upon the NP Government the realities they faced) the NP's approach fundamentally changed. Where Viljoen's effort had centred around publicly-announced formal meetings between teams of politicians (such as those held at Groote Schuur, Cape Town Airport and the Old Presidency in Pretoria) Meyer made use of personal outreach, bilaterally and confidentially between himself and his ANC counterpart Cyril Ramaphosa – such as their latterly hyped joint trout fishing trip, and their hitherto not widely known "save the negotiations" initial talk (when they met in secret at the National Intelligence Academy's secure facility outside Pretoria in the countryside).

Again, it is not only my opinion that, with their changed approach, the NP's new team under Meyer then achieved considerable success. Professor Piet Croucamp's article in ***Rapport*** on 21 June 2026 titled: ***"Kom by, dis eerder Roelf wat vir Cyril ore aangesit het"*** ("*Get real, it was rather Roelf who outmanoeuvred Cyril*"), debunks the myth that Ramaphosa had completely outmanoeuvred Meyer during the transition negotiations. Croucamp rightly points out that the ANC had entered the 1990s with deeply ingrained Communism-inspired ideals as regards the nature of the state and economy, intending to establish an unchecked revolutionary state and Marxist-style economy. However, the ANC in the end signed off on a liberal democratic constitution that anchors private property rights, enables a fiercely independent judiciary, protects civil liberties, and secured a market-oriented economic system. This about-turn on the part of the ANC is ascribed by Croucamp to the quiet, intense, and cooperative mechanics of the "Channel Bilateral" back channel managed confidentially and directly between Meyer and Ramaphosa and their respective teams (by now consisting substantially of "non-politician" experts on the NP side).

Meyer and his team had built an authentic, relationship-driven foundation of trust with Ramaphosa and his team. This close psychological proximity allowed them to unpack systemic realities calmly behind the scenes – away from the radical glare of their respective grassroots constituencies – effectively neutralizing the ANC's hardline socialist political and economic desires. (Of course, by the time that Meyer took over the negotiations, the business sector had shown what could be achieved with a science-based cooperative approach, so that it would be wrong to ascribe the ANC's change of heart – especially on the economy – as purely due to the influence of Meyer).

Once again, what is shown is that the great lament about the NP's handling of the transition should not be the latter-day cry of "weakness" or "selling out". It should be the fact that they had started out without first having a properly prepared strategic plan in place, causing them to have launched based on a patently inappropriate and unworkable approach, which then forced them into a series of highly damaging about-turns.

This is the core lesson that should be kept in mind in this new era of coalition politics: do not approach these situations as being merely politics, to be handled in terms of "gut-feel" or legalistic formulae; bring in outside expertise, do SWOT-analysis and generate the broadest possible range of strategic options, and then subject these to expert scenario gaming, before deciding on the most appropriate course of action – which may turn out to be quite counter-intuitive.

With this overview as background, we will now look individually at the range of causes of the NP's difficulties that eventually led to its disbanding and its members joining the ANC.

### 13.6.2 EXPERT, TIMELY PRIOR ANALYSIS AND SCENARIO GAMING OF THE NP'S INITIAL NEGOTIATION STRATEGY HAD BEEN INADEQUATE, IF NOT ENTIRELY ABSENT

I'm not going to belabour all over again the points already made about this huge flaw which had so seriously hamstrung the NP Government (because it had caused them to start out on gut feel, with a quite inappropriate and non-viable initial approach, costing them the initiative as well as thirty critical months, and obliging them into damaging about-turns). It will suffice here to simply stress again that this is perhaps the most important lesson to be had from the transition: **do your homework before you launch**.

See to it that you have the infrastructure in place, that your policy and strategy formulation system is capable of bringing together all available expertise, to do the absolutely essential SWOT-style analysis with clinical objectivity, ensure lateral thinking in comprehensive option generation, and undertake rigorous scenario gaming that will present you with a comprehensive range of viable strategic options to choose from.

## 13.6.3 WAS A REALIST, BEHAVIOUR-DRIVEN (NOT LEGALIST) NP APPROACH TO THE TRANSITION POSSIBLE?

The driving motive behind the De Klerk team's "big bang" approach (leading to the way in which the 2 February 1990 speech was crafted, as well as to wanting to stage the negotiations so publicly and multilaterally in the CODESA format) was to rapidly show definitive transitional progress away from Apartheid – in order to get sanctions lifted, as well as to put distance between themselves and the past (evidently in order to show "what honestly committed, honourable guys we actually are").

Drafting the 2 February 1990 speech was in De Klerk's exclusive control. However, what was NOT in his exclusive control, was successfully publicly staging – rapidly – the negotiations in the CODESA format he had tactically wished for. Neither in terms of quickly getting it off the ground (with the ANC/SACP exercising its "veto" to stall) nor in terms of the course it took when CODESA at last happened (with an enraged Mandela publicly flattening De Klerk on national TV for his perceived abuse of the "last word" privilege).

DE Klerk taking the risk inherent in adopting an adversarial approach when so much was in fact riding on the ANC's cooperation, showed the NP Government's lack of appreciation of the real-world behavioural dynamics of power politics. It was a serious lack of situational awareness to ignore the patent reality that the only two protagonists that mattered – the two self-evident principals – were the ANC and the NP. Just viewed empirically, the attempt to portray the ANC as "just another party" was therefore naïve and unsustainable wishful thinking. Which made De Klerk's consequent decision to try to structure and manage the negotiations around this fallacy that the ANC somehow wasn't the other principal entirely foolhardy and self-defeating. The world could see that the ANC was, in fact, the probable future election winner. De Klerk was soon to experience quite emphatically the extent to which ANC did in practical reality hold a veto.

If proper preparation had been done by the NP Government, it would have been patently obvious to them that it was axiomatic that the ANC's cooperation was absolutely essential to the success of the entire transition effort.

FW de Klerk had not sought to understand the transition in real-world behaviouralist terms (as being actually a deal to manage the transfer of power from his party to the ANC) with the main challenges being to ensure it happens peacefully, with stability and security, in a manner that would retain for his constituency as much future real influence as possible, using that community's real strengths. Had he considered the true challenge in this manner, he would hopefully have seen that there were other, better real-world options for how to approach and structure the process. Better than what he unfortunately opted for initially, namely to approach the process adversarially whilst simultaneously going rapidly all-in with complete "normalisation" and with trying to publicly stage the negotiation process multilaterally in the CODESA format.

With more situational awareness and better cognisance of standard negotiation theory, he would hopefully have realised the importance of first engaging cooperatively with the ANC in confidential, bilateral confidence-building talks to arrive at a mutually acceptable framework agreement. Instead, he essentially viewed the transition's goals through the lens of a lawyer-politician, as a normativist would – namely, as legalistically negotiating and drafting a new foundational law, a new constitutional dispensation based on groups and numbers, aiming for that new basic law to conform normatively to how he as normativist politician-lawyer would have liked that things ideally should be.

A realistic, situationally-aware strategic approach cognisant also of theory (and therefore correctly focused on the need for cooperation to confidentially and bilaterally reach with the ANC pre-agreement in principle on the essentials) could only have resulted from the outset if De Klerk had looked beyond the drafting of his opening-of-parliament speech, understanding that his address to parliament had needed to be drafted as the launch part of an all-encompassing strategy regarding the negotiated transition in its entirety. For this prior formulation of strategy, he had needed – as often stated already – a properly SWOT-analysed and scenario gamed process beforehand. Thus, he could and should not have depended principally on his politician cabinet colleagues, but should have pulled in expertise from civil society, business, academia and the intelligence community to assist with proper preparation for the huge, existentially important step he was about to take...

Again, my aim is not to criticise after the fact. Once more, just I had done with the hypothetical alterative text for the 2 February speech, I am going to provide now a hypothetical example of a feasible alternative procedural approach to the negotiated transition **as process** – a phased or incremental one, instead of an all-or-nothing "big bang". Again, I'm doing so only as a learning opportunity about the vital importance of proper prior planning and having functional decision-making systems in place, all needing to be based on a clear comprehension of the theoretical foundations science has developed for both negotiating and for engaging in the strong-arm realities of the politics of power.

My aim with the following hypothetical alternative **procedural** scenario is to demonstrate that in this sphere, too, there were options available that could have strengthened the NP's leverage in relation to the ANC – if only they had been identified and assessed through proper preparation. The hypothetical alternative I'm presenting (not claiming that it would necessarily have been better – that is for you as reader to judge – but merely to show that things could conceivably have been done somewhat differently, and which thus had needed to be properly considered beforehand) is not irreconcilable with the NP having adopted a cooperative rather than an adversarial approach as government (as distinct from the NP as party). A patriotic, circumscribed strategic cooperation specifically aimed at and limited to arriving expeditiously, orderly, and peacefully at a New South Africa, does not constitute a love affair or marriage. Each cooperating principal retains its own separate political identity and entitlement to represent their respective constituents' interests, but they agree not to try and advance own interest in a manner detrimental to the common interest of establishing a new dispensation broadly acceptable to all.

Such pre-agreed cooperation instead of confrontation could have been based on agreeing, for purposes of the transition, to adopt a "SA Incorporated" approach, in which both parties are recognised as being the key shareholders and agree to suspend their inclination towards political warfare (just as it was clearly needed to suspend physical warfare) during the negotiations and transition.

Obviously – not to be totally naïve – that common goal of a New South Africa would have required that an "in principle" prior consensus had to be reached at the outset between the NP and ANC on what that new dispensation should eventually broadly look like (because it was around such a foundational vision that the disputes encountered during the actual negotiations had revolved). Here the NP Government would have needed to have worked through and come to understand (during a proper preceding in-house policy formulation process) the inevitable need to make a "virtue out of necessity" and pre-emptively discard non-viable positions that such an assessment and gaming process would have shown were not going to be capable of flying – such as insisting on Group Rights and/or a long-term, fixed-formula Power Sharing model.

Similarly, the ANC for its part would have needed to work through the same process of discarding unworkable ideas (as they had already largely done, abandoning their earlier Marxist "people's republic" wish). The one fallacious idea still festering in their midst between 1990 and 1992 and which ideally the ANC/SACP should have discarded from the start, was the notion pushed by radicals like Ronnie Kasrils that they could, via Leipzig-style mass action, simply seize power and then unilaterally dictate terms (a "fever dream" on the part of the ANC radicals that had initially seriously divided the movement).

Therefore, both sides could and should have arrived, well before the actual date of mid-1992, at the reconcilable "in principle" positions on the procedure and substance of the new dispensation that enabled the September 1992 signing of the RoU, had the confidential, bilateral approach of the "Channel Bilateral" had been implemented from the very start, even before De Klerk's 2 February speech. Again, the key to the NP Government understanding this would have been proper SWOT analysis and gaming, rather than taking 30 months of head-butting and trial-and-error learning to arrive at what in reality became the true starting line for the actual, substantive negotiations, namely mid-1992.

What we had in fact witnessed, was therefore two sets of transitions – firstly, intra-party transition from 1990 – 1992 (with both the NP and ANC/SACP internally shifting from their initial ideological positions to a new, more realistic and compatible baseline for each). Then only, from mid-1992, the start of the real national transition that terminated in 1996 with the adoption of the final constitution (with 1992 and 1993 having been the most intense

phase of both progress and contestation with other parties, reaching a peaceful equilibrium only after the 1994 election and inauguration of Mr Mandela as president).

### 13.6.4 PRESENTING AN HYPOTHETICAL "WHAT IF" ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO THE PROCEDURAL SIDE OF THE TRANSITION

Adopting a step-by-step, phased approach to the transition from the outset, geared towards cooperation with the ANC as clearly being the other principals, would have given the NP Government the ability to sustain for an extended period of time the public relations image-building momentum it rightly had identified it sorely needed. This could have avoided them enjoying the positive coverage just very briefly for De Klerk's 2 February 1990 speech and then again even more briefly around CODESA's first meet (because, due to the adversarial relationship, both events were in the end overshadowed by Mandela, in the form first of the shift of media attention to him upon his release from prison, and then his public slap-down of De Klerk in Kempton Park at the end of that first multiparty meeting).

With a phased approach, the NP Government would also have been able to exert much more control over the unfolding course of events, which could have considerably shortened the process (by tying down less controversial issues first) whilst also steadily building public acceptance and confidence as people saw the process systematically deploy, without the heavens tumbling in.

Returning now to my purely hypothetical version (for illustrative purposes) of a possible alternative approach to the transition's procedural dimension – going for a **phased** rather than the NP's actual **"big bang"** approach – the key point to understand was that the exclusive legislative power of the existing parliament (and the principle of state continuity) always constituted the prime leverage as well as the formal foundation from which the NP should conceptually have steered the negotiation and transition as process.

Their control over the existing legislature (the only entity capable of legitimising the transition through passing the necessary enabling legislation), was in terms of political dynamics the NP Government's true strength – which they could have utilised to systematically, incrementally, put the new dispensation in place by means of a series of successive amendments to the existing constitution, executed in a planned, phased manner. Thereby they could have systematically transformed the old constitution into the transitional constitution required for arriving ultimately at the first non-racial election for the new national assembly cum constituent assembly for the final constitution.

Such a phased approach of cutting up the proverbial elephant into chewable chunks to digest over a period of time, would have step-by-step expanded and transformed the pre-existing constitution, to align it with international human rights law and non-racial inclusivity, whilst simultaneously eliminating the last vestiges of Apartheid.

What it would also have done (had the NP, after proper analysis and scenario gaming, opted for cooperation with the ANC from the start, rather than for the adversarial approach they in fact had chosen) was to have softened and smoothed for their own base, the impact of the huge but necessary change in the NP's policy posture. It would have been demonstrated to the NP's base by means of such step-by-step confidence building that cooperation was indeed possible. This would have reduced the quite natural stress and angst by showing concretely, in digestible chunks, how such humungous change could indeed be systematically implemented without the heavens caving in.

What this systematic approach to procedure and implementation therefore could have achieved, was the possibility for the NP to have side-stepped the political need that they had clearly felt in relation to their own base, for initially postulating, as intra-party transition-smoothing intermediate policy evolution steps, the inherently untenable policy positions they had initially adopted such as "group rights" (which they had essentially done in order to try and limit the initial shock impact of the party's drastic change in policy). The error was that they thereby had trapped themselves into a chain of incremental **policy** adaptations ("U-turns", in plain language), whereas the incremental approach should rather have been applied to the **procedural** dimension, not the **policy** one – which latter of necessity had had to "quantum leap" the canyon in one jump, to have been externally credible and effective, to avoid later about-turns and continuous concessions.

Here-below I will now set out my hypothetical example of such an alternative, phased approach, showing how it could have been deployed step-by-step.

After the release/indemnification of Mr Mandela and of the ANC's key negotiators in February of 1990, the next step could have been for the then parliament to have gone ahead and adopted (as addendum to the existing constitution) a declaration of fundamental human rights, to be included in a future final constitution. This human rights charter could have been non-controversially based on the UN and EU declarations and existing international treaties regarding protection of minorities (which all are focused on achieving that through an emphasis on the rights of the individual, as the NP itself in the end had in fact agreed to).

Very important from a process viewpoint, is that such legislation had had to be negotiated confidentially beforehand with the ANC via an early version of what in 1992 was constituted as the “Channel Bilateral” – i.e., in effect as a continuation of the confidential NIS/Barnard bilateral contact with the ANC). Given how the early elevation of these principles into domestic law would have benefited everyone, including the ANC, it is highly unlikely that such a step as such would have been seriously objected – it would also have been a very significant, very concrete step in the building of mutual trust and confidence, and would have provided amazingly potent ammo to the DFA to demonstrate to the world the serious, bona fide intent of the NP Government, maintaining media momentum.

Step two could then have been for parliament to reform the old constitution's chapter on the structure of the courts and the judicial branch (again, as needed to have been confidentially pre-agreed with the ANC, with as carrot that they could nominate the new chief justice), setting up the Constitutional Court as new apex court and appointing the first bench in broadly representative manner, charged with ensuring that the negotiation process stayed true to the strictures of phase one’s Human Rights Charter.

All of these steps could have been confidentially negotiated bilaterally between the NP and ANC, following the example of the Mandela/Barnard and NIS/ANC talks in an early “Channel Bilateral”, to then be rubber-stamped by a multi-party forum meeting with such limited focus in Mbabane, as per my suggested alternative 2 February speech (remember that the SA Law Commission had actually been tasked by De Klerk in his original 2 February speech to expedite its investigation into a Human Rights Charter).

Systematically moving in this manner towards visible, real change would have built confidence abroad and would also have maintained the NP’s momentum in media terms, by regularly delivering a series of concrete “marketables”. Braking up the process into separate tasks would also have made it more difficult for the ANC to stall, and would have considerably reduced the *angst* that had naturally accompanied the “big bang” approach among the NP’s own base. Lastly, it would have avoided the most unfortunate consequence of the “big bang” start, namely that it entailed that the end of the process needed to also be a “big bang” when everything had to come together as a once-off “take-it-or-leave-it” package deal, not complete before everyone had signed off on its every last detail – meaning that the entire in-between period was marked by a sense of everything still being up in the air, hugely detrimental to confidence).

Getting the Charter and Constitutional Court set up early would thus have sustained the momentum achieved through De Klerk’s 2 February 1990 speech and led to much more buy-in and participation, as well as better synchronisation with the very essential Peace Accord that needed to have been negotiated from the word go, in parallel. Having these structures in place would have better served De Klerk than the *ad hoc* judicial commissions that he had instead needed to regularly appoint. It would also have far better concretised, doing so from much earlier on, the “good guy” image that he and his cabinet rightly wanted to cultivate and would have circumscribed the scope for “atrocity propaganda” against the government.

The next phase of systematic roll-out of the transition could have been to focus on the provincial level and the Kingdom of KwaZulu in particular, as the obvious first candidate. Provincial negotiations could have been launched (at the behest of the national-level Multi-Party Negotiation Forum, pre-negotiated in principle with the ANC and with the IFP) to develop an own provincial KZN constitution from the ground up and hold its own first non-racial provincial and municipal elections, thereby getting the public accustomed to the new non-racial, universal franchise reality (working from the ground up, adaptive to local sensibilities, without enforcing one single template and

timeline from the top down upon all other second-level government structures). This approach would likely have made the ANC/SACP's conflict with the IFP much more manageable, allowed for the early re-integration of the homelands, as well as spurring other provinces to thought… It would likely also have avoided the serious conflict with the Zulu King witnessed during the latter part of the actual transition.

The next logical step could then have been to constitutionally put in place the new executive branch at national level, by amending the existing constitution's provisions regarding the presidency and providing for a directly elected executive president. The first non-racial election conducted nationally would then have been for the new president, which then would have been followed by the investiture of Mr Mandela as the new President and Commander in Chief of the Security Forces, but with the pre-existing parliament still then functioning in parallel as the national legislature, retaining its function of expenditure approval. This would have cemented in place the so very important principle of separation of powers, American style. Following the USA constitution (where cabinet members are not members of congress) it could have been pre-negotiated with the ANC via the "Channel Bilateral" how President Mandela would compose his first cabinet – if the approach had been cooperative rather than adversarial, this could very well have been the 50/50 formula that Mandela had himself suggested in prison. If the ANC and NP had ideally agreed to ally for this symbolically important transitional presidential election, then one could even have imagined a joint ticket headed by Mandela for president, and De Klerk and Mbeki for vice-presidents…

Holding the presidential elections first, before and separate from the election for the new legislature to eventually follow, would have further enhanced the general public's systematic "acclimatisation" as well as having ensured for Mr Mandela a stronger position from which to moderate the influence of the radicals within the ANC. It would also have obviated the need for the TEC (Transitional Executive Council) that cumbersomely have overseen the final phase of the transition leading up to the legislative elections. Again, considering that the NP had found itself obliged to agree to the institution of the TEC, the hypothetical process I'm outlining therefore would not, by separating out and expediting the transitioning of the executive function, have deviated fundamentally from what in any case had happened.

The last phase would then have been to agree the powers and composition of the new legislature, with the existing parliament adopting the necessary amendments to what has incrementally become the transitional constitution, and then holding that first non-racial, one-person-one-vote election for the new national assembly in terms thereof – in effect, exactly the "state continuity" path that in fact had been followed. As was the case with the actual process, that new legislature could then have sat as constituent assembly to draft and develop the final constitution, within the parameters of the pre-agreed principles.

The NP Government could have made its willingness to hand over the keys of the Union Buildings and to protect the fledgeling ANC presidency and government against right-wing coup attempts contingent upon the ANC's acceptance of this systematic phased approach (whilst still reserving for the new legislature the right to draft the final constitution, as per the ANC's insistence). This cooperative approach, implemented from the start via an early "Channel Bilateral", would in my humble opinion (but obviously without proof) have worked to get the ANC moderates on board early on – on condition that it was pre-negotiated with them, confidentially and cooperatively (not adversarially) in a partnership approach predicated upon safeguarding the vital interests of "SA Inc" during an orderly transition. In such a context the safeguarding of the new Mandela presidency and then the incoming ANC legislature would have been not the least of the NP's offered *quid-pro-quo's*. After all, the Frontline States had suggested such a phased transition in their Lusaka Manifesto, and Mandela had floated to Barnard an initial 50/50 cabinet during their in-prison talks...

This phased approach would have given the NP Government much more credibility much earlier on, which the Department of Foreign Affairs could have put to good use, to ameliorate isolation and sanctions and mobilise international pressure on the ANC to cooperate. It would also have ensured that the NP Government and the Security Forces could not be solely blamed for anything and everything that went wrong during the transition. Furthermore, it would have systematically accustomed the public to the reality of the coming new dispensation, allowing them to see concrete evidence that the heavens would not collapse (which likely would have led to less anxiety and less extremism on the radical fringes).

Most importantly, it could have laid the foundation for much greater NP influence in a future cooperative government than numerical quotas could ever hope to ensure, leveraging as true strengths not numbers but the real benefits that the white community could contribute to the common good. This could have resulted in a much more durable long-term cooperation than just a 5-year GNU – also, without the NP (as natural "political party of cultural comfort" for Afrikaners) in the end feeling obliged to disband itself…

Furthermore, it could have significantly contributed to ameliorating what remains the most serious risk faced by South Africa – that of the radical left uniting and taking over control of the ANC and thereby control of the levers of government power.

I'm not saying that the specific hypothetical example of an alternative approach that I've given above would have been a perfect solution in every detail, nor the only other such procedural option conceivable. I also recognise that it, too, would likely have been accompanied by a lot of political arm-wrestling between the ANC/SACP and the NP Government. Certainly, my quick "thinking cap" effort could have been vastly improved upon if many experts had worked on it, rather than it being just a figment of my fertile imagination. That said, what it is intended to be, is simply an illustration that there indeed were alternative strategies possible that were **at least worthy of consideration** (on condition, of course, that we possessed a functional, theoretically and practically sound system for strategy formulation – which, lamentably, we clearly did not have).

Instead, what we had (and I know that what I'm saying here may, at first glance, sound like a gross oversimplification) was: "we need to draft an impactful speech for the opening of parliament" and then we "have to draft a clever new constitution that will protect us against the adversary".

Obviously, there was in practice a lot more than just this that De Klerk's new NP Government found itself needing to urgently attend to during the transition. But those "other things" they were dealing with – the day-to-day political dynamics – they were trying to handle *ad hoc*, "fire brigade" style (as is very clear from De Klerk's own autobiography). They were putting out fires on an almost daily basis, without possessing an over-arching, well-prepared plan nor dedicated structures for analysing and managing the behaviouralist side of the contest for, and transfer of political power. They were too focused on normative, legalist substance of the constitution, and not enough on the procedural side of getting to a settlement.

Because, when cut to the bone, the NP leadership's primary focus – driven by their legalist/normative mind-set and their psychological craving for image rehabilitation – was first on drafting that speech and then on drafting that new constitution. Both of which (in their eyes) had as principal criterium the need for it to sound good, *avant garde*, aligned with the latest liberal eloquence about how the world ideally should be… (to demonstrate what good guys the new NP politicians inherently were?).

Not that there was anything wrong with trying to henceforth be at the leading edge of normative correctness (coming after years of Apartheid trampling on generally accepted norms of morality). The point I'm trying to make is that the process of drafting that speech (and arriving at that constitution) should not merely have been approached in the then typical South African civil service style of "we need inputs for a very important opening of parliament speech".

So fundamental was the change that was being envisaged – truly the most consequential since 1652 – that it absolutely needed to be part and parcel of an overall strategy for the entirety of the process that would constitute the "quantum leap" that De Klerk and his cabinet rightly wanted to make, pre-assessing and scenario gaming it right through to its logical conclusion (as the business sector had successfully done, with their appropriately planned Mont Fleur initiative, thereby succeeding in moving the ANC to abandon their Marxist predilections on the economy and accept the tenets of neoliberal, capitalist economics).

**Self-evidently the in-house process of formulating and finalising that over-arching, comprehensive strategy needed to have preceded the De Klerk speech and the transition it initiated**.

My point is, therefore, that the process side of the historically huge transition from the colonial, white-dominated system to a new non-racial system had NOT been properly understood and appreciated in behaviouralist terms by the NP Government. What was not sufficiently factored in, was the reality that that process was, in its essence, going to be a raw contest for, and a total transfer of political power (i.e., not just a lawyerly process of consensual, compromise-based legalist drafting of a normatively splendid-sounding speech and constitution). Consequently, the behavioural dynamics of the process had not been properly planned for (except for vainly attempting initially to reduce the ANC to "just another party").

**There had been no discernible prior use of behaviouralist tools such as SWOT analyses and scenario gaming, which essential exercise had needed to have been entrusted to a broad range of experts with a well-read understanding of the underlying theory underpinning negotiation and political behaviour, and done with objective scientific rigour, within a properly-functioning system for formulating strategic options (with the final decision-making choices then correctly falling to the cabinet)**.

The process of systematically and scientifically developing strategic options, and the function of selecting between the options so generated, are not one and the same thing. Whilst the latter is obviously and rightfully the privilege of the cabinet, it is naïve to think that those same ministers can, in today's complex world, themselves come up with an optimal strategy purely by means of their own "gut feel" political instincts. A proper system is required for that, tapping into the broadest range of best expertise available. Fundamentally, it is such a system that had been lacking, and which gave rise to most, if not all, of the less-than-optimal decisions we can now identify, enjoying the great benefit of hindsight.

**THAT is my core criticism. That lack of a functional system of strategy formulation. This is what had caused the less-than-optimal outcomes (from the perspective of the NP Government's constituents). Not supposed "traitors selling out" or the eventual second phase NP negotiators under Roelf Meyer having been "weak" in terms of their testicular fortitude…**

Again, not that I believe that having followed a proper process of strategy formulation could or would have led to a fundamentally different basic outcome. Historically, demographically, and in terms of geo-political reality, the only workable outcome capable of preventing a race war was undeniably acceptance of majority rule based on universal franchise within a unitary state. But it could and should have been refined into better than the current bastardised, highly centralised Westminster system with its total centrality of the ANC and its party HQ holding total power (when they have the parliamentary majority, that is).

The great, great risk for the future is that the enormous opportunities that such vast concentration of power confers upon the majority alliance in parliament, may entice the radicals in the current ANC to make common cause with the EFF and MKP (thereby reconstituting the original ANC and its 2/3 majority, but this time under truly radical leadership). Such vast power – and thus opportunity – is a huge carrot for politicians who are looking more at parochial and personal interests than at a national consensus…

You can, for yourself, reach your own conclusion about whether my hypothetical approach of a phased, incremental transition as postulated above would have possibly led to a more refined outcome. One somewhat better aligned with the interest of minorities: namely, to have a constitution that ensures a truly complete separation of powers via a directly elected presidency; with more real federalist, devolved powers, and less omnipotent control by party HQ's over their MP's.

In my example, the eventual first non-racial legislature would still have enacted the final new constitution subject to pre-agreed principles (just as it was in fact done). However, it would have been very difficult for the ANC to then – if my incremental example had been followed – to have taken away the decentralised rights then already enjoyed by, for example, the Zulu Kingdom. It would also likely have avoided much of the bloody Black-on-Black conflict that the actual process generated, as well as the last-minute brinkmanship.

Such an incremental approach would likely have had the Security Forces much more squarely on board with the process – possibly even the likes of General Constand Viljoen and many of his concerned followers.

With Mr. Mandela directly elected early on as executive president to co-govern with the existing parliament for the critical period during the finalisation of the transitional constitution and the run-up to the first national non-racial election for the new national assembly, a solid relationship between himself as commander-in-chief and the ever-loyal, constitutionalist Security Force leadership would likely have resulted (as in fact had happened in the aftermath of Mandela's actual inauguration in 1994, notably also including General Viljoen).

The fact that President FW de Klerk in any event had had to practically abdicate to Mandela the role of head of state in critical circumstances such as the assassination of Chris Hani, plus the imposition of the TEC, show that an early official transfer of executive power to Mandela (as envisaged in my alternative model) would not, in real terms, have caused a catastrophic weakening of the leverage of the NP as party. It would in fact have freed them up to focus, as party, on negotiating – liberated from the burden of blame for all that happened in the townships. The security situation would likely have been stabilised much sooner, too – without the ANC/SACP then so easily being able to shout "third force"...

### 13.6.5 AN ALTERNATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL MODEL TO WESTMINSTER: OFS/USA

This is an opportune moment to dig deeper into the detail of the last of the "hypothetical alternative" mental exercises (which I had briefly alluded to earlier). That of whether the tweaked Westminster model that we have today isn't actually the cause of many of the problems we see, and that we would have been better served had the American constitutional model been used as template.

What we will here be discussing, goes far beyond the legalist "aesthetics" of the two models, or personal normative preferences based on textbook theory (as it may superficially appear). It goes to the very heart of the key Behaviouralist question of whether the constitution we now have, is optimally designed for meeting the real-world challenges related to our most fundamental interests, namely the safety and security of our families and property, but also regarding good governance, optimal service delivery, and democratic functionality with representatives free to vote their conscience rather than being beholden to the dictate of the party HQ that "deployed" them (all very much related to facilitating corruption as well).

When I mentioned that this topic will be coming up in the introduction to this chapter, I explained the very different design purpose behind the two constitutional dispensations, with the English Westminster model having originated in the era of absolutist sovereigns with power highly centralised in the royal palace, so that the purpose for which the system was designed was to allow the sovereign to rule over his subjects. In stark contrast, the American constitution had been drafted by men intent on freeing themselves from precisely the tyranny of that sovereign and his central hold on all power (having rebelled against him), and who had, as guiding purpose, to curb central government overreach. Theirs was a constitution designed for the state to serve its free citizens, with sovereignty vesting in "we, the people". I, for one, firmly believe that the latter would have been far more appropriate and beneficial (as had the good *burghers* of the Orange Free State Republic rightly believed, when in 1854 they had drafted their constitution).

It remains somewhat surprising that modern-day South African lawyers and political scientists know almost nothing about the exemplary constitution of the "model republic" of the Orange Free State – with the Old OFS known colloquially as the "model republic" because of its excellent governance and jurisprudence, making it no surprise at the time of Union that Bloemfontein was designated as its judicial capital. The OFS constitution, which was internationally highly regarded at the time among subject experts, was based on that of the USA (of which the OFS drafters had had a copy to hand) and that of the 1848 French Republic. Like the constitution of the ZAR (Transvaal) Republic, the Free State constitution provided for a directly elected president, and like its Transvaal counterpart, it expressly prohibited any form of slavery.

The direct election of a president by the electorate is a crucial component of a proper separation of powers between the executive, legislature and judiciary. The Westminster model, with the head of the executive appointed by the

legislature, has the great weakness that it allows the political faction that can internally capture control of the party that holds a majority in the legislature – as Mac Maharaj had cleverly enabled the Zuma faction to do at the ANC's Polokwane Elective Conference in 2007 – to then capture all of the state powers vested in both the executive and legislature.

The OFS, with its president directly elected by the populace, thus distinct from the legislature, maintained stable separation of powers: The *Volksraad* (legislature) made the laws, the President executed them, and the courts adjudicated independently, fully capable of striking down new laws and presidential actions when adjudged to be unconstitutional.

As regards legal supremacy of the constitution, the OFS model aligned well with that of the USA. The OFS constitution was "rigid", meaning particularly difficult to amend – it required a three-quarters majority across two consecutive legislative sessions to amend. The OFS High Court successfully maintained that the constitution was superior to ordinary legislation.

Because the OFS framers were heavily influenced by both the US Constitution and the French Constitution of 1848, they explicitly embedded a core set of civil liberties directly into their 1854 founding document. For this purpose the OFS heavily plagiarized Chapter II of the 1848 French Constitution (an especially enlightened document, adopted by the French after the revolutions that had swept Europe in 1948). The OFS protections for freedom of the press, personal liberty, property rights, and the right to petition were framed almost exactly like the French ideals of civic liberty. Accordingly, the OFS constitution guaranteed several fundamental rights that the British colonies in South Africa didn't even formally codify at the time:

- **Freedom of the Press:** Explicitly protected from government censorship.
- **Personal Freedom and Liberty:** Guarantees against arbitrary arrest or detention.
- **Right to Property:** Legal protection of private property rights.
- **Peaceful Assembly and Petition:** The right of citizens to gather peacefully and petition the *Volksraad* for changes to the law.
- **Equality Before the Law:** All *burghers* (white male citizens) were treated equally under Roman-Dutch law, regardless of wealth or social standing.

Because the OFS court had the "testing right" (judicial review), these rights actually held genuine legal weight against government overreach. (I'm highlighting these historical facts here, to show that the American way of doing things wasn't always regarded by our forebears as "culturally alien" to our own traditions and needs – certainly not to the extent that the "purist" Super Afrikaners after 1948 had rejected it as "culturally alien" – nor did our forebears hold a negative view regarding the need for human rights to be explicitly protected).

Before we analyse the key characteristics of the American constitutional model and how it could have better served as template for meeting our most fundamental needs, one first has to be clear about what those real needs actually are – especially should push ever come to shove… By this I mean needs not related to how the world ideally should operate, but about what recourse there is when the world suddenly and violently goes off the tracks…

To my mind, one of the great omissions during the conceptualisation of the constitution was that the draft had not been subjected to, nor been guided by hard-nosed Behavioralist assessment about what wily human beings (not always well-intentioned) could conceivably use its eloquent text for to in practice subvert or circumvent its high-minded, lofty intentions. We have seen this in the "Stalling-grad" tactics regularly employed by top politicians, and the lack of consequences for appalling misdeeds in office – cultivating thereby, in real-world practice, a pervasive culture of impunity and unaccountability in which corruption of all sorts flourishes.

But that is only one side of the coin (i.e., this need to have game-tested, with Behavioralist tools and theory, what the constitution as drafted could in reality permit to occur, before signing off on it as final). The other side of the coin is the critical requirement that, before even having put together the first draft, the NP Government should have thoroughly analysed what the new constitution should put in place in order that its own base's (plus the rest of law-abiding South Africans) fundamental needs regarding security of person and property, as well as good governance, could be optimally met. In other words, using Behavioralist tools and theory to analyse those needs and game out how best they could be met, to serve as guidance as to what the NP negotiation team needed to understand as the primary goals which they needed to have strived for with every bit of leverage they had.

I know that it is not fashionable, nor deemed politically correct, to discuss a constitution in terms of the "no b/s", harsh reality considerations of physical power, in the mould of Machiavelli. We are supposed to look at the framing of a constitution only in high-minded normative terms, capturing in philosophical phrase what we believe the world should ideally look like. That, alas, helps us very little when push comes to shove – as we have already seen in July 2021, when our current constitutional dispensation with its highly centralised management of the Security Forces utterly failed to protect communities in KZN and Gauteng from rampant mob violence.

Whether we like it or not, in dire circumstances such as those of July 2021 – when seeking court interdicts serve no practical purpose, when violent lawlessness is being unleashed upon communities dependent upon an absent government to protect them – then it is only the judicious application of sufficient physical counter-force that can save the day. That, unfortunately, is the unvarnished truth of the matter.

However, the application of such counterforce should absolutely not happen as a free-for-all, with only the laws of the jungle applying. The constitution should have anticipated this – after all, we are in and of Africa, where modern history has sadly been replete with coups, political violence, tribal conflict, forced expulsions, genocide, and other symptoms of the "failed state" syndrome.

When a constitution correctly caters for dealing with such lamentable possibilities, then the legitimate counterforce required can be properly regulated and organised to be readily available and effective, yet controlled, disciplined, proportional, and reasonable. Most importantly, if the constitution had provided for such eventualities and proper means had been ready and available locally where and when needed, able to be employed subject to local decision-making with procedural protocols in place, then very likely the fact of their availability would have been massively dissuasive of the outbreak of such lawlessness (which typically feast on a sense of impunity; that they will suffer no real consequences).

This is precisely what General Van den Bergh had been alluding to when he, from a security perspective, stressed that the ultimate guarantee is not rights ensconced in a constitutional charter, but actual concrete means with which to protect life and property when the legalist "solution" of running to court and asking for an interdict against the looters and rioters (as in July 2021) simply will not suffice, and when it is equally useless to phone the national police… Such legitimate means of self-protection, he pointed out, requires a territorial footprint from which to be leveraged and which can serve as ultimate refuge in case of collapse of the system. **Not** a sovereign own state (*volkstaat*, or as he had called it: a "*Boerestan*"), but **a parcel of territory** (regional and/or local, no matter whether large or small) **legitimately endowed with local statutory authority** and with institutionalised **physical means for maintaining law and order**, over which competent local control is lawfully exercised permitting it to rapidly deploy appropriate force in a fully legal manner (i.e., pre-authorised by statute), and thus to effectively project dissuading force, if and when necessary.

The analogy of a crowbar which Van den Bergh used to explain this is very apt: a crowbar can indeed exert considerable force, but only if it is positioned on a solid fulcrum able to support and make possible the use of its leverage. Without a fulcrum – which need not be huge – the crowbar is useless.

It needs to be stressed again that our reality is that we are in and of Africa. Similar to the USA, South Africa is an extensive, sparsely populated territory requiring that local self-reliance should be enabled, but of course in a legitimate and constitutionally circumscribed manner, with no distinction on the basis of race or ethnic group. Africa's modern history has more than amply shown us the kind of threats our constitutional dispensation had needed to empower communities to locally counter. If proper future security scenario gaming had been done, it would have confirmed what General Hendrik van den Bergh had been warning about: we need a tailor-made model that enables these challenges to be addressed, allowing for the physical safeguarding of these real fundamental interests, but in a constitutionally legitimate manner that won't serve to invite nor enable secession.

That is the kind of constitution we may well need in the near future, as the ANC's monopoly on power further crumbles – much more than we ever needed a constitution that affords one a warm glow of virtue (because it looks pretty on paper, thanks to progressive phraseology) but which does not address the real threats of central government overreach, inability to protect far and wide, and/or state collapse due to violent factional political contestation.

This failure of the current constitution to provide adequately, structurally, for effectively dealing with such very possible dire contingencies affecting the most fundamental needs of the citizenry (irrespective of race or so-called "group") is what had always bothered me most, as the drafting process had unfolded during the transition. You may ask how I, as intelligence analyst *cum* lawyer *cum* Behaviouralist political scientist would have liked for this key conceptual question to have been addressed? Let me now present my thinking, which will help explain why I regard the American model as far more relevant to our situation than the British one.

Whereas many had thought at the time (and some still do) that the obvious answer to the challenges outlined above was that we should split the country into separate sovereign states for each of its constituent "groups" (i.e., for the Afrikaners, an own *Volkstaat*) this absolutist, idealist "solution" unfortunately never was practical, nor will it ever be. Firstly, because we cannot even agree on the definition of our own "group" (is it all who speak Afrikaans as mother tongue, or only white Afrikaans-speakers, or all whites, irrespective of their home language – with both latter options again bringing in the poison of race). Secondly, because we cannot agree on, nor situate on a map, or make out a convincing case for where such a notional *Volkstaat* should be located. Thirdly, and most importantly in purely practical terms, because it is simply inconceivable that a substantial majority proportion of "white" Afrikanerdom can be physically encompassed within such a territory, given how widely dispersed across the entire face of our country we live and where our biggest personal investments – our homes, farms, and businesses – in fact are located.

What makes much more practical sense, is to realise that the country is in truth more distinctly divided along the lines of underlying values. In society, there are those who value such societal norms as the maintenance of law and order and respect for the person, property, rights, and identity of one another. And there are those who simply do not hold these values dear, and who are the real threat. This division is not based on skin colour or ethnic tribal affiliation. What the constitution structurally and practically needs to do, is to empower the citizens with values, to safeguard themselves against those who lack them.

A hard-nosed, no b/s strategic analysis of the security dimension relevant to the drafting of the new constitution, would logically have concluded that a sovereign, independent *Volkstaat* is another Afrikaner "fever dream", because to physically *trek* again is no longer a workable solution. The lodestone had to be shared values and culture, instead of supposedly shared "group" (i.e., racial or linguistic) characteristics. This is true, viewed both normatively (as being the morally correct approach), and practically, because when push comes to shove it is the **law-abiding** that's confronted and threatened by the **lawless**. In any event, guaranteeing the individual's right to freedom of association means that people can freely, voluntarily, form whatever groups they feel comfortable in.

The fact that a *Volkstaat* or any race or ethnic "group"-based dispensation was a practical as well as political impossibility did not, however, mean that the constitution could not or should not have taken better cognisance of **territorial** reality. Vast as the country is, it clearly needed to be subdivided into a number of administrative units at the second level of government (on the basis of economic and management considerations, not race or "group") as was indeed done on paper – but then not endowed with much real devolved power.

Any half-competent analyst would have been able to predict that the Western Cape would be one such unit where people who had made a Western cultural value-set their own, would numerically predominate. This Western Cape territory would be, for law-abiding citizens – whether Afrikaners (white or brown), Indians, English-speaking whites and value-driven Blacks – their logical refuge in case of dire need when threatened by the lawless, such as when politically or tribally inspired civil war may break out, or a coup is initiated by radicals. It is also a bastion territory from where a preventative, dissuasive projection of force can be maintained, ideally subliminally, so as to pre-emptively (i.e., psychologically) keep the central government from overreach (another such territory that could in practice have served as a natural base for such subliminal psychological "keeping in check" of a central government dominated by the ANC/SACP, was KZN).

If only the prime focus of the NP and all other value-oriented parties during the negotiations had been to endow the provinces with sufficient devolved powers and means to legitimately exercise such rights in a meaningful, substantive manner…

For these territories (and their residents) to have been able to exert such stabilising political (and, if ever need be) physical counterforce where it actually matters, namely locally, **the second and third levels of government had needed to be maximally endowed with devolved powers**, such as in the case of the states and municipalities of the USA. Furthermore, all citizens needed to have been individually empowered by the constitution as well, so as to be able to come together when needed as a dissuasive force, through the American mechanism of **the individual citizen's right to bear arms** and **to form and maintain citizen militias** (i.e., state national guard corps).

Had the NP's leadership and constitution drafters (lawyers all) understood the vital importance of these behavioralist considerations, they would have known that they had to fight from the very outset not for amorphous "group" rights or quotas, but for real and tangible maximum devolution to regions and for empowerment of the individual – a realisation that even the liberal voices in white midst are now belatedly coming to. Not for the Western Cape to secede (a notion as impractical as that of a *Volkstaat*) but to in practice constitute a refuge and fulcrum from where the law-abiding can legitimately make felt the influence of the very real strengths they inherently do possess.

The fact that this kind of clinically objective future threat analysis had evidently not been done and that these considerations had not been taken on board by the De Klerk-led NP as being the defining criteria for what the new constitution needed to be designed to achieve, represent in my view their greatest failure to optimally serve the vital interests of their own support base. One can but hope that it does not come back to hurt us destructively (as it in some parts already had, in the July 2021 looting).

Let us now briefly look at how the American model represented a far more apt template for addressing our most fundamental needs, namely for security, for a proper separation of powers, and for good governance (by means of maximum devolution) than the Westminster model can ever present. As I will now show and would like you as reader to think about, the American model – pushed hard for, from the very outset – would have been much more beneficial for the law-abiding to have than either a constitution based on woolly, ill-defined, and economically impractical "group rights" or "power sharing" quotas based on their rapidly dwindling numbers, or a constitution (as we now have) that stops at the defence of the rights of the individual (however important that indeed is).

What the drafters of the American constitution understood is that security against violent threat needs actual physical countering means, when push comes to shove – not nice-sounding words about how the world ideally should be, or the notional right to run to the courts. The means for physical deterrence need to have two things in place to enable its legitimate, reasonable, proportional, and orderly use – a constitutional framework that both authorises and circumscribes it, and an organisational structure competently managed within an own jurisdictional territorium as base platform, as fulcrum, from where this physical "crowbar" can be leveraged.

This is what our new constitution needed to provide, and which the American constitution in fact does. The constitution of the USA begins at the level of the individual citizen and local communities. After having experienced how the British Crown had attempted to disarm the citizenry so as to control them, the constitution of the USA

explicitly guarantees the right of individual citizens to bear arms – both for individual self-defence and for coming together locally with others as armed citizen-militias.

The curbing of lawless threats is then most immediately made the responsibility of municipalities, with each having the right and obligation to establish an own “full service” municipal police force with jurisdiction over its own municipal territory.

To combat threats that go beyond a given municipality, and to render assistance when needed to municipal forces, every state in the USA has its own Department of Public Safety with as integral part a state police force (such as the Texas Rangers for example are, with state-wide investigative powers). The back-up to these public safety forces at state level, is the military reserve units organised as each state’s National Guard, functioning under the command of the state’s elected Governor. Looked at in some more detail, this is how the American system functions:

In the American federal system, power is divided between the national government and the states based on the principle of **dual sovereignty**. Under the Tenth Amendment of the US Constitution, any power not explicitly granted to the federal government belongs to the states (or to the people). This creates a distinct division of labor where states wield an immense amount of everyday autonomy.

While the federal government handles national issues like foreign policy, currency, and interstate commerce, states have primary authority over the health, safety, and welfare of their citizens:

- **Education:** States are almost entirely responsible for public schooling. They establish their own curriculum standards, fund local school districts (largely through state and local taxes), set graduation requirements, and operate state university systems. The federal government provides some funding but cannot directly dictate school policies.
- **Public Safety and Criminal Justice:** The vast majority of policing in America happens at the state and local levels. States write their own criminal codes (defining what constitutes a crime and the penalties for it), run their own court systems, and manage state prisons.
- **Public Health and Welfare:** States administer public health programmes, manage sanitation, and license medical professionals (doctors, psychologists, nurses). For massive programs like Medicaid (national health insurance for low-income residents), the federal government helps to fund it, but each state decides who qualifies and what benefits are covered.
- **Elections:** States entirely administer all elections – even federal ones for the presidency and Congress. They decide polling locations, voting methods (like mail-in vs. in-person), and ballot designs.
- **Intrastate Commerce and Licensing:** States regulate businesses operating strictly within their borders. They also issue licenses for professions – everything from lawyers and engineers to barbers and real estate agents.

The National Guard is unique because it is a dual-status force – whilst it is primarily there to serve its own state’s needs, it can be called upon to serve overseas in the national interest, when command over units so deployed shifts from their Governor to the Secretary of War. There are 54 separate National Guard organizations: one for each of the 50 states, plus Washington D.C. (for which the US President acts as its commander, given tht DC does not have an own governor), Puerto Rico, Guam, and the US Virgin Islands. Each state's Guard is composed of two branches:

- **The Army National Guard** (soldiers, infantry, armour, aviation)
- **The Air National Guard** (airmen, fighter jets, transport planes)

The personnel are overwhelmingly **citizen-soldiers** and **citizen-airmen**. They are mostly part-time Service members who hold civilian jobs but train "one weekend a month and two weeks a year," though they can be called to full-time active service at a moment's notice.

Under normal circumstances (i.e., when not called upon to serve abroad), the **Governor** of the state is the Commander-in-Chief of that state's National Guard. The Governor exercises this command through a state-

appointed military officer called the **Adjutant General** (TAG). In this in-state status, the Guard is used for local emergencies – like responding to hurricanes, fighting wildfires, or maintaining order during civil unrest.

Possessing such potent own means, the principle of separation of powers is important also at state and municipal level to prevent overreach. As at national level, this is achieved by means of the direct election of the state governors and the municipal mayors.

To easily understand the benefits that an American-style constitution would hold over our current Westminster-style one: what would the Western Cape and its residents not give to have the American constitution regulate their powers at provincial and local level, instead of the current South African constitution? So that the *Kapenaars* can enjoy the same rights as those that the State of Texas does (or any other of the 50 US states, for that matter). And if they did in fact enjoy American-style state and local rights, would there still be some in the Cape clamouring today to secede?

Another modality of the American electoral system that could with great benefit have been taken up in the South African constitution is their system of **primary elections**. One of the most significant tweaks to South Africa's earlier, traditional Westminster system was to replace "first-past-the-post" with a significant component of proportional representation (PR) voting. What the raw PR system unfortunately does (because of the fact that voters vote for party lists and not individual candidates), is that it gives party HQ's inordinate power over the likes of members of parliament, who got on the list for loyally toeing the Party HQ line, and who can be easily "de-deployed" by party HQ if they start voting their on conscience instead of the party line dictated by HQ.

In the American system party bosses cannot dictate who their candidates will be – this is decided by the party membership, voting in primary elections. Primaries can easily be married with the PR system (which has considerable merit – I'm not advocating going back to first-past-the-post) by the simple mechanism of potential candidates desiring to feature in their party's eventual list having to participate in a PR election first, held in terms of ranked vote. The party's list can then be legally required to be made up of the successful primary candidates in the same order as they ranked in the primary vote totals.

But, was it ever practical, realistically achievable politics to have pushed from the outset for the American model to serve as constitutional template in the drafting of the new South African one, given the political power equation of the early 1990s? Would the ANC/SACP with their Marxist "democratic centralism" penchant not have fought against it tooth and nail?

Obviously, the ANC/SACP would have strenuously resisted, as they had indeed resisted any whiff of federalism. However, it should be recalled that one of the most negative consequences of the NP's initial love affair with "group rights" was that the ANC could tie federalism to continued racism and so condemn it as "Apartheid light", i.e., as being just a clever new way of retaining the homelands policy.

If the NP had read the tea leaves correctly from the outset and had launched with a strong insistence on the purely geographically-based American federal model – being entirely devoid of group or race or "power sharing" contamination – then I believe that the ANC would have found it much harder to resist, than when they successfully torpedoed federalism after the talks had resumed in mid-1992. Because, by that time, the NP Government had already committed so many "unforced errors" (in tennis terms) and had so thoroughly destroyed its own leverage as well as public and overseas confidence in it (through the wasted thirty months of having hung the "group rights" albatross around their own necks), that by then the ANC/SACP was already firmly in the driver's seat and could dictate the route to take. Which was NOT the case in early 1990, when the ANC were at their most vulnerable and the NP Government's leverage at its strongest (considering also that the American model, had it been pushed for from the very start, would have received strong support from the white opposition parties, the IFP and the Indian plus "Coloured" as well as traditionalist, conservative Black communities.

Ironically, openly calling by name for the American model to be used as template would have played well where it mattered most, namely in the world's then only superpower, the USA (on condition of not being in any way associated with race, "group rights" or quota-based power sharing). If done right from the very outset, with Thatcher

then still the UK's prime minister and Bush Snr the American president, it would have made it difficult for those like the ANC (despite wanting a centralised concentration of power) to oppose it. Because making the US model part of its public plank would have enabled the NP to portray the ANC hardliners as still clinging to communist "democratic centralism".

The fact that the NP could have pointed out to its own base that the principles being returned to were essentially identical to those which had formed the core of the much-admired OFS constitution, could have made the psychological impact of De Klerk's "quantum leap" away from traditional NP policy more bearable. Especially by underscoring that seeking a return to a directly elected president (as at the time of the two Boer republics) and in the process stepping away from the Westminster model, was finally burying the imperialist legacy and again fully embracing true republicanism.

However, by just muddling along instead, using the existing highly centralised Westminster model as template and just cosmetically tweaking it (and not always for the better – as with the party list proportional representation system) what resulted was that in practice "democratic centralism" almost by default fell into the laps of the ANC. Consequently, the very real threats to our most fundamental interests (safety and security of our families and property) were in essence left unattended in the new constitution. Again, as demonstrated by farm murders, the wholesale capture of the state by Zuma and his cronies (due to lack of proper separation of powers) and the destructive July 2021 "self-help" riots – that were "self-help" in two ways: looting rioters helping themselves to property not belonging to them, and communities needing to rely on self-help due to the inability of the highly centralised but incompetent state to perform its most basic function of protection.

All of the foregoing – about a cooperative approach instead of an adversarial one and about promoting the American model instead of merely tweaking Smuts' highly centralised version of the Westminster one – is of course mere speculation, when it comes to whether it could have worked…

But, what is undeniable as seen with these illustrative examples of hypothetical alternatives is that before the "big-bang" had been launched into, the possibility of adopting an incremental behaviouralist approach as well as proposing using the USA constitution as template in the drafting process had needed at least to have been properly analysed and gamed out beforehand. That is, if only we had had a functional strategic decision-making system capable of doing it (one not characterised by superficial structural form existing an organisational chart – as PW's NSMS in practice unfortunately was – but by task-oriented functionalism, a scientifically sound approach cognisant of relevant theory, as well as by unrestrained critical thinking, incorporating expert insights from across the broadest possible spectrum.

Something that sadly had not existed, so that the vitally necessary had been left undone…

### 13.6.6 WHAT DE KLERK'S ADVERSARIAL APPROACH IN PRACTICE HAD RESULTED IN

In terms of the dynamics of political power, what FW de Klerk's adversarial inclination plus his insistence on what he regarded as "normal politics" (to be openly conducted by and between politicians – i.e., not bilaterally and confidentially by intelligence operatives and negotiation experts) had in reality achieved was to have wasted at the outset, during the ANC's period of maximum vulnerability, the best opportunity that the NP could have hoped to have had for applying the leverage it at that time still enjoyed. Insisting on "normalcy", on multilateral openness, and on career politicians conducting what were existentially important negotiations, was clearly not situationally appropriate, given the patent reality that South Africa was then far removed from being a normal country, and with practically all of the career politicians at De Klerk's side not sufficiently equipped for the task he was assigning them – a reality he himself soon enough found out and publicly lamented in his memoirs.

Furthermore, the key conundrum created by De Klerk's wishful intention for the NP to contest with the ANC for winning in its own right political power (or at least some mathematically proportional share of it) was that this was incompatible with the fundamental understanding which many in the NP team and intelligence service already had arrived at, namely that future stability in the country required that the ANC (as the only party conceivably capable of governing effectively) in the interest of national security needed to win convincingly – and, in any case, was certain to do so...

FW's succession of changing choices regarding policy positioning may have been understandable in the historical context (given the extent of the jump that had to be made by his support base, and the limits of tolerance found in human nature). However, it was highly detrimental in terms of having condemned the NP Government to working through the options **experimentally, by trail-and-error** on the battlefield, so to speak (thus resulting in much running into walls, concessions, and U-turns). All because they had not first properly SWOT-analysed and gamed out the likely course that events would take, **prior to launching**. This gravely flawed way of formulating strategy inevitably caused the NP to kick off with an approach which – both regarding goals and the procedure to follow – simply could not fly, thus regularly leading to confidence-sapping about-turns and steady further weakening of its already limited leverage.

The NP had, between 1989 (when De Klerk won the party leadership) and the end of 1993, passed through six distinct turning points:

- The first was the choice under De Klerk to abandon the PW Botha "total onslaught" doctrine of preparing to shoot it out, and instead to favour seeking a negotiated settlement. This was a manifestly correct strategic decision – although unfortunately it came very late in the day, when leverage had already largely evaporated.
- The second was to completely abandon Apartheid and accept universal franchise in a unitary state (as announced by De Klerk in his 2 February 1990 speech), which again was an unavoidable and thus correct decision.
- The third turning point was when De Klerk chose not to build upon the pre-negotiation spadework that Dr Barnard and the NIS (in the outreach to respectively Mr Mandela and the external ANC leadership) had been doing, thereby ignoring the need for first solidly building trust and bridges, cooperatively seeking a meeting of minds – as also recommended by standard theory about how best to conduct negotiations. Instead, De Klerk and Gerrit Viljoen opted for formal, mediatic meetings between the different political leaderships such as that at Groote Schuur, Cape Town Airport, and the Old Presidency in Pretoria, which failed to move the needle and only cemented in place an adversarial relationship.
- The fourth turning point was to change again the procedure being followed to negotiate the terms for the transfer of power; it came about in mid-1992 when belatedly De Klerk accepted what Mr Mandela and Dr Barnard had already reached consensus about years before during their prison talks, namely that the really significant part of the talks had to be conducted bilaterally, doing so exclusively between the NP and ANC, in confidentiality (instead of the multi-party negotiations in a public forum, as De Klerk had tried in order to cast the ANC as "just another party"). This about-turn on the part of the new NP negotiation team led to the establishment of "The Channel Bilateral" as the real, confidential means of the NP Government negotiating the country's future one-on-one with the ANC/SACP.
- The fifth turning point concerned the NP's stated constitutional goal of enshrining "Group Rights" when – after two and a half years of stalemate and the consequent loss of all of the momentum and initiative that had been created by the 2 February speech – the NP Government in the second half of 1992 abandoned its insistence on the new constitution needing to be based upon "Group Rights" (which led to the RoU being signed bilaterally between the NP and ANC in September 1992). After abandoning "group rights", the NP then was focused on obligatory "power sharing" as its new policy platform, to be achieved by means of mathematically calculated quotas.
- The last turning point (or should I just say "about-turn"?) was De Klerk's acceptance in November 1993 of the principle of majority rule (instead of the NP's then wished-for mandatory "power sharing"), leading in short order to the approval of the interim constitution, the establishing of the Transitional Executive Council and the holding of the first non-racial elections, as precursors to the handing over of total power to the new ANC/SACP Government under President Nelson Mandela on 10 May 1994.

All six about-turns were not driven by normativism, but by pragmatic behaviouralist realism.

### 13.6.7 THE ANC/SACP'S OWN ABOUT-TURNS

It was not only the NP that had gone through a number of introspections and inflections. The ANC/SACP had also gone through its own distinct turning points during that same period:

- The first was the practical abandonment of the notion that power could be seized from the white state through armed struggle, leading to acceptance within the ANC leadership of the benefits of seeking a negotiated settlement (as captured in the Harare Declaration of 1989, essentially drafted by the ANC's Oliver Tambo).
- The second was acceptance that the notion of establishing a Marxist "people's republic" in South Africa had become unattainable as well as ideologically a political albatross, and that a new constitutional dispensation based on the Western neoliberal democratic model with free market capitalism had to be accepted.
- The third turning point was the defeat of the radicals and their "Leipzig" mass action strategy, with the ANC from mid-1992 prioritising reaching a negotiated solution via "The Channel Bilateral".
- The fourth turning point was the acceptance by the ANC's NEC in November 1992 of Joe Slovo's "Sunset Clause" proposal, ensuring continuity in governance and avoiding the alienation of the Civil Service and Security Forces.

In fact, by accepting the Western neoliberal democratic model with free market capitalism, and then accepting Slovo's "sunset" proposal, the ANC/SACP probably had made the bigger normative U-turn (but that didn't overly bother them, because their primary goal had always been behaviouralist, not normatively bound to idealist models – namely, gaining maximum control over the actual levers of political power in whatever system emerged from the negotiation compromises).

The big difference between the evolution gone through by respectively the NP and ANC, is that the latter had made peace with practical necessity from the word go, choosing from the outset to make a virtue of necessity, so that they were not hamstrung by their own dubious ideological legacy or unrealistic wishful thinking – certainly not to the extent that the NP remained so.

There is thus empirical proof that the ANC was indeed willing to compromise and cooperate in order to obtain the keys to the Union Buildings. This indicates to me that there had indeed been scope for pre-agreeing, before the launch of the transition, through bilateral and confidential one-on-one talks, a joint strategic approach based on cooperation rather than confrontation – an impression strongly reenforced by Mr Mandela's emphasis on conciliation and "rainbow nation" symbolism after his inauguration as president.

### 13.6.8 WAS IT EVER REALISTIC TO IMAGINE THE NP AND ANC STRATEGICALLY COOPERATING?

In an earlier subsection above (13.6.3) we explored the question whether the NP should have adopted a realist, behaviour-driven (not normative-legalist) approach to the transition. To which the answer was: yes, they should have, and in particular that they would have been well advised to have adopted a cooperative approach to the ANC/SACP, rather than the adversarial one they in fact adopted. The question now is: even if the NP Government had sought to adopt such an approach, could it have been realistically expected to be reciprocated by the ANC, and thus to have worked at the time?

Before we dig deep to dissect this topic, it is important to keep in mind – for the sake of proper historic perspective – that the ANC of 1989/90 (benefiting at the time from the leadership of Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki, and Joe Slovo) was not the ANC of later years. Especially not the ANC of Jacob Zuma, or of Cyril Ramaphosa, with their dubious records regarding corruption and governance. Nor had the still insecure ANC of 1990 yet achieved the confidence and dominance it attained by the latter part of 1992, by which time a combination of their own propaganda successes and the NP Government's fumbling had allowed the ANC to decisively seize the political initiative. We therefore have to look at whether cooperation early-on between the NP and the ANC had been possible, through the lens of how the latter had been in 1990, not through today's lens.

If we ignore this truth, then our mind-set will be contaminated by the very justifiable negativism that nowadays understandably exists about the current ANC as government and party, when we assess today whether in 1989/90 a real possibility had existed for the ANC and NP to have bilaterally and confidentially reached a framework agreement to strategically cooperate.

What we will be discussing here, therefore, is whether the NP Government could, within that rapidly closing window of opportunity at the outset, have established a different and ultimately more productive non-adversarial relationship **with the ANC <u>moderates</u> in particular**, leading ultimately to a somewhat better version of the constitutional dispensation than that which the transition in actual fact produced ("better" not in the sense of something entirely different, but at least with weaknesses addressed regarding more devolution, separation of powers, and moderation of party dominance over parliamentarians – such as following the American constitutional model, rather than sticking with the Westminster one – and also "better" in that it could have sufficiently strengthened the ANC moderates so that the Zuma take-over could potentially have been avoided).

Looking at the ANC/SACP of the latter half of 1989, it is clear that the movement had been greatly weakened by the fact that events in Eastern Europe had exposed their Marxist ideology to be a complete failure. Furthermore, their erstwhile main sponsor, Moscow, had dropped them (to the extent of actually switching sides – remember the earlier mentioned cooperation between Moscow and Pretoria to equip the SAAF's aging Mirage fighters with MIG engines).

The ANC leadership abroad, particularly the likes of Oliver Tambo and Thabo Mbeki, were seriously perturbed by the pressure they were increasingly coming under from leading African states to negotiate (remember the Harare Declaration, penned by Oliver Tambo in response). At that time as well, Margaret Thatcher was still the UK's prime minister and George Bush Snr the U.S. president. In addition, the ANC possessed no real organisational infrastructure inside South Africa, and its "armed struggle" had never made any real headway, despite the turmoil in the townships – in fact, the State's powerful security forces had by 1989 regained the momentum, albeit through the harsh measures of the 2nd State of Emergency.

The ANC thus knew full well that:

- They were highly unlikely to be able to seize power from the white government by force of arms (definitely not in the then foreseeable future),
- The Marxist ideology with which they had so long stood associated, would not fly after its failures had been so well exposed in Eastern Europe,
- The earlier full-blown international support for them (critically so from Moscow, and even too from Africa) could not be guaranteed if they did not themselves fundamentally change course, away from what all could see would be a destructive revolutionary war, to seeking instead a peacefully-negotiated settlement,
- They were confronted in the UK and USA by administrations not enamoured of them, and
- They lacked a strong organisational base inside the country.

The moment of maximum vulnerability for the ANC was, therefore, the first half of 1990.

What they had wanted, above all, were the keys to the Union Buildings. They knew they could not take it off the white government. They also knew that, if they kept on trying to obtain those keys through confrontation and conflict, then the country (and region) faced decades of massive racial polarisation, death and destruction – so that, even should they eventually succeed, they would inherit a wasteland.

The ANC knew that the NP Government had powerful physical and political assets of its own, especially so if one had regard to the financial, private sector institutional, and organised societal means at the disposal of the white community. There was, furthermore, in ANC minds the risk that the NP could choose to go the SWA/Namibia Türnhalle route and build a political alliance among white, "Coloured", Indian, and conservative Black voters.

All of the above Mr Mandela knew full well (which is why he so insistently and urgently had reached out to the PW Botha Government to try and get negotiations between the ANC and NP going). It was also well understood by the likes of Tambo and Mbeki, and importantly also by the SACP's Joe Slovo.

There were a number of good reasons why the NP Government, for its part, should also have opted for at least exploring at the outset (bilaterally and confidentially), whether strategic cooperation with the ANC was possible:

- In terms of standard theory on negotiation, such "pre-negotiation" outreach to sound out the other side and see if confidence and trust can be built – and, if yes – whether a broad framework agreement on procedure

and desired outcomes cannot in principle be pre-agreed (similar to the eventual September 1992 RoU, in other words). Because this avoids committing to a transition on a wish and a prayer, with no real indication as to where it may lead to…

- By entering into a cooperative relationship with the ANC/SACP, the NP Government would have been able to leverage their community's real strengths as bargaining chips on a *quid-pro-quo* basis, building a foundation for substantive future influence and for strengthening the ANC moderates against the biggest long-term threat, namely the ANC radicals in future gaining control of the party and thereby, over each and every lever of state power.
- It is a logical principle in politics that, if you cannot win, then you must try at least not to be seen to lose wholesale. Since there was no chance of beating the ANC at the ballot box due to the ethno-demographic realities, setting up a cooperative alignment would have avoided that the NP emerge from the transition as clear losers (which inevitably would be psychologically perceived, in case of having positioned themselves adversarially – as in fact then happened). By being adversarial and losing as spectacularly as they did, the NP had in effect condemned itself to future irrelevance in 1990 already. This resulted in a huge disservice to its own constituency, who during the political skirmishing of the transition were not best served in terms of the kind of constitution that emerged, and thereafter were left without their own traditional vehicle for political representation and without influence in the decision-making of the new government, nor with a structured means for strengthening the AMC moderates against the ANC radicals.
- Establishing at the outset a strategic cooperative relationship with the ANC, with former enemies reconciling and finding between them a *modus vivendi*, would have been the surest manner of achieving what in the course of the transition emerged as the NP Government's true objectives: **societal peace** (it would have made black/white reconciliation in Mandela's "rainbow nation" spirit easier to achieve, as well as more widely believed – diminishing the polarisation which to this day exists); **image rehabilitation** (if the hand-in-hand photo of De Klerk and Mandela taken at the latter's inauguration could have been taken and circulated already in early 1990, the public response both internationally and locally would have been even more significant and beneficial), and **protection of personal and property rights** (a spirit of cooperation reassuring the ANC that the NP would not try and trick them out of attaining power, would likely have made the ANC more amenable to accepting NP proposals about the political dimension of the new constitutional model, in the manner that the business sector's approach with the Mont Fleur initiative had resulted in ensuring that the New South Africa would be on a viable economic course).
- Public confidence would have been significantly boosted by seeing the two key protagonists cooperating, benefiting the economy and likely avoiding much of the political radicalisation and extremism that had inevitably accompanied the uncertainty created by the adversarial relationship opted for by De Klerk.
- Considering that the ANC – Mr Mandela especially – had been at pains to reach out a hand of cooperation, the NP for its part at the outset at least exploring working together would have avoided the aggravation and hardened attitudes caused by the NP's choice to effectively slap that hand away and try and paint the ANC as being "just another party", with this unnecessarily soured relationship coming back to haunt the NP during the transition and thereafter, leading to their total marginalisation and eventual disbanding.

Given what we've listed above, there clearly were sound reasons for both parties to choose to work together. About whether it would actually have functioned, one obviously cannot know for sure. For my part, I do believe that there's reason to think that a confidential bilateral "in principle" agreement between the ANC and NP to strategically cooperate had in 1989/90 indeed been quite possible – that is, if FW de Klerk had from the outset chosen not to be legalist and adversarial, but to adopt a more clinical, analysis-driven, situationally aware behaviouralist approach aimed at playing his true cards (i.e., leveraging the very real and valuable things his constituency were able to contribute, in the joint interest).

I believe that De Klerk as the top NP leader should have set about, from well before his 2 February 1990 speech, to develop the best possible interpersonal working relationship with Mandela, and the ANC's top leadership, instead of having opted for their legalist, normative approach. Instead of having initially focused on "group rights", then on numerical quota formulas, and finally on being the adversarial Westminster "opposition politician" he should have considered "the long game", swallowed his pride in order to best serve his constituents, and taken the hand offered by Mandela (because, fondly believing that in the capacity of the traditional English parliamentary

Official Opposition he could truly act as an effective brake on future ANC Government excesses, if just he could get the constitution's wording right, was illusory).

Here, also, it is helpful to use again the analogy of the mythical crystal ball – how would De Klerk and his party have approached the negotiations, if in 1989 he could have accurately foreseen what in fact would play out over a period as short as the following decade? If he could then already have seen that neither "group rights" nor power-sharing formulas could ever be made to fly. Furthermore, that the legalist formulaic approach in fact meant that he was basing his strategy on his sides' greatest weakness (numbers) instead of on the very real strengths that his constituency possessed and could offer as *quid-pro-quo's* for significant future real influence, if based on the political dynamics of mutually beneficial cooperative relationships – rather than on irksome mandatory constitutional quota obligations? If he could in that crystal ball have seen that the course that he had chosen and stubbornly clung to, would in the space of a decade lead to his party's total demise, with its members in the end absorbed into the ANC?

Wouldn't De Klerk then have opted to act rather differently at the start, compared to how he actually had set out?

Because leverage (like a crowbar), no matter how strong it in theory is, is of no use if it is not physically in contact with the object to be moved. In other words, there needs to be **engagement**. Otherwise, the crowbar's tip is merely wafting up and down in thin air – and isn't that exactly where we have in fact ended up, regarding white South Africa's real strengths not finding practical application and utility?

Normally, as supported by standard theory, one should not embark on negotiating something as existentially important as South Africa's transition clearly had been, without extensive prior groundwork conducted with total confidentiality, away from the public spotlight. You need to feel out the other side, build bridges, kindle confidence and trust, get clarity on likely common ground versus positions sure to be strongly contested, and pre-shape as much of the negotiations as possible by means of at least an "in principle" framework agreement, before eventually going public in order then to in effect just "seal the deal".

In short, it is common sense not to commit to and actually try and launch into negotiations of such vital importance on the proverbial "wish and a prayer"…

As analyst trained to read the "tea leaves" I am personally convinced (though I cannot offer direct hard proof) that the NIS leadership of those years – Niël Barnard and Mike Louw, above all – had had a rather different, more classical vision of how the transition and negotiations had needed to be initiated and conducted, which contrasted with that reflected in De Klerk's famous speech and in his government's subsequent actions during those first futile thirty months. As Barnard himself had on many occasions stressed, he and Louw knew that an optimally successful negotiated transition had required preparatory groundwork done in total confidentially in bilateral meetings between the only two parties that really had counted – the white government and the ANC/SACP (a point on which he and Mr Mandela in fact had been in total agreement).

The fact that the NIS had invested in the construction of the highly secluded Jakkalsbessie meeting facility in the Kruger National Park (to which people could unobtrusively have been flown in from abroad without give-away formalities, and where they could securely meet in a convivial, distraction-free environment without it becoming publicly known), is to my mind yet more indication of a very different vision on their part about the operational dimension of the transition – similar in format to the crucial meeting between Cyril Ramaphosa and Roelf Meyer in 1992 on the National Intelligence Academy campus, which saved the process by instituting exactly such a confidential "Channel Bilateral" between the ANC and NP Government…

It still baffles me that the NP had in effect entered into this existentially most important of adventures on a "wish and a prayer", without first thoroughly sounding out the other side in secret. In other words, without any confidential prior trust-building and without having put in place at least an "in principle" framework agreement as to what the final outcome should broadly look like. Furthermore, without having availed itself of a thorough prior SWOT-analysis and expert, comprehensive scenario gaming, before having chosen to base their launch on an adversarial, multiparty, publicly negotiated approach. Which soon enough proved in practice to be untenable, but

which in its brief life had lastingly poisoned the well. This, in addition to forcing the NP into a series of leverage-destroying concessions and about-turns.

What they had done, and how they had initially tried to do it, had run so directly contrary to all theory on how negotiations need to be conducted, to be almost unbelievably naïve. Consequently, it was no wonder that they made no progress during the first thirty months and then had to revert to more standard practice, but with their credibility and leverage then totally shot).

If just the NP Government could have known what their misguided initial approach would lead to over those first thirty months, then certainly they would have put in every effort to make a cooperative engagement with the ANC work out…

There are other significant indicators as well that the ANC and NP could conceivably have agreed a *modus vivendi* prior to the transition being formally launched, given the initial vulnerability of the ANC (but on condition that the NP had from the beginning understood practical reality in the same way as they came to do less than three years later).

Firstly, there was a shared historical foundation for NP and ANC strategic cooperation, in that both had been founded as at heart nationalist movements, with both having been set up as counters to imperialism (the emphasis that Mr Mandela had always placed on the Afrikaner's role as the first "liberation fighters" on the continent is telling in this regard).

In terms of economic policy and philosophy, both the NP and ANC were activist state interventionists (before the NP's latter-day privatisation mania, that is). In its heyday the NP's policies of active state facilitation and stimulation of growth, to thereby foster a greater Afrikaner share in the economy, had clear undertones of socialism and state capitalism. In fact, post-WW2 South Africa under NP leadership was the precursor to the Asian Tigers and the modern PRC economic miracle – as well as having been a very successful model of "AEE" (Afrikaner Economic Empowerment), but implemented without killing the goose laying the golden eggs.

Psychologically, there is also the common phenomenon encountered the world over after conflicts, namely that of the actual combatants on the opposing sides afterwards sharing mutual respect and the inclination to let bygones be bygones, focusing instead on jointly working for the common good (as I will reflect upon in more detail when I will relate, in chapter 14, my own experience in this regard).

It is therefore not entirely surprising that the NP in the end chose to disband and be absorbed by the ANC…

On the other hand, one might well argue (on the current face of things) that my opinion – i.e., that strategic cooperation between the NP and ANC had been possible in 1990 – is just naïve wishful thinking. That it would not have lasted – that, as soon as the ANC had felt themselves strongly in power and safe from the radical Right threat, they would have rid themselves of the NP (which is belied by the fact that Mbeki went out of his way in the early 2000s to absorb the NP into the ANC in the hope of strengthening his moderate faction against what had become their real #1 enemy: their own radical faction; white egocentrism makes for not understanding that within the political calculations of the ANC's moderate faction – in charge between 1989 and 2007 – the political relevance of the NP, or any white party, for that matter, had always been far less than the weight of concern around their own radical faction).

There is further reason to believe that my conclusion that cooperation had <u>indeed been achievable</u> at the outset (if correctly approached, bilaterally and confidentially) is not a naïve viewpoint. Precisely because, both strategically and practically, the move's principal objective should have been to in fact ally with and bolster the ANC's moderate wing, whose greatest and enduring concern has always been their own radical wing taking over their party.

There are also strong international examples of where tiny ethnic minorities exercise powerful political influence way beyond their numbers because they have learnt how to best engage and utilise their true levers for the common good (levers which are not military, nor numbers-based, but economic, plus expertise and perceived

integrity) and on condition of them no longer being perceived as a threat to the indigenous majority, but as a valued asset (as I will discuss in Chapter 14).

There is also the very concrete example of the success that the business community achieved with their cooperative Mont Fleur process based on cutting-edge Behavioralist theory, which succeeded in turning the ANC/SACP away from "scientific socialism" to accepting the neoliberal capitalist "Washington consensus" about how economies should be run.

Lastly, had the NP Government made better use of its international and regional diplomatic leverage to have pressure exerted on the ANC to agree to cooperation (with the USSR, the West, and African leaders already having demonstrated their ability to move the ANC/SACP away from "armed struggle" to seeking a negotiated settlement) plus the moral unassailability of ex-enemies deciding to cooperate, it is in my opinion probable that a cooperative arrangement could have been agreed with the then majority moderate ANC leadership – on condition that it had been approached correctly from the outset.

### 13.6.9 HOW THE NP COULD HYPOTHETICALLY HAVE APPROACHED THE ANC, TO PRE-AGREE COOPERATION

In the light of these incontrovertible realties De Klerk should, in my 20/20 hindsight opinion, at the very outset have focused every possible effort on first negotiating, confidentially and bilaterally with the ANC, such a framework agreement on how the transition would be procedurally structured, and with what broad outcome in mind (as was in effect belatedly done in September 1992, with the RoU between the NP and the ANC – just then with relations already seriously soured, and the ANC already publicly confirmed as holding the upper hand in the balance of power).

Having such an "in principle" or "framework" agreement in the back pocket, with it having been negotiated at the stage when the ANC was still at its weakest, would have given much more future certainty. It would also have paved the way for a much smoother and quicker arrival at a new constitution, and for a far more constructive relationship after the first election – likely facilitating a far more optimal opportunity for the NP to influence decision-making than the ring-fenced GNU provided…

The old saying that "one can attract more bees with a spoonful of honey than with a gallon of vinegar" should have been kept in mind when the NP had chosen to go adversarial rather than cooperative…

Tying up as first priority such a one-on-one deal with the ANC (by means of a continuation and expansion of the bilateral confidential preparatory talks conducted by Barnard and the NIS), would have been **the real alternative strategic approach** that De Klerk could (should, in my opinion) have adopted – an alternative approach of much more potential consequence than the alternative speech text and the hypothetical phased, incremental transition that I have earlier illustrated.

So, let us explore – again, as hypothetical example – how this could conceivably have worked, covering the three key issues that such a proposal to strategically cooperate had needed to include. Boiled down to its bare bones, what De Klerk could have based his approach to Mandela around, were the following points:

- Mr Mandela, you had insisted to my predecessor's administration already a number of years ago that, between the NP and the ANC, a solution had to be found to the conflict tearing at the fabric of our country. So that the death and destruction that would accompany a fight to the finish could be avoided. My government and I share that desire to bring an end to the conflict. We also share the insight that – whether we like it or not – Destiny has clearly ordained that it is the NP and the ANC that, more than any others, hold the future of this land and its people in their hands. We recognise the ANC as the essential main counterparty to any successful negotiation process, and we also recognise that, because of ethno-demographic reality, you are most likely to form the next government in a fully democratic, non-racial New South Africa.
- That said, it is also current reality that – whilst you evidently wish to receive the keys to the Union Buildings – it is my government that hold those keys strongly in our grasp. You have seen that you cannot take them from us by force, because the State remains orders of magnitude stronger than you are, when it comes to

a contest of physical force. Based on the concrete proof of past success in growing this country, you can also see the value that the people my party represent can add to the benefit of our nation, in any future dispensation.

- We, in turn, have seen that you can absolutely make life impossible for us, by means of international and internal pressure. Therefore, if we both continue on our previous conflictual course, we will collapse the country into a race war where all will be victims. Everything that has been built up will be destroyed, making any "victory" entirely hollow. Furthermore, having resisted imperialism and domination ourselves, we understand the legitimate aspirations of the people that you represent.
- Accordingly, my new government and I (who see the world and the future very differently from my predecessor), accept the reality that you will likely be democratically entitled to those keys, because we accept that you will probably win the democratic, non-racial elections that we need to have. However, over and above the rationale of respecting of necessity the outcome of a democratic, legitimate election, we furthermore do regard the ANC under your leadership as the only party capable of effective and stable governance in a future non-racial, unitary New South Africa. We therefore understand perfectly well that – on condition of reaching a mutually-acceptable basis of cooperation – it will be in the interest of my party and people that you be entrusted with those keys.
- Since you have studied the history of my people – our struggles for liberty and justice, and our total patriotic attachment to this land and to our African identity – you understand that, unlike whites in the rest of Africa, we are not talking about throwing you the keys while we're on the way to the harbour or airport. We are here to stay. We are as African as you are. We have bled much for this soil, fighting the forces of imperialism. We therefore have a shared interest, together with all other South Africans, in what we believe we all should see as our jointly-owned enterprise, "South Africa Incorporated" – SA Inc.
- As fellow shareholders, my people have much to contribute – our skills, our capital, our devotion to this land and its people, and our expertise in maintaining law and order. Which latter you will undoubtedly need, in order to survive in government against the very real possibility of insurrection on the part of the radical Right, both Zulu and Afrikaner. And we – committed to holding the moderate middle – have the patriotic desire to do just that. We are all anti-imperialist nationalists, having ourselves shed more blood than anyone else in our anti-imperial wars, the first liberation struggle of this century on African soil.
- We believe that the world around us of late has changed radically, much for the better. We understand that the ideological issues that had deeply divided us and caused us to prepare to fight you as hard and as well as we had fought the British, no longer constitute a threat. We understand that now is the time for us to change as well, to liberate ourselves from the burden that Apartheid has become for us as well. And, as we understand the need to liberate ourselves from our "Apartheid" ideological baggage, we hope that you understand the need for your movement to ideologically liberate itself from its equally failed Marxist-Leninist baggage.
- We, like you, want an entirely new post-colonial constitutional and socio-economic dispensation. One that is just and fair to all. A non-racial unitary state based on voluntary association rather than legal dictate, where the majority shall democratically rule, as determined by equal universal franchise. Where the basic human rights of every individual are protected by a charter of human rights and an independent judiciary, within a state of laws in which the constitution shall be supreme, as it had been in the Orange Free State Republic. For which that model constitution, together with those of France and the USA, may serve as excellent examples, with a directly-elected presidency, a vigorously independent Supreme or Constitutional Court, and with the devolution of powers to the lowest levels, so that government can function as close to the people its serves as possible, with local control – non-racially constituted – over local concerns such as education, policing, farming, health, transport, and the like, with each constituent province of our unitary state directly electing its own governor, crafting its own constitution, and having its own national guard reservist force, plus all individuals enjoying equal fundamental rights such as freedom of speech, of association, and of bearing arms.
- That said, we do not want to slavishly follow Eurocentric models. We should visibly and inherently be a proudly African state, but one that follows internationally proven successful models of democracy and free market economic policy, adapted to our own traditions and needs. In the same manner that we ourselves have in earlier decades successfully economically uplifted our own, we believe in an activist developmental state focused on upliftment of the disadvantaged, in cooperation with the private sector – similar to the state

capitalism that we in the past had successfully developed for the upliftment of those Afrikaners who had been left behind by the ravages of imperialism.

- Above all, we wish for a New South Africa that will embrace and encourage our willingness to contribute – a state in which we will be valued as fellow South Africans. We don't want any special deals or protections. Nor do we want a veto. We don't want a mandatory mathematical proportion of power equivalent to our numbers either, because we believe that we have much more to offer than the proportion which our mere numbers reflect. We want our country to be free of racial prejudice, as well as of any prejudice based on ethnic or linguistic group, culture, faith, class, or orientation. We do not believe that any lower units of governance below the national level should be geographically delimitated based on race, group identity, or on any other dividing criterium other than shared economic interest in the territory they all together inhabit and interdependently benefit from.
- The only political status or position we aspire to, is to be welcomed at the Imbizo as men among men, where we can speak up and be listened to, similar to all other voices – to convince not by mathematical formulas, but through the logic of our arguments and the strength of our example, and in turn to be convinced by the will of the majority.
- It is not for nothing that South Africa is by far the most developed economy on the continent. We as Afrikaners have shown that we know how to uplift our people, through policies that utilise the state as engine of development. Your new government will face an enormous developmental task, to rapidly bring to all our country's people a sense of social justice and of equitable sharing in the wealth of this land. We believe that we are one of your greatest assets – all that we ask for, is the opportunity to input our contribution as proud part of our rainbow nation. Because we perfectly comprehend that if our neighbours sleep cold and with empty stomachs, without proper housing or hope, then we cannot sleep tranquilly either.
- Together with you, based on a cooperative consensus that we know we have first to find, confidentially and bilaterally, we want to build a New South Africa where, as it should, everyone will enjoy equal universal voting rights in a unitary state, and the democratic majority shall rule, restrained only by reason and common interest, not by artificial legal constraints based on quotas. Which, realistically, we know means that you will be that government. With Mr Mandela as president. We are ready to support you to become that stable, successful government, through the coming negotiated transition and beyond, based upon such a cooperative consensus between us – in the form of whatever configuration of future cooperation may best suit the moment and our mutual needs. That is our wish – to turn the page and work together as fellow patriots and nationalists. Proud of our heritage as Afrikaners, but first and foremost proudly patriotic South Africans.
- What we want, above all, is to avoid that we end up in an adversarial relationship so typical of the British Westminster system. We do not want to be side-lined as being your official opposition. We do not want to serve as notional institutional brakes on your future government, reduced to continuously carping and criticising. We want to be your patriotic partners, so as to progress together and help you go even faster, more securely and more prosperously than you conceivably can on your own. As two anti-imperialist, nationalist movements and peoples joining hands to cooperate in all that is beneficial to the common good.
- Now to cut to the chase – before Mr Mandela can be sworn in, before we can hand over the keys, there is a transition to navigate. Which we as government of the day have been charged by history to manage and facilitate. This we wish to do in close cooperation and agreement with you. Working together to ensure the success of that transition falls on both the NP and the ANC, because our shared reality is that Destiny has selected us for this. Destiny, without having consulted us, is obliging us to work in strategic cooperation to achieve that objective – whether we historically have liked one another or not, and irrespective of whether we like the idea of being partners or not. The interest of our citizenry requires of us that we give it our very best effort. This is what we need to pre-negotiate, bilaterally and confidentially, and for which we need now to establish between us a Channel Bilateral which can work on agreeing a Record of Understanding, which can serve as a mutually agreed basis for conducting the upcoming transition and framing the new constitution.
- Let there not be any doubt – the coming transition will not be all smooth and easy. You know that not all parts of our nation share my government's willingness to facilitate for you to eventually take in your hands the reins of government. There is a very real risk that significant segments may rise up to try and block the transition. Whether it be Zulu traditionalists or Afrikaner secessionists. Their fighting ability I need not lecture

you on. The only force capable of stopping them, if ever push should come to shove, are the statutory forces under my government's command. That will be our first, very crucial contribution to our common good – to ensure that the transition goes smoothly with the necessary security and good order, so that Mr Mandela can be duly inaugurated as president. As you know, we are well versed in maintaining law and order, which will be indispensable for you – not only to achieve power, but to maintain it (and which ability you cannot replicate quickly).

- In this partnership, you have certain things that you desire. So have we. We want to discuss this and reach agreement with you, one-on-one, before we embark on the public process of drafting a new constitution – a process in which other parties will evidently also eventually need to be included, for the sake of legitimacy and harmony in society. We sincerely believe that, with shared patriotic goodwill and keeping the interests of our citizenry foremost in mind, we will, between our two parties, be able to reach mutually acceptable compromises. We therefore are reaching out a hand of cooperation, in the hope that it will not be slapped away. Because we believe that you know full well that we are far better to have as partners, than as opponents.
- Destiny has chosen to geographically mix all of our peoples together across the face of this fair land. Our undeniable reality is that our fates have become inextricably intertwined. We admit that we've tried policies that had defied those realities, and which accordingly had manifestly failed. We admit that those policies have harmed our fellow countrymen. We are sincerely sorry for that. We have learnt. My new government has come to accept reality, and we want to make the wealth with which this land is blessed work to everyone's advantage. As I've earlier stressed, we know very well that we cannot be safe and secure if our neighbour is hungry and homeless. Therefore, what we propose here to do, together with you at your side, is not born out of a sudden conversion to feel-good, bleeding-heart liberalism, or an insincere show of culpability – it stems from an enlightened, realistic understanding of our own self-interest. Which is your best guarantee of our enduring commitment.
- Your movement is itself an alliance of components. A broad tent, as you like to say. It has always been such – back to the Congress Alliance days. We can envisage that we, being also nationalists like you, may eventually want to form part of such an alliance, bringing with us our people to broaden the legitimacy of your government and complete our "colour" in the rainbow. Just as the SAIC represented the Indian community at your side, and the CPC the so-called Coloureds. We are, therefore, looking beyond immediate expediency to a long-term cooperative relationship. We realistically understand that that is the only way by means of which we will, in the real world, be able to concretely contribute and leverage our expertise, experience, and considerable capabilities – to thereby exert the influence that reason and shared interest fosters (in other words, not through formulas penned onto paper). We do not want "Apartheid Lite" – we want our own liberation. We want cooperation, not conflict, because we realise that that is the approach that will best serve our interests – and yours (hoping that you will also understand that having us as parters is far, far better for yourselves and the country, than having us as adversaries).
- Building now already such a cooperative relationship is what we urgently want to explore with you, before the coming process of transition goes public. Together to set its parameters and its goals, and together to visualise the working and building of the Rainbow Nation that lies beyond.

Now, what do you as reader think? Am I now engaging in "fever dreams"? At first glance you may think so. But I will present proof that this approach had indeed been a viable option.

Let's first apply simple logic, looking at what reality had soon enough forced the NP to accept. Would it not have been beneficial to the whole process (and most particularly for the NP and its base) if an agreement similar in form to the bilateral RoU signed between the NP and ANC in September 1992 – but possibly with better terms – had been agreed between the two parties thirty months earlier? Agreed as being in fact a logical, a prudent first step – then building the process of transition and the new constitution upon it. If the NP could have early on sought to strategically cooperate with the ANC whilst retaining its own identity and its representation of and care for the interests of its traditional constituent base (along the lines of the ANC's own pluralist Congress Alliance model) rather than to have, a decade later, ignominiously disbanded itself and then individually joined the ANC?

I won't be told that this was impossible. The most significant peace accords of recent years have come about when sworn adversaries who had fought each other tooth and nail sat down and explored their common interest. Peace was achieved precisely when so-called "right-wing" parties of hard-nosed conservatives (not the bleeding-heart liberals) sat down to negotiate, based on brass tacks reality. On behaviouralist *realpolitik*, not normative idealism.

A telling example to keep in mind is the outsize role that South Africans of Indian origin have always played in the ANC, not based on mathematical quotas and despite the conflicts that had historically so tragically marked Indian/Zulu relations in Natal. They did it through the value they were adding – in other words, utilising their true levers of influence, instead of their actual numbers.

I was glad to see that Artificial Intelligence (Google Gemini, normally to the "left" of the spectrum among AI's) agreed with me that the ANC and Mr Mandela in particular would likely have embraced the idea of such a strategic patriotic partnership between the ANC and the NP. This is the gist of what it said:

*"Mandela was a profound student of history, and he genuinely respected the Afrikaner anti-imperialist struggle against the British. Had FW de Klerk approached the negotiations as a genuine, patriotic partnership to build a non-racial democracy, the ANC leadership would have embraced it wholeheartedly. In fact, in many ways, Mandela was actively looking for exactly this kind of partner.*

*"Because De Klerk's initial goal was to dilute majority rule rather than embrace it, Mandela began to view him not as a patriotic partner, but as a shrewd adversary trying to preserve white privilege under a new guise. Had De Klerk walked into the room and said, "We want to help you build a non-racial democracy, and we want to use our experience of overcoming poverty to help lift your people," the history of South Africa might look vastly different today."*

## 13.6.10 IF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE ANC AND NP WAS POSSIBLE, WHY THEN DID IT NOT HAPPEN? WHAT WAS THE CONSEQUENCE OF REMAINING STUCK IN AN ADVERSARIAL RELATIONSHIP?

If it had indeed been possible to pre-negotiate with the ANC/SACP a cooperative working arrangement – why then, did this not happen at the outset? (After all, less than a decade after the transition the NP had disbanded and joined the ANC).

The simple answer is that **FW de Klerk did not try it**. On the contrary, he chose an adversarial posture. He was acting not as cold-minded strategist, but as party politician driven by the common determinant uppermost in the minds of most politicians: what would my (unprepared) base say, short-term?

FW de Klerk was a career lawyer-politician who literally grew up in the Westminster system and who was furthermore academically formed in a legalist-normative manner at Potchefstroom. At the beginning of 1990 he was faced with the deadline for making his first opening of parliament speech. This was the context (i.e., of parliamentary protocol) that he was focused on, intent on seizing this moment to make the case for all political forces in the country to come together and negotiate a new non-racial future in a unitary state, which he wanted the world to know that his government was now willing to accept, with "the door now wide open".

What had not been sufficiently understood was that this speech was destined to be much more than merely an "opening of parliament address" or an announcement of willing acceptance of negotiations as path to a settlement. Inevitably, this speech would be perceived to have laid down the government-envisioned parameters for the process to come and thus had, as absolute prior necessity, to have been preceded first by the formulation of a comprehensive A-Z strategy, so that the content of the speech could be aligned with that strategy and not just with parliamentary custom.

What De Klerk (as effectively principal author of his speech) inherently neither could nor would imagine – being a retail politician up to then known for always having been particularly careful not to step beyond the tolerance range of his constituents and caucus – was the idea to pre-negotiate first with the ANC/SACP a framework agreement, and with that in hand then to step up and announce to white voters (who had been conditioned for decades to see

the ANC as an amalgam of both the Red and Black Threats) that his government had in fact concluded a working arrangement with the ANC/SACP to cooperatively transition the country to non-racial democracy in a unitary state, based on universal franchise.

The latter part of that message (i.e., non-racial democracy) he knew to be essential to state up front, given the pressure his government was under – but actually having engaged with the ANC/SACP beforehand and then to reveal in his speech that fact (of having pre-agreed with the ANC/SACP a cooperative working arrangement) evidently had then still for him been politically unthinkable – also because the need for it had not been identified and incontrovertibly substantiated for him by a proper process of analysis, option generation, and scenario gaming.

In this regard, FW de Klerk was considerably less of a systematically structured strategic thinker and efficient process manager than PW Botha had been, who at least had understood and agreed with Niël Barnard to engage first with the ANC to explore the what and how of that which could be possible (during the transition this unfortunate lack of skills was underscored by the structural shambles and the managerial as well as procedural weaknesses that had marked the NP Cabinet's negotiation management effort, greatly frustrating the Meyer team).

Because De Klerk had wished to re-assert cabinet control, he had not first set out to seek expert input from across the bureaucracy and society to help to properly formulate for him and his cabinet the range of strategic options available – which process on the one hand would have shown him what was both inevitable and aligned with best theory, plus on the other that there were ways and means of confidentially reaching pre-agreement on the fundamentals with the ANC, without having to immediately proclaim a Siamese twinning from the rooftops.

I fully concur with Professor Hermann Giliomee that, on a matter of such import, De Klerk should have pulled together the best expertise, also from abroad. Enough of it existed in Afrikaner business ranks, academia and organised civil society (such as the Broederbond) to complement the bureaucracy's capabilities vested in the likes of the NIS, Department of Justice, and Constitutional Development and Planning. But, De Klerk chose to reassert the primacy of the politician and went with his cabinet as his think-tank – which by that stage did not all represent the best and the brightest, and of whom most would in fact abandon him to effectively carry the can on his own well before the transition reached its crucial phase (as he himself lamented in his autobiography).

Back now to why a cooperative relationship did not come about between the NP and the ANC (considering that, a few years later, the NP disbanded itself and its members joined the ANC). The key reason was De Klerk and his adversarial, unrealistic approach. So, why did he adopt it? Probably because he feared that he would be seen as a "sell-out" if he didn't "take on" the ANC/SACP – which, in the end he was in any case accused of (it will be recalled how concerned he had been, drafting his speech, about whether to unban the SACP or not). Perhaps he really thought, initially, that he could beat the ANC at the negotiation table, and perhaps even at the ballot box. Perhaps it was all due to the adversarial Westminster-style of politicking that he was accustomed to from childhood, absorbed from his father (who had been a president of the senate). Reenforced by the normative-legalist mind-set typical of many Afrikaner politicians that I've mentioned, especially in lawyers like him…

Perhaps De Klerk had simply become too wrapped up in the challenge of the moment – being the speech as such – not sufficiently sensing the need first for a grand strategy (as a necessary framework, dictating the nature and content of the speech) because of having perceived that he was extending the invitation and publicly committing, with the rest to follow based on the reactions elicited by the speech. He was, therefore, primarily driven by the need to make the right kind of media headlines when he opened parliament for the first time, on the first anniversary of him having assumed the leadership of the NP (after all, he knew that he had to say something of considerable consequence, due to the tremendous pressure his government was under; and, if not in that speech, then when?).

What is undeniable is that the NP Government, making the most important decisions in more than three centuries, did not have the benefit of a functional, expert system of comprehensive strategy formulation. Neither did it have an experience-based institutional memory and historically ingrained expertise of how to organise and manage the complex kind of challenge that this type of negotiation would present (which, had it existed, could have helped enable them to understand the strategic significance of the speech, as being in reality much more than a speech).

I found very revealing the often-repeated exasperation with the disorganisation and the reactive, often off-the-cuff decision-making on the NP Government side, that clearly emerge in the autobiographies of the likes of Niël Barnard, Jan Heunis, and Maritz Spaarwater – a tendency even reflected in De Klerk's own autobiography, which reads like a diary of daily disaster management, "fire brigade" style, with no substantive mention of any clear guiding strategic plan.

In my professional and academic opinion, most of the De Klerk NP's strategic errors before and during the transition can indeed principally be related back to the fundamental failure to ensure that a properly functional system of strategy formulation was in place to expertly analyse all options and present cabinet with a range of situationally aware, well-motivated alternative courses of action to choose from. This was of course not only De Klerk's failure, although he carried responsibility for actually launching into negotiations without first having such a properly formulated end-to-end strategy to hand. The true blame lies with De Klerk's predecessors, who had allowed the hourglass to run empty – particularly with PW Botha and the lost decade under him, where any thought of negotiating a settlement was taboo and was actively thwarted, and where a pretence of a strategy formulation system was formalistically imposed (the NSMS), but which in fact served to enforce conformity to the "total onslaught" doctrine – definitely not original, critical thinking.

Another factor that played a role in preventing that a cooperative relationship could come about between the ANC and the De Klerk-led NP (i.e., in addition to his natural negative pre-disposition as party politician highly sensitive to his base, his lack of relevant experience and inappropriate academic formation, and the lack of a functional system of strategy formulation to have advised him) was De Klerk's own personality. In my opinion, De Klerk was not a natural alpha male political leader (such as Mandela was). His main strength was his undoubted intellect, which (together with his lawyer-inclination to be instinctively cautious about those he regarded as equally endowed, and whom he tended to treat as competition) gave him the personality type that today would be called a bit "nerdish". This inclined De Klerk to instinctively spar "adversarially" with intelligent others, as if in an intellectual contest of wits – although he was, by all accounts, in general a thoroughly nice and considerate man. Equally instinctively, De Klerk's attitude caused someone like Mandela to, in turn, regard him with caution, seeing De Klerk as a bit too manipulative, too calculating, and too inclined towards clever lawyerly tricks to be fully trusted. *(**Caution**: this is purely a subjective, personal opinion that I have of a leader whose deeds I happen to have great admiration for: I'm not a psychologist, and I also cannot claim to have had opportunity to assess De Klerk's private personality, knowing just his public persona – so that what I'm postulating here should not be taken as hard fact, just as a generally-informed impression).*

If there were two people with whom FW de Klerk had needed from the start to have built up and maintained the best possible interpersonal relationship of mutual trust, with a willingness on his part to truly listen to them (and not treat them as intellectual competition to be instinctively suspected of trying to get the better of him), it was above all Nelson Mandela, but also Niël Barnard.

This evidently never came to pass – they did not take to him, and neither did he to them. If it had been otherwise, things could have turned out somewhat differently. It is noteworthy that Barnard had thought – as stated unabashedly in his autobiography – that PW Botha would have been better at the negotiations than FW – not because of the "Groot Krokodil" being tougher, but because Barnard believed that there would have been far better personal chemistry between PW Botha and Nelson Mandela, with PW also far better at the strategic conceptualisation, organisation, and management of the process. (Which makes it truly lamentable that PW Botha had not, while in his prime, understood the necessity for, nor been willing to meet and engage with Mandela to hammer out a *modus vivendi*).

The other side of the coin is, of course, that Niël Barnard was not everybody's cup of tea either – as he himself well knew. All the blame for the stiff relationship between him and FW de Klerk cannot, therefore, be laid solely at the door of the latter…

That said, the fact that the principal blame remains to lie with a gravely dysfunctional strategy formulation system is not what we tend to hear today – much more often the notion is aired that Meyer and De Klerk were "too weak", that De Klerk should have played his supposed "military card" (as if that could have fundamentally shifted the

eventual outcome). We will therefore soon analyse, in a later subsection, the use or non-use of armed force, and/or the threat of it, as leverage in the negotiation/transition process.

So, **what were the consequences** for the NP and the country, of DE Klerk having remained stubbornly stuck in an adversarial relationship with the ANC/SACP?

Had FW de Klerk at the outset adopted, through bilateral, confidential engagement first building trust and bridges, a cooperative rather than adversarial approach – one geared towards strategic "patriotic cooperation" to together fundamentally transform the country – then a meaningful influencing of decision-making would in my opinion have been possible without the head-butting that we in fact saw. Lamentably, De Klerk remained stuck on legalist-normative mathematical formulae (in fact basing his legalist drafting thinking on numbers – his weakest possible lever, given the demographic reality). What he failed to do was to employ the very real leverage that Afrikaner/white administrative and business expertise, capital, and record of service delivery as well as of successful economic upliftment of its own base could have constituted.

De Klerk's adversarial approach psychologically solidified antagonism and polarisation, where-as what was needed was "rainbow nation" co-identification and "pulling together". Because psychology and politics are behaviourally interrelated, this harmed the constitution-writing process by hardening attitudes and eating up irreplaceable time, and had two grave consequences in the post-election phase: It severely harmed the NP to the point first of the demise of the GNU and then the demise of the NP itself, leaving its traditional Afrikaner constituency politically orphaned as "*bywoners'* in their own country, deprived of any influence over the levers of government. Simultaneously it deprived the new government (especially the moderate ANC faction) of the contribution the Afrikaner could have made in terms of the financial and human capital, plus the expertise and experience the ANC moderates had needed to be able to deliver to the masses (and thereby keep the ANC radicals marginalised).

This lack of tangible results that people of colour could concretely enjoy in their daily lives then led in turn to the formation of the radical EFF and later the MKP, and to the take-over of government after 2007 by a kleptocracy that came close to running the country into the ground.

When looking at the contest for political power as it played out, the answer for the NP and its traditional support base was neither to try and rely on brute force, nor on normative constitutional text-drafting. The answer lay in making the NP and its constituency as indispensable an asset as possible and seeking to strategically partner with ANC moderates (as the NP itself within a decade realised, as had the business community from early on – *vide* Mont Fleur).

FW de Klerk's greatest error was, therefore, not that he was weak, or that he had failed to "play the military card", but that he had made wrong foundational choices regarding which behaviouralist approach to adopt from the outset – adversarial, or cooperative.

What was understood by most in the NP was that Mandela's ANC would inevitably rule. What was not sufficiently understood by De Klerk and those thinking adversarially, was the key future issue – THE key issue to this day, for South Africa's ultimate direction – namely: **who will rule the ANC**? (or, in the post-2024 election context, in alliance with the ANC?).

De Klerk's biggest strategic misconception in terms of **threat assessment** stemmed from not understanding that the interest of his people required building a partnership with the ANC's moderates to help ensure that they (and not the radicals) remain in control of their party and thus of the levers of government. Instead, De Klerk opted for being the 2nd biggest party and try and act as brake from the opposition benches (inevitably, for being such a small party: with what real hope of being more effective than the former official opposition had been over decades of vocal yet toothless criticism in the old white parliament?).

Imagine if the De Klerk-led NP politicians had not initially hogged the negotiations (i.e., if instead they had opened themselves up to outside advice so that experts from the intelligence community, civil society, academia, and

business could have formed part of the support underpinnings for its negotiation team?). What if the NP had in 1990, ten years earlier than when they eventually realised that their future lay with the ANC, opted to work with Mandela's rainbow nation vision? Where could the country then have been today? Would the Zuma disaster then still have happened?

However much the current ANC is obviously first and foremost to blame for where it finds itself today, it remains worthwhile to consider the strategic errors committed by the NP. Not for the sake of transferring blame away from the ANC to the far less culpable De Klerk NP, but for the sake of **learning**, given the reality that South Africa now faces an era of ever more coalition governments across all levels of governance.

### 13.6.11 THE NP GOVERNMENT WAS NOT NEGOTIATING THE TRUE CORE ISSUE (MEANING, THE TRANSFER OF POWER)

This brings us to another core conceptual problem which – with hindsight – is now starkly evident regarding the manner in which the De Klerk Government had approached the negotiations: meaning, the fact that **they avoided negotiating the true core issue around which the conflict centred**, opting instead to entangle themselves (and the process) in disputes about what in reality was an ancillary matter (one that would, furthermore, of necessity fall to be determined by the nature of the settlement reached on the core issue).

What do I mean by this? Simply that **the conflict was in essence all about the transfer of political power from the NP to the ANC**. If we set aside wishful thinking and political posturing, then the empirical reality which already was clear by the mid-eighties (at least to the NIS top leadership and critical thinkers like my father) was that any transition to a truly democratic New South Africa would inevitably see the ANC emerge as clear winners, with Nelson Mandela as State President. This Niël Barnard had very explicitly told PW Botha when the latter had instructed Barnard in 1988 to lead the four-man team which was to initiate the secret in-prison exploratory talks with Mr Mandela.

Furthermore, many in the NIS (and beyond) were already convinced that it actually was in the interest of security and stability in the country that the ANC should become the next government, because only the ANC would conceivably be viewed as legitimate and only they possessed the leadership, backing, structure and organisational ability, as well as the discipline required for effective governance.

Cut to the bone, the real issue that had needed to be negotiated bilaterally between the NP Government and the ANC, was **how best to effect the transfer of power from the NP to the ANC**, considering the broad best interest of the country and its inhabitants. **Not** the legal niceties of how the new constitution should be drafted.

When Dr Barnard initiated the prison talks with Mr Mandela, Barnard had proceeded from that realist assumption that a system of majority rule in a unitary state was unavoidable, meaning that the ANC would win non-racial elections and that Mandela would thus inevitably become the next president. This did not signify that that would have been Barnard's preferred outcome in a reality-free ideal world, nor that he and Mandela had agreed on everything, or that Barnard had simply conceded every point – on the contrary. However, he recognised reality when it stared him in the face. Because of both being realists, where Mandela and Barnard disagreed on the modalities of policy and implementation, they were not treating each other as political adversaries engaged in a win-or-lose contest for power, with one wanting to overcome the other. In their minds the question of who would hold power was settled by immutable external determinants (most importantly, the demographics); they no longer needed to fight each other over that but could cooperate to resolve their differences about the modalities. Because what they fundamentally shared was a broad consensus that the transition from the NP to the ANC absolutely had to be made to work, to avoid the country collapsing into Vorster's "alternative too ghastly to contemplate".

This non-adversarial, clinically realist, and goal-focused cooperative approach on the part of Barnard and his team, based on their acceptance of underlying realities determining the balance of political power and their understanding that cooperation had to replace conflict, had elicited from Mandela a similar cooperative response – for example, to the point of him having volunteered to Barnard the idea of having a 50/50 cabinet (i.e., similar to what had been suggested in the Lusaka Manifesto).

Barnard and his team also understood that the new constitution, important as it undoubtedly would be, was ancillary to first of all establishing agreement about the main modalities of the transfer of power from the NP to the ANC – that the content of the constitution would flow from and be guided by that basic bilateral agreement, best negotiated in confidentiality.

De Klerk, however, tried from the start to maintain the fiction that the ANC was "**just another political party** among many", with whom his NP would be competing for political power in the New South Africa via itself seeking an electoral mandate. The eventual result of the 1994 election (with the NP only winning one in five of the votes cast) shows how unrealistic this always was (and, inversely, how correct the NIS's assessment had all along been). However, De Klerk clinging to this fiction and therefore approaching Mandela as a political adversary meant that he and his team had in practice precluded themselves from first negotiating, bilaterally and in confidence, the core issue with the ANC: i.e., the transfer of power.

What this lack of reality-recognising situational awareness on the part of De Klerk and the NP politicians surrounding him, plus their resultant unwillingness to negotiate over the core issue of transfer of power inevitably culminated in, was that for them the ancillary issue (the drafting of the constitution) perforce became, by substitution, the main focal point of the negotiations, suited to their normative-legalist skills. Consequently, because of the reality that such legalist negotiations were captive to the ANC's veto (in the absence of prior agreement on the behavioralist modalities of the transfer of power), the NP Government simply could not achieve any real progress for thirty months. During which time the ANC had kept their eye on the ball, propagandising, organising, and mass mobilising for winning the real contest for political power – i.e., for popular support in the townships and countryside.

This resulted in the NP and the ANC for 30 months sparring on the public stage at arms' length (instead of meeting in confidential bilateral working sessions, directly, one-on-one). The NP's approach of ignoring studiously the core issue of the modalities of the transfer of power and their avoiding – till mid-1992 – of the need for a "Channel Bilateral" with the ANC, had meant that the fundamental issue of who held the upper hand, of who could dictate terms, was by default being fought out in the streets and diplomatic back-chambers, where the real balance of power was being ever more harshly rubbed in.

Against the NP's attempted use of normative and legalist tools, the ANC were deploying the behaviouralist weapons of the political streetfighter – mass mobilisation and an expert propaganda campaign, amplified by the local and international English and foreign-language media.

With, by mid-1992, this jockeying for advantage (which constituted the most accurate reflection of the real balance of power between the two parties), unequivocably confirming that the ANC was, nationally and internationally, in the driver's seat. Which inevitably resulted in the NP being forced into a series of about-turns and one confidence-sapping concession after the other. Including eventually having to start addressing that core issue via Roelf Meyer and Cyril Ramaphosa, confidentially in the Channel Bilateral, leading to the Record of Understanding being signed by De Klerk and Mandela in September 1992.

But with as lasting negative, the souring of relations and a gross wasting of precious time and leverage…

Without the NP's initial attempts at avoiding the core issue changing in any way the eventual outcome – namely, of the ANC succeeding the NP as government.

All that in the end resulted from this ill-advised initial NP strategy (due to the NP's resultant loss of negotiation leverage plus the pressure of time that had accumulated over the course of those wasted 30 months of carping contestation) was a more Westminster-based, highly centralised "Old SA" constitutional dispensation than what we now know would have been ideal. This constitution was furthermore less "bug-tested" (against future exploitation by bad actors), less polished, and less comprehensive than would conceivably have been possible to negotiate if the core issue (of first agreeing how best to handle the transfer of power) had been settled at the outset between the NP and the ANC, confidentially and bilaterally, on a non-adversarial, realist footing…

Because De Klerk and his team had not been truly prepared and ready for what that speech of his inevitably initiated. They did not have to hand, before launching on 2 February 1990, a realistic, situationally aware strategic roadmap for how to handle the negotiations. As stated already multiple times, De Klerk did not enjoy the benefit of a properly functional system of strategy formulation that could have reliably provided him with comprehensive SWOT analyses and "war gaming" results for a comprehensive spectrum of strategic options – which was only made worse by his decision to hog the process for himself and his politician cabinet …

The main "**what if**" question that we can all ponder (because of what we can learn from the past about today's challenges of coalition governance) is what the outcome could have been if De Klerk had faced reality head-on, accepted that the ANC inevitably (and necessarily) would be the next government, and accordingly chose to first negotiate with them up front, bilaterally and confidentially, the main issue that faced his government and its principal antagonist: an orderly and mutually-beneficial transfer of power from the NP to the ANC (or, ideally from the perspective of the NP and its base, from the NP to an ANC Government receptive of NP participation and input).

Surely it should have been logically evident that, to first bilaterally and confidentially strike with the ANC a deal about how such a transition should happen, and what real influence based on trye strengths (not number quotas) he and the NP could afterwards input into national decision-making was an essential prerequisite for embarking on the actual transition...

Because the reality that De Klerk in truth had faced was this:

- There was no way in which the existing system could be sustained "as is" any longer, for the NP to retain power in terms there-of.
- An entirely new dispensation had become an urgent, no longer avoidable necessity.
- Any new constitution would only be accepted, by South Africans of colour and by the world, if it was fully non-racial, based on universal franchise in a unitary state.
- Such a non-racial democratic system meant that who would hold power in future would be determined by the electorate in national elections.
- The inevitable consequence of such a new system, given the demographic reality, was that the vast non-white majority (more particularly, the Black Africans) would determine who would govern.
- Given all that was known about the political preferences of Black South Africans (and many in the Indian and "Coloured" communities) it was already in 1989 a foregone conclusion that the ANC would win a clear electoral majority, with the only question/risk being whether they would obtain more than two-thirds of the national vote.

To briefly summarise, bringing this back to basics – the NP had abandoned PW Botha's preparations to shoot it out because the New Nats realised that white South Africa could not win against world. That axiomatically meant according to the majority equal rights, which equally axiomatically meant that their preferred representatives (the ANC) would win election and would govern. The great future danger (as seen in Afrikaner history also, in 1948) is that voters tend to gravitate towards radical populist nationalism when the moderate centre fails to deliver and pluralist society remains divided, becoming increasingly polarised. In such circumstances, advantaged groups are exposed to being targeted as exploitative and a threat/enemy of the people (because they didn't project themselves instead as valuable assets/partners). Westminster-style oppositionism with its constantly criticising adversarial stance reenforces this stereotype.

When the New Nats finally realised that the white government could no longer avoid by force that South Africa also transitions away from its race-based colonial heritage and that a New South Africa inevitably needed to be negotiated on the basis of a non-racial democracy where everyone equally enjoys full and equal voting rights, they had logically needed to consider what the outcome of such a new system kicking into gear would likely be.

Who will win the election, to thereby win the right to govern? Obviously, the party that captures the support of the demographic majority.

What could and should the NP then have done, knowing that the new governing party would be not them, but the ANC?

They had just three choices:

- One was to try, in a normativist-legalist manner, to paper-constrain the ANC as much as possible through incorporating "guardrail" provisions protecting minority groups in the constitution (even though that was always going to be seen as an attempt at imposing “Apartheid Light”).
- The 2nd option (also normativist-legalist) was to try and include provisions in the constitution that would legally oblige the new head of state to accord the NP a number of cabinet positions proportional to its share of the vote, i.e., mandatory, quota-based power sharing (even if that meant unhappily and unproductively sitting together in cabinet because of constitutional obligation).
- The last main option was to not approach the challenge in normativist-legalist manner, but to instead look behaviouralistically at your constituency's true levers of power that could be brought into play in a cooperative environment (i.e., what they could offer as *quid pro quo* for having an appropriate model such as that of the USA/OFS for the constitution, and for being given opportunity to participate in and influence future decision-making).

This latter option of necessity meant first of all agreeing with the ANC a strategic partnership based on the common good it will serve and the benefits it will unlock also for the ANC in terms of security and, over the longer term, for its crucially important moderate faction in terms of service delivery and economic upliftment for the masses).

The third course was clearly not considered by FW at the outset – although it would prove to have been the only viable one.

### 13.6.12 PLAYING THE “MILITARY CARD": BEST LEFT AS SUBLIMINAL REMINDER TO BE USED AS CARROT GUARANTEEING THE SECURITY OF THE NEW DEAL, OR INSTEAD USED BY THE NP TO ACTIVELY TRY AND COERCE THE ANC?

Our Behaviouralist assessment of the key determinants that impacted the course of the negotiations and transition – or potentially could have done so – would not be complete without reflecting upon the role, actual or potential, that hard physical force could have played in shaping the eventual outcome.

This remains important to address, even though – as we will show in the next subsection – the potential utility of the hard “military card” to influence the outcome of the transition was always far less than that of the soft power “propaganda card” so expertly played by the ANC/SACP alliance, or the real-world strengths of the white community that had not been brought into play by the NP Government.

The objective with this current subsection is to conceptually analyse the lingering contention which is being put forward by many whites today that FW de Klerk had failed to effectively play the “military card” that he undeniably held in the form of the South African Defence Force (SADF) and the South African Police (SAP). Is it true that De Klerk did not sufficiently bring his “military card” overtly into play to pressure the ANC into major constitutional concessions? As I will motivate, in my view the answer to that is a definitive **NO**.

In the calculus of political warfare, the so-called military card is always most effective if left to subliminally influence thinking. This was particularly true during South Africa’s transition, since everyone at the table was already fully aware of the capabilities that existed. Given the polarising potential inherent in its overt use, as well as the ammunition that employing it would have provided in what was at heart a political conflict determined in the propaganda arena and not on the kinetic battlefield, the overt brandishing of the “military card” as an offensive, coercive means of pressure would in all probability have been extremely damaging for the NP Government.

To my mind, the real question to ask today about the so-called “military card” is this: Could De Klerk – if he had opted for a cooperative approach to the ANC, rather than an adversarial one – have gained far more milage in the negotiations from the Security Forces’ ability to protect, by offering this as a *quid-pro-quo* to the ANC in the context of building a strategic partnership?

Could he have used it as an inducement rather than a blunt instrument of coercion?

In my view, **YES**. Because the ANC did not on its own possess the conventional or counterintelligence means with which to ward off the Radical Right. The institutional stability that the SADF and SAP could guarantee was therefore a highly valuable asset to offer in cementing a cooperative relationship with an ANC seriously in need of a helping hand to ward off the very real threat posed by the Radical Right – help offered that may, in turn, have induced the ANC to afford the NP a greater influence over the type of constitutional model as well as future state decision-making.

It is not as if nobody had tried to use the threat of military force coercively to "persuade" the ANC. As we shall see, General Constand Viljoen in fact tried his utmost to overtly play the military card by threatening an armed coup if the white Right's demands for self-determination weren't met – and by his own later admission, it got him nowhere. There is broad consensus today that the ANC easily fobbed off Viljoen's threats by offering him and his followers the inclusion of "fig leaf" palliative phrases in the interim constitution – "concessions" that held no practical, long-term value. Viljoen himself eventually admitted that this was the inevitable outcome of trying to play the military card overtly. He recognized that while the right-wing dog would certainly have been able to catch the proverbial bus, it possessed absolutely no capacity either to keep or to drive it, given the overwhelming hard plus soft force that the international community could bring to bear.

Using the military option overtly would merely have inflamed polarization along stark racial lines – as tragically demonstrated in the ill-fated Bophuthatswana caper – and at most have briefly delayed the inevitable. All the while, playing that card would have drastically weakened white leverage for the unavoidable negotiations that would, of necessity, have had to follow on any military intervention. It is also a fact of life that overtly playing the "military card" and then finding out that it had no practical effect, means that you have forever lost its use – you have literally blown your own gunpowder.

To better understand this reasoning, let us look now in more detail at each of the key military-related issues, beginning with the relational dimension and then looking at the raw balance of forces.

### *13.6.12.1 The background history to FW de Klerk's relationship with the Statutory Forces*

It is only human that, when things go wrong (as they clearly had done for the NP Government, to the extent of them rapidly having to completely abandon policies they had believed in for half a century) there would be blame cast for whose fault the failure was.

Many in the Security Forces had long felt that the politicians (who, after all, were ultimately in charge, setting policy) were principally to blame, for not having moved in timely fashion to find a political solution.

On the part of politicians, many felt that the Security Forces were largely to blame for the atrociously bad image the NP Government had acquired and its logical consequence, the punitive measures and isolation. The reasoning behind this latter thinking was that the most direct triggers for punitive measures being imposed had indisputably been the Sharpeville Massacre, the lamentable 16 June 1976 events in Soweto, and deaths in detention such as that of Steve Biko, Ahmed Timol, Neil Aggett and the like – all things that obviously the governing politicians had never wished to happen (knowing what it would result in) and didn't order, and which were in their minds therefore for the account of the Security Forces.

It was also logical that, after the fall of the NP Government, there would likely be a reckoning regarding the many unacceptable and frankly illegal things that had happened, especially during the full-blown "total onslaught" years from 1984 onwards. There potentially were two distinct sets of probable recipients for retribution – the political decision-makers who had been in charge (as had been the case in the post-WW2 Nürnberg and Tokyo trials) or the rank-and-file from among the Security Forces (i.e., those who had actually pulled the trigger). With the politicians and top brass arguing that they never explicitly gave such orders (at least not in writing) and the foot soldiers arguing on the contrary that the psychological culture of "all is fair in love and war" that the politicians and the top brass aligned with them had deliberately cultivated during especially the PW Botha "total onslaught" era,

had left them with the clear understanding that the politicians supported and in fact demanded a “no holds barred” response.

The relationship was thus increasingly becoming clouded by the question of who was going to be left to carry the can for past misdeeds. The once tight team bond (based on a shared sense of destiny) that had existed between the PW Botha politicians and the men in uniform began loosening and the two sides drifted apart when FW de Klerk and the New Nats took over the political leadership and very publicly distanced themselves from the “Old” South Africa by committing publicly to a “normalised” New South Africa…

At a more strategic level, there had also for more than a decade been deep division about whether to prepare to shoot it out, or seek to settle, dating back to the John Vorster era. De Klerk and the New Nats had been in the “settle” camp, thus fundamentally at odds with the PW Botha camp on strategy; they saw the SADF as both the muscle and brain behind the PW Botha doctrine, which they believed reflected a fatal lack of situational awareness on the part of the Security Forces. In brief, De Klerk and his circle therefore did not trust the judgement of the Security Forces as commanded by PW Botha appointees who had led the SADF and SAP with full-throated commitment to the “total onslaught” fallacy.

A little-known case in point was the confrontation on strategy that had occurred during a cabinet “bosberaad” held during the first half of 1989 while PW Botha was still president, but with De Klerk already elected as the new leader of the National Party. The top brass of the SADF and SAP were present to discuss the escalating internal security crisis. According to what Kobie Coetsee later told historians, the then Police Commissioner, General Johan Coetzee – in the opinion of Coetsee having been put up to it by his colleagues in the Military – proposed a radical "solution": suspend the constitution entirely, including parliamentary oversight, and institute direct presidential rule by decree. In effect, the securocrats were suggesting the institution of what would amount to martial law – which would have undone the shift of power away from PW Botha (which shift had visibly been occurring within the NP Government since the election of De Klerk as party leader) and restored him and the “total onslaught” adherents to unchallengeable supremacy.

This proposal was vehemently opposed by senior civilian politicians, including De Klerk, Cape leader Chris Heunis, Pik Botha, and Free State leader Kobie Coetsee. P.W. Botha sat in detached silence as his cabinet rejected the proposal. Remembering the “quiet coup” through which PW Botha had won the premiership a decade before, this attempted manoeuvre did not enhance trust between De Klerk and the leaderships of the Police and Military…

De Klerk's deep caution regarding the generals did not stem from a personal animosity toward the armed forces, but from a pragmatic realisation that the PW Botha appointed top securocrats were profoundly lacking in accurate situational awareness. Apart from their “total onslaught” misdirection they had, for instance, completely mis-predicted the outcomes of the Zimbabwean and Namibian elections, believing that Mugabe and Nujoma would be beaten at the ballot box. Furthermore, the long litany of disregarding explicit orders and not preventing Security Force actions that could be exploited for propaganda during the transition (as listed in the earlier timelines) could not but convince De Klerk that the military was a volatile, unpredictable instrument that could easily compromise his quest for international legitimacy – as he tellingly confirmed in his autobiography, in which he used the analogy of him having inherited from his predecessor two huge, dangerous but self-willed guard dogs (SADF & SAP) that PW had doted on, but not sufficiently trained and disciplined to ensure that they would not break away from the leash and cause havoc in the neighbourhood...

It was also simply natural for politicians to want to distance themselves from the SADF and SAP when the end was in sight – as said, someone would have to bear the blame (and typically in the past, for example after WW2, it was the political authorities). It was thus in the own interest of the upper echelon to shift blame to lower ranks in the forces, as if the latter had – of their own volition – acted overzealously, without ever any direct instructions or mandate from above.

A further bit of history not to lose sight of, is the role of the SADF in the "silent coup" that had brought PW Botha to power. FW de Klerk had been close to BJ Vorster, to the point of the Botha cabinet having appointed him as mediator with Vorster. De Klerk had not voted for PW Botha as premier and was never close to him – nor was Botha ever warm towards De Klerk, addressing him always as “Mister de Klerk” and unwilling to involve FW in his

inner national security circle (despite De Klerk having been the NP's Transvaal leader, by far its biggest formation). Having witnessed what had happened in 1978 De Klerk thus had every reason not to trust the generals to be involved with politics. Furthermore, the "lost decade" was logically to be laid at the feet of the SADF who had been promoting the foolhardy (but self-serving) "Total Onslaught" strategy.

In brief, De Klerk thus had every reason not to entirely trust the military when it came to political dynamics, nor to regard them as sufficiently situationally aware to merit seeking their input – on the contrary. This was reenforced by the direction that many retired former senior SADF generals such as Constand Viljoen and Tienie Groenewald had taken, together with some SAP generals, when the formed the hard right's "Committee of Generals" and vehemently opposed De Klerk, going to the extreme of trying o threaten military action – confirming thereby that he had every reason not to trust their judgement, nor the role they would be incline to play in political matters.

It is also true that there was nothing that had made FW de Klerk's life more difficult during the transition than the 3rd Force allegations, for which he blamed the SADF & SAP. So, it was logical that he had wanted to keep the Security Forces away from the decision-making around the political process – but in doing so he did not sufficiently appreciate the benefit of independent intelligence input, not appreciating sufficiently that the NIS had never shared the "total onslaught" delusion of the uniformed forces, and neither had Foreign Affairs. This suspicion also of the NIS (perhaps because Niël Barnard had been appointed by PW Botha) was especially true at first, when De Klerk launched the transition (it was only in 1992, when the proverbial calf was stuck very deep in the well, that he began to significantly involve Dr Barnard and the NIS staffers the latter had brought with him to Constitutional Development and Planning in the actual negotiations, with Maritz Spaarwater for example becoming Roelf Meyer's "man Friday").

Another negative consequence of the palpable distrust between the De Klerk inner circle and a significant number of senior officers, is that its existence had considerably antagonised many whites and Afrikaners in particular, due to the high degree to which practically the whole of that community had been personally invested in the SADF, because of the wide reach of the system of compulsory national service and the citizen force.

Having taken cognisance of the shifting psychological mood on the part of the NP politicians regarding the Security Forces, it is even more important to consider the psychological impact on the ANC (and the non-white masses in general) of the manner in which the military card was, or could be, employed.

It is essential to understand that, whether minorities are perceived by the majority as threat or as asset, is key to that minority's long-term standing and political influence with the majority. Saying: "do this or we can and will physically oblige you to" obviously makes you a threat – to be opposed, isolated, and whittled down.

Saying instead: "look, we have these abilities that you need and which we will put at your disposal so that you and us can survive against those that truly threaten us both" makes you a valued partner. Which goes back to the vital need for thorough and coldly objective prior SWOT-style analysis and scenario gaming, so that you can correctly understand your own true inherent strengths and opportunities (as distinguished from the superficially prominent, but in reality counter-productive ones).

Against this psychological backdrop, let us now look at the hardware and hard numbers of how the forces that had needed to be considered in the context of the "military card" being played, had actually stacked up at the time.

### *13.6.12.2 How the Four Potential Protagonists with Armed Capability had Stacked Up*

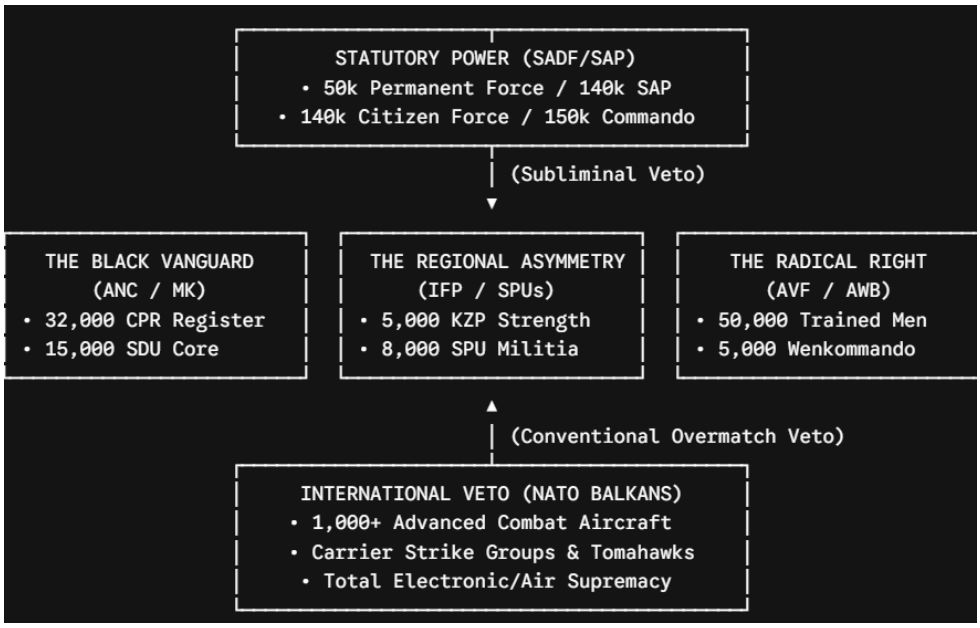
To understand the geo-strategic environment within which the World Trade Centre negotiations took place, one must cut through the contemporary propaganda spin and examine the relative strengths of the four armed protagonists that could have been brought militarily into play during the transition. In this equation needs to feature:

- the white State's statutory Security Forces,
- the forces that the Conservative Right (composed of respectively the AVF and the IFP, who at the time were openly threatening coups and secession) could potentially muster,
- the ANC/SACP's MK and SDU (self-defence units), and last but not least,

- the forces that the international community likely would have deployed under UN Security Council auspices if the SADF had openly entered the fry internally (to give a concrete idea of the latter, I'm listing the capabilities actually deployed by NATO in the Balkans against Serbia in two air wars in the nineties).

That including international intervention in the calculus of the true balance of power is not fanciful thinking, as illustrated by the fact that the UK had used its Royal Navy to blockade Rhodesia (the "Beira blockade"), as well as by General Viljoen himself having acknowledged the likelihood of foreign military intervention as a very real concern (which eventually helped move him to choosing to rather participate in the elections than stage a coup), plus the very concrete example of what the Western Powers under Bill Clinton were willing to do against a recalcitrant Serbia in order to protect Moslems – and there are many more Black voters in the USA (on whose vote Clinton had depended) than there are Moslem ones…

The following graph provides a quick overview of the numbers:




**The ANC's Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) & Self-Defence Units (SDUs):** For integration into the newly formed South African National Defence Force (SANDF) in April 1994, the ANC submitted a Certified Personnel Register (CPR) that initially stood at roughly 28,000 names, eventually audited up to 32,000. In reality, the professional, externally trained guerrilla core (schooled in the USSR, East Germany, Angola, and Cuba) numbered no more than **5,000 to 12,000** active personnel. The ANC tactically inflated this register by absorbing into it the township-based Self-Defence Units (SDUs), which possessed an active, more or less weapon-wielding core of 10,000 to 15,000 young men on the Reef and in Natal, thereby securing state-funded financial cushions and demobilization packages for their domestic foot soldiers.

**The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and KwaZulu Elements:** Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi commanded a highly concentrated, regionalized force capable of devastating asymmetric warfare which could have been particularly potent psychologically because of historic fears of the Zulu. This included the statutory KwaZulu Police (KZP), numbering between 4,500 and 5,000 men, alongside a paramilitary wing. Between late 1993 and April 1994, Philip Powell directed the training of 5,000 to 8,000 IFP members in weapons handling and paramilitary tactics at the Mlaba Camp and Amatikhulu. Reinforced by the "Caprivi 200" – the VIP protection operatives covertly trained by SADF Special Forces in 1986 under *Operation Marion* – the IFP possessed an immediate, highly lethal force of roughly **12,000** men concentrated within the PWV hostels and in Natal, giving them the capacity to disrupt the entire transition if marginalized (thus matching or exceeding the real numbers of trained fighters available to the ANC).

**The Afrikaner Volksfront (AVF) & The Radical Right:** Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Pretoria military intelligence assessments agreed that the white Right could realistically mobilize a force of roughly **50,000** men

who had undergone formal military training. This was an entirely realistic baseline given the decades of compulsory white National Service. While the flamboyant Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) boasted a *Wenkommando* paper strength of 35,000, intelligence audits showed their actual street-ready capacity was closer to **5,000** men, flanked by the 200-strong *Ystergarde* and the clandestine intelligence cells of *Aquila*. Numerically as well as in terms of training and combat experience, the right wing could vastly overmatch the ANC's MK and SDU's. A further big part of the danger posed by the right-wing militants lay in their capacity for structural subversion of the statutory forces.

**The Statutory Forces (SADF and SAP):** The state possessed overwhelming conventional superiority on paper. The SAP fielded 112,000 core members (expanding to 140,000 when incorporating homeland police forces) alongside 12,000 active reserves. The SADF maintained a full-time Permanent Force core of 18,000 to 20,000 professionals, supplemented by 10,000 active National Servicemen. Behind this stood the real juggernaut: a conventional Citizen Force reserve of up to 140,000 mechanized and armoured troops, and a rural territorial militia – the Commandos – fielding between 130,000 and 150,000 men (although the allegiance of many of the latter may have shifted to the AVF). Furthermore, the SADF possessed potent armour, artillery, and an Air Force that none of the non-statutory forces possessed.

**The United Nations and the International Factor:** Acting as the ultimate veto, the global community had made it clear that any overt, offensive deployment of statutory military power to subvert the democratic process would be met with total international isolation, rendering the SADF structurally impotent for domestic political enforcement. As the Balkans "air wars" by NATO against Serbia showed, the Western Powers on their own could deploy overwhelming military force that would have left the SADF at its mercy.

As said before, it is highly instructive to analyse the overwhelming military force that NATO deployed against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia) during the 1990s. This serves as an exact template of the conventional "counterstrike" that the international community could – and in all probability would – have brought to bear on Pretoria had the statutory forces joined an internal right-wing coup or unilaterally intervened to try and force a certain outcome at the negotiation table. Serbia's population then was twice as large as that of white South Africa, with some 180,000 men on active duty at the time and a further more than 2.4 million capable of being called up for duty.

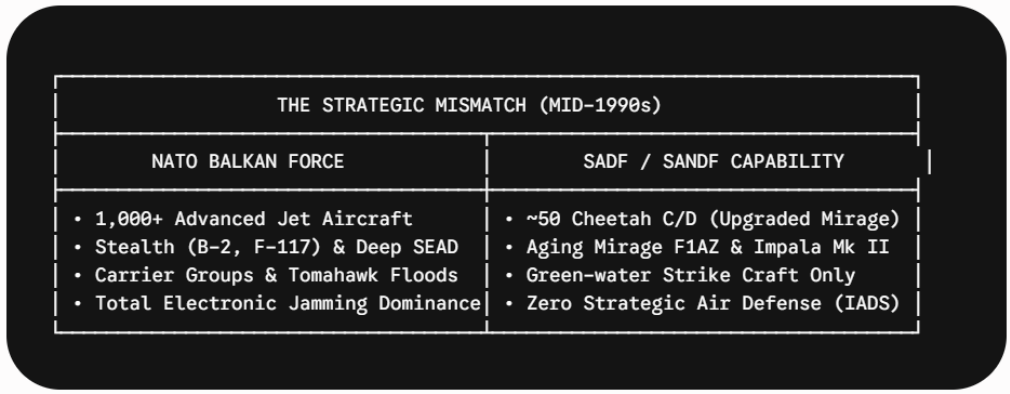
**The NATO Order of Battle in the Balkans:** NATO's intervention against a highly militarized, deeply dug-in Serbian state possessing a robust, Soviet-style integrated air defence network demonstrated the zenith of late-20th-century aerospace and maritime power projection.

- **Air Assets:** At its peak, NATO deployed a formidable armada of over **1,000 combat and support aircraft** operating from more than 40 airbases and aircraft carriers across Europe and Italy, executing over **38,000 sorties** with total aerial supremacy.
    - *Strategic & Low-Observable Strike:* B-2 Spirit stealth bombers flew non-stop round trips from the US mainland to drop satellite-guided Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs), paired with F-117 Nighthawk stealth fighters conducting high-threat precision strikes directly over Belgrade.
    - *Tactical Air Armada:* The core strike capability relied on hundreds of US F-15E Strike Eagles, F-16 Fighting Falcons, British Tornado GR1s, and French Mirage 2000s, utilizing precision laser- and TV-guided munitions.
    - *Electronic Warfare & SEAD:* To systematically blind Serbian radars, NATO deployed an electronic warfare umbrella consisting of EA-6B Prowlers, EC-130H Compass Call jamming platforms, and F-16C Wild Weasels firing AGM-88 HARM (High-speed Anti-Radiation Missiles) to suppress enemy air defences.

- **Naval Assets:** The maritime architecture in the Adriatic Sea acted as an un-interceptable, mobile launch platform for stand-off warfare.
    - *Carrier Strike Groups:* NATO maintained a continuous rotation of multiple aircraft carriers, including the USS *Theodore Roosevelt* (CVN-71) flying F/A-18 Hornets and F-14 Tomcats, the French carrier *Foch*, and the British Royal Navy's HMS *Invincible*.

- *Stand-Off Missile Capability:* A vast screen of US and British cruisers, destroyers, and nuclear-powered attack submarines (such as HMS *Splendid*) saturated Serbian strategic infrastructure with hundreds of Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles (TLAMs), fired safely from hundreds of miles out.

**The SADF's Assets at the Time:** Had the right-wing generals or the NP Government tried to overtly play the "military card" internally during the transition, thereby triggering an international military intervention, the SADF's air and naval capabilities would have faced an immediate, catastrophic mismatch. Decades of United Nations arms embargoes had forced the SADF into a brilliant, but fundamentally localized, low-intensity design for land war of the counter-insurgency kind – not for confronting an overwhelming modern conventional force attacking selectively and punishingly from air and sea.




**The South African Air Force (SAAF):** While the SAAF possessed highly aggressive, combat-hardened pilots fresh from the Border War, its inventory was structurally incapable of defending against a multi-nation, high-intensity electronically backed air campaign:

- **The Fighter Inventory:** The cutting edge of the SAAF consisted of roughly 38 to 50 **Cheetah C/D fighters** (locally re-engineered, upgraded Mirage III airframes) and a fading fleet of **Mirage F1AZs** being readied for retirement or engine swap-out, supplemented by subsonic **Impala Mk II** light attack jets. These aircraft completely lacked low-observable (stealth) characteristics, modern active radar-guided beyond-visual-range (BVR) missiles, or the automated data-linking systems standard in NATO's front-line fighters.
- **Zero SEAD or Heavy Electronic Countermeasures:** The SAAF possessed no dedicated Suppression of Enemy Air Defences (SEAD) aircraft or heavy electronic jamming escorts. A NATO electronic warfare campaign would have instantly blinded South Africa's domestic radar networks, grounding or isolating SAAF assets within hours.
- **Defensive Vulnerability:** South Africa lacked a unified, strategic Integrated Air Defence System (IADS). Its air defence relied on short-range, tactical mobile SAMs like the aging **Cactus (Crotale)** and standard anti-aircraft guns. This array was entirely useless against high-altitude B-2s, stealth fighters, or waves of low-flying Tomahawk cruise missiles.

**The South African Navy (SAN):** By the early1990s the South African Navy was undergoing severe structural downsizing, completely losing its blue-water surface combat capability.

- **Absence of Capital Ships:** The Navy's historic Type 12 *President*-class anti-submarine frigates had all been decommissioned by the late 1980s.
- **The Strike Craft Fleet:** In the mid-1990s, the surface fleet was restricted almost entirely to nine **Warrior-class strike craft**. While fast and aggressively armed with short-range Scorpion (Gabriel) anti-ship missiles, these merely 400-ton vessels were strictly "green-water" coastal patrol craft. They possessed no localized air defence shields, making them trivial targets for NATO's carrier-borne aviation or sea-skimming anti-ship missiles long before they could sail into engagement range.
- **Subsurface Assets:** The undersea deterrent was confined to three aging **Daphné-class diesel-electric submarines**. While capable of silent coastal ambushes, these 1960s-era French hulls were loud by 1990s standards, lacked modern acoustic countermeasures, and would have been rapidly hunted down by NATO's advanced, integrated anti-submarine warfare (ASW) networks.

**Conclusion:** The imbalance in forces underlines the delusion of the radical right-wing elements who dreamed of holding a sovereign territory in Southern Africa by force of arms. The SADF was a highly sophisticated, lethal instrument – but for *regional asymmetrical containment*; it was never built to survive a collision with an international superpower armada. The moment NATO carrier-centred strike groups arrived off the coast of Durban and/or Cape Town (not to speak of air power deployed from the Frontline States), the entire domestic military architecture would have been rendered operationally paralyzed without a single foreign soldier ever needing to set foot on South African soil. This completely validates De Klerk's realisation that the military card had no offensive value in terms of forcing the ANC into concessions, because of the devastating ease with which the international community could quickly neutralise it – at great cost to the white South African warriors who would have been obliged to vainly try and counter it, and afterwards leaving white South Africans with no means of self-protection, nor any leverage at all, if and when the negotiations eventually resumed.

Accordingly, the absolute strategic priority had to be to not risk the continued existence of the SADF on a white initiated mad pro-active "playing the military card" caper that was unquestionably destined to end very badly. It was imperative that the statutory forces had to always remain available as **the ultimate fallback** with which to be able to maintain internal law and order, should the negotiations momentarily have failed, and internal conflict resumed with heightened intensity.

Which is not to say that the capabilities of the Statutory Forces were not a potentially very valuable bargaining chip in the NP Government's relationship with the ANC – if its potential value had been correctly understood (as guarantor against Radical Right over-reach) and, most importantly, on condition that the NP Government had realistically sought to try and gain influence through choosing to strategically cooperate with the ANC, rather than adversarially try and coerce it by means of threat of force into obligatory power-sharing quotas. That would then unquestionably, under Bill Clinton's leadership, have triggered military intervention…

### *13.6.12.2 To What Extent Was the Threat of a Coup by the White Right Real?*

To understand whether the threat of a right-wing coup was such that it could have pre-disposed the ANC/SACP to opt for cooperation with the NP Government, we need to analyse in more detail how it had manifested. Doing so will illustrate that the threat of a right-wing coup was not a figment of a paranoid transition imagination; it was a highly structured, operationally viable contingency that caused deep anxiety within both the ANC leadership and international intelligence agencies.

A secret CIA assessment titled *"Prospects for the South African Transition,"* dated January 1, 1994, explicitly warned that coup plotting by right-wing elements within the security forces was actively underway, noting that even a failed attempt could permanently fracture the electoral schedule and ignite a high-intensity civil war with catastrophic cross-border regional consequences.

The operational reality of this threat was originated by the AVF's "Committee of Generals," led by Constand Viljoen and the likes of General Tienie Groenewald. Their strategy went far beyond amateurish weapon-hoarding by fragmented underground cell structures. Instead, they relied on a parallel subversion of the state apparatus itself. By late 1993, the AVF had successfully compromised the rural SADF Commando network in Northern parts of the country, securing the ideological loyalty of an estimated 100,000 out of 140,000 commando members who kept their state-issued R4 rifles and ammunition at home.

Furthermore, General Groenewald later revealed that the AVF had covertly obtained the official **National Key Points Register**. This meant the right-wing general staff held the precise blueprints and ground plans for every strategic installation in the country – including Telkom exchanges, Eskom substations, Sasol plants, the SABC, and the Koeberg nuclear facility.

The AVF possessed the immediate, non-conventional capability to execute a synchronized guerrilla campaign of mobile warfare to paralyze the entire national infrastructure, proclaim the independent secession of the Transvaal and Free State (or geographically significant parts of it), and also to launch operations from secure, external sanctuaries. The latter was validated in February 1994 when Groenewald flew on a clandestine mission to Angola, landing at Jamba and meeting UNITA leader Dr. Jonas Savimbi north of Huambo at three in the morning. Savimbi,

deeply indebted to Viljoen from the Border War era, explicitly pledged UNITA's full logistics, base facilities, and heavy weaponry to support an Afrikaner armed resistance.

Yet, this significant asymmetric capability suffered from a fatal behavioural vulnerability: it lacked ideological cohesion. The highly disciplined, clinical military planning of Viljoen's generals was fatally undone by the theatrical impulsiveness of Eugène Terre'Blanche's AWB. The empirical proof lies in what occurred during the Bophuthatswana crisis in March 1994. Viljoen had designed a professional, quiet deployment of seasoned military veterans to bolster Lucas Mangope's homeland forces and secure for the white right a territorial bargaining chip. Instead, an uninvited, chaotic convoy of AWB *Wenkommando* members stormed into Mafikeng. Acting not as a disciplined army but as an erratic, racialized militia, they drove randomly through the streets firing at civilians. This undisciplined behaviour caused the Bophuthatswana security forces to turn their guns on the white right-wing and motivated a shocked and disillusioned General Viljoen to permanently abandon the military option.

It was, however, a close-run thing – had the AWB not so chaotically inserted itself and completely disrupted Viljoen's carefully-laid plans, it was very likely that the AVF would have been able to take effective control of Bophuthatswana, providing them with an "independent" base area much closer than Savimbi's Angola. Because of the notional then sovereign status of the territory (at least still in the eyes of the NP Government) that would have posed quite a conundrum, since it would have obligated the Government to use the SADF to intervene against effectively its own reservists and retired generals, leading politically to an emotionally highly fraught situation in Afrikaner ranks. It is for this reason that Niël Barnard had described the Bophuthatswana drama as one of the most high-risk turning points of the transition, which – had Viljoen succeeded – could have brought the transition process to the brink…

What is an absolute certainty is that, had the great bulk of the SADF and SAP officer corps, plus the majority of the lower ranks not remained resolutely loyal to the constitutional order and thus functional as security guarantee for both the outgoing and incoming governments, then – if the militant right should have initiated an armed insurrection – the ANC's own feeble forces would not at all have been able to prevent it.

### *13.6.12.3 The Statutory Forces: To Be Overtly Brandished Coercively, or rather to serve as Subliminal Guarantor of Reasonableness and the Security of the New Government?*

Considering the background given above, it is clear that, from a behavioralist perspective, the De Klerk Government's great error during the transition was **not** the "failure" to more overtly brandish the SADF coercively, but the NP's wholesale failure to understand what their true "trump cards" actually were.

The SADF and SAP were never appropriate for use as coercive tools with which to extract political concessions or dictate a constitutional blueprint. They were the essential "ace in the hole" if things should have gone totally wrong, and therefore it was both correct and essential to never have compromised them by attempting to overtly involve these forces coercively in the politics of the transition – also, because this would certainly have triggered counter-action (including from the international community) that would have been catastrophic for white interests.

The moment De Klerk unbanned the liberation movements, the primary source of state leverage shifted entirely from raw domestic coercion to the international legitimacy it had begun to regain (as least as regards the credit De Klerk received for initiating the transition). Had the NP government aggressively brandished its military teeth at the Kempton Park table, it would have instantly validated the ANC's propaganda narrative, alienated initial Western backers like the US and UK, and invited a hardening of global sanctions that would have disintegrated the remaining economy. Furthermore, under Bill Clinton, it most likely would have resulted in international military intervention of the type just a couple of years later seen against Serbia, which would have rapidly destroyed any remaining vestige of white power.

The statutory forces were instead the white state and community's ultimate fallback – but as a purely defensive, subliminal veto. In negotiation theory, the power of an army lies in its **shadow**. There already existed a very real, omnipresent (albeit quiet) understanding shared by all involved, from the ANC to the AVF, that if militant radicals – whether within the liberation movements or, at the other end of the spectrum, the radical white Right – did not

abide by the democratic negotiated transition in progress and attempted a chaotic, armed takeover, the state possessed the capacity to put a full stop to it.

For this subliminal card to maintain its deterrent value, the SADF and SAP had to maintain "clean hands". The NP Government could initiate Security Force intervention only in case of an existential black swan event – of the kind that had occurred in SWA/Namibia with SWAPO's ill-fated invasion on "April Fool's Day" – when such intervention would indeed be viewed by the international community as an objective, stabilizing necessity rather than an NP attempt to hijack the negotiations.

The other potential leverage provided by the capabilities of the Security Forces to maintain internal order and stability, was in relation to the initially very vulnerable ANC who, as new government, by no means would or could have had the own ability to protect themselves against an insurrection or attempted secession by either Zulu traditionalists or the radical white Right. The simple fact of the matter was that the ANC was in practice entirely dependent upon the statutory Security Forces for its own security – this was in truth the "military card" that the NP Government could and should have better made use of, but which depended on a cooperative rather than adversarial relationship existing between the respective top leaderships…

The real, offensive trumps that the National Party should have played were civilian, economic, and intellectual:

- **Private Sector & Economic Expertise:** The NP had – apparently by choice – neglected to mobilize the sophisticated negotiating experience of South Africa's corporate leaders, which would have subliminally brought the country's true white power base – the economy – directly to bear on the ANC's future policy positions. Instead, fixated in legalist/normative thinking, it based its approach on what was the least of white leverage: voter numbers.
- **Intellectual and Academic Mobilisation:** Rather than approaching Kempton Park solely utilising the intellectual abilities of its so-so cabinet, the NP should even before launching the transition have mobilised an advisory vanguard of academic experts, political intelligence think-tanks, and strategists from bodies like the Afrikaner Broederbond and SABRA to continuously execute scenario-gaming, SWOT analyses, and strategic structural planning, amplifying and likely confirming what the NIS had been doing. Instead, the NP politicians tried to go it alone. Initially relying on a small cadre of inexperienced and unprepared ministers – with a few notable exceptions like Roelf Meyer, Leon Wessels, and Dawie de Villiers – the NP politicians forsook strategic political intelligence and proven theory, as well as seasoned negotiators like General Jannie Geldenhuys, Naas Steenkamp of the Chamber of Mines, and Niel van Heerden of Foreign Affairs to name but a few, who were left entirely unutilised on the sidelines. Which meant that the NP rushed into the existentially most important exercise in South African political history, having exchanged its massive structural advantages for a narrow legalistic, predictably unworkable dream based on the ill-defined, politically unachievable and historically fatally tarnished notion of "group rights."

### *13.6.12.5 Further Proof: General Viljoen Tried to Coercively Leverage Force, to No Avail*

If any further proof is required that the overt brandishing of the military card was an exercise in political futility, one needs only to look at the historical trajectory of General Constand Viljoen and the Afrikaner Volksfront. Viljoen had, in the AVF's planning, initially attempted to push the overt use of the military threat to its conceptual limits. At the Skilpadsaal congress in February 1994, amidst the chanting of the AWB, Viljoen asserted his supreme command over the right-wing forces, declaring that he alone would decide when to transition to physical violence. He stood before the country claiming to have the absolute loyalty of the *Boere Krisis Aksie* (BKA) and the overwhelming majority of the SADF's Citizen Force and Commando reservists.

Yet, because Viljoen was a rational military strategist, he understood that force cannot exist in a political and economic vacuum. He himself therefore presented his followers with a sobering checklist of ten structural questions that had to be answered before a single drop of Afrikaner blood could be spilled, including:

- *Where are the defined, economically viable borders of this proposed Volkstaat?*
- *How will a right-wing state draft a constitution that could achieve legal recognition from the Western world?*
- *Where is the independent taxation system and the accompanying administrative infrastructure to finance and run provincial and national departments?*

- *How will the AVF counter the inevitable, crushing conventional and economic onslaught launched by the international community backed by a UN military intervention force?*

Viljoen frankly acknowledged the ultimate behavioural rule of conflict: *"Aan die einde van elke militêre stryd is daar 'n onderhandelingsfase om die vrede te herstel."* (At the end of every military struggle, there is a negotiation phase to restore the peace).

An analysis by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and historians like Hermann Giliomee reveals that the ANC countered the right-wing generals with behavioural sophistication. The ANC had absolutely no intention of ever granting a sovereign, independent *Volkstaat*. Instead, they deliberately strung Viljoen along, engaging in intensive bilateral talks to keep him talking through the election cycle until the immediate military threat naturally dissipated.

The ANC neutralized the entire right-wing mobilization by conceding two structurally hollow "fig-leaves" in the interim constitution: **Article 185** (protecting the rights of cultural, religious, and linguistic communities) and **Article 235** (recognizing the abstract principle of self-determination). They established a formal *Volkstaatraad* (Volkstaat Council) to allow Viljoen's followers to constitutionally investigate the feasibility of an ethnic state.

In reality, the council was an ingenious, state-funded co-optation strategy. It provided secure, lucrative government salaries, pensions, and prestigious retirement nests for a group of elderly right-wing leaders, who then predictably dragged out the research process (to stay on the state gravy train as long as possible?) which allowed time for the Afrikaner Right's erstwhile ardour to cool down when the New South Africa under ANC rule did not bring the heavens tumbling down. Once the ANC was certain that the political temperature had sufficiently normalised and that the transformation of the statutory security forces was sufficiently advanced to eliminate any threat of a military mutiny, they financially starved the council and quietly dissolved it in March 1999. The recommendations for an autonomous notional tenth province had already been summarily excluded from the final 1996 Constitution. The ANC thus had successfully defanged and neutralized the entire white separatist movement for the meagre sum of R15 million, showing that sabre-rattling the "military card" as Viljoen did, resulted in absolutely no gain.

### *13.6.12.6 The Real Relevance of the Security Forces as a potential "Card" in the NP/ANC Negotiations was its irreplaceable Ability to Protect the Process (and the new government)*

An objective behavioralist synthesis of the transition reveals an historical irony: the true value of the military card lay not in its coercive deployment against the ANC, but in its utilisation as leverage in the form of offering a defensive shield to protect the liberation movement and the fragile democratic process from radical destruction.

That the transition process and potentially the new government had indeed been under real threat form the Radical Right, cannot be doubted. During the transition, right up to the election, the radical white Right had launched a calculated, escalating campaign of domestic terror and structural sabotage explicitly designed to provoke a racial civil war and paralyze the multi-party negotiations. This campaign evolved from localised property destruction into highly lethal, indiscriminate acts of urban warfare.

**The Initial Wave of Bombings (1990):** The terror campaign began in earnest between **March and June 1990**, orchestrated by hardline groups like the *Orde Boerevolk* and *Blanke Veiligheid*. These early operations primarily targeted symbolic institutions of reform and resistance across Nelspruit, Welkom, and Johannesburg – including the bombing of a mosque, trade union headquarters, National Party offices, and the offices of the pro-reform Afrikaans newspaper, *Vrye Weekblad*. While these initial attacks caused extensive property damage, they resulted in no immediate deaths.

The strategy shifted toward human targets during **July and August 1990**, when radical right-wing cells and the *Wit Bevrydingsleër* launched a series of pipe bomb attacks in Johannesburg and Pretoria. By intentionally targeting crowded commuter railway stations, busy taxi ranks, and residential hotels housing ANC and SACP delegates, these cells killed 3 people and injured 63 others. This lethal pattern continued into **October 1990** in Durban, where a high-explosive parcel bomb – linked to the same radical network – was delivered to a local computer firm, killing Nicholas Cruise and injuring three others.

**Sabotage and Targeted Infrastructure Strikes (1991–1993):** Throughout **1991 and 1992**, radical elements aligned with breakaway Conservative Party (CP) cells pivoted toward disabling the state's infrastructure. Operating across Sabie, Pretoria, and Krugersdorp, these cells executed a systematic bombing campaign aimed at magistrates' courts, post offices, and newly desegregated institutions such as Hillview High School, causing severe structural damage but limiting direct casualties.

As the negotiations at the World Trade Centre neared critical constitutional milestones, the violence grew more audacious. In **September 1993**, the *Boere Weerstandsbeweging* (BWB) Cullinan cell detonated a high-explosive device within an Indian-owned commercial shopping complex in Bronkhorstspruit. The blast killed a responding police officer, Sergeant Abraham Labuschagne, and left six civilians injured.

**The Pre-Election Offensive (February–April 1994):** In the final months leading up to the historic democratic vote, right-wing desperation peaked. Between **February and March 1994**, an alliance comprising the AWB, the AVF, and the James Zulu group launched a coordinated campaign across Bultfontein, Flagstaff, and Port Shepstone. This included the bombing of black schools and provincial taxi ranks, alongside a violent armed assault on a Transkei police station executed specifically to plunder heavy weaponry for Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) paramilitary units. These operations left 2 dead and dozens injured.

The bloody climax of the right-wing resistance occurred on **April 24 and 25, 1994**, just days before millions of South Africans were set to cast their ballots. Operating under direct orders from AWB "General" Nico Prinsloo, a highly organized urban terror cell launched a sizeable, coordinated pre-election offensive. They detonated heavy car and trailer bombs at critical, high-density transit hubs, including the Bloed Street taxi rank in Pretoria, Bree Street in central Johannesburg, and Johannesburg's International Airport parking garage. This final, desperate series of attempts to collapse the electoral process resulted in 20 people being killed and injured 71 others, cementing the reality that the transitional government was facing a highly capable, lethal internal insurgency.

In addition to these urban bombings, international arms smuggling operations were actively working to reinforce this insurrection capability. This was proven in October 1994 when South African police raided a smallholding in Centurion and uncovered an illicit 40-foot shipping container sent from Oregon by US citizen and Ku Klux Klan affiliate Bob Mahler. The container held a sophisticated paramilitary arsenal: 227 brand-new, military-style assault rifles, long-range sniper rifles equipped with laser night-vision optics, automatic combat shotguns, and over 47,000 rounds of specialised ammunition designed to detonate upon impact.

This potential for insurrection and/or secession demonstrates why FW de Klerk's adversarial legalistic focus on "Apartheid Lite" constitutional mechanisms was a strategic error. The ANC leadership – including Mr Mandela – was genuinely concerned about the right-wing military threat from the likes of the AVF and IFP. They recognized that while they could politically manage the IFP, or even (on the Witwatersrand and in the Durban area) counter the IFP militarily in the townships with MK's SDU's, they possessed no institutional defence against a highly trained, heavily armed Afrikaner insurrection springing from within the state's military structures.

This was the exact juncture where the military card could have been played as an inducement to cooperation. De Klerk, instead of adopting an adversarial approach, should have engaged cooperatively with Mandela to offer the institutional permanence, tactical intelligence, and counter-insurgency shield of the statutory security forces as a supreme *quid-pro-quo*.

As Albie Sachs and other astute contemporary observers noted, the ANC desperately required the functional competence and administrative legitimacy of the old state apparatus to survive its own transition into power. Had De Klerk used his military card to offer a cooperative, protective shield, he could have accustomed the ANC to a genuine, long-term arrangement preserving real-world white leverage and influence through what whites undoubtedly could offer the new state in terms of expertise and means, rather than the NP relying on constitutional clauses existing merely on paper.

## 13.6.13 THE NP WAS UNDER-PREPARED FOR THE DECISIVE POLITICAL BATTLEFIELD: PROPAGANDA AND THE BALLOT BOX

Much has lately been made by many Afrikaans commentators about what we have been discussing in the preceding subsection – the supposed "military card". As we have seen, that never was, nor realistically could have been, a deciding factor in the outcome of the transfer of power. The real determinant of how the vote went (and thus, to whom political power went), was how public perception had been shaped by propaganda. Few have given much attention to this crucial element (with the exception of Dr Anthea Jeffery) perhaps because so few in Afrikaans circles had enjoyed a proper grounding in Behaviouralist analysis of political reality.

In the realm of political warfare, hard power is merely a backdrop factor; the contest is ultimately won or lost in the cognitive domain of popular opinion. The ANC/SACP's conceptualisation of the "Armed Struggle" not as a conventional military campaign, but as **armed propaganda** (as in Vietnam), together with the support given to it by the part of the South African media complex that really mattered (the English-language press), allowed the ANC/SACP to capture the "hearts and minds" of their overwhelmingly numerically superior target – the Back African constituency – long before the first ballot was cast.

By looking at the **All Media and Products Survey (AMPS)** and circulation data from the 1990 -1994 transition era, one can see how lopsidedly the numbers stacked up in the then-existing media landscape and why the National Party's media weapons (which by then were no longer correctly targeted, being still focused on the previous era's politically dominant white Afrikaner constituency) completely failed to counter the ANC's message outreach.

The South African media landscape at the time was fundamentally bifurcated between state-aligned Afrikaans and opposition aligned English-language media, but the sheer demographic weight and the distinct "pass-along" rates of different media types gave the English-language ecosystem an insurmountable advantage and outsized influence over the population as a whole.

It is true that state-controlled SABC Radio was – in terms of outreach statistics – mathematically the mass medium of the transition, reaching deep into illiterate, rural, and working-class populations. SABC Radio reached over **12 million listeners daily**. But the Black masses tuned in to it for African music, entertainment and sport in their own vernacular – not for having their political opinions formed by it. In any event, precisely because of being state media, the SABC needed to be seen as politically neutral and could therefore not be used to overtly propagandise on behalf of the NP – as the independent English media by contrast could and did, for their preferred choice). Therefore, although the SABC indeed held a total state-ordained monopoly over the radio waves, it did not serve the NP's propaganda aims in the 1990s. This was further due to the fact that, whilst the SABC's top management was historically NP-aligned, the black broadcasters on the vernacular stations were living in the townships; their tone, music choices, and subtle framing of news inevitably reflected the mounting pro-liberation zeitgeist.

SABC Television, which was the middle-class bubble, had roughly **2.5 million licensed viewers** (reaching roughly 4 million households). However, this audience was heavily skewed toward the white, Coloured, Indian, and a thin layer of the urban black middle class. It was highly influential in shaping the *white* consensus (for example, moving them toward a "Yes" vote in the 1992 referendum), but SABC-TV possessed almost zero credibility or persuasive capital among the broader disenfranchised non-white majority, who viewed it as the mouthorgan of the hated NP state.

In the Print Media split (i.e., circulation vs. readership) the built-in advantage that the ANC enjoyed was overwhelming. The print media was split between an Afrikaans press that had not previously targeted the Black masses at all, versus a multi-targeting English press. The mainstream Afrikaans press at the time had an estimated combined readership of about one million, limited essentially to white Afrikaners and some "Coloureds" in the Western Cape. By contrast, the mainstream English media had a readership of between three and four million, with the English press aimed at the Black market (such as *The Sowetan*, and *City Press*) having a combined further 4.5 million readership – making for a total English-language press readership of some eight million.

The political orientation of the English-language media as the key Behavioralist force multiplier was essentially determined by the historical alienation from the state experienced by the English-speaking white elites since 1948. The NP had spent forty years systematically replacing English-speakers in the military, the civil service, and state corporations to achieve "*Afrikanerisation*." When the transition arrived, the "white" English press had no institutional loyalty to the "white" (essentially Afrikaans) government of the National Party – on the contrary! Which explains why the English press willingly acted as a massive message multiplier for the ANC's narrative.

This created three distinct operational layers within the English media that the ANC expertly exploited:

- **The Black Mass-Market Dailies (The Ground Game):** Papers like *The Sowetan* and *City Press* did not merely report news; they articulated and guided the aspirations of the majority. They framed the ANC not merely as just another political party competing for votes, but as the *inevitable, historic force of human dignity* breaking the back of white tyranny. Every MK skirmish, every township stay-away, and every mass funeral was given epic, heroic framing. This completely marginalised any "Apartheid Lite" concessions FW de Klerk tried to offer the Black electorate. Together with the power of word-of-mouth church/community networks, this was decisive for the forming of public perception among the Black majority, where ANC grassroots outreach plus this sympathetic media coverage easily prevailed over the government's messaging through radio (which was mostly listened to for sport and entertainment programming, not as an authoritative political opinion-former).
- **The White Liberal English Press (The "Flank Attack"):** Mainstream English titles like *The Star* or the *Sunday Times* effectively de-legitimized and made suspect the NP Government's efforts to manage a peaceful transition to a truly new and just South Africa. Because their journalists were overwhelmingly progressive, their investigative reporting focused relentlessly on "Third Force" violence and alleged state-sponsored hit squads (like Vlakplaas and the CCB). By continuously presenting what was projected as the "moral rot" of an inevitably dying state, they made it socially and psychologically hard for moderate white South Africans to be openly supportive of the NP and its initial positions such as "group rights" and "power sharing". In short, the English-language papers had far broader national readership than the NP-aligned press, plus dominant influence over international reporting, and rightly or wrongly enjoyed higher prestige all round. It reached English-speaking Whites, plus a large proportion of Afrikaners (who typically read papers in both languages, if only to see what the "other side" was thinking), as well as urban Blacks and the business/intellectual elite. English was the language of economic power, highly influential among the intelligentsia in professional, business, and academic circles across colour and language barriers.
- **The Alternative Press:** Although titles like the *Weekly Mail* and *New Nation* had tiny circulations (often under 30,000), their impact outweighed their size. They were read by foreign diplomats, international intelligence analysts, and the global press corps. They carried ANC viewpoints into the national and international narrative, ensuring that the western powers came to view the ANC under Mandela as the "statesmen-in-waiting" and see the NP as untrustworthy, stalling political operators.

From a behavioralist perspective, the NP's propaganda was dead on arrival for two main reasons:

- **The Language Barrier:** The Afrikaans press – no matter how technically excellent its journalism – was printed in the language that the 1976 uprising had explicitly rejected. It was psychologically and structurally de-legitimised from ever communicating effectively with or converting the black majority.
- **The Unmarketability of "Apartheid Lite":** Propaganda requires bold, emotionally resonant, and easily digestible myths. The ANC offered a magnificent, simple mythos: *Liberation, Equality, Dignity, and "A Better Life for All."* The NP tried to counter this relatable message with an ever-changing policy platform that was always un-inspiringly dense and technical, making it difficult to grasp. Because it was forever being changed it sounded like a series of draft legal briefs produced by a fickle lawyer, in the manner of: "*OK, if you don't like that idea, then what about this tweak?*" Built around a succession of theoretical concepts such as: *Consociational democracy, rotating presidencies, federal vetoes, and minority group protections (through ill-defined "power sharing")* it passed over the heads of the vast majority of the populace of all races and helped to undermine confidence in the NP leadership (because it could be so easily portrayed to white and black alike as just more NP trickery). Up against what was at heart a mass-led revolution, no NP politician

could hope to win the popular ballot with a message centred around a complex set of constitutional mechanisms which to most seemed to be designed to maintain the *status quo* – just in disguise.

In short, the ANC's propaganda edge – via better narrative control, English media allies, and higher perceived credibility – was a key soft-power multiplier that far exceeded hard-power realities in securing electoral victory. The NP clung to institutional control formulas that proved not to be perceived as credible. Thus, communication skills and existing media alignments were the key force multipliers in the contest for political power – not the "military card".

A telling example of how the media contest went is the **1993 SABC Live Presidential Debate between Nelson Mandela and FW de Klerk**. Quantifiably, it was the most-watched broadcast in South African history up to that point. Culturally and psychologically, it crystallised the dynamics outlined above: De Klerk approached the microphone like a frustrated, defensive lawyer trying to litigate the fine print of a contract; Mandela approached it like an incoming sovereign, famously reaching out at the end to shake De Klerk's hand – not as a competitor, but as a magnanimous president-in-waiting.

The media ecosystem had prepared the population for that exact moment.

It is sometimes necessary to be bluntly focused on the essentials so as not to be blinded by the myriad side issues that typically cloud political reality. Cutting the B/S, there were only two real strategic issues that the NP had needed to find a clear answer to BEFORE launching the transition – clarity that was needed for making the correct strategic choices. Can we continue shooting blacks to stay in power? And: If the answer to that question is: "*no, we cannot continue ruling by force*", what then will of necessity be the only legitimate option? Clearly the answer had to be the acceptance of a non-racial democracy in a unitary state – in which case, the question to have canvassed before deciding your approach to the transition needed to have been: can we hope to win the elections that unavoidably will be the culminating part of a non-racial democracy?

Obviously, PW "Piet Skiet" Botha's strategy of preparing for shooting rather than settling had been an utter failure and had rightly been discarded when he was shown the door. In that, the De Klerk-led NP undeniably made the correct strategic choice – especially since there were no further grounds for branding the ANC as proxies of Moscow, aiding and abetting a world-wide Soviet conspiracy threatening the entirety of the capitalist West.

This meant that the only remaining option was to transition asap to a non-racial, democratic New South Africa based on equal universal suffrage, in which political power would be allocated by the ballot box. Elections in which all parties would participate, and where **public perception** (and its formation through message communication – i.e., through propaganda) would be the key to winning or losing.

Considering the realities about historical sensibilities and the media landscape listed above (which were very well known back then) any half-competent analyst could have concluded that the NP could not win an election against the ANC because of the fact that it couldn't realistically hope to win the propaganda contest, nor therefore the hearts and minds of the vast non-white demographic majority.

Logically then, if you could not conceivably win a power-determining election, opting wilfully from the outset for an adversarial approach (especially within the Westminster format) to the party clearly destined to win, meant nothing else than you yourself choosing a total loss of influence over the future government's exercise of political power.

If there was one thing that the NP had owed its constituency – apart from peace and image rehabilitation – then it was to ensure at least some practical means of influencing future government decisions (in real-world behaviouralist terms, not legalist formulations on paper). It was easy to predict that this could not be achieved formulaically (through quotas or vetoes – as actual events in the end clearly proved that it could not).

It should also have been clear that that kind of clever paper-based approach in any case ignored **the real levers of influence** that the community possessed, while attempting to base the "solution" being sought on what was in fact their weakest element – numbers. Given these realities, it should have been evident that future influence needed to be worked towards behaviouralistically (not formulaically) through establishing a political relationship

ensuring receptiveness for such input based on what can cooperatively contribute – instead of on what can legalistically be demanded.

In short, it should – whether it was soothing to the own ego or not – have been understood that the only viable option was reflected in the old English saying of: *If you can't beat them, join them*…

Which is not what the NP under the adversarially-inclined De Klerk had opted for at the outset – but which the NP in the end nevertheless did have to accept as being reality, a decade later voting itself out of existence and seeing its members being absorbed into the ANC – but once again, far too late (and consequently by then far too weak) to still have leverage and be able to make a real difference…

The first obvious reason is that, During PW Botha's reign, there had not been any real effort to properly prepare, in a timely manner, for future all-inclusive settlement negotiations. To, as per the title of the ultimate chapter of General Hendrik van den Bergh's autobiography, prepare that crucially important "seat at the table". On the contrary, talk of negotiating was taboo under PW Botha, with anyone engaging in exploratory talks publicly condemned and socially ostracised.

Evidently this was because under PW Botha the strategy had been to prepare for a shooting war, not to settle. Of course, there had been **lip service** paid by the generals to the need for a "political solution". But even such pious talk by the military about negotiations to achieve a political solution, in reality had not deviated from their core philosophy of the time (for example, the TRC reported that when the military in 1985 had organised a security/intel-community "bosberaad" over negotiation as possible strategy: "…*the general thrust was that some form of settlement was unavoidable in the long term, but that every effort should be made to weaken the ANC and destroy its revolutionary potential. In the words of General (Tienie) Groenewald 'You can thus only negotiate from a position of power. If we negotiate with the ANC with the purpose of eliminating it, that is acceptable. If we negotiate with the purpose of accommodating it, that is unacceptable.'* There is nothing to indicate that this view ever changed" (under PW Botha, that is).

### 13.6.14 NO CLEAR & REALISTIC NP POLICY GOALS, NEGOTIATION STRATEGY, OR POLITICAL ACTION PLAN

Ther is another important reason why the NP lost all power. Under De Klerk the need to settle the internal conflict and end the country's punishing isolation by means of negotiation was correctly understood, as well as that such negotiations needed to be for a non-racial, unitary South Africa based on universal franchise for all to, negotiated inclusively by and between all representative political forces. What seems to have been less well understood by the NP Government is that negotiations are merely a mechanism, a tool.

Yes, negotiations can serve to move the political dynamic from shooting to talking (if your immediate objective with initiating negotiations is to put an end to open physical conflict). But there needs to be a clear policy goal beyond merely ending violence – you have to determine what outcomes you intend to be negotiating for, in terms of the real-world future political dispensation or system in the country. Coupled to that, you have to identify your party's best options for playing an influencing role therein). With its strongly legalist-normative approach, the NP Government also seems not to have understood that the living, interacting, real-world political system in the country is not synonymous with the constitution (which latter is also no more than a tool with which to try and guide the political dynamic – there are many realities in the environment of the political system that impact it much more than a constitution does – such as ethnic composition, demography, and economic realities – even though these are not accorded any formal role in the constitution).

Negotiations represent a change of tools (the conference table versus weapons) and are merely a short-term deviation of the conflict to the conference room instead of the battlefield, sometimes accompanied by a cease-fire intended to end open hostilities. Entering into such negotiations can sometimes dramatically increase violent conflict, particularly if some of the key parties then adopt political action programmes centred on tools such as armed propaganda, in the manner of the ANC/SACP's "people's war" strategy in which the deliberate use of violence (logistically supported by their Operation Vula) formed an integral part of their ruthless pursuit of political power.

Negotiation is, in reality, just an **alternative <u>method</u>** for achieving mostly peacefully your desired long-term outcomes regarding the future allocation and utilisation of political power within the political system – which, in part, will be prescribed by the new constitution, but which fundamentally will be determined by the real balance of actual power.

Firstly, therefore, participating political parties need to be clear about what objectives (outcomes) they wish to achieve regarding the nature and exercise of political power in the intended new dispensation (for example, will power be divided between groups, shared between parties, or singularly exercised by a winner that takes all, in a centralised unitary state?). You also need to define where you stand, policy-wise, on what exactly the new constitution must, above all, protect: individual rights, or group rights, or a balance between the two? Beyond these legalist questions, you also have to consider your real strengths and weaknesses, as well as those of the other political actors, plus the key environmental determinants of the behavioural dynamic within the political system, to establish what strategy will best serve your fundamental objective to maximise your influence over future governmental decision-making.

Once you have your policy positions and the outcomes you wish to achieve defined, then you have to plan properly your political action programme for how best to achieve those desired outcomes (i.e., a clear plan for how to muster – on your own, or in cooperation with others – a majority at, firstly, that negotiation table to support achieving the outcomes you desire; secondly, an action plan for how to win the strongest possible leverage through the crucial elections that will follow on the negotiations and which actually would determine who would hold power). In a highly diverse plural society such as South Africa, arriving at a working majority in support of your ideas, of necessity means planning on how to build a working relationship with other parties – whether that be the majority party, or a coalition of others.

You then need to go beyond concepts and plans on paper, to putting your political action plan for mustering sufficient support efficiently in motion on the ground. You have to start preparing that table, by putting in the hard work of building the most productive cooperative relationships to achieve your goals.

You cannot merely go and sit there at the negotiating table in reactive mode, effectively just responding to the other parties to the negotiations. What you absolutely cannot and should not do, is to adopt unrealistic, unachievable goals at the outset, which you then seek to achieve adversarially (especially if you do not have the balance of power in your favour to make it possible). That erroneous approach is only going to force you into about-turn and concessions, resulting in further isolation and diminution of your leverage.

Perhaps most importantly, you have to realise that – yes – the goal of such a negotiating convention is indeed to come up with an agreed constitution. But that is not where the game ends, because that constitution has one all-important purpose, namely, to make possible the holding of elections which will determine in turn the allocation of the actual political power. Meaning that, from the very start, you have to be planning and preparing not only for winning the contest of ideas around the negotiation table, but simultaneously also need to start planning and preparing for your side to win that election at the ballot box.

What, then, had transpired within the NP regarding its policy positions and the outcomes it desired, after it had in December 1989 abandoned completely its pre-existing policy platform of separate development? What exactly were the core constitutional and systemic outcomes that the De Klerk government were now aiming to achieve by means of the proposed negotiations? I must confess that I myself, could never obtain any real clarity about that. Nor about what negotiation strategy and political action plan for gaining/retaining power, or at least significant influence, the NP actually had had before launching the transition.

Initially there was still a majority among the NP leadership who had regarded the protection of group rights (ill-defined as that notion was) as of core importance. But by 1993 it had become clear that the NP was no longer striving for a constitution that would accommodate their thinking about South Africa as a plural society consisting of distinct groups, nor were they any longer really aiming to gain political power for themselves (they were not attempting to build the alliances that would have been needed for such goals). Instead, their priorities had turned short-term and tactical, namely, to ensure stability and security and a hand-over of power that would avoid

retribution. In short, a political system in which they as political party could retain some influence (at least initially) by means of a Government of National Unity based on the idea of obligatory proportional "power sharing" mandated in the constitution.

As was the case with its abandonment of "group rights" the NP had to also abandon the notion of constitutionally-dictated "power sharing" when they were confronted with the choice of either accepting or rejecting the interim constitution (which De Klerk realised he had no option but to sign up to). Never during De Klerk's leadership of the NP did they seem to have considered that they may be able to exercise more real influence over future government decision-making if they sought a cooperative relationship with the ANC rather than an adversarial one – that if they had chosen a cooperative approach, then that would have allowed for the white community's very real strengths to be leveraged, instead of trying to base that leverage quota-wise on the greatest weakness of the whites, namely their paucity of numbers. In the end, with the GNU disbanded, the NP soon enough realised that the role of "Official Opposition" afforded them no real influence whatever, not even as "brake". Accordingly, they disbanded and individually joined the ANC, to try and influence its course from the inside…

Why had this sad situation played out? Essentially, because the NP had not identified achievable strategic goals related to the real fundamental interests of the people it represented. Furthermore, it had confused, and seduced by, short-term **tactical** goals, whereas they should have identified above all their long-term **strategic** approach. (As stated so many times before: because they had not based their decisions on a properly function system of prior strategy analyses, gaming, and formulation).

In the initial phase, starting with De Klerk's speech of 2 February 1990, there evidently had been a tactical decision to go hard and fast to try and catch the ANC off-guard with the announcements made in that speech, thereby to try and gain at the outset the initiative in the propaganda war – above all, to establish the *bona fides* of the De Klerk government. That was indeed done with considerable initial success (however, it also entailed that the NP had needed to then already play a lot of its top negotiation cards). But thereafter, the NP had no clearly discernible strategic road map for the rest of the route. So that, when the actual negotiations eventually began thirty months later, there was no clear policy platform nor strategy around which the NP was united and enthused. No defined, concrete core outcomes that were being worked towards in a unified manner. No negotiation strategy through which to try and achieve those desired outcomes. And no proper, systematic political plan of action to, at the end, win political power (or at least a significant portion thereof) at the ballot box.

It appeared as if the *modus operandi* had become to simply put out fires on a day-to-day basis and to try and "strike the best deal possible".

The underlying imperative, soon enough, had become to keep the negotiations going – if only for the sake of not returning to the international opprobrium and black/white conflict of before. So as not to be immediately blamed for any collapse. Why I say this, is because it later became known that – whenever his cabinet colleagues started complaining about the direction in which the negotiations were heading with evidently growing ANC/SACP dominance – De Klerk's stock response was: "do you want me to abandon the negotiations?"

Which then silenced his colleagues...

Pointing out all of this, does not mean that I believe that – at that very late stage, and with the historic legacy of Apartheid that the De Klerk government had to bear upon entering the negotiations – there were necessarily any better realistic options then remaining to choose from (since the balance of power and general trend had by then already pre-determined by the NP's initial erroneous approach).

Was mustering a majority at the negotiation table, and then winning an election, ever even realistically possible for the NP, when De Klerk had changed course on 2 February 1990 and adopted a settle rather than shoot strategy? There clearly wasn't unanimity about the prospects among the security/intelligence establishment, given how late the NP's change of course away from Apartheid had come and the realities on the ground. There clearly wasn't internal unanimity either about whether the ANC needed to be defeated, or in fact was indispensable to future stability. In short, what the actual history empirically and undeniably show is that the NP Government had

had no sensible, achievable strategic approach, goals and policies when they launched the transition, therefore had to make one about-turn and concession after the other, and did not have a unified vision about what outcome would best serve their people either.

In any event, it surely had not been difficult for the ANC/SACP to see what was going on within the NP. With the government effectively locked into negotiating for negotiation's sake, this of course had provided the ANC/SACP alliance with enormous leverage – they simply needed to threaten (as they often enough did) that they would walk out if they were not given their way, upon which the NP Government then invariably capitulated.

This is how **Google Gemini AI** summed up the NP's misguided strategic stances:

- *In twentieth-century Afrikaans society, the lawyer (regsman) held almost mythical status, often surpassing even the theologian. In a culture obsessed with formal order, state-building, and bureaucratic control, the law was not seen as a flexible social contract, but as an absolute, objective pillar of civilization.*
- *For the National Party (NP), the law was historically used to institutionalise Apartheid via a veneer of parliamentarism. When it came time to negotiate away white minority rule, the NP elite – dominated by lawyers like De Klerk and classical legalists like Gerrit Viljoen – subconsciously retreated into this cultural comfort zone.*
- *They truly believed that if a guarantee or a limitation of power was written into a constitutional clause with sufficient legal precision, it became an unyielding reality. They mistook **constitutional text for institutional power**, completely ignoring the behavioural reality that a constitution is only as strong as the political forces willing to enforce it.*
- *During the high-stakes negotiations at CODESA and the Multi-Party Negotiating Forum, legal drafting became the primary mechanism for breaking political deadlocks. However, this process frequently descended into the use of high-sounding platitudes and **"creative ambiguity."***
- *When the ANC and the NP hit an insurmountable wall regarding the division of power, the lawyers would step in to craft a compromise. Instead of resolving the actual behavioural power struggle, they designed semantic bridges – phrases that both sides could interpret as a victory.*
- *This reliance on beautiful, politically correct phraseology masked deep structural contradictions. For example, clauses concerning the independence of state institutions, accountability, and the separation of powers were drafted under the idealistic assumption that future actors would always act in rational, public-spirited alignment with the "spirit" of the text.*
- *The crux of the tragedy - **The Lack of Behavioural "Game-Testing"**. Because the NP* ("Super Afrikaners") *had systematically purged Behaviouralism from its primary academic institutions, and because the ANC's legal team (led by figures like Dullah Omar and Joe Slovo) was focused on revolutionary transformation and majority rule, **neither side subjected the draft constitution to rigorous behavioural stress-testing.***
- If behavioural political scientists, game theorists, or public choice economists had been embedded in the drafting committees to act as "red teams," they would have asked a completely different set of questions:
  - *"How will this specific appointment mechanism be manipulated if a single party captures 70% of the vote for three decades?"*
  - *"What happens if an unscrupulous faction gains control of the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) to shield themselves from corruption charges?"*
  - *"How will the proportional representation list system affect accountability when MPs answer to a party boss rather than a local constituency?"*
- *Jacob Zuma, an extraordinarily astute behavioural politician who understood informal networks of patronage and power far better than formal legal structures, exploited the exact blind spots left by the idealistic constitutional draftsmen. He systematically used the **formal executive powers of appointment** granted to the President by the Constitution to hollow out the very institutions designed to check his power—the NPA, the police, the tax service (SARS), and intelligence agencies.*

- *The constitution held, but only because civil society, an independent judiciary, and a few courageous individuals (like Public Protector Thuli Madonsela) fought a brutal, exhausting rearguard action. The text itself did not automatically protect the country; it required a massive, organic behavioural response from society to survive.*

***Summary***

*The South African Constitution was drafted as an aspirational, normative monument – a product of lawyers seeking verbal compromises and a dying regime looking for a legal fortress. Because it was never "game-tested" for the darkest scenarios of political behaviour and human nature, it left the post-Apartheid state highly vulnerable to institutional capture. It proved that a beautiful legal document cannot constrain an unscrupulous politician unless the underlying, practical mechanics of power are explicitly engineered to stop them.*

*The NP team continually mistook a legal text for political leverage. They failed to realize that an uncompromised constitutional draft means nothing if the behavioural and psychological forces on the street saw that constitution merely as a necessary transitional phase without everlasting legitimacy, that necessarily had to be passed through, on the way to their ultimate goal.*

*Because De Klerk's transition team was initially led by Viljoen (the classical legalist) and heavily advised by structural theorists from the Free State and Potchefstroom axes, the government operated with a massive conceptual deficit. They lacked the empirical toolsets required to counter the ANC's highly effective, behavioural strategy of mass mobilization and street-level leverage.*

*De Klerk's greatest conceptual mistake was treating the transition like a standard Westminster election or a corporate litigation battle. He operated under the illusion that he was the leader of a legitimate "Loyal Opposition" competing against a rival political party within a shared, stable democratic system.*

*He failed to realize that the ANC was not a mere political party; it was a massive, diverse* ***national liberation movement*** *designed to swallow the state whole. By adopting an overtly adversarial, hostile stance toward Mandela in the early 1990s (most infamously during his aggressive speech at CODESA 1, which provoked Mandela's legendary, furious rebuke), De Klerk poisoned the relational well. He forced the ANC to view the NP as a duplicitous enemy to be utterly neutralized, rather than an essential partner in a shared patriotic project.*

*Niel Barnard's intelligence-led approach had already proven that a relational, co-operative framework was the only viable path to long-term influence. Mandela was a traditionalist, deeply respectful of history, and profoundly concerned with Afrikaner anxieties. Had De Klerk stepped forward in 1990 not as a clever lawyer trying to checkmate the ANC, but as a strategic partner offering a* ***"historic compromise"*** *between African nationalism and Afrikaner nationalism, the entire trajectory of democratic South Africa would have changed.*

*By aligning openly with Mandela's moderate center-left faction, the NP could have helped insulate the transitional state against the populist, radical left wing of the liberation movement. Instead, De Klerk's constant attempts to out-minority-veto the ANC forced the moderate ANC leadership to continually close ranks with their own radicals (such as the ANC Youth League and the SACP) to maintain a united front against the white state. De Klerk's hostility systematically weakened the very moderates he needed to survive.*

*De Klerk believed that the "national constitution" they were writing would be the ultimate arbiter of future South African politics. This was pure Dooyeweerdian/legalistic wishful thinking. The De Klerk-led NP completely failed to understand that in a dominant-party state,* ***the internal constitution of the ruling party matters infinitely more than the constitution of the country*** (emphasis as in original). *The real locus of power in South Africa did not reside in the clean, institutional check-and-balance mechanisms engineered at CODESA; it resided in the internal*

*voting dynamics of the ANC's National General Council and its elective conferences (like the watershed 2007 Polokwane Conference).*

*Because De Klerk focused entirely on drafting clever parchment barriers rather than embedding white technical and economic capital into a durable, relational alliance with the ANC's moderate core, his constituency was left entirely defenceless when the initial, unifying morality of the Mandela era began to fade, opening the door for the radical and populists factions to unite against the moderates, as in 2007.*

*By prioritizing* ***normative legalism over behavioural sociology and strategic relationship-building****, De Klerk played a short-term hand of poker against an opponent playing a long-term game of chess. He left his community completely exposed to the internal, predatory dynamics of a liberation movement that they had chosen to fight at the drafting table, rather than manage through a permanent patriotic partnership.*

*Today, South African political scientists and constitutional scholars view the 1996 choices with a mix of reverence for their moral ambition and deep frustration with their behavioural naivety.*

- ***The Shift in Academic Focus:*** *Modern South African political science has shifted drastically away from the old legalistic, normative frameworks. Current scholarship utilizes public choice theory, behavioural institutionalism, and political economy to analyse how actors respond to institutional incentives.*
- ***The Electoral Reform Battle:*** *There is a strong, ongoing consensus among modern analysts that the electoral system must be overhauled. This culminated in prolonged legislative battles over the Electoral Amendment Act, which finally allowed independent candidates to contest national and provincial elections. However, behavioural scientists point out that the resulting changes were heavily diluted by the political elite, leaving the core structural issue – the dominance of party lists – largely intact.*
- ***A "Living" Defensive System:*** *Ultimately, modern scholars argue that South Africa survived its period of intense democratic backsliding not because the text of the constitution was self-enforcing, but because of an organic, behavioural counter-mobilisation. An independent judiciary, a resilient media, active civil society organizations, and investigative journalists stepped into the institutional vacuum to push back against state capture. The modern consensus is that constitutional design cannot rely on high-sounding platitudes; it must actively anticipate human greed, factional capture, and the relentless pursuit of unaccountable power. The 1996 South African Constitution, despite being globally hailed as one of the most progressive and textually beautiful documents in history, was* ***fundamentally under-engineered against bad-faith actors*** *because it was treated as a legal masterpiece rather than a behavioural battleground.*

## 13.6.15 SUMMATION – SECONDARY REASONS WHY AND HOW THE NP LOST POWER AND RELEVANCE

To conclude this sub-chapter on what the NP had actually done (but less than optimally), as well as that which they had failed to do, that caused it to lose political power to the point of disbanding itself, herewith a quick summation of some other contributing factors that have tangentially featured above but intermixed among the main causes discussed. For good order and completeness, I'm now briefly listing them here at the end in this summation (without repeating again the argumentation and facts already presented).

### *13.6.15.1 Afrikaner Division and the Discreditation of the Concept of Group Rights led to a by then shell-shocked NP "going with the flow" and accepting a continuation of the Westminster system, thereby gifting highly centralised state power to the ANC/SACP*

Another problem that the NP was confronted with after De Klerk's speech, was that it increasingly depended for support (in the context of the "old" parliament and matters such as the whites-only referendum), on English-speaking South Africans, who were more progressively inclined and also conditioned to see any suggestion that the concept of "group rights" needed to be accommodated in the new constitution as being once again Apartheid,

just now dressed up more attractively (given their experience of active exclusion since 1948, into what kind of "group" would they fit – white 2nd class, or multiracial English-speaking?).

What the failures of Verwoerdian homelands concept and the 1983 Tri-Cameral constitution unfortunately had done, was to thoroughly discredit the concept of group-centred and territorially-based consociationalism. This was due to the failure in practice of the homelands concept that had been central to "separate development", as well as the incendiary failure of the notion of "sharing power" via quota formulas based mathematically on ethnic numbers, as had been central to the Tricameral Parliament concept.

The only explanation why the NP had initially persisted in basing their constitutional proposals on "group rights" and then "power sharing" (despite the reality that these concepts had been at the core of the failed models of first Verwoerd and then PW Botha) is that De Klerk was indeed intent on making a "quantum leap" – but not so far away from what his base had earlier been indoctrinated with that he would lose them to the Afrikaner right-wing parties and movements.

Furthermore, conditioned by British tradition, the English-speakers instinctively favoured the Westminster model with its ostensible emphasis on the rights of the individual, rather than on that of ethnic groups. In "Super Afrikaner" academic and political circles there was also a latent negativity about anything that had originated in the USA. These two psychological inclinations, English as well as Afrikaans, unintentionally combined to ensure that the aptness of the American constitution as model for South Africa wasn't given the consideration it deserved.

In the end the National Party went along with the historic attachment to the familiar Westminster-style constitution, seemingly without realising that one of the main purposes behind the original Westminster model was precisely to allow the English majority in the U.K. to dominate the Scots, Welsh, and Irish minorities (with London all the while fobbing those minorities off with the palliative that they don't have any reason to complain, since individually they enjoy exactly the same rights as any Englishman).

The ANC/SACP of course understood very well that the Westminster model (as locally further centralised by Jan Smuts) is so structured as to allow the parliamentary majority unfettered reign; a system that would make it possible for the majority faction within the majority party (for example, Zuma's faction within the ANC in 2007) to elect the executive president of the country, even though that person would likely not have been elected in an open, direct vote. The president so elected by parliament then ends up holding all the executive power, plus near total control over legislation, because of the Westminster model's centralisation of power within a unitary state (in other words, a faction that succeeds in taking control of a party which has a majority of parliamentary seats, can take over the entire government and enjoy all its power, plus direct the passing or amendment of laws).

Now, thirty years on, the successors to those who had promoted the Westminster model during the negotiations are clamouring for devolution of power to the lowest level...

### *13.6.15.2 The Impact of an Overly Academic and Legalist-Normative Theory-Bound Approach, Without Sufficient Regard to the Practical Realities of Political Power & Process*

It is sad to have to say (again, in terms of my personal view of these things) that the NP Government representatives at the negotiation table increasingly were self-servingly focused on "c.y.a." considerations as the talks progressed. It is probably understandable, at a human level, that they each had as a vital personal objective to achieve an outcome where they would not be hauled before a kind of Nurnberg tribunal and be condemned to be hanged or to long imprisonment, as had happened to the losers after WW2. In the broader "protective" context, they were indeed negotiating to ensure that property rights, pensions and the like be respected – at least for the immediate future – which certainly were laudable goals, from their constituency's perspective. But these were peripheral issues – none of this addressed the coming realities around the core issue concerning real political power, its over-concentration through centralisation, and the potential created for untrammelled exploitation.

It was as if having a nice new constitution (which you could hold up to the world to show what great guys you actually are) had become a goal in itself, rather than the National Party realising and preparing for the true tests – namely, firstly to muster a majority at that table to support what should have been identified as the vital core

interests regarding political power (and, accordingly, as the outcomes to set as the objectives to be achieved). In other words, the outcomes which you and your allies needed to be jointly striving for. Followed by planning and preparing for the ultimate test – to win the first non-racial elections. Again, if you had decided to go adversarial with the ANC (as the De Klerk did) together with your allies. Because, both for gaining a majority around the negotiating table and subsequently at the ballot box, the adversarial NP clearly would have needed allies. Alliances which – unlike the DTA in Namibia – they never achieved (which is not a reflection on their alliance-building, but on their original choice of going adversarial rather than cooperative).

Was this due to them not sufficiently comprehending these vital real-world needs, as regards the true nature of realpolitik and political power? Or perhaps due to having been left no time by their own predecessors to properly prepare the ground, saddled with the albatross of a a legacy so negative that nobody really wished to be associated with them? Or was it due to the tactical brilliance and superior propaganda of the ANC/SACP, as well as them having had more expert negotiators? Plus, Mr Mandela's astute and charismatic leadership, in particular? Or a combination of all of the above? (We will come back shortly to this point of Mandela's use of Giap's "people's war" doctrine, i.e., the orchestrated use of propaganda and violence through which to overcome political opposition).

It seemed to me that those engaged in conducting the negotiations, and those counselling them, were very much academic theorists concerned with how the constitution will look on paper and how many accolades it will elicit from academics and media abroad. They were not projecting ahead (as General van den Bergh had done) what each paper clause would in practice lead to in terms of the future allocation and exercise of hard political power, nor to the means for how best to contain and if need be counter central government over-reach. They were not, beyond the protections for individual human rights, catering for when things may go seriously wrong in future.

For example – if South Africa should (around the next election, perhaps?) experience a repeat of the 2021 Zuma riots but just on a national scale, what is the real-world recourse provided for in the 1996 constitution, if the government itself is then torn asunder and cannot manage a state of emergency, nor have at its disposal a unified, disciplined, sufficiently capable security force with which to restore law and order? Do we run to the apex court and plead for an interdict?

Or if the MK party and EFF should come to power in alliance with the radical wing of the current ANC, and then proceed with implementing their socialist National Democratic Revolution? (As they undoubtedly would, since they have always adhered to the Marxist two-stage revolution theory, with the 1996 constitution just having been, to them, the first phase).

What then?

No matter my own fondness as lawyer and political scientist for the theory of constitutional law, it had always bothered me through-out the transition that our side in the negotiation process had seemed blinded by and gotten themselves enmeshed in abstract theory, without apparently realising what the transition was actually all about, in terms of realpolitik. Because in the real world it is all about power. Calling a spade a spade, what our representatives were actually finessing in their abstract normative-legalist way, was the hand-over of the totality of the power of the state to a former sworn enemy who had no democratic credentials. Apparently without realising its likely behaviouralist consequences, they were doing so in the form of a highly concentrated, centralised scheme of executive control within a unitary state with little effective separation of powers between the executive and the legislature and with only lip service to the devolution of power downwards to regional and local levels of governance. In the end "going with the flow", using the historically familiar Westminster model which Jan Smuts had further centralised as template, and tweaking it to in effect give party HQ's even more power – without understanding that that would mean that the course of the country would be determined in the elective conference of the majority party and thus with little heed to the preferences and interests of the broader populace as well as minorities. Leaving us to have to put our faith in a piece of paper, should things go wrong (as we all know, historically, that they most definitely can – anywhere in this world, but recently most commonly in our Africa, often with devastating genocidal results).

Should we not have been negotiating about how to democratically restrain any central government overreach? Doing so – as in the USA constitution – without being side-tracked by race, "group rights" or "power sharing" quotas, but by means of a proper separation of powers between the legislature, the judiciary, and the executive (with the latter revolving around a directly-elected president). Together with proper devolution of power down to state/provincial and local levels. All based upon voluntary association and the empowerment of the citizen, whilst limiting the power of party HQ's to dictate to elected representatives. All the while being cognisant of the reality that real influence over decision-making will depend on whether interest groups can effectively leverage their real bargaining chips so that the value they can add becomes the basis of their influence (and not some legalist mathematical quota).

In final analysis, understanding how power works in the real world – namely, that any attempted abuse of central power can only effectively be dissuaded by sufficient real counter-power emanating legitimately from other poles of power built into the system. Whether it be the judiciary as counter-pole to the executive (which indeed seems to be functioning reasonably well) or the provinces constraining the central power, or the citizens uniting to do so themselves, through organised civil society, media and the like, or serve to subliminally dissuade when the central power knows that the citizens enjoy the right to bear arms and that the provinces and municipalities also possess physical means of dissuasion and maintenance of law and order.

To illustrate this in practical terms: was it understood by the NP (and the CP/AVF, for that matter) that real protection of the white Afrikaner minority would not be served by paper provisions nor by an impossible-to-define, artificial sliver of homeland (with 99% having their homes, farms, and businesses outside of it), when the central state collapses or large-scale lawlessness such as the 2021 Zuma riots break out? Was it understood how important it would then be for the citizen to have the right to bear arms for defence of home and neighbourhood? For local and provincial authorities to possess own police forces and national guardsmen to be deployed under their control?

In other words, that – as so often has been the case elsewhere in Africa – the greatest peril lies not in intra-parliamentary shenanigans (however much that also needs to be constrained) but in extra-parliamentary actions such as a coup, state capture, state collapse, the outbreak of tribal conflict, and the looting, killing and destruction driven by mass action psychosis? That the constitutional dispensation needed to be so set up as to not only provide normative rules on paper for how the system should ideally be working, but to also provide for the legitimate existence of real-world poles of physical counter-force with which to keep the centralised system in check, and especially for physically countering rogue forces that care not a hoot for the normative-legalist provisions about how things ideally should function – particularly when the central authorities fail in their duties (as in 2021) or when urgent local emergency deployment is vital?

What our own history shows is how counter-productive (and, frankly, superfluous) it has been to legislate things that human nature already largely self-regulates (such as passing the Group Areas Act, the prohibition on mixed marriages and the like). It was always going to be the case that the Western Cape, for example, would likely have a different governing party in charge than nationally, simply based on ethno-demographic reality. Given that natural reality (which had not needed to have been legislated into existence, making the entire constitutional debate about "group rights" unnecessary in practice), should the NP Government's efforts not have rather been focussed on ensuring that provinces enjoy as much local power as possible, long the example of the American states? Similarly, it was always evident that there would be many cities and towns across the country where the local majority would not correspond to that at national level – should the focus not have been on empowering all municipalities? And, once the NP's focus had shifter to protecting the rights of the individual – should they not have focused all their leverage on having the right to bear arms enshrined in the constitution, as in the USA? Should these latter objectives related to the real-world dynamics of actual power not have enjoyed equal or more priority than the nice-sounding but essentially abstract normative-legalist notions they had been focused on?

The NP Government politicians, as politicians, were interested in what share of power they could gain (in other words, how many cabinet positions, what titles, etc.). We as ordinary citizens, however, were much more concerned about the physical safety of family and property, if and when the proverbial hits the fan. Our interests were not attended to, firstly because it wasn't the priority of the politicians (who had hogged the negotiations) and

secondly because the politicians simply didn't understand real-world power dynamics as somebody like General Hendrik van den Bergh had. Because the politicians had launched the transition without involving the broadest range of outside expertise, without a sound grasp of applicable theory, without undertaking proper preparation, without a realistic, comprehensive strategy having been expertly formulated, all the while keeping the "securocrats" at arms' length, the real-world power dimension of the negotiations had been left essentially un-addressed – which clearly was one of the reasons why the NP lost all power…

Was our position really so weak that we had no other option but to simply transfer power to what – upon closer analysis and looking beyond woke phraseology – in practice came to very closely resemble a system based on the Marxist-Leninist concepts of the "vanguard party" and "democratic centralism"?

The real problem was not what the negotiations achieved in terms of producing and internationally-acceptable constitution that would "rehabilitate" image and stop the conflict – these were clearly in their own right very important objectives and the NP team probably achieved as much as could reasonably have been expected, considering the power balance – in fact, even a bit more. The true problem was that there had been insufficient attention to the real-world power dimension of the new dispensation which the new constitution created – what the constitution with its particular focus (and omissions) actually would result in, in terms of the real-world, practical exercise of political power.

Further factors not properly weighed before setting off, included:

- what will have provided most influence – a partnering approach, or opposition?
- the critical importance of which faction would rule within the ANC (and thus the overriding need to keep the radicals out, for being the core threat that the NP's constituency would face well into the next century). Plus,
- the future opportunities and demands that would flow from the continuing societal reality of our group-based demographics, which would in political terms increasingly find expression in the formation of group-centred political parties – meaning that, in practice, the concept of statutorily prescribed "group rights" would become redundant, with the persistent societal reality of group identity resulting, via voluntary association, in culturally comfortable political "homes" in the form of identity-aggregated political parties (this pluralist societal reality translating into party-political pluralism meant that the two-party model would collapse, and because the 1996 constitution had not been drafted with coalition governance in mind, the risk of ungovernability now exists should no natural, clear majority be voted into power at whatever level of government).

### *13.6.15.3 The Apartheid Legacy Albatross*

The main reason for the NP failing to muster the political support it needed, was that it psychologically (in the minds of the vast majority of the new electorate) still had a legacy of past errors around its neck, like an albatross. Racist practices plus policies that had been based on wishful thinking rather than on practical reality, which had prejudiced and hurt the vast majority of the new electorate. A toxic legacy and tarnished image that was well-neigh impossible to surmount within a short period of time.

The De Klerk version of the NP was therefore principally the victim of wrong decisions taken decades before by the NP itself. Decisions about entrenching petty racial discrimination in law and pursuing a fundamentalist policy of "separate development", even though these policies simply had no foundation in practical reality or logic. Policies that today's generation can hardly fathom. Considering that the skies did not fall in when race-based discrimination was abolished, and instead everyone had quickly adapted with relative ease to the new reality, most white South Africans had subsequently asked themselves why these hurtful measures had ever been deemed necessary? What real purpose did they serve – other than us placing an enormous target on our own backs?

Similarly, very few people can now comprehend how intelligent leaders back then could have imagined that the homelands policy (in its absolutist Verwoerdian form, of totally separate, sovereign tribal patchwork states), could ever work economically? How such a scheme could ever have been imagined capable of overturning the

demographic reality of an ever-growing, vast black urban majority, given their essential part in the national economy?

### *13.6.15.4 The dead hand of enforced groupthink*

It is not as if there hadn't been Afrikaners in high positions who had early on seen the folly in where we were headed. Such as the Dutch Reformed church leaders, themselves then senior Broederbonders, who in 1960 had co-signed the Cottesloe Declaration – only to be ostracized. Authors. Academics. Businessmen. Afrikaners in senior advisory positions in government itself, such as Eschel Rhoodie and Hendrik van den Bergh. Who had understood the need for speed in making the paradigm shift from a race-based system to a group-based system, with Van den Bergh warning that clinging to racism was "tantamount to suicide". Who knew that "Grand Apartheid" was, in practice, unworkable. Who comprehended that there could be no military solution to a political problem – that we were engaged in a contest for political power driven by propaganda, with the "armed struggle" being armed propaganda, not a serious military challenge against which all the means of the state needed to be mobilised to provide a military response…

All of these voices were drowned out by the insistence on adherence to groupthink, with a societal system designed to enforce conformity of thought under the guise of maintaining Afrikaner unity. Thereby, effectively banishing critical thinking and debate, and punishing those who were trying to wave red flags. The foremost instrument in this suppression of critical thinking was the Broederbond. What did their aggressive suppression of critical thought and debate achieve, in the end? They certainly did not thereby preserve Afrikaner unity – our people splintered: politically, in the church, in academia. All that was achieved was that the moment of enlightenment was disastrously delayed, **coming two decades too late** when FW de Klerk finally faced up to reality.

### *13.6.15.5 Ongoing internal discord on strategy had severely hamstrung the NP Government*

As had been demonstrated in the preceding chapters, the discord and dysfunction that had marked strategic decision-making in the NP Government (particularly from the mid-seventies on), had played a significant role in firstly leaving the FW de Klerk government with very limited options and precious few cards to play, when at last the decided to seek a settlement. To then make matters worse for themselves the "New Nats" continued in the same vein, vacillating and floundering without clearly defined and agreed strategic objectives or a proper plan for achieving their ever-changing policy goals.

The fact that this lack of unity on policy had continued, through the Transition and beyond to the short-lived GNU era, had made the task of the ANC so much easier. Successive NP Governments had not heeded the timely warnings from their experts (such as from Eschel Rhoodie and Lang Hendrik van den Bergh) and relied instead on what Niël Barnard later rightly called fever dreams. Had Vorster listened to Rhoodie and Van den Bergh's urgings about the need for speed in the seventies, and had PW Botha listened to his own State Security Council Secretariat cautioning against unilaterally imposing the Tri-Cameral constitution in 1983, perhaps things may not have been so easy for the ANC (not that South Africa was the only place where expert advice was ignored – the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation had warned Ian Smith against unilaterally declaring independence, as had Dr Verwoerd, but he nevertheless went ahead…).

Maritz Spaarwater, who had been Roelf Meyer's principal assistant, recalled in his autobiography that he: "*never got the impression that there was a laid-down strategy with non-negotiable bottom lines and negotiables spelt out for all negotiators to adhere to*".

There was, furthermore, a fundamental difference visible within NP Government ranks about what real-world outcome (i.e., who needed to emerge victorious) would best serve national security interests. The NP politicians initially placed in charge were fondly aspiring to an NP victory. It is said that the influential Minister Gerrit Viljoen

(the former Broederbond Chair who had been administrator-general of SWA/Namibia and thus knew well the DTA model) was one of those who had strongly favoured a constitutional dispensation that would somehow ensconce group rights and who also wanted to build a political alliance with Inkatha and other parties not supportive of the ANC/SACP, to establish a power block with which to counter the ANC and contest for political power at the negotiation table and ballot box. This can be seen in the following observation by Barnard in his autobiography: "*At the beginning of 1992, the Government was still quite firm and even paternalistic about its goals and expectations of the constitutional model. During the discussions within its own circle, the negotiators were determined to make "the principle of self-determination" part of the agenda for negotiations. In fact, this was seen as bait to involve the right-wing groups and to muster them as allies against the ANC*".

However, it is also known today that the NIS were rightly concerned, when making their intelligence assessments, about the future security and internal stability of the nation – not with the fortunes of any given party (as per their "paradigm shift" from white "state security" to holistic "national security" discussed earlier). Accordingly, the NIS leadership (if not each and every one in the broader Service) had early on come to the conclusion that the only future government that will be accepted as legitimate, internally as well as internationally, would be an ANC government led by Mr Mandela, and that the only party that would be capable of governing effectively would be the ANC.

It can be stated here for the historical record that I have been told by a knowledgeable and reliable individual who had been personally present at the Secretariat of the State Security Council that a senior NIS official had made this precise point early on and very clearly to Secretariat staffers, stating that in the view of the intelligence service top echelon it was in the interest of the country that the ANC become the next government under the leadership of Mr Mandela, because only an ANC government would be recognised as legitimate, would thus be able to govern normally, transparently, and thus would be able to bring an end to the violent internal conflict and end international isolation. That NIS spokesperson (who recently re-confirmed that this is what he had then said) had half-jokingly added that such an outcome, i.e., of an ANC government, would mean that we would then once again be able to play rugby against the All Blacks…

When Roelf Meyer in 1992 took over from Gerrit Viljoen as minister responsible for the actual negotiations, the process had become totally stuck (as we had seen in the earlier timelines). It was necessary to overcome – or rather, sidestep – the differences within the NP about "group rights" versus reality, in order to be able to move the negotiations forward. Because of the normative-legalist inclination of the NP leadership and their need to be able to sell to their base the inevitable about-turn away from "group rights" that reality required, the "branding spin" and "new packaging" required, still had to have a normative-legalist flavour.

In this regard Prof Francois Venter, constitutional lawyer from Potchefstroom University who had been on loan to Meyer's new, more technocratic team via a secondment to the Department of Constitutional Development (then newly under the leadership of Niël Barnard) had played a significant role through coming up with a complete framework for a transitional constitution not based on "group rights" but rather on maximum protection of the rights of the individual in the context of what in Germanic legal philosophy and parlance was known as a "State of Laws" (*Regstaat*). This blueprint for the constitution Venter had bound in a blue file, so that it became known in the corridors as the "Blue Book" (comparing the NP's "Blue Book" and the ANC's "Green Book" is enlightening: the "Blue Book" was a legalist blueprint for the constitution, in effect a draft statute drawn up by a lawyer; the "Green Book", by contrast, was a behaviouralist real-world guideline for winning political power, drawn up by Marxist-inspired revolutionaries).

As to the philosophical orientation of the "Regstaat" draft that Prof Venter had presented as escape route out of the "group rights" dead-end, it leaned heavily on his personal formation as constitutional lawyer at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (as it was then known) and the Max Planck Institute in Germany, where he did his post-graduate studies. Venter enjoyed the confidence of his fellow Potch Law School alumnus, FW de Klerk. As stated before, it is truly a pity that on the Potch and Bloemfontein campuses Behaviouralism had been dismissed, with research and teaching deliberately orientated away from the Anglo-world to Germany and the Netherlands. This unfortunately resulted in the practical benefits of the USA Constitution as template, not having received due consideration.

So, why did De Klerk in the end sign up to the interim constitution which clearly was 100% based on unfettered majority rule? As young intelligence analyst it had been hammered into me that, to understand the actions of people, one need to look at their bottom-line self-interest. As already explained, the NP Government top brass over the course of the transition had come to understand that they potentially had everything to lose if they persisted in their initial objective of forming a true alliance with the likes of the IFP and then engaging in an all-out fight for the political power against the ANC/SACP/COSATU alliance. Because if the ANC and its allies then in any event emerged victorious after such open hostility, a new government could have been less than forgiving… One can thus understand, at a purely human level, why the NP negotiators in the end chose to rather be seen as the honest facilitators of a peaceful hand-over of power to Mandela and the ANC.

It was also evident that it was hugely in the interest of the NP's own white constituency – who had the most to lose, materially – that the transition be completed in a manner that would above all ensure security in the country and stability in the economy. It was also vitally important that the election enjoy legitimacy in the eyes of the world – it did not take a clairvoyant to know that (as the NIS had concluded), should the ANC/SACP have lost the 1994 election, however genuinely, then there would not have been peace in the country and the violence and destruction would likely have increased. The international pressure would likely not have abated either, because the feckless new governments in Washington and London, in particular, would likely have accepted ANC complaints that they had lost only because "the NP Government with its 'Third Force machinations' had abused its powers", thus insisting on a new election but under international supervision (as had taken place in Namibia). The economy would accordingly have remained in dire straits. It was clear that foreign governments such as the British had been investing heavily in having the ANC in power, and that the pressure would have persisted till such an outcome was achieved – no matter how many re-runs was required.

Last but not least, the personal safety of the NP's white constituents and the security of their property would also likely have come under increased threat, in the heightened bloodshed and violence that would likely have followed upon an electoral result disputed by the ANC.

Let there be no doubt, therefore, that – in terms of the hard-nosed realities – the De Klerk government had effectively been trapped in a lose-lose situation, caused in large measure by their own initial choice not to seek strategic cooperation with the ANC.

For the NP and its advisors, the best way in which to exercise future influence over an ANC/SACP government was not to be found in an alliance with other partners painted by propaganda as fellow "Apartheid pariahs". Nor in a consociational-style constitutional model based upon reserving rights for ethnic groups. Rather, the NP's focus had shifted to the political party as the vehicle for "power sharing", in a GNU (Government of National Unity). This the ANC/SACP had acceded to as part of the interim constitution of 1994, but only for a limited time – only during the initial years following the transition – not as a permanent constitutional feature.

Thus, a GNU was indeed set up on 27 April 1994 with the large majority of the new cabinet portfolios accorded to the ANC/SACP/COSATO tripartite alliance, but also with some that went to the NP and to the IFP, and with FW de Klerk as one of President Mandela's two vice-presidents.

However, the still-persisting **fundamental divisions** within the broader NP soon enough came to the fore again, with the party's congress deciding to withdraw from the GNU in 1996, despite some leading figures dearly having wished to stay (so decided by congress ostensibly because it was felt that being so closely tied to the ANC-led government's policies would doom the NP at the next election).

The irony was that the NP did not survive this withdrawal from the top table of national decision-making, and in 1997 the "old NP" formally gave way to the New National Party. This latter iteration fared disastrously in the 1999 election and was completely disbanded not long thereafter (with its top leadership then joining the ANC).

Thus, the NP's every attempt at retaining some modicum of political power – passing through ethnic group rights to power sharing among political parties – had come to naught. Not only had the NP lost all political power – it had in fact ceased to exist.

This left the ANC entrenched at the helm of a highly centralised state based on a model designed for untrammelled majority rule with no real obligation nor incentive to give consideration to minority interest.

The only "groups" that would in future count (as regards the exercise of total executive power), were the two main ideological groupings **within** the ANC – the so-called "moderates" versus the "radical economic transformationists". Because of the Westminster-style constitution, whichever one of these two groups achieved a simple majority within the ANC at its elective conferences, could thereby anoint the president of the entire country and thus hold, as faction, all of the centralised executive power, as well as enormous influence over the legislature and the judiciary.

Most readers will be familiar with the demise of the NP, so there's no need to belabour the point any further.

#### *13.6.15.6 PW & Pik Botha's kneecapping of Dr Rhoodie's counter-propaganda machine*

As was earlier illustrated (and which, because of its negative impact, is essential to mention here again), is the fact that PW Botha had destroyed the counter-propaganda capacity that Eschel Rhoodie had begun to build, leaving the NP Government without the means to deflect the main thrust of the ANC/SACP's "people's war", which was above all propaganda-driven. As Anthea Jeffrey for one had rightly pointed out, the fact that the NP Government had lost the propaganda war wholesale also meant that they inevitably lost the contest for political power.

More than that, the doctrine of a "total onslaught" and thus the militarisation of the state apparatus for a "total counterassault" had given rise to a **war psychosis**, in which legal norms and the rule of law were increasingly ignored because of the perception that "all is fair in love and war". Thus, the State was not only bereft of an own counter-propaganda capacity, but during the PW Botha reign was, additionally, actively feeding the ANC/SACP's "atrocity propaganda" machine…

Furthermore, the excessive reliance under PW Botha on secret Security Force special operations (which didn't remain secret for long) as supposedly the magic bullet for resolving internal political challenges, would come back to haunt the De Klerk government, because it provided a background against which the ANC/SACP could present their Third Force propaganda as believable – that Third Force propaganda and its success being the factor that, more than most, alienated the NP Government from the black masses that had initially trusted De Klerk.

Lastly, the Military's hogging of the better part of the national budget through the eighties (thereby depriving the Police and social services of funds urgently needed for what should have been the top priority, namely internal security and stability) had left a legacy of violence, ungovernability, polarisation, and radicalisation – think of the "liberation before education" slogan – which had in key metropolitan townships created a fertile seed-bed for the ANC/SACP's "people's war" to flourish.

By 1993 the NP Government had clearly come to the conclusion that it was not in the best interest of its own office bearers (in terms of what may happen to them in a future hostile South Africa) nor of its own constituents, to risk everything on the gamble of winning with an "alliance of reactionaries" – which victory would in any event not be recognised abroad, and may even have led to more forceful international intervention. The NP's policy aim thus shifted away from ensconcing group rights in the constitution and also away from trying to win political power at the ballot box as part of an anti-ANC/SACP alliance and instead evolved into ensuring a stable and secure transition and obtaining at least some share of the political power by means of a party-based GNU, even if just temporarily.

## 13.7 WHY AND HOW DID THE ANC SUCCEED IN COMING OUT ON TOP?

### 13.7.1 TOTAL FOCUS ON GAINING POWER

That the ANC alliance in the end resoundingly came out on top, despite the position of relative weakness that they started from (organisationally and ideologically, with their Stalinist communist legacy) was due to their superior

strategizing and utilisation of propaganda – made all the more effective by the NP Government's weaknesses in these key dimensions (as demonstrated above).

The ANC/SACP's leadership under the formidable Mr Mandela had been strategically far more focused and geared towards behaviouralist reality, using their historical advantages in the propaganda arena with great skill (such as the favourable disposition of the English-language press, the Black concern about traditionalist Zulu domination, as well as resentment in non-white ranks against the racist policies of the post-1948 NP governments. On the ground in strategically important areas of voter concentration such as the Witwatersrand Black townships the ANC/SACP had also been ruthlessly adept at employing violence and propaganda in accordance with communist revolutionary "people's war" doctrine, as per Vietnamese General Giap's formula.

Thanks to their propaganda dominance the ANC quickly came to enjoy overwhelming international support through succeeding in having themselves be seen as the inevitable "government in waiting". They also succeeded in positioning themselves – in the eyes of non-Zulu Blacks – as the bulwark against Zulu/Boer domination. The initial trust that De Klerk benefited from was destroyed by successfully implanting the perception that his government was behind "Third Force" activity.

The difference with the NP Government was that the ANC/SACP were supremely situationally aware and capable of preparing properly, with a clear action plan, so that they could single-mindedly pursue toppling the white government and winning political power. By contrast, the NP Government appeared brow-beaten, dysfunctional as regards strategy formulation, and deeply discord-riven – due in large part to the reality that they had been two decades too late in embarking on negotiations (so that far more propitious moments in time for having done so, had slipped by unexploited). When the NP finally realised that there was no other realistic option than to try and negotiate a settlement, the terrain they needed to cultivate in order to win political power was unprepared, they themselves were unprepared and divided in terms of what to aim for (and how), and ended up outmanoeuvred and isolated.

As emphasised before, I'm the first to admit that it is easy to be wise after the fact. Hindsight is indeed 20/20. I myself had not understood, back then, all that I understand now. It is also essential to stress again that the past can obviously not be changed – just learnt from. Furthermore, I do not believe that, when the negotiations finally did start, it had truly still been possible (or even advisable) to try and engineer an outcome fundamentally different to the majority rule system that in the end emerged – at that late stage, the priority of necessity had needed to be to ensure a stable transition and avoid the country falling into chaos and insecurity (since by then the optimal time for trying to arrive at ideal-form constitutional arrangements had already passed decades before). Which, however, does not mean that a more apt, USA-style of majority rule could not at least have been attempted to be negotiated.

De Klerk and his government had undoubtedly, by their own lights, done their utmost to try and make the best of the bad situation they had inherited. They did, after all, avoid the wholesale destruction and bloodshed that many abroad had predicted. Back then we had all, in our own way and role, done our utmost to ensure precisely that – a secure and stable transition – which, in practical terms, clearly had needed to be the top immediate priority. That a relatively peaceful and legitimate transition was indeed ensured was a hugely important achievement. One of which all involved in securing it – particularly the former Security Forces – can be justly proud of.

Nevertheless, it is informative to look back now, with the benefit of hindsight and with the facts now far better known (rather than the enormous amount of media and political spin that had then predominated) so as to learn what had actually happened, and why.

### 13.7.2 THE SITUATION THAT THE ANC/SACP FACED AT THE START OF THE NEGOTIATIONS

As I have illustrated with the earlier references to the findings about black attitudes made public by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), at the start of the transition a substantial number of blacks trusted FW de Klerk. A Gallup-Markinor poll done at that time had also found that nearly half the urban black population could, at the outset of the transition, be classified as "potential" NP voters.

The ANC/SACP knew full well that they would not likely obtain many votes from the white, Indian and “Coloured” communities. For them to achieve a majority at the ballot box, it would all be down to how the black African vote would split. In other words: what percentage of the Black African vote the NP would obtain, plus how much of it would go to the black tribal traditionalists affiliated with the homeland leaderships, as well as to the Black Consciousness Movement / AZAPO and to the likes of the PAC. Most crucial from the ANC/SACP viewpoint was how the Zulu vote (as numerically the most important black ethnic group), would divide between the ANC and the IFP.

It is noteworthy that this exact same assessment can today be found online in the Nelson Mandela Foundation’s O’Malley Archive. Padraig O’Malley (no friend of the Apartheid government) described the ANC’s fears as follows:

“*According to the malign scenario, espoused by the ANC, government strategy was predicated on driving a wedge between supporters of the IFP and the ANC, splitting the black vote (a more sophisticated variation of the old colonial "divide and conquer" routine.) Then, the NP in an alliance with the IFP, and with the coloured and Indian communities (who believed they had more to fear from the perceived threat of future African domination than the actual domination by whites they were presently subjected to), and with the support of homeland and TBVC leaders who were either despised by the ANC as collaborators with the ruling regime or not co-opted by the ANC, would be properly positioned to* ***outvote the ANC in an election*** *held on the basis of a universal franchise … The ANC wanted to marginalize the IFP, the only credible black organisation that commanded a substantial base of support and to keep "real" negotiations the exclusive preserve of the ANC and the government*…

*“According to the benign scenario, espoused by De Klerk and the former NP Government, the violence was primarily a matter of the deadly competition for support between the IFP and the ANC, which escalated after the release of Mandela and the unbanning of the ANC when the ANC mounted a campaign to marginalize the IFP and Buthelezi, with a relentless barrage of propaganda to portray him as a collaborator with the Apartheid regime, a puppet of successive NP Governments, and an opponent of the liberation movement”.*

What the ANC knew that it absolutely needed to prevent, was that the NP Government could – in the manner done in SWA/Namibia – set up a DTA-type alliance with black traditionalist parties, the predominantly Zulu IFP, and “Coloured” and Indian parties. Secondly, it had to de-legitimize all non-white parties not aligned with itself as being puppets of the “Apartheid regime”. Thirdly, it had to paint the “new” NP under De Klerk as being still at heart anti-black and still deviously scheming to retain power by means of dividing the blacks against each other, so as to continue oppressing and exploiting the masses. Lastly, the ANC/SACP had to limit the negotiations to effectively being the exclusive prerogative of just two forces: itself (as the “government in waiting”) and the NP Government (portrayed as the illegitimate outgoing authority, obliged to hand over power).

To achieve these political goals, the ANC/SACP had a blueprint at their disposal – their 1979 “Green Book” prepared by their Politico-Military Strategy Commission and adopted by their NEC in August of that year.

### 13.7.3 UNLIKE THE NP, THE ANC/SACP HAD A CLEAR STRATEGY – THEIR “GREEN BOOK”

It is true that the ANC/SACP suffered from many debilities at the beginning of 1990.

The NP had caught them somewhat unawares with its 2 February announcement and had (at least temporarily) seized the initiative. The events in Eastern Europe had exposed their ideology as a disaster, and the USSR’s changed attitude (in part due to Pretoria’s successful efforts to turn Moscow’s thinking around) had robbed the ANC/SACP of its principal sponsor.

The ANC/SACP’s MK had been effectively neutralised as a military force and had been pushed back to Uganda as their nearest base areas. The ANC also had no own organisational infrastructure on the ground inside South Africa, and their earlier efforts to clandestinely infiltrate own political operators – their Operation Vula – had been fully penetrated by the State’s intelligence agencies (even their much-vaunted so-called impenetrable communication systems had actually been completely compromised, with Vula having been permitted to proceed in order to allow the intelligence agencies to identify and track its operatives).

Most importantly (as we had shown earlier) the ANC/SACP could not at the outset count on the natural allegiance of all of the black African masses.

Furthermore, the same split that had internally divided the ANC from the fifties through to today (between the so-called moderates and those aspiring to see Radical Economic Transformation through the full-blown implementation of their "National Democratic Revolution") was also a real factor at the beginning of the negotiation process, deeply dividing the ANC ideologically. Yet, despite these drawbacks and the possibility of strong opposition coming from a potential alliance centred around the NP and the IFP, the ANC/SACP also enjoyed two important advantages: firstly, it was united behind its strategy for how to single-mindedly pursue political power, and secondly, it could count on a sympathetic English-language press, both inside South Africa and internationally (and in the world media context, because of the international press taking their lead from the Anglo media, effectively across the planet). This media advantage in both the contested townships as well as overseas would greatly facilitate the implementation of their propaganda-based strategy of waging a "people's war" for political power, with few awkward questions asked about tactics and means...

So successful was this "armed propaganda" strategy that: "*By 1993 the ANC was able to control the negotiation process, as well as to exert a powerful influence over the deployment of the (undefeated) South African police and army. In 1994, less than two decades after it had embarked on its people's war, it had trounced the National Party government and the IFP and become the dominant party in a new government of national unity*" (as stated by John Kane-Berman, former CEO of the SAIRR, in the foreword to Anthea Jefferey's ***People's War: New Light on the Struggle for South Africa*** – Kane-Berman and the SA Institute for Race Relations had been no friend of the NP Government).

What did the ANC's "Green Book" consist of, and where did it originate from? The so-called "Green Book" was in fact the proposals for a new strategy that the ANC's Politico-Military Strategy Commission in 1979 had proposed to the movement's NEC, which formally adopted it in August of that year.

When the ANC/SACP initially embarked on its "armed struggle" in the early 1960's its strategic vision was that of waging a typical guerilla war against the government forces. This can be seen in the operational plans for Operation Mayibuye captured by the SAP-SB during the Rivonia raid (it essentially consisted of a plan to land groups of trained, armed guerillas along the coast to instigate a guerilla war, in the style of Castro's earlier seaborne invasion of Cuba, for example). This strategy, and its associated sabotage campaign, had all come to naught. (The SAP-SB under General van den Bergh had been able, by the late sixties, to nip literally all ANC armed actions in the bud, and it stayed at nil-level till the second half of the seventies).

What had also contributed largely to the ANC/SACP's realisation at the end of the seventies that a thorough re-think about strategy was needed, was that competing black political formations such as the (non-communist) Black Consciousness Movement had been surging to the fore after the Savannah debacle in Angola and the 1976 Soweto youth unrest. Similarly, the anti-communist Inkatha movement had emerged strongly among the crucially important Zulu population – meaning that the ANC/SACP required a strategy not only for defeating the white government, but also for defeating these competitors in the over-all contest for political power. Therefore, the ANC/SACP knew by the end of the seventies that it was sorely in need of a new strategy.

The USSR then stepped in and recommended to the ANC/SACP that they visit Vietnam (where the communist forces had earlier defeated first France and then the USA) to learn from them what kind of strategy the Vietnamese communists had followed to win political power against such seemingly formidable odds.

The Vietnamese had followed a strategy of "people's war".

This is how Mills & Van der Merwe describe what the ANC/SACP had learnt in Vietnam, among others from the legendary General Võ Nguyên Giáp himself (in Brenthurst Discussion Paper 14/2018): *"The Green Book enabled greater co-ordination of the ANC's political efforts, including the creation of a 'popular front' in the form of the United Democratic Movement, the strengthening of a propaganda wing, and the importance of international diplomatic efforts. Another key lesson was that the Vietnam War was 'won' in Washington, and not just in the*

*trenches. General William Westmoreland, the local US commander, referred to it as 'the first war in history lost in the columns of the New York Times.' Vietnam taught that, if the ANC was to succeed in overthrowing the Apartheid regime, it would have to gather a broad front of international support, increase media coverage and rally local youths to build a political movement that could outlast the then South African Defence Force. The armed struggle would have to become 'secondary' to armed propaganda… "The strategic impact of the ANC's 1978 mission to Vietnam on the course of ANC and South African history cannot be overstated. It is said to have been a watershed between an exclusively militant (and likely unsuccessful) ANC, and a multi-racial, unified ANC. At the very least, it signifies the start of the 'People's War', the point at which the ANC went beyond the armed struggle of the 1960s and 1970s in undertaking a more strategic, organised political effort. The ANC's visit to Vietnam represented what Howard Barrell terms a 'Damascus moment' for Slovo and others in terms of their understanding that the armed struggle could not in itself 'regenerate' the political agenda, and that the latter needed to take precedence."*

The two main components of waging a "people's war" are a **political action programme** (centred around **organisation** and **propaganda**), complemented by a **programme of violence** (but with the latter subordinate to and supportive of the political action programme). Thus, waging a "people's war" is nothing like engaging in a conventional war, because it principally is focused on creating **organisational ability** to "mobilise the masses". This is achieved firstly through **conscientizing** the suffering masses about their lot, then **polarising** them against a perceived enemy deemed responsible for their unacceptable condition, followed by **converting** them to your revolutionary cause (presented as best route to the betterment of their situation), and lastly **consolidating** and **activating** them to participate in mass action designed to debilitate the enemy and win you political power.

Complimentary to organisation, **propaganda** forms the other leg of your political action campaign – propaganda designed precisely to conscientize, polarize, convert, consolidate, and activate, but which also serves to stigmatize and isolate the enemy and break down his will and ability to resist. In this regard all forms of propaganda are used, but especially "**atrocity propaganda**" (where the enemy is set up for public outrage) and "**armed propaganda**", with the latter tying in to and guiding your parallel **programme of violence**, which is designed to promote your own **"strong-man" image**, also to show that **there will not be peace** unless you are given the political power that you demand, as well as to **entrap the enemy into over-reaction** that can serve as fodder for your "atrocity propaganda", and – in final analysis – to **intimidate and physically eliminate opposition** you may encounter among your target group for mass mobilisation.

The "people's war" doctrine as applied by the ANC/SACP during the Transition was not something conceived entirely originally by the Vietnamese. It had its roots in earlier Marxist methods (Giáp had been a committed Marxist theorist from his youth). This is evidenced by the similarities between the ANC/SACP's "people's war" and the communist modus operandi during the Spanish Civil War. Elements such as kangaroo "people's courts" and the use of "denunciations" by informers to mete out exemplary "justice" against "enemies of the people" ("collaborators") in particularly violent manner (designed to eliminate potential opposition leaders and to shock, intimidate, and dissuade the masses) were key components of the communist methodology in Madrid as well. These perpetrators of violence, there and in South Africa, were always styled as engaged in defence of the people ("*junta de defensa*" and, in South Africa, the ANC/SACP's notorious so-called "self-defence units", the SDU's).

The "enemy within" to be defended against was always abstract – the "collaborators". In Spain, they were called the "*quinta columna*" or "fifth column". In South Africa, the "Third Force" (with third being chosen because the ANC/SACP wanted there to be only two recognised forces in the negotiation process, namely themselves and the government).

It is important to understand that these programmes of political action, propaganda, and targeted violence were directed at gaining control over the initially mostly uncommitted masses – on the one hand there was a known and easily identifiable **outside** enemy (in Vietnam, the South Vietnamese government forces and their overseas allies such as the USA, and in Spain the forces of General Franco and their allies, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy). On the other hand, there were the **inside** enemies hiding among and infecting the masses, namely the "collaborators" in cahoots with the "outside enemy".

If we now look back at what the ANC/SACP had identified as the main threat facing them at the start of the Transition (that the government would form, DTA-style, an alliance with the IFP and like-minded traditionalist parties), one can see how effectively Mr Mandela had used the Third Force propaganda to neutralise this, leveraging the sympathy that the he and the ANC enjoyed in the English-language media. Anthea Jefferey wrote: "*The third-force claim that De Klerk and Buthelezi were using violence to derail the transition was thus a neat subversion of the truth – for if any organisation was intent on marrying violence and negotiations for its own political advantage it was the ANC… In the course of the people's war, whenever the UDF or ANC role in violence was becoming too obvious to conceal, the movement's response was always to blame the NP Government and/or its surrogates... This is what the ANC repeatedly did in the early 1990s, when it used the 'Third Force' accusation against the NP Government and the IFP to distract attention from Umkhonto's role in the killing of some 15 000 black civilians, many of whom had links to either BC or Inkatha*".

By means of effective "Third Force" propaganda Mandela effectively deprived FW de Klerk of the interventionist use of the statutory forces under his command, and also prevented that the NP could form political alliances. Because the De Klerk government was rightly sensitive about its international image and wanted to distance itself from the PW Botha era and its over-abundant use of violent special operations, it could not be seen to be using the security forces to advance its interests and had to accede to the establishment of the Transitional Executive Council (TEC) which would co-exercise executive control over the forces.

Secondly, the "Third Force" propaganda ensured that the NP could not be seen to be associated with what was portrayed as a blood-thirsty, reactionary Inkatha. (The unfortunate reality is that special operations of the previous era, such as the SADF's Operation Marion to arm and train Inkatha, now could be conveniently presented as convincing "proof" that the white government was "still up to its old tricks" of pitting black-against-black, which was lapped up and amplified by the anti-NP media which under no circumstances wanted to see Afrikaner political influence survive the transition – especially not for it to play a major part in an anti-ANC new government based on an alliance of parties united in their support of a group-based model).

The ANC/SACP's intense "Third Force" propaganda blaming Inkatha and the government for the violence which they themselves in most part had been instigating and perpetrating, was convincingly presented by the charismatic Mr Mandela. It was swallowed whole and then splash-regurgitated by the liberal media, who had accorded Mandela near saintly status, thus amplifying the impact of the propaganda locally and abroad. The "Third Force" propaganda served two further purposes: preventing the NP from forming what the ANC/SACP had feared most, namely a DTA-style alliance coalescing around group rights, plus turning black sentiment against the NP Government as the supposed devious instigator of the black-on-black violence that caused so much death, destruction and fear in townships in key metropolitan areas.

In setting up Prince Buthelezi and the IFP as blood-thirsty "collaborators" and thus as enemies of the oppressed black masses, the ANC/SACP was very effectively tarnishing its main opposition at the future ballot box, aligning the non-Zulu population against Inkatha. In this the ANC/SACP was aided by deep-seated historic fears about Zulu militarism and domination among other black African ethnic groups. I well remember the results of a "social distance study" done back at the end of the seventies, when I was still with the analytical division of the BfSS focusing on anthropology and constitutional matters. What that kind of study measures, is how close (or distant) one societal group feels themselves to be from other groups. It was striking to see in those study results the abiding fear of the traditionalist Zulu deeply ingrained among all other tribes. Evidently, the other South African "power tribe" were the amaBula (the Boere/Afrikaners), so that the ANC/SACP could play into those fears by playing up the dangers that an alliance of the AmaZulu and amaBula would hold for the rest…

Lastly, the Third Force propaganda was an insurance policy for the ANC/SACP, in case that they should lose – in such an event they could then claim (based on the government's supposed covert instigation of the violence serving as "proof" of deliberate manipulation of the democratic process) that the elections were not free and fair, that the NP Government could not be trusted with overseeing elections, and that new elections should thus take place under international supervision, as had taken place in SWA/Namibia.

The notion that FW de Klerk was deviously directing a Third Force to undermine the democratic process is not supported by fact, as attested to by renown scholars who never had been supportive of the NP Government such as Anthea Jefferey of the SAIRR and Erik Melander of Uppsala University. The latter wrote an article: "*The Limits of Manipulation Theory: The Apartheid Third Force and the ANC-Inkatha Conflict in South Africa"* which was published in 2002 in *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy 8(4):1-1* in which he rejected the allegation that the violent conflict between the ANC/SACP and IFP was the consequence of the then government manipulating the situation via a shadowy Third Force. Justice Richard Goldstone (of the Goldstone Commission, set up to investigate the violence) also was categorical in stating that he had found no evidence that President FW de Klerk was in any way involved with Third Force activity.

Even the TRC could find no reliable evidence that such a third force was behind the black-on-black violence that had marked the Transition. Instead, it wrote in Volume Two of its report:

*"389. Over the next two years, violence escalated as the ANC came into conflict with newly-established IFP branches on the East Rand. The simmering violence in KwaZulu and Natal intensified. Violent conflict also erupted between ANC and PAC members, between supporters of the liberation movements and members of homeland parties such as the African Democratic Movement (ADM) in Ciskei and members of vigilante groups and gangs, some of which were aligned to the IFP.*

*"390. The ANC SDUs played an increasingly dominant role during this period, having been trained and armed by MK members. In practice, MK had little real control over the SDUs, although a number of ANC leaders applied for amnesty, giving details of their involvement in the establishment and training of SDUs. In addition, a large number of 'ordinary' ANC members applied for amnesty for acts carried out in the course of their SDU membership in accordance with the policies of local ANC leaders".*

In Chapter Seven of Volume Two of its report, headed: *Political Violence in the Era of Negotiations and Transition, 1990-1994* the TRC went on to state:

*"506. While negotiations had always formed part of ANC strategy, for most members of the ANC and other liberation movements, this simply meant negotiation for the transfer of power. When negotiation assumed a completely different form, winning at the polls became inextricably linked with the often violent contest for support and power at a local level. The existence of Operation Vula, which became public with the detentions of Mr Mac Maharaj and others, the continued training of MK members in foreign countries, and above all the arming of SDUs reinforced perceptions that continued offensive strategies were a legitimate part of the ANC negotiation strategy, notwithstanding the public position of the ANC. … In this context, the establishment of SDUs – although created to protect communities against attack in the face of a complete lack of confidence in the security forces – inevitably led to wide-scale abuse and, in many instances, operated not just defensively but offensively as well. This, as has been suggested, was exacerbated by the lack of clear lines of control and accountability. Further, SDU members were given very little training, either military or political. This made it almost inevitable that the effect of arming such groups would lead to violence – particularly in areas that had already experienced violent conflict. In many respects, the training of SDU members was little different from the training of special constables in the 1980s, with similar consequences. While the IFP was clearly the main target of such offensive actions, the period also saw an increasing incidence of attacks on particularly black policemen. This in turn resulted in increased polarisation and reinforced security force perceptions that they continued to be engaged in a war.*

*"507. A further factor in understanding the violence of the 1990s is the extent to which covert action, the existence of large amounts of secret funds and a climate of unaccountability led to an increasingly criminalised set of networks between members and ex-members of the security forces. In such cases, considerable financial interests were clearly furthered by a destabilised political situation. There is considerable evidence of ex- and serving security force members engaged in, for example, gunrunning, as well as a range of other criminal activities. To some degree, the same pattern of criminalisation and involvement in gunrunning is evident on the liberation movement side. Thus, for example, the Commission received amnesty applications from members of APLA's 'Repo Unit' who applied for what appear to be largely criminal acts, as well as applications from SDU members involved in criminal activity. Such activity was partly a way of arming SDUs or APLA units, but there is evidence*

*to suggest that, in some areas, criminal elements took over or got involved in SDUs. It is also clear that some impoverished disillusioned ex-guerrillas became involved in criminal networks.*

*"508. Finally, the intensity and pace of the negotiations and the transition also resulted in rapidly shifting alliances between political parties  such as the IFP and the NP and later between the IFP and various right-wing groups. This made lines of command and accountability difficult to discern and identify".*

Padraig O'Malley wrote (recorded in the Nelson Mandela Foundation's O'Malley Archives):

*"The TRC did find that the ANC had to shoulder part of the responsibility for the violence insofar as it had "contributed to a spiral of violence in the country through the creation and arming of SDUs" local paramilitary Self -Defence Units that were supposed to protect the communities ANC supporters came from. …* ***The TRC reported in 1998 that it "did not make significant progress in uncovering the forces behind the violence in the 1990s. It found little evidence of a formally constituted third force, of a structure acting under the direction of the SADF or the SAP or their satellite agencies …***

*"Goldstone himself is categorical; nothing his commission investigated implicated De Klerk in any way in the violence that took place in the 1990s; in this regard De Klerk had a clean slate...*

*"Supporters of the IFP were quick to follow the lead of the ANC and formed Self Protection Units (SPUs) on the pretext of protecting their communities from onslaughts from ANC cadres. Once again, weapons proliferated in IFP strongholds, with consequences similar to those in ANC controlled communities. The violence took its heaviest toll in KwaZulu/Natal where the war between supporters of the ANC and the IFP, which had erupted in1983 when the UDF began to "invade" IFP areas the IFP regarded as being part of its territory. More South Africans  almost 14,000 were killed in South Africa during the four and a half years following the release of Mandela in February 1990 and his inauguration as President of South Africa in May 1994 than had been killed in the previous 42 years of the Apartheid".*

Given the TRC's known pro-ANC bias, and considering the facts which they themselves had reported on (as attested to also by independent scholars), it is clear that the ANC/SACP had purposely and very effectively used their people's war doctrine as blueprint for targeted violence and propaganda with which to prevent an alliance being formed between their most important foes and to mobilise the masses in their favour, doing so not only through positive messaging but also through fear resulting from brutal intimidation. Fanning the violence and then blaming it on the NP Government through a massive propaganda campaign which fell on receptive media ears and for which the Government had no effective counter, resulted in a lessening of trust in the Government among blacks and a tarnishing of its international image, which made it impossible for the NP to be publicly allied with the IFP.

### 13.7.4 SUMMATION – WHAT HAD ENABLED THE ANC TO ACQUIRE ALL POWER, LEAVING THE NP WITH NONE?

As the preceding chapters had shown, there were a variety of converging reasons why the ANC had ended up in 1996 holding all of the political power that the NP had exercised for nearly five decades, leaving the latter bereft of any – which then soon enough led to its demise.

Some of these reasons stemmed from immutable determinants present in the environment within which the power struggle had played out – principal among which, was South Afra's ethno-demographic reality. Another was what former American National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brezinski had referred to as the inexorable "locomotive of time" (i.e., the world-wide abhorrence of racism and the collapse of white colonial rule after the 2nd World War). A third critically important environmental determinant was the English-language media's antagonism towards the NP Government. The tipping factor that shifted the international geostrategic equation in the ANC's favour was the collapse of the USSR, and with it the end of the West's former fear of the ANC serving as Trojan Horse that would allow the Soviets to take control of strategically important South Africa.

Other factors related to the ANC itself were also important – more so than most, the fact that the ANC had possessed in Nelson Mandela a leader of exceptional political acumen, charisma, and sheer presence of personality. His formidable yet likeable persona and leadership abilities completely overshadowed that of the NP's standard-bearer, FW de Klerk (precisely as the intelligence community had predicted a decade earlier, in the KIK-meeting which I recounted earlier).

The last set of determinants are related to the errors of successive NP Governments, that in the end boomeranged upon them with a vengeance. Most of all, in my humble opinion, the underlying tendency of "*baasskap*" (showing who's the boss) which after years of British oppression and fear born from their minority demographic reality had become almost the default attitude psychologically of the "Super Afrikaners". This led to them, after 1948, alienating practically everyone around them – often with the appearance of deliberately doing so, in the process of demonstrating who's the boss (and its corollary: "we won't be dictated to" – even when it concerned not dictate but well-intentioned advice). Thus, were alienated the English-speaking white elites (and their powerful media and academia), plus the "Coloureds" and Indians (with hurtful "petty Apartheid" measures), and the Black majority (with "Grand Apartheid" or separate development). Under PW Botha, this included alienating even the NP Government's most important international protectors at the time, most notably the USA and UK. All of this resulted in the NP Government finding itself standing alone at the negotiation table.

A further error of great significance was that De Klerk's predecessors had failed to read the writing on the wall in timely manner, thereby letting slip by opportunities that had earlier existed (before the window had significantly closed with the fall of the Portuguese Empire, and then definitively was shuttered by the fall of the Berlin Wall) to have perhaps negotiated better terms under those more propitious earlier circumstances.

What is nowadays most often alleged is that the outcome of the negotiations was supposedly due to the ANC having had better, tougher, more wily negotiators than the eventual NP negotiation team under Roelf Meyer. The scoreboard does not, however, attest to this – on the contrary, a strong case can be made out that the ANC in the end had, on the substance, made greater concessions (i.e., had moved further away from their original ideological positions) than the NP Government in the end had. Which is demonstrably true, if one considers that the ANC had for decades fought to install a Marxist people's republic, but had to accept a Western-style neoliberal democracy based on capitalist principles.

There is, however, a very clear distinction that has to be drawn between the substance of the new dispensation as it exists on paper, and the reality of who had in the process of the transition acquired total actual control over the levers of state power – undeniably, Mr Mandela's ANC. The ANC winning this contest for political power hands-down was not due to them having been better negotiators. The key reason for this – which is also the key lesson to be taken from this eBook with a view to the future – is that it was due to the indisputable superiority of the ANC/SACP as **STRATEGISTS**.

The history of Southern Africa, especially that of the decades of Afrikaner/British conflict, had demonstrated that the Afrikaners had always tended to be good tacticians and therefore had won more than their fair share of battles, but were weak at strategic planning. This tendency had persisted throughout the NP's reign from 1948 on. When De Klerk had come to power, he had continued to preside over what was still a completely dysfunctional system of strategy formulation and had thus gone into the transition without the necessary analytical and theoretical base for negotiating optimally. Consequently, he had chosen the wrong strategic approach from the very outset (i.e., adversarial instead of cooperative). Furthermore, the policies and objectives initially chosen were unrealistic and unachievable, leading to inevitable, highly debilitating about-turns and concessions which seriously weakened confidence among the populace.

Because the NP under De Klerk had failed to properly set up the negotiations in terms both of strategy (approach and objectives) and the procedural side of the process, they ended up being faced with a binary barter: <u>peace</u> in exchange for <u>power</u>.

# 13.8 DESPITE ITS HICCUPS THE TRANSITION ENDED RATHER WELL – BUT WITH RED FLAGS

Despite every “criticism” levelled above about how things perhaps could have been done somewhat better, when viewed holistically the transition was indeed successful. Especially if measured in terms of immediate consequences as felt on the ground (thanks in no small measure to the herculean efforts and professionalism of the then Security Forces). And yes, as the NIS officer mentioned earlier had predicted to the staffers of the Secretariat of the State Security Council, it did in fact lead to the Springboks playing the All Blacks again – and beating them, in the finals of the Rugby World Cup of 1995.

The charm and wisdom of President Nelson Mandela fostered positive sentiments across the length and breadth of the “rainbow nation” and indeed across the globe. The economy picked up significantly, the “old” civil service and security forces served the new government diligently, pensions were preserved, as well as careers (for those who had opted to stay on). Reconciliation was in the air. The New South Africa definitely wasn’t a Marxist “people’s republic”, having instead a decidedly neoliberal, free market Western-style constitution with model protections for individual rights. For a short while at least, the NP held a half-dozen cabinet positions in the GNU, with FW de Klerk as one of the two deputy presidents.

What had not been resolved by the new constitutional dispensation, is what would happen when the decades-old division within the ANC (between its “moderates” and its “radicals”) would again emerge, over the question of their “National Democratic Revolution” (NDR). Both groups had, during the transition, been united in their shared desire to unseat the NP Government and attain power. However, the “radicals” (committed to “radical economic transformation”) had seen the transition process as merely the first step in their typical two-phased Marxist revolutionary model – i.e., the phase of getting rid of the prior holder of political power. The radicals were still entirely dedicated to implementing phase two, being their full-blown NDR, intended to result in an essentially Africanist version of a communist state (the “moderates” for their part, had mostly just been paying lip service to this ideal of an NDR).

It is common knowledge that the ANC’s internal division has indeed emerged again – first at their Polokwane elective conference in December of 2007, where President Thabo Mbeki was unseated in favour of Jacob Zuma, and again in 2023, when Zuma’s MK party broke away.

The question that only time will answer (probably around the scheduled 2029 general election) is what will happen if, under the present constitution with its massive centralisation of power at the national level and the absence of any real physical protection capability devolved down to regional and local levels, an alliance of radical forces such as the MK Party and the EFF (together with the ANC’s own radical wing) should win a majority in parliament, thus allowing them to nominate the president and form the cabinet – or if a repeat should occur of the 2021 Zuma riots (or some worse form of state collapse, such as a coup or inter-tribal political conflict).

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# CHAPTER 14.

# WHAT OWN PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE TAUGHT ME: DIFFERENT RACES CAN WORK TOGETHER

## 14.1 AFRICA'S DECOLONISATION BROUGHT AN APPRECIATION OF THE VALUE-ADDING ABILITY OF PERSONS WITH "WHITE" CHARACTERISTICS

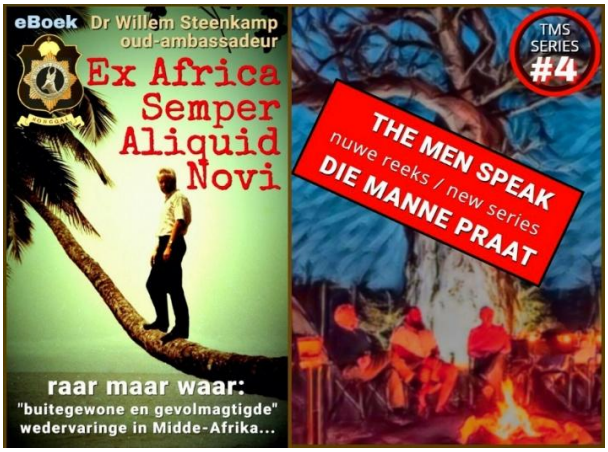
It is common knowledge that Africa's rapid decolonisation was accompanied by much turmoil and hardship for the populations essentially left to fend for themselves. This was mostly due to the haste with which the erstwhile European imperial powers had abandoned their former colonies, without having beforehand invested time, effort, and money to prepare the indigenous peoples for the challenges of governing a modern state – especially states that were entirely artificially created with boundaries taking no heed of ethno-demographic reality on the ground, meaning that each of these new states were inherently primed for tribal conflict over who should control the levers of power.

When, in many instances, the white settlers (and, in East Africa, Indians) who had been involved in the business sector and agriculture left or were driven out, the necessary expertise and capital required for continuing the colonial plantation-type economies and raw resource extraction ceased to be available, nor could state income cover the cost of infrastructure maintenance. Which left most of the common folk (who under colonial rule had certainly been exploited and denied a say in their own governance, but who under white rule had at least been regularly paid and cared for as an essential labour resource) were left destitute. In many countries they were forced back into foraging, fishing, and hunting to supplement meagre subsistence farming or desperate township dwelling – which soon enough caused their new standard of living, as well as the quality of services delivered to them (if any at all) to contrast starkly with what they had been accustomed to under even the harsh colonial rule.

This was severely exacerbated by the misrule, corruption, incompetence, and wilful neglect on the part of their self-centred new leaders, who had mostly come to power by means of coups and ruled through fear often brutally maintained by force of arms – for the common man and woman, therefore a dispensation as undemocratic as the colonial regimes had been, and far more economically destructive and harsh than white rule had been.

I witnessed this during my travels through that vast region of West-Central Africa that had formed my jurisdiction as ambassador, from Chad on the edge of the Sahara in the North, to tropical Central Africa in the East (up to the Sudanese border), and including the island states of the Gulf of Guinea such as Sao Tome and Principe, and the lands bordering that so-called "armpit of Africa" such as Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon. I will cite here just a couple of examples to prove my case (if you are interested in the trials and tribulations that made up my wonderful adventure as the New South Africa's first ambassador to previously hostile Black Africa, you can read for free my eBook about those often quite humoristic experiences, by clicking on this link:

**Ex Africa Semper Aliquid Novi**



Those Guinea islands with their rich volcanic soil and abundant rainfall had been major exporters of high-quality coffee and cacao before "independence", with Fernando Po (now Bioko) then enjoying a higher standard of living, higher per capita income, and more doctors per head of the population than mainland Spain. When I first visited there, just 25 years after they had gained independence from Spain in 1968, the country was literally in ruins with the once lush palm oil, cacao, and coffee plantations destroyed by neglect. Being taken to visit one of those palm plantations by officials of their Foreign Service, we encountered a weatherbeaten grandma sitting at the entrance to the once majestic lane that had led up to the former estate mansion. When the official chaperoning me asked her what she would like the South African ambassador to do to aid them, she looked with unconcealed distaste at the guy (obviously with no liking for the new ruling class) and turned to me with a brief but heartfelt request: "*Just bring us some white men*".

What had happened is that the common person's perceptions had been fundamentally changed by the hardships that had accompanied the change of regime, so that whites were no longer seen by them as threatening – as supremacist, exploitative foreign oppressors – but were being viewed as necessary catalysts for better service delivery, better living conditions and economic prospects, and more just rule with less corruption and arbitrariness.

At the other end of the scale of experiences to my meeting with that grandmother, but not less outspokenly clear, was what I was witness to in the presidential palace in Libreville in Gabon – when President Omar Bongo (then doyen of Francophone African heads of state) very explicitly counselled future SA president Thabo Mbeki that South Africa's whites must be regarded as the country's greatest asset.

I will now relate in more detail, this appreciation for what whites can contribute to the common good – on condition of not acting like supremacists that politically threaten, but as indispensable patriotic partners seeking – and able – to catalyse the advancement of all. What I'm referring to is what I had experienced in microcosm in Franschhoek (after my ambassadorial term had ended and I had moved back to lawyering), as well as during my post-retirement sojourn in Central America. With lessons (for white and non-white South Africans alike) that I believe to be fundamental to the future well-being of those who understand that all who call South Africa home are by Destiny's dictate inextricably intertwined, meaning that finding ways to cooperate is the only possible foundation for peace and prosperity.

Most important being the lesson which I can personally attest to, namely that IT CAN BE DONE. This truth I've myself experienced in practice (not theory), in Central Africa, Franschhoek, and Central America.

## 14.2 PUTTING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP INTO PRACTICE: "FRANSCHHOEK INC."

In this section I will briefly touch on my life experiences as gained after my years as ambassador. The first part consisted of a decade of again practicing as an attorney, founding and heading my own law firm in Franschhoek, during which time (1997-2007) I also served in various elected capacities as community leader there, as well as entrepreneur. In Franschhoek I saw concrete proof of the potential for the New South Africa to actually work – on condition that everyone pull together and cooperate across ideological, racial, and language lines. I could convince the local community to set aside politics and instead forge ahead together as "Franschhoek Incorporated", applying practical business realism about how the real world actually works ("it's the money that buys the whisky"). Adopting this approach, we could develop the potential of that beautiful valley to everyone's shared benefit.

It was therefore with great sadness that, in 2007, I suddenly was forced to say good-bye to that bountiful but allergy-prone valley, obliged by an unexpected, gravely serious health situation. I had been prone to respiratory allergies from childhood and in the process of treating that, my pulmonologist in Stellenbosch did an EKG which led to the discovery that my coronary arteries were more than 90% blocked up by arteriosclerosis, resulting in an emergency 5-fold heart bypass being performed. Because suffering respiratory and heart problems together constitute a very perilous combination, I was immediately advised by my doctors to bid Franschhoek farewell because of the impact on my lungs of the dry air, crop-spraying, and Karroo dust blown in over the mountains (my lung condition has since deteriorated – as I sit and type this, I have a cannula up my nose, tubing in supplemental oxygen which I now need on a permanent basis).

What I was told to seek, is warm, humid tropical air.

One may think that my subsequent sojourn in tropical Central America since 2007 could hardly hold any lessons relevant to South Africa's challenges, but in fact there have been some eye-opening revelations. Particularly about race relations and the role of the respective churches in ensuring that the Latin American reality regarding race is quite different from that which one sees in former British colonies… What this region has also shown me, is the true recipe allowing for tiny white minorities to continue to flourish, participate in (and most often lead) in government, and contribute to the common good way beyond the proportion of their numbers. That recipe is not centred on quotas, vetoes, or own territorial enclaves, but on the fact that they have demonstrated the value of their expertise and integrity, for which they are appreciated (and elected) by the vast non-white majority in country after country across the region…

Again, as with describing earlier my time in Libreville, Gabon, I will keep this section brief and to the point – relating only that which has a clear bearing on my understanding of why and how South Africa went from where it was to where it is today (and how it can best continue towards the bright future all its inhabitants deserve).

### 14.2.1 FRANSCHHOEK: FROM MODEL APARTHEID *DORP* TO SA'S TOP PROPERTY HOTSPOT

Most readers will be familiar with Franschhoek's special place in Afrikaner founding mythology, as the valley where the French Huguenots (refugees from religious persecution) were settled in the late 17th century. Thus, the name: the French Corner. Because of its symbolic importance the town had been rigorously de-segregated after the NP came to power in 1948 (despite the fact that its DRC congregation had actually been one of the last holdouts against church segregation at the end of the previous century).

The removal of all persons of colour from "white" Franschhoek was rigorously enforced under the Group Areas Act (they had owned a substantial number of valuable properties in the "white" town, with their churches and school also located there). Furthermore, the then NP Government dictated that no black Africans could live there (also based on historical myth, because ever since the first whites settled in the Valley, there had in fact already existed such a Black African presence, albeit small).

The manner in which all this was enforced had caused the Valley's community to become highly politically polarised and conflicted during the eighties and first half of the nineties. Regular protest marches, often violent, roiled the main road. Court interdicts were obtained against the last white municipal council's efforts to stack the deck before change came (the council had, for instance, tried to quickly transfer title to the municipality's hugely valuable Commonage land below the Franschhoek Pass to a neighbouring white farmer, to try and avoid that people of colour be settled there under the anticipated new non-racial municipal council).

My children had started attending school in Franschhoek already more than a year before my own permanent return to the Valley in March 1997 – this we had done so that my twins (the oldest of my three) could do their last two years of schooling and write their matric exams there. I had, of course, very regularly visited them (one of the perks of my Libreville "hardship post" had been paid travel privileges every six weeks). Therefore, I had over time been very much aware of the deep polarisation that had existed in Franschhoek – nevertheless, I remained firmly convinced that, with the right approach and the Valley's enormous potential, things could be turned around.

Shortly after I had settled in and launched my own new law practice there in 1997, my friend and neighbour (a long-standing Broederbond member) had asked me if I would be willing to address their local chapter on the security situation in the country and where I saw things headed. He knew, of course, that I was not and had never been a Broeder, but he also knew of my background in intelligence and my former position as ambassador. He also knew my father, because I had built a nice free-standing "granny flat" for my parents next to our house (which had its own entrance, adjacent to that of the forementioned neighbour's) and my folks spent much of the year with us in Franschhoek.

I accepted the invitation because I believed that a large part of the problems that I could see in the Valley and in the then NP (such as when the party congress had, the year before, decided not to continue in the GNU) was due

to the Afrikaner public in general lacking reliable information about what was really happening in the country, and why.

What I emphasised that evening was that it was crucial to understand that the governing tripartite alliance of the ANC, the SACP, and COSATU had been united only because of the transition, because of their shared ambition to oust the old system and obtain power for themselves. Furthermore, that the governing alliance was being held together (and held on a then reconciliatory course), mostly thanks to the leadership and standing of Mr Mandela, supported by Thabo Mbeki. However, the ANC's apparent unity of purpose did not mean that the moderates like Mandela and Mbeki would forever be in the ascendency, because the deep historical internal divisions between the ANC's moderates and the radicals stretching back to the 1950's had never really been settled.

The radicals had only gone along with the moderates during the transition in order to, together, overthrow the former white-dominated dispensation. To them the transition had been simply the first phase of their classical two-phased Marxist revolution (as had been seen in Russia, in Cuba and the like – where a broader alliance first unseats the former power in phase one, and the hardliners then subsequently take over from the moderates through a second revolution).

I warned that the ANC's radicals were still as dedicated as ever to fully implementing their National Democratic Revolution the moment they could gain enough of an upper hand within the ANC so that they can sideline the moderates and dictate policy.

Furthermore, that the way that the new governing alliance would swing (between the moderates and radicals) would largely be determined by the extent to which the moderates would be able to meet the expectations of the masses for real, tangible advances in their socio-economic situation. If the moderates could not concretely deliver such real benefits, then the radicals would inevitably gain support. It was therefore in the vital interests of the Afrikaners and whites in general (who had the most to lose from the radicals taking over) that moderates such as Mr Mandela and Thabo Mbeki be actively assisted to deliver – not as a bleeding-heart act of contrition for supposed past wrongs, but as pure, practical, enlightened self-interest.

What I knew from my intelligence days and from what I had seen in Africa, is that the new government on its own could not be expected to possess sufficient expertise or experience to enable it to deliver to the masses, to the extent needed. The only people who had that kind of experience, expertise, and also the necessary means, were us – the whites. It was, therefore, imperative that we not remain standing on the sidelines, but that we pro-actively get stuck in where it matters – in the scrum – and throw our weight in behind the moderates. This needed to be done visibly – thus physically, in own person.

Which was the reason why I, for one, had decided to publicly take a stand backing the Mandela "rainbow nation" way, and for Mr Mbeki to succeed him. Not just me piously prattling this in cosy conversation with friends around the braai fires or at elite wine tasting events, but to actually step up and publicly join the local ANC branch. Because it is only there where one could work effectively, on the inside, to persuade the comrades of the direction we should be headed in – not by means of mere words, but by deed: actually showing them what can be achieved, to the benefit of the community, if we take hands and work together. Which is how I became the secretary of the Franschhoek branch of Mr Mandela's ANC, as well as a regional executive member – a public stance that could very well have killed my nascent law practice among the local whites (on which it evidently depended for financial success), if they had not trusted my judgement and integrity.

I believe that my situation there in the Valley was somewhat unique – there I was, former BfSS/NIS intelligence officer, son of a former SAP-SB commanding general: now secretary of the local ANC and regional structure member, whilst at the same time being the elected chair of the local Rapportryers (the Afrikaans cultural organisation, to which position my forementioned neighbour had nominated me), plus chair of the local Chamber of Business/Sakekamer, as well as heading the Community Policing Forum and the Neighbourhood Watch…

You may ask – what did my dad think of my decision to join the moderates in the ANC? I am pleased to say that he fully supported my reasoning.

The first big, practical test for this approach of mine was resolving the serious conflict over housing and land claims that I had mentioned earlier. Many landowners in the “white” town sat stymied, unable to sell their properties, because of land claims interdicts that had been registered against their property titles by restitution claimants of colour. At the other end of the spectrum, more than a thousand non-white families were living under horrible conditions in a squatter camp that had grown up right next to the main entrance road to Franschhoek – the disturbing unsightliness of which was harming the tourist potential of the Valley.

Providing these unfortunate people with proper housing and clearing up the squatter settlement was, therefore, of the highest priority. Furthermore, the town’s infrastructure was seriously in need of upgrade, particularly regarding potable water, electricity distribution and the like. And something needed to be urgently done about our small-town council’s very limited rates base, to ensure future financial sustainability in the face of the pressing and ever-growing needs of the community.

My suggestion to all concerned was that we start an inclusive process of community-wide consultation, with every single organised group (not just the political ones – down to the local needlework club, for example), all agreeing to participate. The purpose was to draw up an inventory of all of the physical needs of all sides in the community, plus then – on the other side of the ledger, so to speak – an inventory of all of the community’s physical assets that could be monetised in order to meet these needs. Because, as I fortunately could convince them all: it was in the end a question of MONEY.

We all needed to get REAL.

If we wanted to truly address all of our community’s many needs, then we had to go beyond ideology and view ourselves as “Franschhoek Incorporated”.

Like a business enterprise, we would need to monetise our communal assets to best advantage, to raise the capital with which to meet the expenditure that would be required for us to be able to make good all that was lacking. Because nobody was going to simply gift us money, however worthy our cause may be, and it was not advisable to increase existing rates either.

This inclusive process of brainstorming created a new spirit, with cooperation replacing confrontation.

Mutual trust was nurtured, and with it a new mind-set emerged that was cognisant of the hard practical realities of the real world.

It also birthed a new mind-set infused with optimism, as people came to understand the potential that could be unlocked. Because we adopted a strict policy of: SHOW, don’t just TELL.

I could get every single entity in the Valley (even the forementioned sewing circle and the book-club) to sign up to the ground-breaking **Franschhoek Social Accord** which I drafted – a comprehensive strategic plan for meeting all of the broader community’s identified needs, from housing to infrastructure to getting title interdicts lifted for white property owners. We first of all focused on delivering concretely to the most disadvantaged, the squatters, by providing them with quality housing – this we undertook to deliver BEFORE any of the needs of the rest of the community would be attended to.

Thus, concretely SHOWING, not merely telling.

With my diplomatic background and connections, I could get the French Government to agree to extend to our municipality a very substantial soft loan (via the Development Bank of SA) with which to purchase an ideally located farm on which to build a new suburb (“Mooiwater”) to which to re-locate the squatters and others on the housing waiting list.

What had happened was that the then French President Chirac was preparing to come to South Africa in June 1998 on an important state visit. I knew from own experience how embassy preparations for this kind of visit typically works (that it would have the French consul-general in Cape Town casting around for worthwhile photo

opportunities through which to show-case his president to the local and the Frech media, especially for the sake of attractive publicity back home in France). I also already enjoyed friendly relations with the said consul because of me back then being still part of the local Cape Town diplomatic circuit (the title ambassador enjoys a “for life” status, so that I was still regularly invited to diplomatic do’s, especially by the French because of my knowledge of their country and language).

So, I contacted the consul, reminded him of the significance of the Social Accord project and the historic ties of France to the Franschhoek Valley, and suggested that if France would make a soft loan available to our municipality, then we could arrange a splendidly photogenic signing ceremony for such an agreement at the Huguenot Museum in Franschhoek.

Which is exactly how the initially required millions soon enough landed in the municipality’s coffers…

Obviously, the actual build-out of a new suburb of some 1,117 decent starter houses (not RDP boxes) plus all the infrastructure to the highest “white” borough standards (with all cabling for example placed underground and endowed with broad tarred roads) required much more than just that loan. That town lay-out and those modular houses (designed for easy expansion) were contributed by the best private sector town planers and architects in the region, allowing the ex-squatter recipients a choice between different models, designed and prepped to allow for easy extension even into double storeys. These houses, together with full legal title to them, were to be delivered entirely free to those homeless families in the squatter camp and on the housing waiting list, giving them each a real stake in the free-market system.



The squatter camp would be dismantled, and the terrain which they formerly occupied be rehabilitated and re-purposed. The homeless had to sign an agreement to transfer ownership of their erstwhile shacks’ construction materials to the municipality, in exchange for receiving title to their new homes (so that those old tin sheets, for example, could not be used to simply put up new shacks).

Furthermore, each new homeowner had to sign acceptance of formal title deed conditions that, if they were found guilty of promoting illegal squatting or of drug offences on their properties, they would lose title to it.

What we had set out to do was not mere charity, but a deliberate attempt to start integrating these disadvantaged people into the capitalist system by giving them legal title to a valuable asset of their own, so that they had a stake to defend as members of a society of responsible citizens.

How could we do the financing, without any additional financial burden being placed on the local ratepayers?

By means of an innovative scheme of cross-subsidisation, monetising other municipal assets to best advantage and enticing the private sector to build those free houses and infrastructure (i.e., not the snail-paced public sector) as *quid-pro-quo* for allowing them to develop lucrative land they were keen to bring to market.

The main means for funding all of this, was to be the monetisation of that self-same, formerly much-contested vacant municipal commonage land of 100+ hectares below the Franschhoek Pass. I explained to the previously disadvantaged community that any idea of developing low-cost housing on that steep land would be financial suicide, because of the very high cost of providing services there, far away and up against the slopes of Middagkrans.

However, it would be precisely the kind of land that would appeal to high-end buyers because of its seclusion and superb views, and the rich would of course not be bothered about the high cost of installing services. Therefore, the logical business-like thing to do would be to sell the commonage to developers and allow for it to be developed as a high-end wine estate (today the *Fransche Hoek Estate*), rated as one of the top such places in the country, with individual units selling for in excess of R85M - see:

**YouTube Top Ten most expensive Estates in SA**

The proceeds of that land sale could then cross-subsidise the housing development on the better-located farm Mooiwater, where the new low-cost housing project of 1,117 units was indeed rolled out speedily and affordably by the private sector partners salivating to get going on their high-end developments.

Using the commonage for a high-end wine estate development could also cross-subsidise and help accomplish a number of other things to the benefit of the community at large, without any additional cost to the ratepayers – it established an ongoing additional income source for the municipality in the form of rates on the new super high-value properties being built there, that would every year contribute significantly to the rates base. Furthermore, a segment of that high-value land was retained separately, earmarked for the land claimants in compensation for the valuable mid-town erven their forebears had lost. Being adjacent to the high-end development and part of the erstwhile “white” town itself, the land claimants were not only compensated in terms of equal value, but also for the psychological trauma of having been deemed unfit to live in a “white” area…

As part of this holistic package deal, the land claimants in exchange formally waived all claims against the formerly expropriated properties later acquired by white owners – which allowed for all of the interdicts to be promptly cancelled.

Such a monetisation of municipal land assets could, additionally, address the Valley’s other pressing infrastructure and developmental needs, again without cost to the ratepayers:

- providing a large, modern new municipal water purification plant and large new storage reservoir for the Valley;
- removing entirely, and then rehabilitating the town’s old rubbish dump;
- rehabilitating the former municipal sewerage ponds;
- funding the upgrade of the electricity distribution network and the sewerage network in the “old” town; and, last but not least
- help fund on an ongoing basis, into perpetuity, the municipality’s Mont Rochelle Nature Reserve as well as an empowerment trust created specifically for the benefit of the rural segment of the Valley’s previously disadvantaged population (funded through a levy on title transfers flowing from each subsequent on-sale of properties on the wine estate), whilst that new high-end wine estate’s vineyard and wine-making operation was handed to that development trust for the previously-disadvantaged to operate for profit, to give them a free initial foothold in this important agricultural sector (which otherwise would have required a prohibitive initial investment for any of them to be able to enter into the wine-making industry).

All of this could be achieved thanks to the Franschhoek Social Accord, based on the insight arrived at by all in the Valley that cooperation is much more productive than conflict.

Franschhoek is home to some of the country's most affluent, capable, and caring entrepreneurs, so that we decided among us to ourselves go ahead and set up a local privately-owned property development company to undertake the development of the erstwhile Commonage as the "Fransche Hoek Estate". The shareholders of this company were nicely varied, but all with strong commitment to Franschhoek.

One of the first locals that joined was John Samuel, then the chief executive of the Nelson Mandela Foundation up in Johannesburg, but whose home was actually two houses away from mine in Franschhoek (just the other side of my Broederbonder neighbour). John then introduced me to his friend Dr Franklin Sonn, who had been the New South Africa's first ambassador to Washington.

When we first met face-to-face, Franklin's lead-in question to me was whether I knew who he was. In my dealings with ANC members, I had always followed a policy of not shying away from my own past (instead, showing my unabashed pride in it). So, I said to him equally bluntly: "Yes, I know you from way back, and far better than you can probably imagine – I read all the transcripts of your sometimes quite interesting private phone conversations, when I was head of the "Coloured Affairs" section at the old BfSS".

Which broke the ice and set us off on a good footing, enhanced by him learning that I had also been ambassador for the New South Africa, with a letter of credence signed by President Mandela…

What I had found with my ANC colleagues is that we, the actual "combatants" who had faced off on the two sides of the conflict, afterwards got along very well (as has typically been the case among those who had actually fought each other, throughout history and around the world, in the aftermaths of wars). What they abhorred as much as I did, were the former fence-sitters who were now suddenly trying to cosy up to them with mealy-mouthed tales of how they had always surreptitiously been against Apartheid...

Again, to keep this short, the Sonns, the Samuels, and the Steenkamps became friends, for example holidaying together in the Kalahari and joining in week-end excursions. Franklin and his wife Joan, plus my wife and I, cruised the Med together most enjoyably, and at another time went on an extended study trip to France. He was at my side in the majority of our most important negotiations to put funding together for what was to be a development project requiring hundreds of millions of Rands in investment (I had been appointed by my partners as the managing shareholder/CEO of the new development company).

If you think the friendship that grew between the two staunch struggle stalwarts Sonn & Samuel and myself as proud NIS alumnus and son of an SAP-SB commanding general was weird, I need to share with you at this point another amazing coincidence that the vagaries of chance in the New South Africa had thrown my parents' way, at more or less the same time. When his beloved garden at their old house had become too big for my father to handle any more, they had bought a very nice town house in a gated complex in Pretoria. These were single-storey garden units, designed in adjoining pairs that shared the same access path, with the two front doors effectively sitting side-by-side and the two units then mirroring each other. As is regularly the case with this kind of "old folks" complexes, there was a significant turn-over, so that their neighbouring unit soon enough went on the market.

Who would buy it, to become neighbours to the retired SAP-SB general?

None other than a couple who had been amongst his oldest adversaries, going back to the Durban days during the sixties…

Ronnie Kasrils and his wife!

(Earlier in the series I had mentioned an episode which Kasrils recounted in his book, about how his wife had appealed to then Major Frans Steenkamp about the treatment she had been receiving from other officers during an SAP-SB interrogation about the whereabouts of Kasrils, who had been much sought by the Security Police already then during the ANC's 1960s sabotage campaign, because of his involvement in the SACP and that MK bombing campaign).

The two sets of neighbours became good friends, with my mother and Mrs Kasrils especially close (my father, unfortunately, had passed away not very long after fate had brought them all together).

But back now to Franschhoek – the Social Accord initiative had elicited strong support from both the provincial and national governments. The Western Cape's WESGRO showcased us at the likes of the tourism indaba in Durban, and the national government had nominated us to represent the country at the annual MIPIM international property development expo held every year in Cannes, France (where we even received UN recognition for the innovative concept of cross-subsidising low cost-housing via high-end development).

Our formula for having the low-cost housing designed and built by the private sector (instead of by the municipality itself) meant that tiny Franschhoek could in record time deliver an entire new suburb with modern infrastructure and more than a thousand proper houses, whilst during the same time span the Cape Town municipality managed to build no more than three hundred RDP houses for their homeless population…

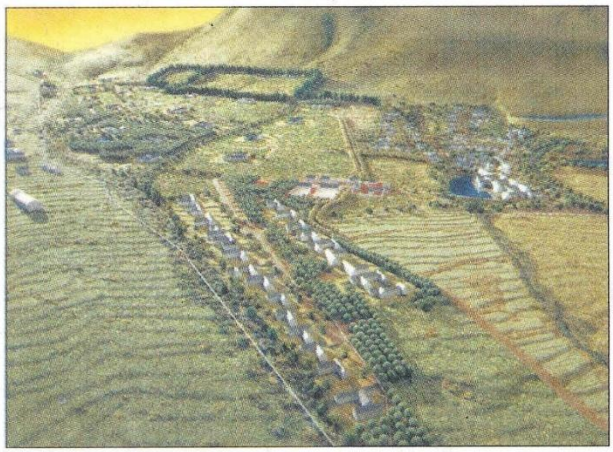
Our "locally sourced" development company could put together the necessary shareholder capital with which to purchase the 100+ hectare Commonage from the municipality. We could recruit important partners into our ranks, such as the V&A Waterfront Company, who I could entice into becoming a shareholder because they wanted to show that they cared about their hinterland as well. Some half-a-dozen of the Valley's leading millionaires also bought shares.

The usually very difficult environmental impact assessment for this very large project also passed off without a hitch, and – remarkably for such a huge project – **without a single objection** being lodged (thanks to the prior sign-off by the entire community on the concept as agreed in the Social Accord). In fact, the *Enviropaedia* magazine invited me to write for them a guest article about how socially and environmentally responsible land development projects should be conceived and managed. Media coverage was also hugely positive, as can be seen in this example.

# Flavour of the month

Business Day Homefront 15/04/2005

*Franschhoek is putting its apartheid past behind it and becoming a model of political compromise and sustainable development, writes* ***ANNA-MARIE SMITH***



A COMMUNITY that was previously split into "white" and "coloured" municipalities, Franschhoek is taking on a new face following the adoption of a ground-breaking Social Accord in 1998.

When the local community opted for co-operation rather than confrontation, this translated into a private-public-community partnership that is starting to bear fruit.

Among the priorities of the accord was the provision of housing for the disadvantaged community, which had also been excluded from agriculture and tourism, the mainstays of the local economy. This was achieved by optimising the village's communally-owned assets in such a way that it was possible to subsidise the building of housing, as well as uplift the environmental and poor community in sustainable manner.

Fortunately, among Franschhoek's wealth of agricultural land and privately owned sites suitable for commercial or residential development lay a neglected piece of municipal commonage covering 102ha. The property had previously been used as a sewerage farm, rubbish dump, sand mining area and rifle range, and was overgrown with alien vegetation.

The Franschhoek Empowerment and Development Initiative has enjoyed powerful support from investors, many of whom have roots in the Franschhoek area and therefore had good reason to want the accord to succeed. As a result, no commercial borrowing has been necessary.

Willem Steenkamp, CEO of development company Frandevco, says: "The backing that the project has enjoyed from leading private sector groups indicates a realisation in business circles that empowerment and conservation make good business sense."

Transfer of the commonage land took place in December 2001, followed by the clearing of alien vegetation and the start of the first phase of 1 000 low-cost housing units. Extensive employment opportunities were created in co-operation with the "Work for Water" programme as well as 4 400 jobs in the construction phase, plus 750 permanent positions.

One of the striking features of the commonage development is the "co-habitation" which is envisaged between wealth and upliftment. A typical example is the 90ha wine and olive estate developed by affluent investors who have chosen to make their homes in tranquil rural surroundings but who do not want to participate in the farming process. As a result, the farming venture will be co-owned as a business operation by the previously disadvantaged local community, who will gain direct access to the agricultural wealth of the region.

The project consists of several components, the first being a 90ha wine and olive estate which will be divided into 19 residential erven of 4 400m² in a typical Boland ambience. Further illustrating economic viability through employment opportunities will be the co-ownership between the local community and investors of the 15ha culture and eco-tourism incubator node to be developed in barnyard style. This project is being established on a section of land bordering the main road below the Franschhoek pass and between the village and the Mont Rochelle nature reserve. It will consist of a luxury hotel, vinotherapy spa, conference and exhibition centre, art gallery, craft centre and the SA National Food and Wine Museum.

Included in this area is "The Village", a 41-unit residential country-lane village with a typical Southern French ambience to be developed adjacent to the business node, where stands measure between 450m² and 2 200m².

Residents will not only enjoy natural fynbos and mountainous surroundings, but also have access to the luxury hotel, shops and a wide variety of eateries within walking distance from their homes. Steenkamp says residents will also have access to the first Vinotherapy Spa in SA, boasting the famous Caudelie products, the ultimate in beauty therapy.

Completing the Franschhoek Estate project will be Riverside Lane, an urban residential development along the banks of the La Cotte stream situated above the town's tennis courts. Riverside Lane was divided into 14 plots of between 1 000m² and 2 700m², all of which were sold within two weeks. The architectural style of building will reflect the traditional Cape winelands atmosphere, with an emphasis on Franschhoek's rich historical heritage and fine Victorian building style.

In brief, each and every one of those societal needs initially identified by the community in the many brainstorming sessions we had held before deciding together on a strategy, were thus met through this ground-breaking public/private/community cooperative effort. Simply because the Franschhoek community had set aside petty politics and adopted a real-world, business-like approach. Tapping into the "can-do" ability of the private sector, with the public sector facilitating rather than itself trying to implement, and with the community determining the parameters and supporting the execution of its holistic package of plans, rather than allowing special interests to obstruct progress.

Apart from first of all building out and delivering the acclaimed Mooiwater low-cost housing project and the clearing up of the erstwhile squatter camp, the land claims interdicts were lifted, prime land was set aside for the claimants, the old municipal dump-site and sewerage farm were rehabilitated, a new water purification plant and reservoir were built, and the electricity grid was upgraded – all at no additional cost to the local ratepayers. In fact, the town's rates base was hugely enlarged with the addition of the high-value housing developments.

In a very short space of time, Franschhoek had gone from a highly conflicted model Apartheid *dorpie* to the culinary capital of South Africa, one of its top tourist destinations and the pinnacle of residential property investment in the country (on the South African version of the Monopoly board game, the highest value properties are indicated as Clifton and Franschhoek).

What this experience taught me, was the enormous potential of the New South Africa, despite my concerns about the constitutional model that had been adopted not being completely perfect. The Franschhoek success re-enforced my belief in the need to always be practical and to deal with reality as it is, not as one would ideally wish it to have been (the constitution is what it is – so, we simply have to deal with it till some opportunity hopefully one day arises to improve it). What was also confirmed, was that people are more interested in and influenced by actual, concrete outcomes than by high-sounding verbal outpourings. They are convinced by tangible results – by <u>show</u>, not tell. Achieving such real results depend on common sense and cooperation, and on understanding that it is MONEY that makes the real world go round, not political prattle.

A particular lesson I learnt about our highly centralised new constitutional model was how harmful it was to have done away with small local municipalities such as that which Franschhoek before had successfully been since 1881 (such municipalities were, in terms of the new constitution, incorporated into larger municipalities). Franschhoek willy-nilly became part of Stellenbosch, with its residents' wishes to remain autonomous simply overruled. From that moment on, our progress in all matters municipal was dramatically slowed down and we became subject to enormous bureaucratic *schlep*, being governed by a council and administration in which our Valley is represented by only two ward seats, with the rest not much interested in our lot nor deeply knowledgeable about us (apart from being very interested in our money, of course).

Now obviously I comprehended the need for a more just spreading around of ratepayers' money, but financial justice and autonomous governance are two quite distinct matters. That goal of ensuring equitable allocation of ratepayer funds across an area forming an integrated economic whole (such as the Franschhoek, Stellenbosch and Paarl valleys) could have been achieved by other, much better targeted means, without taking away local administrative autonomy (what clearly had needed to be stopped was the Apartheid-era notion of two separate municipalities, one for "white" Franschhoek" and another for "Coloured" Groendal functioning side-by-side in the same valley, where obviously the erstwhile "non-white" municipal area had been merely a dormitory with no real own rates base whilst its residents – with their labour and purchases – had evidently contributed significantly to the "white" town's economy; however, simply lumping the Franschhoek Valley in with Stellenbosch had been to throw the baby out with the bathwater…).

That experience of having to drive the more than 60km roundtrip over Helshoogte Pass on almost a daily basis to go and convince councillors and bureaucrats sitting in Stellenbosch about our needs (wasting enormous amounts of time in the process, not only in driving but in bureaucratic schlep, compared to how fast we were able to move in Franschhoek prior to the year 2000 elections under the new municipal dispensation) had more than convinced me that one of the greatest errors to be found in the new constitutional model was its over-centralisation of power,

instead of purposely devolving it to the lowest practical level (in order for government to be as close to the people it serves as possible).

But let me not gripe about what could or should have been. Fact is that we could, as community, in partnership mode place Franschhoek on the road to success, because we realised that the vital interests that we shared far outweigh the petty politics that historically divided us. And, I'm please to say, the Franschhoek example today isn't unique in South Africa. There are now quite a few examples of such "bottom up", community driven civic partnership initiatives.

A case in point (one that touches me deeply on a personal level) is the northeastern Free State town of Frankfort in the Mafube Municipality. A local lawyer there, Tienie de Jager, was my residence floormate back during our Bloemfontein varsity days, and I later went on to do my articles as a law clerk with his firm, M.P. de Jager & Partners. So, I know Frankfort quite well (as explained at the start of this eBook).

Tienie and I had stayed in touch over the years, and a while ago we were discussing the desperate situation that had arisen in Frankfort. The town's primary economic anchor and main employer, NCD/Clover Dairy, was about to shut down permanently, in truth because the dysfunctional local municipality was incapable of delivering basic services such as electricity and clean water (exactly what had caused the closure of their Lichtenburg operation as well). Tienie had balanced this sad tale with some very good news – that locals from all backgrounds were beginning to tackle the challenge themselves, in partnership across colour lines. He for example told me that out-of-work, desperate black townsfolk had approached him through contact at church level with a profoundly moving, pragmatic proposition: they were entirely willing to get stuck into the physical maintenance of the town's decaying roads and parks, provided that the white residents, business owners, and farmers could supply the necessary tools and food. I sent Tienie a copy of our Franschhoek Social Accord as further ammunition for him to use to show that they were on the right track – proof of what a community can achieve through non-political, bottom-up civic cooperation rather than adversarial politicking.

Frankfort's leap of faith across historical divides has since evolved into another remarkable example of small-town private-public civic governance cooperation in South Africa: the Frankfort Solar and Rural Maintenance model. To insulate themselves from systemic municipal failure, the local community, agricultural stakeholders, and business leaders locked the Mafube Municipality into a 25-year management contract with a private engineering firm, Rural Maintenance. The private entity took over the local grid, successfully engineered catastrophic electricity line losses down from 50% to a mere 5.5%, and injected over R131 million of private capital to upgrade the substations. By late 2021, partnering with local businesses and farmers, they commissioned a 4.26-megawatt private solar network. When the town began "voiding" national load-shedding—successfully keeping their own lights on via sunshine without drawing a single watt from the national utility during peak hours - the state monopoly (Eskom) and a politically compromised local council actively tried to sabotage them on legal technicalities.

But the community did not retreat. Led by the multi-racial Mafube Business Forum, the townsfolk launched a relentless counter-offensive in the judiciary. The Free State High Court ultimately delivered a landmark Full Bench ruling, issuing an interdict that legally bound the municipal and provincial authorities to cooperate with organized civic structures, fix the administrative collapse, and regularly report their progress back to the Bench. It was a stunning confirmation of shared interest and an entire community adopting business-like common sense in partnership triumphing over state decay.

This cooperative partnering approach at local community level across historical divides is replicating itself across the South African landscape, proving that the Franschhoek experience was not a localised fluke, but an early pointer to what I believe should become a macro-behavioural shift. In the North West province, ordinary residents across all demographic lines formed the Kgetlengrivier Concerned Citizens after the local municipality abandoned its water treatment works. They bypassed politics, secured a High Court order, and physically took over the running of the water and sewage plants themselves, swiftly restoring clean utility services to Koster and Swartruggens. In Senekal, following intense, externally manufactured racial polarization after a horrific farm murder in 2020, local township leader Sabata Tsotsotso and Pastor John Mathuhle stepped into the vacuum to form the non-political Senekal-Matwabeng Community Forum. White farmers brought heavy machinery and township volunteers

brought the physical labour, jointly bypassing the state to repair collapsing infrastructure and rebuild their shared public spaces.

We see the exact same non-political, shared-interest models saving local commerce in secondary hubs like Kroonstad, where business leaders and agricultural stakeholders united under the "Ignite & Revive" initiative and a localized Christian Business Chamber, actively pooling private capital and technical expertise to bypass municipal ICT and administrative logjams to repair broken sewage networks.

From the Cederberg to Knysna, and from the industrial hubs of Harrismith to the adjacent township of Intabazwe, the old "laager mentality" of building higher walls and retreating into private bubbles is dying out because it cannot survive total utility collapse. It is being replaced by resilient, non-political civic commons. Communities are realizing that the most potent, disruptive form of civic expression is no longer the traditional service delivery protest of burning tires, but rather service delivery *execution* – quietly fixing the grid, the water, and the roads themselves, and using the courts where necessary to legally hold to account the incompetent state structures that stand in their way. With each segment of the community contributing that which they best can: blacks their numbers, whether to persuade or get the work done, and the whites typically their professional skills, capital, and equipment – which then serves to concretely demonstrate the value they add, to the common good.

The core challenge faced by whites and the Afrikaner in particular, was to change how non-whites perceived of them: from threat to asset, from exploiters to facilitators of shared wealth, from convinced racial supremacists to respectful, appreciative fellow team members…

But back now to my own personal experience, and an explanation of why my health obliged me to bid farewell to my beloved Franschhoek.

My burning of the candle at both ends (running my burgeoning law practice, as well as the property development company) and then burning it in the middle as well with my many community commitments, in the end probably contributed in large measure to me ending up on the cardiac surgeon's operating table at the tender age of 53.

As earlier mentioned, I had suffered from respiratory allergies from childhood, which had become progressively worse in Franschhoek, due to the Karroo dust blowing in over the mountains and the frequent crop-spraying in the confined valley. When that EKG done in early 2007 led to the discovery that – in addition to my respiratory problems – my coronary arteries had become 90% blocked due to arteriosclerosis, an emergency five-fold heart bypass was performed on me by members of the famous Cape Town heart team.

Lung problems and heart problems are in themselves already big enough health challenges. Together, they can be fatal. My doctors therefore advised me that I should urgently relocate to more humid, dust-free climes.

This unfortunate personal health challenge coincided in 2007 with another of my predictions sadly being confirmed – namely, that the divisions within the ANC would re-emerge, with the radicals unseating Thabo Mbeki and the moderate faction. Having been in such close proximity, I had seen well ahead what was coming in the ANC. Whilst I was willing to stand with Mandela and Mbeki, I certainly wasn't willing to be associated with the radical faction pushing Zuma as president and the corruption with which they stood associated.

As optimistic as I had been (and still remain) about what the New South Africa could potentially achieve under the right leadership and with the right cooperative approach, my experience as ambassador in Africa had left me in no doubt about how bad things could quickly turn under the wrong leadership – consequences that I did not wish my children's future to be determined by.

I had years before started developing a future retirement property in Panama where I intended to spend part of the year when the Cape becomes cold and wet. It's a nice place where to pursue my passions such as diving and deep-see fishing, and also an ideal base for connecting by air with my children and touring the world, as well as being effectively tax-free, with the US dollar as currency.

So that – when my doctors advised that I urgently needed to get out of the Franschhoek Valley and move to a place where the air's clean, warm, and moist – I very fortunately already had a holiday home waiting for me in just such a place…

## 14.3 WHAT CENTRAL AMERICA TAUGHT ME ABOUT RACE, CHURCH & COMMUNITY

Anyone who's somewhat familiar with other parts of our world that had also experienced European colonisation will have noticed that the lands where British colonists had settled in substantial numbers to this day stand out for still struggling with their legacy of institutionalised racism – whether it be the USA, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, or South Africa.

Whilst it is certainly true that European conquerors of all nationalities (and their descendants) in their personal attitudes displayed a marked sense of superiority over indigenous peoples, who certainly were discriminated against and often horribly exploited, in most territories in the Americas under Spanish rule, for example, there didn't exist the institutionalised and ingrained separation of the races. In fact, the Spanish crown encouraged integration of the local nobility, also through marriage, and "mixed marriages" in general at all levels of society were so commonplace as to actually become the norm over time – giving birth to new nations who were speaking Castilian (i.e., Spanish) but who identified with local culture and identity.

In this the Catholic Church had played a central role. Thanks in no small part to what is referred to as the miracle of Guadalupe – the alleged appearance of Mary (the mother of Jesus), to an Amerindian peasant with the Hispanicised name of Juan Diego, shortly after the Spanish conquest of Mexico. Without getting myself involved in theology or the pros and cons of different faiths, the proof of the alleged encounter was so overwhelmingly convincing at the time that the Catholic Church immediately took very serious heed of what was Mary's core message to Juan Diego: that all humans are equal children of God, who she wished to be united in their lives and worship, in mutual love (a message which she had instructed Juan Diego to take to the archbishop, replete with incontrovertible proof that indeed convinced the cleric that he was receiving an order from God, via the Virgin Mary).

Traveling in Latin America I've been struck by the place that the Miracle of Guadalupe and its unifying, non-discriminatory message still enjoys among the local population of all hues and descendancy. That unifying message was and still is at the heart of the birth of new nations in which race was not used as an institutionalised basis for the organisation of society (again, without denying that personal prejudice was and often still is present among some).

Given the mixed bloodlines that soon began to predominate here, if the NP Government had come to power in Panama or Guatemala in 1948 and tried to implement a system of race classification, it would have been a practical impossibility to differentiate. Because Central Americans exist across the entire spectrum of pigmentation, from dark coffee to milky white (although "pure whites" today form just a tiny percentage). In Guatemala, for example, the Spanish-speaking so-called Ladinos (of Maya and European origin) constitute some 56% of the population, whilst the indigenous Maya (i.e., still relatively pure and speaking one of the Maya languages as mother tongue) account for 41%, with "pure whites" just 3%.

So, what is the political relevance of this? Unlike in the Anglophone countries, where race is a very definite factor (in the USA, for example, 83% of Blacks voted Democratic in 2024, while only 42% of whites voted for Kamala Harris), race is not an overriding factor in political affiliation in Central America. In fact, it is a historic reality that government after government here tends to be composed almost exclusively of white persons, supplemented by mixed-race Ladinos – this, by democratic choice of the voters, who value education and abilities above skin colour. A few politicians have in the past attempted to form political movements of and for indigenous peoples, but they have been roundly rejected in Central America, in large measure also by the very indigenous people they were trying to recruit to their cause. This is mostly due to Panamanians, Guatemalans and the like having seen the problems with governance that have arisen in South America (in places like Nicaragua, Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador), where race had seeped into political choice.

Of the six Hispanic Central America countries, five are currently led by presidents generally deemed to be of "white" descent, with no indigenous blood. The only exception is Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua, who is of *mestizo* descent and whose dictatorial and economically destructive reign there has only served to reenforce the negative perception about rule by "non-white" presidents like him, or former military dictator of Panama General Manuel Noriega, and Hugo Chavez and Nicolas Maduro of Venezuela.

Guatemala, of which more than four out of five of the population are either of pure Maya descent (about half the total) and the rest with typically some 60% Maya blood, has never had a president who was not of "white" descent. A telling example in the case of Guatemala was the late indigenous rights activist Rigoberta Menchú, darling of the woke international establishment who had awarded her the Nobel Peace Prize; in the two occasions that she ran for president, despite her name recognition, she each time only managed to obtain barely over three per cent of the national vote.

Another prime example of this was the 2024 election in Guatemala, which was won by the most progressive party to have held power in many decades, and which enjoyed overwhelming support from the local Maya population as well. When the new president announced his new cabinet (which he had equally balanced between male and female) there was however only one minister of Maya extraction – a fact which the new president himself in his public address lamented, but then quite openly ascribed to the fact that there simply weren't enough Mayas yet with the requisite experience and education (which was accepted by the indigenous population themselves as a valid argument based on practical reality; he of course promised that a special effort would be made to address the underlying problem).

A further example from this region with relevance to South Africa, relates not to Latin-American societies, but to the Dutch islands in the Caribbean. Unlike all of the former British islands (which had all opted for full independence – with some now insisting on reparations for slavery) the Dutch islands of Curaçao, Aruba, and Sint Maarten all chose local autonomy but still chose to remain as constituent countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, with the Dutch armed forces assuring their defence, for example (the much smaller of the so-called "ABC" islands, Bonaire, is an autonomous Dutch municipality). These islands are today recognised as separate autonomous entities in their own right, but their citizens all have Dutch nationality, and through that, share in all the rights and benefits enjoyed by any other citizens of the European Union.

There are interesting corollaries between the populations of these former Dutch colonies and that of the Old Cape, particularly as regards language – just as the Cape saw the emergence of Afrikaans as new language, so too the island of Curaçao (capital = Willemstad) gave birth to Papiamento, now an official language there alongside Dutch. Because of the island's proximity to Venezuela the other language that Papiamento had borrowed from in its formation is Spanish. As happened with Afrikaans, the grammar of Papiamento became much more simplified than that of Dutch. Anyone with knowledge of Afrikaans will be able to read Papiamento, especially if you have a smattering of Spanish as well.

As was the case in the old Cape (where no colour bar had existed under the VOC and then Batavian Republic administrations) there was no restriction on mixed marriages in these islands either. At the Cape the church was in charge of the legalities around births, marriage and deaths and it married anyone irrespective of colour, subject to two conditions only: firstly, that they be Christian, and secondly – if the prospective wife was a slave, as often happened – that she first be manumitted, i.e., legally freed, so that both partners would be of equal legal status and enjoying freedom of choice when they each accepted to enter into matrimony.

More than four out of five inhabitants of Curaçao have Afro-Caribbean blood, so that the fact that they opted to remain a part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands is significant confirmation that the same racial animosity towards the former coloniser as we see in the Anglophone islands, does not exist in the islands forming the Netherlands Antilles.

My reason for pointing out these facts is not to slander the British or to suggest that white folks somehow enjoy a God-given right to be given precedence when cabinets are formed. Why I'm pointing out the difference that we now still see between the Anglo colonial heritage and that of other ex-imperialist powers when it comes to present-

day societal harmony, is to underscore that the root cause of disharmony can be found in systems of legally institutionalised racial differentiation and discrimination, especially where these are reenforced by church segregation, as the British colonies were known for.

On the other hand (and whatever one may think of a particular faith), where the church hierarchy had stood firmly for the recognition of the brotherhood of man as all children of the same God, then race had far less chance of poisoning society.

Which is not to say that these now preponderantly mixed-race Central American countries don't celebrate and give legal effect to their richly diverse cultural heritage. Dr Verwoerd would have been proud of the degree of autonomous self-rule which is to this day enjoyed by the likes of the Kuna Yala tribal homeland in Panama, for example – where its constitutionally formalised existence is a shared point of pride among Panamanians, not something regarded as abhorrent.

Similarly, the Maya tribes in Guatemala are fiercely protective of their "cantons" where they still rule and where traditional Maya law is to this day applied by indigenous courts – again, a recognition of cultural diversity that is celebrated (ironically, not only by the Maya themselves, but especially so by the world's bleeding-heart liberals who had so vehemently condemned the homelands policy in South Africa…).

So, to cut to the chase: why are white politicians in this part of the world appreciated and entrusted with governing? Not because of their race as such, because race does not play a role here in politics (if it did, then the "non-whites" likely would not vote for a "white"). Not because of their meagre numbers, because as a group they are politically almost statistically insignificant. They are voted for – almost despite their skin colour – because of the attributes as individuals that they have learnt to cultivate: having opted to identify patriotically with and be proudly part of local society, determined to cooperate and make themselves valuable to their fellow countrymen, who have come to trust their integrity and expertise as individuals.

Most noteworthy is that they have succeeded in having the "non-white" population no longer see them as threats (as clearly had been the case during and after the *Conquista*), but now as assets; no longer viewed as white supremacist exploiters but as valuable, nay essential facilitators in the creation of national wealth and opportunities for all.

What is needed isn't an approach based on airy-fairy woke idealism, but on cold, hard realism. Understanding firstly the realities of the environment that Destiny had chosen for you: what you can conceivably change about it, and what not (and thus have to accept and make the best of). Understanding that human beings are fundamentally driven by their perception of what best serves their own interests, within a hierarchy of priorities led by first by fear (thus the imperative to unite against and counter perceived threats), and only then by greed (who and what would help make my lot better).

So, being coldly realistic about whiteys of every nationality and how we are actually perceived the world over, let me bluntly state the truth that I had encountered in the course of my meanderings across the globe (admittedly to my own initial puzzlement, because we are such nice guys, aren't we?).

The general attitude on the part of non-whites towards whites tends to be dualistic, meaning to say that it is two things at one and the same time. The brutal truth I have learnt is that, generally, whites are not loved – on the contrary (formerly colonised peoples have still not forgotten the imperial domination and have not yet forgiven our very much still present subconscious tendency to project a sense of superiority – or otherwise, even more despised feigned humility). Not loved, and not admired either, because of the hypocrisy that still often marks Western political interaction with the rest of the world.

One can for example see this in the anti-Western reaction of the third world to the Ukraine-Russia conflict, where they sympathise with the Russians and blame NATO for its hypocrisy.

So, if we are not loved nor admired, what is the other part of the dualistic attitude that I've referred to above? It is objective recognition of the value we are capable of adding, which is driven – often begrudgingly, but nevertheless

powerfully – by their understanding of their own self-interest on the part of non-white populations. People tend to have two sets of reactions – emotional and rational. At the latter level, driven by their comprehension of own self-interest, they appreciate the reality of what whites are capable of contributing (and conversely, are well aware of how poorly things often tend to go without white involvement). One can, for example, see this in the kind of school that affluent Black South Africans tend to send their kids to.

It is, furthermore, not much different from how the Irish, Scots, or Afrikaners generally feel at the emotional level about the English, or even the English and West European elites for their part about the U.S.A. and its tendency towards domination. No-one likes to be intentionally or unintentionally treated as inferior, but that does not mean that you allow your emotions to override your rational side when you are alone in the voting booth and consider the best future for you and your children. Then most people think rationally about their real self-interest and that of their near and dear, and vote accordingly – on condition that the emotion generated in them by the prepotent tendencies of the white race is merely that of irritation, and not fear, because if whites are perceived as a threat that may deprive and subjugate again (even through manipulative trickery rather than force) then the instinctive reaction will be to close ranks against white "*baasskap*" (supremacy).

Because humans are hard-wired to respond first to threats, defensively, and will only allow themselves the luxury of responding to opportunity for advancement if they do not feel threatened (the old truth often quoted in the context of money management: that human actions are driven by the oscillations between fear and greed).

To sum up: I had my eyes opened by what I experienced in predominantly "non-white" parts of the world, regarding to how whites are generally perceived at the emotional level to this day. To be sincere about it: at the emotional level we are not universally loved, despite what we perceive as our good deeds and intentions. But at the rational level, what we can contribute is nonetheless valued.

The challenge for white minorities is to ensure firstly that they are not perceived as threatening (since their proven expertise and means, plus the historical experience of their capabilities to overcome and subjugate even if vastly outnumbered, do inspire trepidation that's out of proportion to actual white numbers).

There is historic reason for this. In our real-world white heritage, the notion of "might is right" runs deep, despite what our religious and philosophical tenets might preach. The entire legal concept of the "right of conquest" – that in fact it is the strong that shall inherit the earth, no questions asked – has been a pillar of our version of International Law for millennia.

We cannot but see and admit this truth, if we put hand in own bosom – figuratively as well as literally. The latter as evidenced in our white male DNA, specifically our Y-chromosome heritage so overwhelmingly dominated by the Yamnaya haplogroups (the Yamnaya being the fierce horsemen who invaded Europe some five millennia ago from the steppe of today's Ukraine and Russia, in the form of what they themselves called "wolfpacks" of single young men sent forth by their elders to conquer and settle new lands).

These marauding Yamnaya "young wolves" made short shrift of the resident male populations they encountered, practically entirely replacing them so that of those original male bloodlines very little trace remained in European male DNA even just 300 years after the invasion had begun. Having taken the local women (whose original bloodlines are still strongly present in today's European mitochondrial female DNA), these invading conquerors established – over the entire expanse from the Indus Valley to the British Isles – the domination of the Yamnaya-originated language family (that which we today know as the Indo-Europeans). All sharing the same warlike legacy of the unquestioned right of the "law of conquest", where the winner takes all and the weak suffer what they must. This had persisted through the ages as a dominant character trait, evident in everything from the Viking raids to the conquest of the Americas and then the world-wide expansion of European imperialist colonial subjugation across the world.

The downside of the grudging recognition that other groups have for white expertise, material means, and capabilities, is that there is an ever-present concern that these clever, powerful whites may again manipulatively

use their advantage in expertise and capabilities to "take advantage of" the non-whites they engage with, even if seemingly well-intentioned.

The challenge for whites is therefore not only to not be seen as threatening, but also to work to merit and gain the trust of their non-white countrymen. It is not a question of working to be loved, and of debasing yourself to that end. That kind of feigning is easily spotted, creates even more suspicions about true intentions, and is in any case roundly despised. Be yourself, proud of who and what you are, with no apologies, but treating all others as you wish to be treated yourself, i.e., respectfully, and work to be trusted and valued for the contributions you concretely make to the shared good.

Be aware, also, that – just as there is a difference between the rationally and emotionally induced positions people take – there is also the distinction made between the individual and his/her group – on condition that the individual's comportment is meritorious and worthy of respect and appreciation.

Applied to politics, all of this can be illuminated by using rugby as analogy. If you're battling to move the maul forward, what you appreciate is the guy who gets stuck into that struggle with you, throwing in his weight and skill to help push forward. What you ignore as no more than an irritant, is the guy who's against you, standing on the sideline shouting insults and criticising (which, unfortunately, is what being the opposition in the adversarial Westminster system traditionally boils down to).

Talking about rugby – President Nelson Mandela had been a visionary about many things, but what stands out with regard to unlocking the vast potential of the Rainbow Nation is how he presciently identified the ability of rugby to demonstrate what we can be when we pull together. Today, from schoolboy rugby through to the Springboks, there is nothing that better illustrates what we can genuinely be, if and when we cooperate and join forces. Then we are assessed on the merit of what we can contribute, being then a force much greater than the mere sum of our parts.

The best part, though, is to see how rugby success convinces in inter-group and interpersonal terms. To me the shared joy nowadays so evidently demonstrated among the mix of spectators in the stands – their happy unity among diversity – is truly something beautiful to behold (and hugely promising).

Such rallying behind the flag, such teamwork is what the country – our dear shared SA Inc – sorely needs at management level, whether it be municipal, provincial, or national.

Everybody likes to be part of success and values those who help make it possible. Success overcomes past divisions and dislikes. So, if you want to be appreciated on merit, you need to join the team and help make it win. Stop standing superiorly on the sideline shouting criticism. Get stuck in the maul and show what you can and want to do. That way you will be perceived as an essential part of the winning whole, and may even be selected to coach it – and, as bonus, over time perhaps as individual even become liked, in addition to being listened to and respected.

These points I will now elaborate on in the next chapter – my conclusions – which will be the last chapter in this series. It contains my opinions about the why's and wherefores of our South African history, sharing my understanding of what brought us to where we are today. I will therefore be sharing with you my personal and admittedly therefore subjective conclusions – "my truth" in the modern jargon – about the decisive moments in our history. Analysing those "forks in the road" where critical choices were made (or not) and which then resulted either in us scoring "own goals" or unique successes – or merely in muddling along, as most of humanity tends to do...

With, as final half-penny's worth, my musing about the "**what ifs**" that could (and should) have turned out differently, if only better strategic choices had been made by us and our forebears…

Not because we can change anything about 1994, or what went before.

What's done, is done.

But at least we can learn from our past, so that – if new opportunities do arise for attempting to better our current system, and/or where we are increasingly confronted by the need for coalition governments at all levels – we hopefully will not repeat our mistakes. And, even if no such opportunities arise at national level, so that we can learn that it is indeed possible, at local community level, to reach out across historic divides, cooperate in non-political strategic patriotic partnerships (based on business principles and plain common sense) and from the bottom up build back our towns and districts.

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# CHAPTER 15.
# CONLUSIONS: THE "WHAT IF" QUESTIONS OF OUR HISTORY

Whilst one can debate whether European settlement of the Cape was a good or a bad thing in principle, the unchangeable fact of the matter is that it occurred. There's no undoing that (unless someone tries to chase all who now have European blood in their veins – or Asian, for that matter – back into the sea).

That the arrival of Europeans had a huge impact on indigenous Khoi-San peoples is of course undeniable. Especially through the pandemics that resulted from their exposure to European diseases against which they had no natural resistance. And, yes, the land which their tribes had communally possessed was indeed taken over by the new settlers (who then, for the first time, developed it). In the case of the black African pastoralists further afield, the subsequent conquest of their tribal lands was often more violent, through organised military campaigns by the British Army.

The only thing that can be said (from the European perspective) is that, rightly or wrongly, that had been the way of the world back then – if it had not been the Dutch and later the British that had taken possession of the strategic Cape, and then progressively of its hinterland, then some other European imperial power(s) would surely have done so, sooner or later. Also, that the colonial conquest did bring new technology, expertise, and values, whilst also putting an end to inter-tribal warfare – all leading to much enhanced life expectancy and explosive population growth among the non-white peoples.

## 15.1 OUR FIRST "WHAT IF" QUESTION: WHAT IF THE EUROPEANS HAD STAYED AWAY?

Let's now engage in a bit of pure fantasy and ask ourselves **our first "what if" question** (for the value of learning, not because of having lost all sense of reality and pining for the unattainable!). Let's imagine that all of the European colonial powers had somehow stuck with the decision that the Portuguese had taken in 1510, when they resolved not to try and overcome the Cape Khoi in battle again, and rather steer clear of the Cape (in that year the famed Portuguese Viceroy Francisco de Almeida, who had just before conquered the Moslem armada at the historically pivotal battle of Diu and is regarded as the founder of the Portuguese Empire in south-east Asia, met his death at the Cape on his way back to Portugal from the East Indies, when he and his troops were comprehensively defeated by a local Khoi tribe – as described in Part One of this series).

What if no whites had ever colonised Southern Africa? What would the likely current situation then have been? In material terms, there would still likely have been development (the experience of other countries that never suffered European colonisation, such as Thailand and Japan, illustrate this truth). However, looking at the examples of the non-colonised Ethiopia and Liberia on the African continent, local levels of development may not have reached parity with the rest of the world at the level that the Thais and Japanese demonstrate. Material and technological advancement are, however, not so important for our discussion as the question of how the region would likely be politically arranged.

We can of course but speculate, but it is quite likely that it would today consist of a patchwork of tribally defined, geographically delimitated separate kingdoms. Because there is no doubt that the current South African unitary state within its present-day borders, is the product of British colonial conquest, and nothing else.

Will the fact that we've gone against the "natural" order of things at CODESA when we chose to essentially ignore the reality of tribal and ethnic divisions and instead to stick with the artificial earlier colonial construct of a highly centralised unitary state focused just on the protection of individual rights (as important as these are) come back to haunt the sub-continent in later years? Especially as regards the Zulus? Only time will tell…

That said, it is important to note the fundamental difference between the likes of the Zulu Kingdom of yesteryear and the present-day ethno-demographic and geo-economic reality of South Africa. One can rightly ask the theoretical question why the Zulu Kingdom should today be in such a conceptually different situation than that of the Swazis and the Basotho (who each have their own sovereign state, by the quirk of colonial history). But there is little resemblance between the former Zulu nation-state's core attributes and those of other linguistic groups of modern-day South Africa – such as those who speak Afrikaans or English and are of mostly European, or mostly Indian, or mostly mixed origin, or even most of the other Black tribes, who had lived dispersed in small chieftainships and lacked the unified political structure and territory of the Zulu Kingdom.

The Zulus in the 19th century had had their own substantive, clearly-defined territory and culturally homogenous single-nation state – one that, unfortunately, happened to be located along the coast, which made them a target for European conquest, leading to a race that the British happened to win. If though one could argue today that the Zulus historically merit in that locality their own state similar to Lesotho and eSwatini, one cannot then extrapolate from that the Indians, or the "Coloureds", or the "Whites", or the "English", or the "Afrikaans-speakers", or the "Boere" have the same historical merit for also claiming a historic single-nation homeland that since time immemorial had been theirs and theirs alone, like the Zulus may. And what happens to the millions of Zulus who today live far afield from the historical territory of the Zulu Kingdom, forming important populations in the north-eastern Free State, Witwatersrand, and the south-east of the old Transvaal? Or the Xhosa-speakers today forming such an important part of the population (and workforce) of the Western Cape?

That the reality of distinct cultural groups still exist should therefore not be ignored, but neither can it alone dictate how political solutions should be configured to best serve modern-day South African geo-demographic and economic reality…

## 15.2 WAS RACE IMMUTABLY DESTINED TO DOMINATE?

But let's get back to real history. Leaving fantasy behind, we need to deal with the reality that, like it or not, in 1652 the Dutch East-India Company (VOC) had indeed established their re-supply station at the Cape. If we look at the conflicted course of our modern history, then the key question is whether the polarising and hugely hurtful role that institutionalised racism was to come to play had been inevitable, or whether it could have been avoided. Because, as I've demonstrated above regarding Central America and the Caribbean, things in (non-British) colonies had indeed evolved along a somewhat different path…

It is an indisputable fact that, when the VOC established their supply station at the Cape, they were not concerned about race at all. They were focused on making money and couldn't care less about the skin colour of their employees (as I had pointed out in Part One, some of the most significant governors – the Van der Stels – were persons of colour, by the latter-day Apartheid definition). The Cape settlement was somewhat unique, when seen in the global context, in that it was not established by the official state forces of some European crown, but by a commercial company. Which had left the management of what we would nowadays call "Home Affairs" in the hands of the church. Who demonstrably married anyone, irrespective of race, on condition only of being Christian and of equal legal standing (i.e., not a free man marrying a woman legally still enslaved to him).

Yes, it is an obvious truth that there were personal prejudices on the part of many Europeans regarding race. The leading example of which was the Dutch immigrant Adam Tas (who had some good ideas about stamping out corruption among the then officialdom, but some exceedingly virulent ideas about basing the structure of society upon race). Fortunately, at that time Tas had made little headway with the church or among his fellow *Vryburgers* regarding his racial prejudice, with many indeed marrying women of colour (who became the mothers of the Afrikaner people, the matriarchs of some of the best-known "white" Afrikaans families, and the developers – often as wealthy widows – of some of the top estates in the Drakenstein and Franschhoek Valley and other parts of the Old Cape; which is the reason behind the percentage of Asian and African DNA typically found in modern-day Afrikaner genetic make-up).

Very early on in the life of the new settlement the Vryburgers no longer identified with Europe, but with Africa – as exemplified by a then 16-year old Hendrik Biebouw publicly proclaiming in the streets of Stellenbosch in 1707

(only half a century after the founding of the Cape settlement) that he was an Afrikaner, not a European. **This question as to the identity of the "newcomers" at the Cape can be seen as the first historic "fork in the road" choice that they had had to make, and which they then in fact made very correctly – henceforth the Afrikaners would be proudly African. Without having an "Old Blighty" (England) across the waters, to which their hearts belonged. To Afrikaners, "Home" meant South Africa – with no ifs nor buts.**

What had also been highly influential in the forming of Afrikaner political thinking, laying the foundation for their republican and independentist outlook, had been the American Revolution, and subsequently the revolution in France, with French revolutionary armies early in January 1795 invading the Netherlands and allowing the local Patriot Movement to establish the Batavian Republic as sister republic to the French one, based on the same principles of liberty, equality and brotherhood of man.

There had been an intellectually influential French presence at the Cape already from 1781 on, following upon the American Revolution (in which the French had actively participated). The ideas of the Dutch Patriot movement (fed by republican ideals and the liberal worldview of the Enlightenment) inspired many at the Cape – as stated by the Dutch scholar Martijn van der Burg: "…international revolutionary calls for reform, as well as reactionary responses, reverberated at the Cape." (*2015, Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*). Their new sense of identity and their naturally independent, egalitarian, and democratic character also led the nascent Afrikaner people to start seeking self-rule, leading eventually to them breaking away from VOC rule and proclaiming in 1795 the likes of the Republics of Swellendam and Graaff-Reinet (unfortunately nipped in the bud only months later by the first British occupation of the Cape during the early part of the Napoleonic Wars).

After the short-lived first British occupation of the Cape from 1795 - 1802, there followed the even shorter-lived Batavian Republic rule at the Cape (1802 – 1806). Thus, the Cape was no longer under company rule, but part of a thoroughly modern state which was based upon the principles of the French Revolution. In fact, the Batavian Cape as envisaged by the enlightened governor JA de Mist was being structured as **the first non-racial, democratic political entity on the African continent**. Basic freedoms such as freedom of religion had been instated (to the joy of the Malay Moslem population), all adult males who met certain qualifications were accorded the right to vote (irrespective of their skin colour), and slavery as institution was curtailed and actively being phased out by means of ordaining that all children born to slaves would henceforth be deemed born free and that no slaves may be imported to the Cape (as was described in more detail in Part #1 of this series).

The establishment at the Cape in 1802 of this enlightened Batavian Republic administration had brought to an end the rebellions that had kept flaring up among the republicanist Graaf-Reinetters during the first British occupation; in fact, the later Boer republics established in the interior subsequent to the Great Trek, borrowed heavily from the Batavian model and the ideas of the Dutch Patriot movement.

When in 1806 the British invaded the Cape for a second time with a fleet of 61 vessels, they were met on the battlefield at Blauwberg by a combined force of these Afrikaans-speaking *Kapenaars* fighting side-by-side. It was made up of the three main ethnic groups who had been living there side-by-side: a *kommando* of Boer farmer dragoons from the interior, the Hottentot Lichte Infanterie and the Batavian artillery corps consisting of Cape Malay volunteers (the European mercenaries in the small local Batavian standing military contingent had at the very first shot run away). Together these local forces battled the British, with the Hottentot infantry especially distinguishing themselves, holding out long enough for the Batavian commanders to be able to agree reasonable terms of surrender with the overwhelmingly superior regular British forces.

Which brings us to our second "what if" question in this game of historical fantasy politics: **what if the British had not succeeded in conquering the Cape in 1806, and the Batavian model had persisted to this day**? Looking at examples of former Dutch colonies such as those in the Caribbean, it can reasonably be assumed that institutionalised racial discrimination that followed British rule (and then was further codified by later Union governments) would not have become part of a humanist, republican Batavian colonial legacy – even though there would undoubtedly still have been a high level of prejudice among many whites, which is only now diminishing in the modern post-1994 era.

It is unlikely that the Batavian Cape as such would have expanded its official borders eastward beyond the Great Fish River, or northwards beyond the Orange River (even though individual adventurous "trekboere" would likely have continued to explore). Which geographical restraint would most likely have resulted in the Batavian Cape evolving within those borders as a largely culturally homogenous modern-day "volkstaat" consisting of racially-mixed Afrikaans-speakers, which may over time have obtained full local autonomy, and – following the example of the likes of Curaçao, Aruba, and Sint Maarten – may even have opted to be independent countries within the constellation of The Netherlands, but with Dutch nationality and thus all rights enjoyed by European Union citizens today…

However, the harsh reality is that, with the second British conquest of the Cape, came to a premature end the continent's first experiment with an enlightened system of democratic, liberal, non-racial government. Having in 1806 permanently taken control of the Cape, the British forthwith instituted the same race-based system they had introduced in other parts of the world.

For example: before then, the term "Coloured" had not been used at the Cape – the locals had differentiated among the members of different indigenous tribes by their name, such as the Bushmen (San), the Griquas, Khorana, and the like, whilst the mostly Moslem descendants of the Malay elites expelled from the Dutch possessions in the Far East were identified as a distinct group, the Slamse. In the British system (based on skin colour rather than ethnic groups) all these people were lumped together as "Coloureds" simply for having skins that were not pure white and thus "coloured".

And so, just as in the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India and the like, under British rule the determining factor in all of life's activities was henceforth institutionalised racism – just as Adam Tas had earlier unsuccessfully advocated for…

## 15.3 THE SAD CONSEQUENCES OF RACE-BASED BRITISH COLONIAL DOMINATION

It is opportune to deal here with the modern-day attempts to portray the British rule at the Cape (and subsequently in Southern Africa) as having been supposedly much more benign than the Batavian Dutch rule which had preceded it. Even the most cursory of comparative reviews of the lot of indigenous peoples in lands across the world that were conquered by the English will confirm that their subjects suffered a fate statistically far worse than that which typically befell other conquered peoples.

In Scotland, the "Highland Clearance" caused that country to lose some 15% of its population. The "Great Famine" in Ireland caused the Emerald Isle to lose a quarter of its populace. In the case of the two Boer republics, some 50% of their youth under the age of 15 were killed during the 2nd Anglo-Boer War. In Australia, the total decimation of the Aboriginal population in what would today be called ethnic cleansing, is well known. The modern estimate is that there had originally been 6.4 million aboriginals populating what is now Australia before the arrival of the English. This had been reduced to less than 80,000 in the 1929 census.

Before the arrival of the English the estimated Native American population in what is now the USA was up to seven million. In the 1900 census, this had been reduced to just over 248,000…

No-where else on the planet, outside of lands conquered by the English, were these levels of decimation seen. A prime example of such a comparison is the USA and Mexico, which reveals statistical realities that belie the English spin about how horrible the Spanish conquest was (which it indeed was, but no-where near as fatal for the indigenous population as the lot that befell those conquered by the English, on the northern side of the Rio Grande River).

South of the border in Mexico, more than half of the population of that country today identify as Amerindian, with a further 30% having a large proportion (40-60%) of Amerindian blood – thus, in total more than four out of five Mexicans are either Amerindian or largely Amerindian (as is the case also in next-door Guatemala, for example).

In comparison, today only 0.88% of the population of the USA are Amerindian or have Amerindian blood…

In Canada, only 5% of the population today are Native American or have Native American blood (their marginally better survival than in the USA is mainly thanks to the large "reservations" – homelands – for "first peoples" created in the vast northern Arctic territories of Canada on land then of no economic interest to the whites).

### 15.3.1 BLINDLY EXPANDING COLONIALISM'S GEOGRAPHICAL FOOTPRINT ACROSS A SUB-CONTINENT

What the British invasion and military expansion in Southern Africa caused was a large-scale geographical displacement of the indigenous populations. The first of these was the Great Trek of Afrikaners seeking to escape British rule, which caused a domino effect in the interior (amplified by the impact of King Shaka Zulu's rapid expansion outwards from the Zulu heartland north of the Tugela River, which caused some of the neighbouring tribes to flee as far afield as present-day Zimbabwe and Mozambique).

Upon the heels of the Voortrekkers followed a steady British military expansion out of the Cape. There were a number of wars with the Xhosa, pushing the Cape's frontier ever further north and east, each time annexing more of the Xhosa lands through military conquest. The British annexation of the (coastal) Voortrekker republic of Natalia in 1843 caused the Voortrekkers to cross back over the Drakensberg mountains and settle the interior of modern-day South Africa, in turn taking land from the local tribes there. The British then fought a number of bloody wars against the Zulus, till the entire east coast, stretching from the Cape up to the border with Portuguese Mozambique was conquered (with the rise of Germany, the British didn't want any part of the coast not to be under their own rule, lest the Germans step in and annex such "unoccupied" land, as they actually had done in the case of modern-day Tanzania).

Of course, the chain reaction initiated by this unrelenting process of invading and taking over by force the land of black African tribes by the British and the Voortrekkers (or Afrikaners as they later became known), had tragic implications for the sovereignty and economic well-being of these indigenous tribes, who were forcibly deprived of their best land. As the European imperial rush for Africa accelerated this became worse, with the British aiming to establish a continuous empire stretching from Cape to Cairo. The two Boer republics of the Free State and Transvaal interrupted this intended continuity and thus were also annexed in the 1870s, but the Transvaal regained its freedom through defeating the British in 1881 in the 1st Anglo-Boer War. The respite was only temporary, though – with the discovery of first diamonds and then gold, the British again quick enough began setting the table again for the military conquest of the Boer republics, resulting in the 2nd Anglo-Boer War through which London cemented its dominion over all of Southern Africa, except for German South-West Africa. That last domino was to fall during the 1st World War, when the British Empire occupied the territory by means of the Union Defence Force.

Given the geopolitical realities in the world during the 19th century (with the European imperial powers vigorously competing for new colonies in Africa) this history of native lands being conquered probably was unavoidable. If it had not been the British, then highly likely it would have been one or more of the other great powers of that time. Be that as it may – the mere fact of the British military conquest of the whole of the Southern African sub-continent and its subsequent economic exploitation (leading to metropolitan areas popping up and needing labour, which thus drew in large numbers of all tribes) did have profound consequences regarding the geographical shape, ethno-demographic distribution, and nature of the constitution of our modern-day South African state.

What the fact of British conquest also did (as evidenced in other Anglophone areas such as the USA with Jim Crow) was to institutionalise the role of race in shaping the exercise of, plus the contest for political power during the decades of white rule after the establishment of the Union in 1910.

It was British geostrategic interests that explained some of the apparent anomalies we still see today – for example: being then the world's leading maritime power, the coastal tribes were fully annexed as explained above, whilst some tribes in the mountainous or desert-like interior which seemingly held no economic benefit for the British were allowed autonomy outside of the 1910 Union (such as present-day Botswana, Lesotho and eSwatini) even though they were effectively surrounded by the territory of the Union and later Republic of South Africa.

The artificiality of the geopolitical unit formed when the British (after the hugely costly 2nd Anglo-Boer War) wanted to shift some of the burden to the locals by "uniting" them and making them "autonomous" and thus paying for their own administration, is perhaps best illustrated by the highly original name for this new imperial dominion that they came up with: "South Africa". In other words, it was simply a place referenced on the world map as a compass point, but without any connotation to the peoples living there.

What the Union of South Africa certainly wasn't, nor any of the other European colonial possessions further north, was a nation-state in accordance with the typical Westphalian model of one (such as France for the French, or Germany for the Germans, Italy for the Italians, etc.). Yet, when it became opportune in the 1960s for the former colonial powers to rapidly rid themselves of their possessions because of fear of otherwise facing Soviet-backed national liberation struggles, then all of these former imperial colonies in Africa (all haphazardly constituted in a manner similar to South Africa) were overnight all expected to act and govern themselves as if they were indeed model Westphalian entities – and great was the feigned surprise and tut-tutting when that experiment predictably failed, with the continent inevitably falling back on the oldest and most fundamental rule of any political jungle: domination by the strongest group…

Considering these realities and playing now our game of fantasy politics, it is plain to see that the British occupation first of the Cape and then of the rest of the sub-continent, played a determining role as regards the South African state we now live in – if one or more of the other imperial powers had annexed and held different parts of the sub-continent, then today's Republic of South Africa would logically have ended up appearing quite different from its actual shape and current constitutional dispensation. Or – as previously said – if no European powers had ventured here after the Portuguese had been dissuaded by the defeat of their military hero Almeida, then Southern Africa may now have looked a bit like Europe, composed of a patchwork of ethno-cultural indigenous nation-states. Also, if the British had let the Batavian Cape be, then that territory south of the Orange and west of the Great Fish River may quite possibly now have been in effect an Afrikaans-speaking "Volkstaat" – just definitely not a pure white one...

Which explains the philosophy behind what the likes of Hendrik Verwoerd (imperfectly, in terms of practical realities) had wanted to do, with their vision of group-based Separate Development undoing the colonial conquest. Such are the vagaries of chance in the course of human history…

# 15.4 A KEY FORK IN THE ROAD: HOW AFRIKAANS-SPEAKERS BECAME FULLY AFRICAN

## 15.4.1 THE CAPE MALAY COMMUNITY – FIRST FORMALISERS OF AFRIKAANS AS WRITTEN LANGUAGE

The true history of the Afrikaans language and its formalisation as a written medium of instruction, eventually ending up in print, had for a long time been purposely obfuscated by Apartheid propaganda which attempted to appropriate it to white Afrikaners. Because language is so integral to sense of identity, the mere fact of people choosing a new language (instead of simply using established ones) represents a truly important "fork in the road" regarding culture and identity. The choice of using Afrikaans as medium of instruction, and of formalising it for use in writing and print, was therefore a very telling break with non-African languages and identities and the re-affirmation of an unique African identity.

As explained in detail in Part One, the first community of Afrikaans-speakers at the Cape to have chosen this path were the Muslim community consisting mainly of the Cape Malays. Already in the 1840s they were using Afrikaans in their schools as medium of instruction, with the "*koplesboeke*" being written up in Afrikaans (using Arabic script). Sermons in Cape mosques were also delivered in Afrikaans. The first-ever book to be printed in Afrikaans appeared in 1869. It was an explanation of the Moslem faith, printed in Turkey using Arabic script. The Holy Koran was similarly printed in Afrikaans well before the Bible first appeared in Afrikaans.

A fact that had also been mostly suppressed under "Super Afrikaner" rule, was the role actually played by "uitlanders" in the first use of Afrikaans as language written and printed in the Roman alphabet. The leading

exponent of this was “Klaas Waarsegger” and his pleadings for greater autonomy for the Eastern Cape region which he published in Afrikaans, using European lettering – with “Klaas Waarsegger” in fact being Louis Henri Meurant, the English-speaking (but through close contact, fully bilingual) son of a Swiss father and an English mother from London.

Of such importance was the pioneering role of Meurant as “Klaas Waarsegger” in demonstrating that Afrikaans can serve to convey in print complex argumentation that, when the first Afrikaans newspaper (*Die Afrikaanse Patriot*) was founded in Paarl in 1876, CP Hougenhout chose as his penname “Klaas Waarsegger Jnr”.

## 15.4.2 WHITE AFRIKANERS START COMING ON BOARD WITH THE FOUNDING OF THE GRA, 1875

Eight Afrikaner intellectuals formed the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* (Association of True Afrikaners) in Paarl in 1875. Some of them, like Arnoldus Pannevis and Dominee SJ du Toit were principally motivated by the idea of making the Bible available in Afrikaans to the “Coloured” community, who were no longer familiar with High Dutch. However, the association’s logo made clear that it saw its motive as principally political – striving for Afrikaans to be recognised as official language in the united South Afrika they were hoping to see established.




This idea was, however, not universally accepted among white Afrikaners. The leading politician of that era, “Onze Jan” Hofmeyer, strongly advocated for retaining Dutch. It was only in 1905, with the establishment in Pretoria of the *Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap* by Gustav Preller that the proponents of Afrikaans steadily started to gain the upper hand.

I am of course very proud of the fact that my namesake great-uncle, Dr. W.P. Steenkamp, was the first person ever to write up a doctoral thesis in Afrikaans (in 1910, on Theology, at the famous Vrije Universiteit in Holland), well before the recognition of Afrikaans as official language was enacted by Parliament in 1925 – with that thesis having helped to illustrate the acceptance of Afrikaans in international academic circles as a language of science.

The fact that Afrikaans-speakers took the unprecedented step of breaking with their ancestral languages from across the waters to proudly adopt the “kitchen dialect” that had sprouted on African soil as now their own official tongue, was symbolically extremely important in according them acceptance as being Africans, instead of settlers.

The related question was: having adopted the language of their brown countrymen as also theirs, would the “white” Afrikaners accept those brown co-linguists as co-equal fellow countrymen, or would they remain stuck in the British race-based paradigm of white supremacy?

# 15.5 CHURCH SEGREGATION – ANOTHER FORK IN THE ROAD

As I've earlier explained, the Old Cape did not apply any formal colour bar. However, there were of course whites bearing prejudice – Adam Tas being notable among them. Under VOC and Batavian rule, the racists had made little headway. When the British invaded and instituted at the Cape the same race-based approach that marked their other colonies, this provided a boost to the racially prejudiced. Unfortunately, also in the church. So that in 1857 the Synod of the DRC voted in favour of instituting segregated, separate church services for white and coloured congregants. In 1881 this was taken a step further, with the establishment of a separate church for "Coloureds", named the DRC Mission Church. Eventually, this would culminate in a full-blown attempt at biblical justification of Apartheid adopted in 1975.

Given the influential stature of the church regarding societal mores, this turn towards segregation based on skin colour represented a highly consequential choice – one of the most serious "forks in the road" that Afrikaners would encounter in their history. A manifestly wrong choice which the DRC only recanted at their 1990 synod.

Looking at how different the colonial experience regarding race was societally managed in Latin America (largely thanks to the strong stance of the Catholic Church after the "miracle message" of the Virgin of Guadalupe), the important role of the Afrikaans churches in the manner in which matters degenerated in South Africa during the 20th century can hardly be overstated. In this, they were abetted by their fellow groupthink promoter and enforcer, the Afrikaner Broederbond.

One can but ask: had they known, back then, what we know today – how would they then have acted? Would they then have heeded the prophetic Afrikaner voices that had indeed always existed in their ranks? Would they then have been less prone to enforced groupthink?

# 15.6 SETTING UP THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA ON A RACIAL BASIS

## 15.6.1 BACKGROUND

After the trauma of the 2nd Anglo-Boer War, setting up a Union to consist of the two erstwhile warring white peoples and doing so within less than a decade after the concentration camp experience (in which more than 50% of the youth under 15 of the two republics had died) was inherently an exercise fraught with risk.

Dictated by the needs of the British fiscus (which was still struggling to overcome the impact of that three-year war – the costliest that Britain had fought since the Napoleonic Wars) it was nothing short of a shotgun wedding.

The Peace of Vereeniging agreed in 1902 was essentially a compromise reached to accommodate the respective core desires of that war's protagonists. On the side of the British Empire, in the end their principal concern had become their own **international** geostrategic imperatives at a time of growing competition with Germany. Thus, at Vereeniging they needed the war to stop and for the Boers to recognise British supremacy so that, on the global map, strategically located South Africa could be painted red (stopping the war had become an overriding British objective because of the cost and the threat which the on-dragging war had become for the Tory government's electoral chances). On the side of the Boers, who couldn't care less about the international geostrategic dimension but were fully focused on the future political balance of power on the subcontinent, their **locally focused** need was for the British to acknowledge and facilitate Afrikaner aspirations to hold political power in the new Union.

The Boer and British bottom lines were therefore not irreconcilable, being more like two sides to the same coin – international geostrategic versus local political. The Afrikaners as well as the British government in London had both for some time already (well prior to the war) aspired to the creation of a union – for the Afrikaners, it was all a question of who would control the local levers of power in such a union.

The Boer objectives were met when the British agreed in 1902 to rapidly instituting home rule with democratic (white) elections, in which the Afrikaner numerical majority would ensure an Afrikaner-led government.

When the Constitutional Conference met in Durban in 1909 it was thus in the interest of the Afrikaner demographic majority to retain the Westminster model and a centralised state because of the unfettered political power it would

afford them (as the likely electoral winners). Exactly as was to be the case nine decades later at CODESA, when the ANC accepted the centralised Westminster model, for the very same reasons. The only difference was that in 1909 the Afrikaner demographic majority had to be artificially fixed by insisting on a race-based system that excluded the non-white majority from the then political process.

### 15.6.2 THE FIXING IN PLACE OF A PARADOXICAL, PROBLEMATICAL PARADIGM AT THE BIRTH OF THE UNION

Perhaps the most indelible consequence of the bloody tussle between Boer and Brit that imprinted itself on political reality in the new the Union of South Africa, was the manner in which this new Union with its majoritarian Westminster-style constitution had, in behavioural terms, trapped the two white tribes in a paradoxical political paradigm. Shackled together by history and London's superior force, this was a shotgun marriage that neither local white group by heart desired, yet which largely dictated the course of their political interaction (also – and especially so – their united actions towards the non-white peoples). This paradoxical relationship persisted for the better part of the twentieth century.

It was a paradigm that was simultaneously problematic, perplexing, and paradoxical. Perplexing, because it took very little account of the ethno-cultural realities bordering on residual Boer/Brit hatred that existed on the ground (the "solution" answering, as it did, to the financial needs of London). Paradoxical, because it wedded together two archenemies that had been fighting each other for many decades during which a legacy of utmost bitterness had built up, but doing so in such a way that one group was structurally incentivised and mathematically pre-ordained to win total local power – on condition, that is, that that numerically superior group could stick together. This paradox was accepted by the English-speaking minority group, because it was after all "their" Westminster system to which they had historically been accustomed to, and South Africa was part of the Empire, under the Crown – was it not?

This was a dynamic which was to repeat itself in the negotiated transition, with the "white" minority going for "their" highly centralised Westminster model which they had had experience of for eight decades, seemingly without realising what consequence that would have in effectively transferring total power to the representatives of the new mathematical majority of Black Africans – if they as group could, in turn, stay politically united under one banner.

The paradigm referred to here was (and still is) that of a highly centralised unitary state, with its inclusion of provinces in 1910 merely as a sop to history with no substantive content in terms of real devolved regional powers. A constitutional dispensation based in 1910 on dividing the entire populace by race, differentiating between the whites (as the "haves") and the non-whites (the "have-nots"), and which geographically encompassed (almost) the entire sub-continent, with little regard to geographical demographics of old.

This segregationist political demarcation ironically went hand-in-hand with integrationist economic development, thereby fostering the birth of another paradoxical over-arching reality of political segregation existing amidst (and despite of) ever faster growing economic integration. Thus, one saw the unfolding, side by side, of steadily increasing economic integration of the races whilst white politicians were promoting political policies simultaneously sharpening the racially segregated nature of the political entity within which that rapid, integrative economic development was occurring. The inevitable consequence of the centrifugal power of this metro-centred economic development was to disconnect the better part of the population from their traditional geographical heartlands due to the attraction posed by the new metropoles and their need for labour.

Another paradox was that the political system was, in terms of the exercise of executive power, since 1910 highly centralised in national government hands, but that politicians (especially after 1948) were developing a system of devolution based on tribe that ran directly counter to both the ongoing process of ever greater economic integration and the established highly centralised governance template as regards the exercise of real power.

This race-based dispensation was cemented at the unity talks of 1909 – a paradigm which later history would prove to have been by far the greatest and most damaging "own goal" scored in the history of the region. Because it was this paradigm that in effect maintained the Afrikaans and English-speaking whites pitted against each other,

through the Afrikaans NP versus the mainly English SAP, in an ongoing contest for all of the political power in the land – and which simultaneously set up the later conflict with the non-white population, who quite naturally resented their exclusion from participation in the political processes in the country of their birth.

Due to the Westminster system of the winner takes all – also meaning: all of that highly centralised political power – but then ignoring group rights while emphasing individual rights (the latter based on the fallacy that people in plural societies vote as free-thinking individuals and not in terms of their tribal affiliation), the white demographics that applied between 1910 and 1994 had made it inevitable that the Afrikaans-speaking whites (as the numerical majority in a whites-only system), would under the 1910 rules organise themselves into an Afrikaans political party (the NP) and then dominate and control the levers of power and the benefits that derived from it.

This was true, subject to two conditions, however: namely that the Afrikaans-speaking whites would be politically united, and secondly that no third group of voters would be added to the equation (because the English-speakers still overwhelmingly controlled the wealth of the land, so that it was feared by Afrikaner politicians that their English-speaking adversaries would be able to "buy" the support of such a third group to thereby obtain a majority).

It was this Westminster model, more than anything else, that had caused the white Afrikaner majority to resist any political integration of the other groups (because it would likely have meant the loss of exclusive Afrikaner control over government). Because of the centralisation of power that such a system brings about, it raises the reward for the societal group that can win such unfettered power, and thus provides an incentive for standing together, and uncritically lending one's ears to groupthink which facilitates such unity.

Instead of recognising the plural nature of society and sharing power among all the groups in the country, a system that emphasises only individual rights in practice discriminates against minorities. Before 1994 it favoured the NP as the nationalist party of the Afrikaners as the white majority group; after 1994 it favoured the ANC as the nationalist party of the black African majority. If that Westminster system is partially hybridized with the inclusion of a system of proportional voting on political party lists (as done in 1994) what follows then, is that political parties are founded as group-centred natural political "homes of comfort" for such mostly tribal interest groups, with the party HQ in a position of dominance over the individual member of parliament, who owes his position to having been included on the party's list.

Empirical evidence from around the globe overwhelmingly demonstrates that, in plural societies, people tend to vote in accordance with their ethnic affiliation – no matter whether constitutions are structured along strictly unitary lines, federally, or consociationally. Which is also true in supposedly sophisticated Western countries. Therefore, the realisation had grown internationally that a plural society is not best served by a constitution that has regard only to individual rights (which is why the UN, for example, piloted its treaties on the protection of minorities).

What needs to be accommodated in a balanced manner, alongside protections for individual rights, is the reality of the existence of groups and thus the protection of minority rights. With power ideally not centralised but devolved to the lowest level. Ideally, to be shared equitably among the groups. Which, unfortunately, is anathema to the Anglophone constitutional tradition…

The two main democratic traditions found in the Western world today, stem from different historical experiences. Empires are founded on and defined in terms of territory, with all who live within a conquered geographical space *ipso facto* becoming subjects of that imperial power, whether they like it or not, and irrespective of whether they feel any cultural affinity with the empire's core ethnic group. Modern nation-states, on the other hand, have the notion of a nation of mutually identifying and culturally homogenous **citizens** (not **subjects**) at their core. For empires, their biggest threat is nationalisms that spring up within their territory. For nation-states, on the other hand, their biggest issue is that borders should correspond to their ethnic group's demographic distribution, so as to include all co-nationalists within one state. It is this latter ambition of having borders coincide with ethnic geographical settlement that has been at the heart of practically all wars that the world has witnessed over the last two centuries (including lately in the Balkans, and now again in Ukraine).

Because of the imperial tradition of the English (who to this day are subjects of their crown, living in a system based on territory rather than nationality) they find it particularly difficult to deal with nationalism among minorities such as the Irish and Scots (and Afrikaners). English elites tend to see nationalism as the root of all evil, which needs to be countered by maintaining the sanctity of existing borders, no matter how arbitrarily these may have been imposed (with no thought to ethno-demographics).

This is a perceptual problem existing across the Anglo-world, as can be seen in the case of the USA, where its military conquest of formerly indigenous and Hispanic lands is now taken for granted and those who feel aggrieved by it, are not comprehended. What the history of the USA also amply illustrates as having been another key part of the Anglo paradigm, is the defining role of race – of white vs non-white – in determining political and individual rights. "Jim Crow" had existed in the USA, as Apartheid did in South Africa, right up to the latter part of the nineteen-sixties. As discussed in Part One, the U.S. Supreme Court only outlawed state prohibitions on racially mixed marriages in 1967. Native Americans in the state of Colorado only received full voting rights in 1970. The legacy of this race-based paradigm is still at play in the current contest for power between those supporting DEI and those ostensibly favouring merit (MAGA).

We will soon return to this paradoxical and perplexing paradigm in which white South Africans had entrapped themselves in 1910, to further explore why it had been pushed and by whom, with what consequence. What we need to do now, though – in order to understand better the concept of ethno-cultural groups, particularly from the Afrikaans perspective – is to look at the defining developments that had followed upon Hendrik Biebouw's declaration of himself as an Afrikaner, not an European.

Pivotal developments that had steadily evolved Afrikaans-speakers further and further away from the typical adherence to the colonial fatherland's language that we see in former colonies around the world – where the Brazilians still speak Portuguese, the Hispano-Americans still speak Spanish (or, more exactly, Castilian), the Quebecois continue speaking and writing French, and the former English colonies such as the USA, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand still speak English.

Exploring how and by whom this new ethno-cultural Afrikaans identity was forged – that new, fully African identity that caused the leaders of 14 newly-independent black African states to confirm, in the Lusaka Manifesto of 1969, that Afrikaners are not settlers but are indigenous Africans…

## 15.6.3 THE ROLE OF JAN SMUTS – HE LED THE CREATION OF A CONSTITUTIONAL MODEL BASED ON RACE AND HIGHLY CENTRALISED POWER

One of the main architects of the Union and principal drafter of its constitution was General JC Smuts. He well understood what would be required to ensure Afrikaner political domination – namely, that non-white voting rights not be extended. Despite all of his truly excellent attributes as one of the great statesmen of the 20th century, Smuts was undeniably a white supremacist. Which blinded him to the future importance of accommodating the political aspirations of the population in its entirety, in the new constitutional dispensation he was crafting.

Smuts saw the protection of whites on the black continent as depending on the closest possible tie-in with the British Empire. To him, South Africa was in principle no different to Australia or New Zealand (where the conquest and substitution of the indigenous populations had been far worse). Across the entire empire, white supremacy was accepted as the natural state of things. Understandably, Smuts was a man of these times. What he thus saw as imperative in terms of white survival, was unity among Boer and Brit, under the protective umbrella of the British Empire, with the non-white population excluded from political participation. Which is why he helped create the paradigm that would later come to haunt South Africa – that of a race-based, strongly centralised unitary state affording little recognition to its true pluralist composition nor to group rights.

What this paradigm that Smuts helped create was to ensure, was a bitter contest between Afrikaners and English-speakers for political dominance in the system, causing a tendency towards short-term tactical manoeuvring rather than long-term strategic planning, whilst setting up the country for future racial conflict and damnation as irredeemably racist, when empire and colonialism were no longer in vogue after the trauma of the 2nd World War.

What Smuts was to learn was that having gone all-in to identify with and support the British Empire did not offer any protection when the British themselves decided to disband that empire. His government immediately became the object of fierce attack by newly independent India at the United Nations, for the charter of which Smuts had penned the preamble. Because the truth of the matter is that the foundations for what was later tagged as Apartheid had been laid well before 1948 – in the Union Constitution agreed in Durban and adopted by the British parliament, in the 1913 land act, in the pass laws and the 1945 legislation on black urban development. In fact, the "immorality" legislation prohibiting sex between whites and non-whites were the very first laws that the British had placed on the Transvaal and Orange Free State colony statute books, immediately after the 2nd Anglo-Boer War…

Smuts lost the 1948 election largely because he could offer no substantive policy regarding the question of black rights. As General Hertzog had feared, Smuts's tactical moves for short-term gain had come back to open the door for a much more radical form of Afrikaner nationalism to win power in 1948…

Smuts had, at the birthing of the Union of South Africa, favoured strongly centralising power in order to avoid schismatic groups laying hands on any substantive fraction of power, believing such central concentration of power to be justified because it would avoid stimulating disunion and because in his own hands that centralised power to legislate and enforce would be responsibly used. For example, he had quickly set out to establish one national police force controlled centrally from Pretoria, and similarly one Union Defence Force, because he did not want to leave regional forces outside Pretoria's control that secessionist Afrikaners could put to use for their own political ends. Having concentrated power centrally, what Smuts did not anticipate was that reason and moderation do not always prevail in politics – that such concentration of power in itself becomes a magnet for more radical forces that then set out to win it for themselves and their group, rather than seeking to counter-govern or even to secede (as he had feared).

Smuts in 1909 failed to appreciate that future mega-impactful events in the environment may cause voters disgruntled by their not-improving circumstance to heed calls to the blood and support simplistic nationalist and populist policies. He most importantly failed to anticipate how intoxicating such centralised power is, enticing its holders into legislative and executive **over-reach** because of their extreme actions being technically endowed with legality – even if being objectively unwise and illegitimate. This over-concentration of power furthermore made such over-reach difficult to prevent or overturn, because the highly centralised Westminster-style system which he created lacked structural checks and balances such as a proper separation of powers. It effectively elevated the loudest faction in the largest party into electoral untouchability, giving them virtually untrammelled control over all those levers of government power.

That is the risk that now again faces SA, due to 1996's constitution having merely continued Smuts's 1909 centralisation.

Smuts had thus been a key creator of the paradigm of a "white nation", part of the British Empire, ruling South Africa under the unitary, centralised Westminster model. After the passing of Louis Botha, Smuts became the leader the SA Party and prime minister. On the opposition side, leading those who wished for greater recognition of the plural nature of South African society and thus for greater accommodation of ethnic group rights, stood General Barry Hertzog and the National Party he had founded.

### 15.6.4 THE VISIONARY GENERAL JBM HERTZOG: RACE VS ETHNICITY – A CRITICAL "FORK IN THE ROAD"

There are two South African prime ministers who have basically been written out of history (thanks to the machinations of their successors) who do, however – in my humble opinion – merit being recognised as having been the more visionary and better attuned to reality among the white leadership of the 20th century. Barry Hertzog and John Vorster.

Hertzog was by no means a bleeding-heart liberal. Undoubtedly his goal was to benefit his people, the Afrikaners. Certainly, he did not wish for South Africa a constitutional future in which the black African majority would rule over his people. Crucially, though, he did comprehend the need to look at South Africa's challenges through the lens of ethno-cultural groups and shared value systems, as opposed to merely skin-based race. Which is why he

favoured the inclusion of the "Coloured" community into the then parliamentary system country-wide and had actually presented such legislation to parliament at the end of the 1920s (see Part One for more detail).

Had Hertzog's legislation regarding "Coloured Persons" been implemented, it would have had a profound impact on South Africa's future evolution. It was truly a historic "fork in the road". Unfortunately, we did not proceed to travel along that most appropriate course which he had tried to indicate. Because, had his legislation been implemented and the "Coloureds" had been included in the political system, then it would have removed the entire basis upon which, in later years, South Africa was decried as irredeemably racist and white supremacist.

What Hertzog had envisioned was a political dispensation using not race (i.e., skin colour) as differentiator – as in the typical Anglo white vs non-white paradigm – but ethno-cultural affiliation based on shared value systems, where a distinction would be drawn between, on the one side, the black African population with their native African culture and languages, and on the other, those who spoke Afrikaans or English and shared a broad cultural heritage based on the Judeo-Christian world-view and norms – thus, including the so-called "Coloureds".

Not only would this approach have conformed with what we can today see as the reality of modern-day political affinity (where the English and Afrikaans-speaking whites, the "Coloureds" and the Indians vote broadly similarly). It would firstly have made it impossible to paint the South African Government as irredeemably racist. It would also have considerably enhanced the demographics-based power of an anti-communist alliance during the crucial eighties and nineties. Instead, because of parliament not having passed Hertzog's reforms with the necessary enhanced majorities (which Smuts could have facilitated, but didn't), the fact that we had remained trapped in the race-based paradigm eventually led to exactly what Hertzog had warned would happen in his Smithfield speech – namely that the "Coloureds" were driven into the arms of the revolutionary "black" camp.

Hertzog's sympathies with nationalist sentiments (such as that of the Irish and the Afrikaners – in the case of the latter, passing legislation to make Afrikaans one of the official languages, and enacting an own flag for South Africa) had of course not made him the darling of the English-language press. However, his ability to sense the tides of time cannot be denied, nor his contributions beyond South Africa's shores – he was, for example, one of the key drivers behind the Balfour Declaration which recognised the equality in stature of the former (white) British dominions, ensuring full autonomy for South Africa, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

When in 1939 the 2nd World War broke out, Hertzog was faced with a choice between neutrality (as had been chosen by Ireland) and siding with the British in declaring war against Nazi Germany. His decision to recommend neutrality to parliament (a neutrality which would still have allowed Britain the use of its treaty base at Simons Town and allowed volunteers to choose to enlist in the British military if they so wished) was not motivated by any sympathy for Adolf Hitler. What Hertzog had feared was that a declaration of war on the side of Britain, would (given the still emotionally vivid legacy of the Boer-Brit conflict), serve only to empower the more radically nationalist and racist Afrikaner right-wing parties.

Which is exactly what then transpired, in 1948…

## 15.7 1948 – APARTHEID, RACE, AND THE FATAL TARNISHING OF ETHNICISM

After 1948, the race-based paradigm that Smuts had pushed in 1909 came back to really haunt his followers. Trapped constitutionally in the forementioned "shotgun marriage" with English-speaking white South Africans, the new National Party government (which had won a majority of seats, but a minority of the overall votes) was focused above all on cementing their power base. In that process they had fully discarded Hertzog's notion of integrating the "Coloureds" and schemed to remove any non-white representation in parliament, by hook or by crook. By choosing to go down that fork in the road, and doing it in such a blatantly hurtful manner (in the process demonstrating that the Westminster model provided no proper separation of powers between the legislature, executive and judiciary), the NP had firmly set the "Coloured" population against the National Party – exactly as General Hertzog had feared. This was achieved by legalistically using the law-making tool for that purpose (a

legalist tendency to regard the law as the cure for all, that remained in evidence on the NP side throughout the negotiations of the early nineties).

## 15.8 THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PRESS ALIENATED FROM THE 1940s, INCUBATING A PROPAGANDA DISASTER

Even though its long-term implications for the retention of "white power" over South Africa were likely not widely understood in 1948, that year there crystallised one particular shift in the societal determinants of political power which, perhaps more than any other, would in the early nineties culminate in the fall of the NP as last "white" government. That shift related to the attitude towards the government of the day, on the part of the English-language media in South Africa. Whereas white governments in Pretoria had generally enjoyed the support of the English-language media on matters of race, this changed drastically from 1948 on – especially so from when the NP moved to convert the Union into a Republic. This shift in media allegiance to being vocally against Pretoria was to have a crucial impact on the coming propaganda struggle – itself the single most important determinant of in whose hands political power would ultimately end up.

During the Smuts premierships the English-language media and elites had been strongly supportive of his mixed Afrikaans/English white governments – for example, brushing aside the Bulhoek Massacre (orders of magnitude worse that Sharpeville) as simply being the "revolting blacks" receiving their "just desserts" for challenging the Crown (to use the actual words of the English media at the time). The trend, therefore, was to give the Smuts government the benefit of the doubt, projecting its often-harsh rule as benign.

Those elites and media perceived the ousting of Smuts by an alliance of nationalist Afrikaner parties in 1948 as driven by anti-English and anti-Empire animus (in which they were entirely correct). They saw this new Afrikaner government as adversarial to their group interests, and accordingly adopted a highly adversarial attitude in return, relentlessly criticising it and its policies at every opportunity.

Which coincidentally provided fodder for the superb international leftist and ANC/SACP propaganda machine directed at that time by Moscow (stating this fact serves not to try and minimise the unfortunate reality that the NP government – and officers in its security forces who were insufficiently situationally aware – all too frequently provided on a platter those headline-grabbing, morally questionable policies and deeds which fed that media machine with ammunition, thereby allowing it to portray the Afrikaner government highly negatively to their local and international audiences).

Fact is that the NP Government never truly was, nor intended to be, a government by and for all whites – it was in its heart and soul an Afrikaner government, whose political survival by 1990 was still first and foremost dependent on the Afrikaner vote (in terms of the paradoxical paradigm we earlier highlighted). Meaning that the media in the NP's stable were Afrikaans-language papers whose pro-NP propaganda was almost exclusively targeting the Afrikaner, focused on discrediting the Afrikaner Right. This Afrikaner media self-evidently had no significant impact on non-white South African opinion nor on international opinion – which had been of no consequence when the NP Governments of earlier years had essentially acted as if non-white an international opinion were irrelevant (but obviously not so when De Klerk turned the political paradigm from exclusively white to inclusively non-racial). The English-language SA press, on the other hand, was always highly influential also in non-white SA ranks, and especially so with regard to shaping international opinion, because of the reality that the local English-language reporting formed the core media feed that determined international reportage on South Africa.

Again, the objective here is not to criticise, nor to try and shift blame to the English-language media – with hindsight, they had had good reason and justification for highlighting questionable NP policies and actions (even though their motives may not always have been deemed patriotic. We are looking at this in terms of "forks in the road", where decisions had been made for short-term tactical gain, but with highly negative long-term strategic consequences. What successive NP governments had done, through having opted for policies and a high-handed manner of governance that affronted and alienated all around them in a country where they in fact represented a small minority, was to have made the powerful English-language SA media its sworn enemy (among many others). This adversarial approach adopted by the NP towards all and sundry, based on not correctly evaluating where the world

was headed post-WW2, had set itself up to later decisively lose the propaganda war when it mattered most – and, consequently, to thereby lose the contest for political power (both as regards leverage during the negotiated transition and in the 1994 election).

The lesson from this is that, in a plural society, it is always dangerous for any one group to merely assume that the political paradigm that for the moment favours it will last forever, and that it can therefore act entirely for its own benefit without due regard for the interests of other groups. Furthermore, that in such a society it is strategically appropriate – especially with regard to the longer term – to adopt a cooperative stance rather than an adversarial one.

As before, one should ask the question: if the NP of the 1940s had known what would become inevitable less than 50 years later, would they have then still chosen those deliberately self-centred, adversarial policies that in the end served only to totally isolate the Afrikaner? With foreknowledge of the consequences, would the security force commanders in 1960 Sharpeville, 1975 Operation Savannah, and 1976 Soweto have opted for the same course of action? As a later example: if the national police leadership now in the spotlight had known that they would face the likes of the Madlanga Commission, how would they then have acted?

In other words, always think ahead, never abuse power that for the moment has been entrusted to you, do not imagine that you can act with impunity, and love your neighbour as you love yourself, doing onto others as you would want done onto you…

## 15.9 THE 1956 SUEZ DEBACLE AND THE END OF FRENCH & BRITISH COLONIALISM

Just as, in the first place, the existence of a white government in South Africa had been the direct consequence of the existence of the phenomenon of European imperialist colonialism, the eventual demise of that white-dominated system of government in South Africa (and all others like it across the former European empires spanning the globe) was fundamentally part and parcel of the **demise of European colonial domination** after the 2nd World war.

Because, if Nazi racism and expansionism had been worthy of condemnation to the point of waging a world war to suppress it (as clearly Nazism morally was) then European colonialist racism and expansionism evidently was equally worthy of condemnation and overthrow.

In its striving for hegemony, the USA as the new supreme superpower (with its own history of having fought to liberate itself from British imperialism) did not look kindly upon European efforts to re-establish their colonies after WW2. The Dutch were to find this out the hard way in Indonesia in the late forties, and the French in Algeria in the fifties.

Apart from the moral equivalency issue, the war-weary European powers were confronted by practical realities that made it too costly for them to continue to maintain their colonies by force of arms – the British in India were successfully confronted by Gandhi's passive resistance campaign and had to accede to independence for that subcontinent in 1947, less than two years after WW2 had ended.

The resistance fomented by Moscow through its support of Marxist-inspired national liberation movements by means of supplying them with weapons, training, PR-assistance and funds was by no means of the passive Indian kind. In French Indochina the French were forced to withdraw after meeting with military disaster against the communist Vietminh forces.

In Algeria the French had a stronger presence in terms of both numbers of settlers and military deployed there than in Vietnam, but there also failed to stabilise the situation despite employing brutal military suppression (the Algerians were supported primarily by Egypt – i.e., not Moscow – in the name of Pan-Arab solidarity and liberation).

In 1956 matters came to a head for Britain and France, when Egypt nationalised the Suez Canal (over which they had held ownership). Both European powers felt that upstart Third World nationalists like Egypt's Nasser needed to be taught a military lesson, for which purpose they forged a secret alliance with Israel. The military action taken was undoubtedly successful but was a political disaster for France and Britain because of the manner in which the very much annoyed U.S. president Eisenhower indelicately exerted American supremacy, forcing France and Britain to withdraw ignominiously.

In the context of the USA's preoccupation with Soviet expansionism, the lesson that the USA would not tolerate its Western allies creating circumstances that Moscow could exploit and which would alienate Washington from its Arab and other Third World allies, was harshly learnt – the Suez crisis had made very clear that the era of European imperialism and colonialism needed to be terminated, and fast. Which led to Paris and Londen hastily granting independence to their erstwhile colonies across Africa and the globe.

From the South African perspective, there were a number of lessons to be learnt from Suez and the subsequent post-haste French and British decolonisation rush:

- racism as concept and societal practice was out, and especially so as a legal construct,
- imperialism and colonialism were out,
- most of the world consequently saw it as historically inevitable that white rule in South Africa would terminate sooner rather than later (especially so, after the Portuguese Empire collapsed in 1974),
- the USA would side with decolonisation, and would only intervene where it saw the USSR behind destabilisation, but then also only where and when American vital interests were at stake and further on condition that U.S. intervention would not cause internal political harm within the USA's own body politic,
- Pretoria's discrimination against Blacks & Coloureds was for Afro-Americans a re-run of their own civil rights struggles, ensuring that the USA's internal politics obliged it to act against Pretoria, especially whenever a Democrat administration was in power in Washington,
- White South Africa's discrimination against its Black African population united the whole of the newly emergent African continent against it, leaving the West with having to choose between being seen to be siding with South Africa, and its relations with the rest of the continent and the Third World,
- discrimination against South African Indians aggrieved India and Pakistan and united the East against Pretoria,
- Europeans knew that they, as the original imperialists, colonialists, and racists were next in line to be targeted over their legacy, so that they tried to pre-emptively publicly use the South African situation as a "virtue signalling" opportunity.

The only part of the foregoing lessons that PW took on board was the Western/American fear of Soviet Communist expansionism, which single dimension was then made into the cornerstone of the "total onslaught" doctrine.

## 15.10 VERWOERD GIVES "GRAND APARTHEID" A THEORETICAL (IF IMPRACTICAL) BASE

Perhaps the most damaging result of the NP's efforts to enforce a policy of "separate development" (which was based on recreating, from the British native reserves system, a set of tribal homelands that could be excised from the South African body politic as sovereign states), was that it fatally contaminated any possible future use of a consociational model for accommodating the reality that South Africa was simultaneously an economically integrated society, yet also a socio-culturally pluralist one. When Verwoerd opted for a model of total sovereign break-up based on race, it effectively precluded trying later to accommodate the two realities of both socio-cultural pluralism and economic integration existing within in one country by means of a group-centred unitary state model such as consociationalism – or even with a devolved, decentralised, federal yet still unitary but territorially configured dispensation free of race or group reference, such as that of the USA.

Because of the unilateral, over-cooked, inconsistent, impractical, and blatantly racist manner in which homelands-based "separate development" was enforced through "*baasska*p" (white supremacy), when negotiations finally became the norm in 1990 any notion of in some way recognising group rights, or even of devolved regional rights

not related to group or race at all, effectively became taboo as option, so that the importance of maximally devolving and decentralising power in a federal model was sadly overlooked.

Apartheid as practiced by the NP was NOT consociationalism. It was an extreme exploitation of the centralised governmental powers that the race-based 1909 Constitution had afforded Afrikaners as the white majority, when after 1948 they fell under the spell of their "Super Afrikaner" idealist wing and the groupthink enforced by that leadership via the AB and church (prior to 1985).

It was not a case, though, that Verwoerd had not seen and understood that the racist colonial order simply could not continue unchanged in the post-war environment. Whereas his predecessors as prime minister, Dr Malan and Adv Strijdom, had essentially muddled along with the pre-existing constitutional model (just sharpening its racially discriminatory laws), Verwoerd clearly comprehended that an entirely new constitutional dispensation was needed. He had grasped that the "old order" of white supremacist colonialism and racism had rightly become unacceptable around the globe. Therefore, a new logical rationale was needed as intellectual justification for excluding black Africans (i.e., his "separate development" model of giving them the vote in their own states, similar to the BLS countries to be found trapped in South Africa's orbit); because he understood that it was no longer feasible nor acceptable to exclude the non-white population – the vast majority in the country – from political participation purely on the basis of their skin colour.

The solution that Verwoerd envisaged was not to negotiate a sharing of power among the groups within a unitary state, but to geographically divide the Union into sovereign states. In other words, being determined not to give Blacks the vote in the "white state" but knowing that citizens of any state are deemed entitled to vote, to physically geographically shrink that "white state" and excise from it the territories of origin of the Blacks so that they are no longer citizens and therefore supposedly no longer entitled to aspire to a right to vote. In that manner, to try and restore a white demographic majority in the economic heartland which he saw as "white" South Africa, by physically excising the peripheral areas (the tribal homelands) on the model of Lesotho, Botswana and eSwatini – which would in his thinking have justified excluding black South Africans from the central political process, because there would indeed be "one man, one vote" for them as well – just to be exercised in their own states, not in "white" South Africa. This despite the fact that those irksome blacks actually were not living in those homelands but in the metropolitan heartland of "white South Africa", where their labour was absolutely indispensable…

Among the many imperfections in this plan were that:

- it was entirely impractical in economic terms,
- the black African population rejected it because of depriving them of their citizenship and a share in South Africa's riches,
- it did not provide any solution regarding political rights for the so-called "Coloureds" and Indians,
- it maintained race as norm for differentiating in everyday social interaction (such as to which beach one could go), and
- last but definitely not least, the fact that the intention was to unilaterally impose this, resistance be damned – which meant that it could not hope to gain any legitimacy locally or abroad.

What Verwoerd had correctly understood was that, after WW2 and with the demise of colonialism, South Africa had found itself before a crucial fork in the road: it could either accept that the country had in practice become, through economic imperative and resultant population redistribution, a unitary state wherein all had to enjoy equal political rights (as the NP finally accepted in 1990), or it could choose to embark on a process of forced social engineering to try and overturn that reality.

Unfortunately, the choice was made to go down the road of forced social re-engineering, despite warnings from within Verwoerd's own ambit (such as the Tomlinson Commission) that the idea was unworkable in practice, and despite the understandably fierce opposition it had elicited from non-Afrikaner circles and the world at large…

Again, if Verwoerd (undeniably an intelligent man) had had a crystal ball in the late 1950s, would he still have chosen the fork he did? Knowing that it would lose his people thirty valuable years during which a much smoother transition into a likely much better configured constitutional dispensation could have been negotiated, and

understanding that his particular “fever dream” would only serve to isolate his people and make them the polecats of the world?

The lesson: policies need to be realistically workable in practice – not only normatively-legalistically attractive…

## 15.11 BRITISH PREMIER HAROLD MACMILLAN WARNS OF THE “WINDS OF CHANGE”

The new post-war international order had brought with it drastically different new political mores, with the world having turned hard against racism and colonialism. This had by the end of the 1950s definitively confronted white South Africa with a critical fork in the road. Could the policy choice made by the white NP-supporting electorate in 1948 (in favour of white – or rather, outright Afrikaner – supremacy) be sustained against the growing wave of Uhuru? Or would it become an inevitable necessity to adapt to the new world-wide reality? Could the white Afrikaner nationalist government realistically hope to defy into perpetuity, world opinion and well as the demands of the non-white internal majority?

That the NP Government’s policies were increasingly going to encounter local and international headwinds had become abundantly clear by 1960, when then British prime minister Harold Macmillan delivered his “Winds of Change” speech to the South African parliament. This speech had served a twofold purpose, from Macmillan’s perspective – on the one hand he was talking to his British audience, confirming to them that the days of empire were definitively over, requiring economic and geopolitical adjustment on their part.

His core message that the old order was over and done with, secondarily served (for his South African audience) as a warning that the new realities will require changed thinking about South Africa’s internal political dispensation, to accommodate the legitimate aspirations of the non-white majority. Verwoerd’s reply to Macmillan, delivered off the cuff, was firstly driven by his annoyance that his British counterpart had not warned him beforehand of how far he intended to go in his speech and secondly prompted Verwoerd to take a strong stand that white rights needed to be protected as much as those of non-whites.

It is understandable that white South Africans were deeply concerned about the chaos, destruction, and bloodshed that the winds of Uhuru (exacerbated by the Cold War and the very hasty retreat of the erstwhile imperial powers) had brought to Africa. It was thus not surprising that whites from both language groups were increasingly closing ranks behind their government and focusing increasingly on immediate security considerations, rather than on political solutions.

Yes, there was debate in parliament on what kind of constitutional model would be most appropriate, but what received scant attention was how any model could be bestowed with **legitimacy**.

Objectively assessed, this could only be achieved through inclusively building a consensus in favour of such a new dispensation across all racial groups – something that inevitably would require open negotiation as basis for arriving at such a consensual settlement. However, few people assess future scenarios objectively. Subjectively, driven by the self-delusional IPC groupthink earlier mentioned, whites preferred to believe that the legitimacy problem could be engineered away by means of the legalist stratagem of creating for Blacks their own homelands. The reality was that, despite the signs of the times, white South Africans were not ready for non-racial negotiations over an open agenda – because placing the future of the country in the hands of such an inclusive constitutional convention, would of necessity mean forfeiting exclusive white control over the levers of power.

In strategic planning, it is not only WHAT you wish to achieve that matters, but also the HOW – the means and methods – through which your desired outcomes are to be achieved. Plus the IF – whether it was in real-world terms practically achievable.

In the Verwoerdian era it was not sufficiently grasped that LEGITIMACY of any future dispensation was even more crucial than its actual configuration. No matter what kind of model could be imagined, it would only address the

core issue of ensuring peace and security if it enjoyed legitimacy – with legitimacy being a result of the HOW part of strategy.

It is true that South Africa in the 1960s did not possess a sophisticated analytical and strategic decision-making capability. So that the urgency of the moment – the fact that the sands of time were fast running out – was not sufficiently appreciated in political circles (not to mention among the public at large). Nor was it appreciated by Verwoerd that the only way through which legitimacy could be achieved was through negotiation – he steadfastly refused to even talk with black leaders, lest it be seen as weakness.

His successor, John Vorster, at least understood that outreach was urgently needed…

## 15.12 THE LUSAKA MANIFESTO OF 1969 – AN OPPORTUNITY NOT SEIZED

With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that the conciliatory declaration calling for a negotiated settlement issued by 13 African heads of state when they met in Lusaka, Zambia in 1969 (later adopted by the OAU), had placed the Vorster government squarely before another fork in the road. Premier Vorster had a year earlier started a dialogue with President Kaunda of Zambia. The Lusaka Manifesto, which was rejected by the ANC/SACP as too soft on white South Africa (as well as for entrenching capitalism), was notable because it had very clearly distinguished South Africa – even though white minority ruled – from colonial situations that then still persisted in Africa, such as the Portuguese territories, Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, and SWA/Namibia. The manifesto explicitly recognised South Africa as a sovereign independent state, a full UN member, and thus not a colonial "settler" situation like the others.

The Manifesto also recognised white South Africans as Africans and not colonial settlers, and explicitly rejected racial discrimination, whether by whites dominating blacks or blacks dominating whites. Importantly, it favoured dialogue over confrontation, stating the preference of its signatories to: "*negotiate rather than destroy, talk rather than kil*\".

In the broader international context, the Lusaka Manifesto resonated with the USA's National Security Study Memorandum #39 of that same year, which also made the point that South Africa's whites were there to stay, and which (under President Nixon and Dr Henry Kissinger) favoured engaging positively with South Africa as part of the USA's overriding strategic interest of countering communist expansion.

Despite having himself initiated outreach to Black Africa the year before, and no matter all of the positive elements in the Manifesto (as confirmed by the ANC's rejection of it), the Vorster government also chose to publicly reject the Lusaka Manifesto.

The international and regional environment clearly was propitious for dialogue, but unfortunately 1969 was also the year of the first Afrikaner political schism, with the founding of the hard-right *Herstigte Nasionale Party* by four defecting National Party MP's. Vorster clearly had feared that publicly accepting the principles of equality and non-racialism upon which the Manifesto had insisted, and furthermore then initiating a national constitutional dialogue on such a basis, would have been a bridge too far for his followers. (One can but wonder what white attitudes to the Lusaka Manifesto would have been, had they by divine revelation then already known how the next two decades would transpire in the region – especially with the fall of the Portuguese Empire just five years later, and the radically changed geostrategic determinants that that would bring about).

Vorster's rejection of the Lusaka Manifesto had put a lid on the "outward policy" of outreach to Black African leaders which he had initiated the year before when he and Kaunda had started talking. This effort at détente was only revived when Portugal's Carnation Revolution in 1974 fundamentally changed the geostrategic picture in the region.

As said, with hindsight it is clear that the Lusaka Manifesto had been the last best opportunity to negotiate a constitutional settlement that could have included guarantees for group rights on the basis of a consociational or devolved/decentralised approach, on condition that non-discrimination and equality of all citizens within one national territory be accepted. This would, in my opinion, have stood a good chance then of gaining substantive

local black support (of the likes of heavyweights such a Prince Buthelezi, for example). On condition that it had been initiated with the same openness as that with which President FW de Klerk two decades later embarked upon the CODESA process. With such local black support behind it, and given Western anti-communist sentiments during the Cold War context of the early seventies, plus likely also moderate African and Western acquiescence, such a constitutional settlement incorporating protections for minorities would at that time, if genuinely non-racist and non-discriminatory, likely have been able to overcome East Block opposition and gained sufficient international and internal legitimacy, probably sidelining the ANC/SACP in the process.

Even though of course impossible now to retrospectively prove, in my opinion such a non-racial, equal rights-based negotiated settlement back then (i.e., finalised before 1974) would have likely at the time been able to produce a constitutional dispensation more appropriate in form on key things such as devolution rather than centralisation of power, as well as the protection of minority rights in addition to individual rights – or at least proper federalism with devolution of power down to the lowest level and clear separation of the branches of government as per the USA model – than the eventual settlement package that the De Klerk government had been obliged to accept two decades later, in order to achieve peace in the land…

What white South Africans in general could not and did not know in 1969 was that they had had less than five years within which to avail themselves of this relatively favourable negotiation opportunity. The fact that they did not do so, is now indelibly part of the historic record – a fork in the road where, once again, the wrong (adversarial) direction had been chosen, with disastrous consequences.

The lessons: be aware that time tends to run out ever faster, and don't slap away the hand of cooperation when it is reached out to you…

## 15.13 JOHN VORSTER LAUNCHES HIS OUTREACH TO AFRICA (DÉTENTE)

By the early seventies, Foreign Affairs, the nascent BfSS under General Hendrik van den Bergh, and the Department of Information under Dr Eschel Rhoodie were already fully aware that the Portuguese were not going to last much longer in Africa. It was also not a case of the strategic planners in Foreign Affairs, the BfSS and Information lacking understanding at the time of the reality that South Africa's national security was inextricably linked to two ends of the same string: international legitimacy and acceptance by its own non-white population (with achieving the former depending on the latter). As a senior DFA official had at that time of Cold War conflict correctly explained to British journalist John de St Jorre: "*South Africa's national security is dependent upon its relationship with the international community, which is determined by its relationship with black Africa, which in turn is governed by its relationship with its own black population*".

It is against the background of this (correct) understanding by his key advisors, namely of the urgent necessity of fundamental change internally coupled with outreach externally (especially to Africa) that Premier John Vorster made his famous statement that in Southern Africa settlements simply had to be found, because the "alternative would be too ghastly to contemplate". He therefore launched his détente initiative, driven strongly by Rhoodie, Van den Bergh, and Dr Brand Fourie of the DFA, with the support of ministers Connie Mulder and Hilgaard Muller.

Unfortunately (as had been substantiated and explained in detail in the earlier sections) the "total onslaught" faction in the SADF and their then minister, PW Botha, were dead set against such "appeasement", bringing national security decision-making to another critical fork in the road. With regard to which the strategic choice was not dictated by rational analysis and proper government-wide consultation – it was unilaterally forced by means of the self-initiated action on the part of PW Botha and the SADF (Operation Savannah, the abortive march upon Luanda). This unauthorised, unilateral military action (which went way beyond Vorster's authorisation only for training to be provided to Unita, and ignored clear DFA and BfSS advice) essentially took the settle/outreach option off the table – till 1989, when FW de Klerk would of dire necessity revert dramatically to searching for a negotiated settlement.

# 15.14 THE LISBON CARNATION REVOLUTION BRINGS A FUNDAMENTALLY NEW GEOSTRATEGIC REALITY

The fall of the Portuguese Empire after the Carnation Revolution in Lisbon in 1974, followed by the SADF's Operation Savannah in 1975 had irrevocably closed a door that had been still just barely ajar beforehand. A door to a negotiated non-racial dispensation with possibly some recognition and protection for minority rights, or at least for a federalist dispensation.

The impact of the collapse of Portugal in Africa came fast and hard. Within just half a decade, Ian Smith's ill-fated Rhodesian UDI would be no more (which he had proclaimed in 1965, against the advice of his own intelligence organization, and against the counsel of Dr Verwoerd).

That left South Africa and the territory of SWA/Namibia which it controlled, as the last remaining vestige of white rule.

Which meant that, the moment that the Portuguese colonial empire fell, the geo-strategic and politico-psychological reality in the region had irrevocably changed. In geographical terms, Marxist regimes now abutted SA/SWA's own borders for the first time. Psychologically, the Savannah retreat had burst the bubble of supposed white South African military invincibility…

Since the Vorster government had not beforehand decisively seized the moment when it still existed, negotiating a beneficial settlement had, from April 1974 on, become exponentially harder (already verging on the impossible), despite it being simultaneously more urgent. If ever there had been a need for strategic re-assessment and adjustment, surely the NP politicians should in 1974/75 have realised that that was the moment. However, the sharp increase in pressure only served to bring to the fore ever more clearly, the discord and dysfunction that we had earlier seen as having marked the white government's strategic decision-making during that era and beyond.

Instead of moving urgently and irrevocably forward with significant reforms such as abandoning race by integrating the "Coloured" and Indian populations politically, Vorster prevaricated. His *laisse faire* style of leadership furthermore allowed PW Botha to unilaterally set the SADF upon a march to try and capture Luanda, against strident warnings from the BfSS and DFA. When that adventure had to be aborted early in 1976, from that moment on, any possibility of negotiating a settlement on the basis of a compromise that could conceivably still have incorporated accommodation of minority rights was no longer just exponentially more difficult than prior to April 1974, it had in truth evaporated – as the outcome of the 1990-1994 negotiations in fact confirmed.

Because, in looking back, it is clear that that moment when Ops Savannah had failed was the moment that **we lost our crucially important aura of invincibility**.

That abortive adventure had brought in the Cubans, sunk détente, lost us our constituency of moderate African states that had earlier supported us because of their own fear of communism, brought upon us the international arms embargo, and psychologically prepared the ground for the Soweto youth riots which then followed, giving confidence to and firmly polarising as well as radicalising black society. So that those events of 1974, '75 and '76, rather than 1990-1994, in truth had represented the last crucial fork in the road regarding whether South Africa could or would have a constitutional dispensation based on pure majoritarianism or one based on groups and protection of minority rights. It had been the true moment when the die had effectively been cast. Because in effect it had pre-determined the character of the 1994 settlement which handed over power to the ANC/SACP (as eventually based on a non-racial unitary state with universal franchise, without concrete provision for group rights).

Those were the choices and events that in reality meant that the De Klerk team enjoyed very little leverage for shaping the outcome differently than it in fact turned out.

Under the PW Botha reign that followed on Vorster's, the situation the country found itself in would deteriorate even further, and ever more rapidly so. To such an extent that the overriding priority at the end of that lost decade

had become to have just about any deal that would ensure **peace and stability** through having legitimacy (security and stability for the then foreseeable future, at least).

This was the overriding imperative that had left De Klerk and his team with practically no room for bargaining.

## 15.15 THE "LOST DECADE": CHOICE BETWEEN MASADA AND CODESA

We've discussed in detail the internal discord over whether to prepare to shoot, or to settle. Under PW Botha as defence minister and then premier/president, the "total onslaught" brigade had been convinced that Armageddon was inevitable and that, consequently, all of the state's resources needed to be directed towards preparation for deciding militarily whose land "white South Africa" was – that of whites only, or of the entirety of what Mandela would term the Rainbow Nation…

To PW Botha and his cohort any strategy aimed at seeking true, inclusive negotiation over an open agenda for a new non-racial South Africa based upon equal universal franchise was tantamount to appeasement, if not a "sell-out" – or, in the eyes of some, treason…

This addiction to military action had inspired the maladroit 1975/76 Ops Savannah adventure into Angola, even before PW Botha came to power through the palace revolution of 1978. There's no doubt that it was Ops Savannah that (together with the Police's equally maladroit handling of the Soweto youth unrest of 1976) had sounded the death knell for Vorster's attempt at détente.

What is perturbing to see is how, as matters deteriorated, PW Botha himself had gotten fixated on a kind of Masada complex – that in his view the only "self-respecting" course of action remaining to us would be to go down "hard-arsed" (*hardegat ondergaan*) as he had said to Niël Barnard and had also intimated in his introductory address to his cabinet gathered in 1985 at the *Sterrewag* prior to the ill-fated Rubicon speech.

That said, it is my personal conclusion that the PW Botha securocrat era had, paradoxically, been a very **psychologically necessary phase in the evolution towards the eventual negotiated transition**.

It is in my view quite certain that a high percentage of whites, particularly in the security forces, in the seventies had still firmly believed that white South Africa could prevail militarily, indefinitely. Remember that those who were of this opinion had been willing to stage a coup to place PW Botha in the premiership in 1978. If they had not thereafter so demonstrably failed in their subsequent militarist, incrementalist strategy during the ever more grave PW Botha years (which clearly showed up their strategy's failure as "solution"), then almost certainly those militarists – if they had not first had their opportunity to fail – would have gone beyond the threats that we saw and would have staged a full-blooded coup in the early nineties to avert a "sell-out".

The fact that the securocrats had enjoyed free reign to try out their fantasies over the course of the "lost decade" and then very visibly came up short (almost landing us in a disastrous full-blown war against Castro and his allies in the process, and unable to quell the unrest in our own heartland, whilst steadily bringing down upon us ever harsher punitive measures by the international community), had unequivocally demonstrated to ordinary white South Africans and eventually the NP politicians that negotiation was in fact the only realistic option.

In other words, it was demonstrated incontestably that there could be no military solution to our inherently political problem and that continuing to bank on force of arms was foolhardy. Indeed, that that would be the road to our own Masada – brave perhaps, but a futile literal dead end. The only way in which legitimacy could be ensured for any solution, was that it had to be inclusively and openly negotiated and broadly accepted by the entire population. Without such legitimacy, the strife and insecurity would simply continue to escalate.

There were moments during the transition when die-hards had indeed threatened staging a military coup. I believe the fact that the militarist option had been tried for ten years and had visibly failed, in the end moved the NP Government under De Klerk to understand what the DFA, the NIS and indeed the broad civil service had been telling them – that negotiation was the only realistic way forward, towards a legitimate settlement that would bring peace, security and liberation also for the whites of South Africa.

Had PW Botha not had the opportunity first to try his way, and in that process conclusively (though unintentionally) demonstrated that there could be no military solution, it is likely that De Klerk would not have been in a position to take the white voters along with him to the negotiation table – at least not without a much higher risk of a real coup attempt.

So, paradoxically, the PW Botha era had indeed served its purpose in starkly illuminating the choices when in the second half of 1989 FW de Klerk found himself standing before that most critical of forks in the road. The misadventures of the "lost decade" had made crystal clear that there were in reality just two options – with one being already proven to be exceedingly bad. Keep on going down the militarist road leading to our own suicidal Masada, or make the "quantum leap", the big jump across, to the road of negotiation that would lead to a non-racial New South Africa.

Since the militarist option had by then been completely discredited, the choice to make by 1989 fortunately had been clear – as hard as it probably was for any politician to accept that that choice would inevitably entail losing power. De Klerk heeded his own moral compass and the professionals at the NIS, the DFA, and Constitutional Development. The chasm had been huge between carrying on with the "separate development" fever dream and thus with preparing to "shoot", versus accepting the need to "settle" and inevitably having to hand over power.

As wide as the Blyde River Canyon.

And, as with any ditch or canyon, you have no choice but to jump across in one leap – there would be no possibility of doing it incrementally, or of trying to turn back half-way…

## 15.16 TO CHOOSE STRATEGIC COOPERATION WITH THE ANC, OR TO ADVERSARIALLY GO FOR AN OWN WIN?

Having chosen a negotiated settlement rather than shooting it out, the **penultimate** proverbial "fork in the road" regarding strategic choice that FW de Klerk and his NP Government were confronted with at the end of 1989 (i.e., before they formally initiated the negotiation process with the 2 February 1990 speech) was whether they had to approach the other main protagonist, the ANC/SACP, adversarially in typical Westminster party-political style, or instead engage with them cooperatively, within the format of a limited strategic partnership aimed at together ensuring a smooth and rapid transition to a mutually-acceptable outcome (not as partners by choice or convergence of policy, but as obliged by destiny).

As earlier explained, the core drawback that the NP Government suffered from when they made their initial choice (when they chose to go for a win themselves, adopting therefore an adversarial stance and trying to reduce the ANC/SACP to "just another party") was that they made their choice of approach without the benefit of a proper functional strategic decision-making process. There was no preceding rigorous SWOT analysis, nor was there comprehensive scenario gaming of the likely outcomes of the different options available.

Indeed, there was a large degree of hubris, with the NP Government believing that the ANC was organisationally weak, had lost its main international sponsor (Moscow, which had effectively flipped sides), and having seen its Marxist ideology publicly exposed as a total failure in the former Eastern Bloc. In the corridors of Military Intelligence up in the Liberty Life Building, and in the Police's Security Branch in Wachthuis, the talk among the officers was again that the ANC/SACP could not and would not win an election – I have been told how the conversations in Wachthuis were that the NP would gain the white, "Coloured" and Indian vote, and together with the IFP and the homeland parties would defeat the ANC alliance at the ballot box (i.e., the same kind of utterly wrong wishful thinking – instead of objective intelligence analysis – as when the Military had earlier predicted that Mugabe would not win in Zimbabwe, and SWAPO wouldn't in SWA/Namibia).

As discussed in some detail in Chapter 13, it was also difficult for the NP politicians to imagine (in relation to retaining the support of their base) how they could, after years of "Red & Black Threat" indoctrination, now switch to a cooperative approach with the ANC.

The problem, again, was a lack of understanding of the fundamental principles of negotiation theory and not having developed a clear, comprehensive vision of all the different procedural ways through which to achieve the goal of cooperation (instead of adversarial public head-butting), without in the process exposing themselves to accusations of now getting in bed with the ANC. The essence of this lay in not approaching the negotiations as an open, in the public eye process, and not to trying to structure it around multilateral big-bang style events.

Instead, as Mr Mandela and Dr Barnard had reached consensus on during their many in-prison conversations, the process had first to be given sufficient substance by means of confidential, bilateral "pre-negotiation" meetings to build trust and thrash out an in-principle framework agreement (as the NP reverted to in 1992, when the "Channel Bilateral" was established).

The initial choice of an adversarial approach was utterly counter-productive, as amply illustrated during the wasted years leading up to the eventual bilateral, confidentially negotiated RoU signed between the NP and ANC in September 1992 (which was in effect the result of exactly the type of cooperative approach aimed at setting the negotiations on a viable course, that should have been adopted from the start). The negative result of this gravely flawed initial strategic choice regarding approach that the NP had made, was threefold:

- it firstly wasted valuable time,
- secondly, it allowed the ANC ample time to paint the NP Government as obstructionist and not competent nor reliable enough to be entrusted with facilitating the negotiation process, and
- Thirdly, it had wasted a golden opportunity for cementing in place at the outset, through cooperating with a still relatively weakened ANC whose moderate leaders were keen on such cooperation, the core foundational accords that could have led both to a technically better end result, and the strengthening of the moderates in the ANC against the radicals – if a cooperative approach had been adopted from the start (again, there's sad irony in the reality that the NP membership, within less than a decade of the 1994 elections, had understood the convergence of interests and of their own accord effectively decided to be absorbed by the ANC).

If the NP Government had embarked upon the negotiated transition with a well-prepared strategic plan and realistic situational awareness regarding their true fundamental interest, strengths and weaknesses, they should have opted towards the end of 1989 already to confidentially, bilaterally negotiate with the ANC a framework accord similar to the later RoU. They could have positioned themselves as the facilitating link occupying the middle ground, open to cooperation with all parties willing to join in a total transition through peaceful negotiation, talking to each bilaterally and confidentially till a broad-based consensus about the fundamentals of the process and the goals had been achieved.

With such a cooperative approach based on shared interests and the common good, rather than an adversarial approach intent upon outmanoeuvring and defeating the ANC, the NP Government could likely have negotiated a technically better constitution and also achieved what should have been their principle aim in terms of what absolutely had needed to be their two most fundamental strategic goals, namely:

- to **ensure that the radicals in the ANC don't get their hands on the levers of government power** (which, to this very day, is the correct fundamental threat assessment that should guide all political decisions of moderate South Africans across the party-political spectrum), and
- to ensure that the constitutional dispensation would decentralize and devolve power as much as possible, separating clearly the three branches of government, and ensuring that – as in the federalist American constitution – the means are built in to empower and legitimately allow the citizenry as well as local and state government to statutorily possess and control physical means of dissuasion against central government overreach as well as for the protection of persons and property in case of state collapse, coups, civil war, or mass looting and destruction.

# 15.17 A BIG FORK: PUSH GROUP RIGHTS, OR SEEK PEACE AND REHABILITATION?

It is unchangeable history that the NP had, at the outset of the negotiated transition, unfortunately chosen to adopt an adversarial approach to the ANC. By 1992 it had become clear that the success of the negotiation enterprise would above all depend on it gaining traction and **legitimacy**. Without legitimacy, it would have been an exercise in futility, with the strife continuing and the pressure piling on. What gaining legitimacy required was buy-in from around the negotiation table, regarding both the process and the constitutional model.

Reaching "sufficient consensus," as it was then called.

Having been unprepared for the negotiations due to the preceding "lost decade" under PW Botha and then outmanoeuvred by the ANC/SACP with their people's war strategy and its highly effective propaganda, by 1992 the NP Government found itself confronted by the last big strategic choice to make. This was to either keep pushing for a constitution that would conform to their preferences regarding group rights and quota-based "power sharing" (a confrontational approach which would have derailed the entire process), or go with the flow regarding the configuration of the constitution as majoritarian, and focus instead on the core foundational interests of the NP's members and support base, namely stability and security – in other words: peace, individual and property rights, and image rehabilitation.

In my humble opinion the NIS's assessment in this regard had, therefore, been correct, namely that majority rule was inevitable, as was the prospect of the ANC winning the election, and that in truth a Mandela-led ANC was the preferable outcome from a national security viewpoint since only they would be able to form an effective government after the first election (what had evidently not been foreseen, though, is that the ANC would in later years turn out to be as desperately poor at governing as they had been at waging a guerrilla war…).

Evidently the NP leadership and their constituency had much to lose if the negotiation process had descended into acrimony to the extent that a smooth transfer of power with legitimacy and legal continuity between the old and the new system could not be achieved. That would certainly have brought into focus the spectre of retribution and a fall-back to shooting it out. It was thus right and reasonable that the De Klerk team in 1992 chose consensus and reconciliation over further confrontation regarding the core constitutional model, to ensure as smooth a transition as possible and thereby achieve the stability and security that the whites – who materially had the most to lose – needed more than anything else.

The harsh reality is that the prior excesses of Apartheid had so contaminated the notion of group rights that it would have been hard to sell at the best of times, and effectively impossible in a situation where there had been little prior planning nor alliance-building beforehand, and where the white government possessed no effective counter-propaganda machine with which to neutralise the very effective propaganda of the ANC/SACP and the traditional animus that the English-language media had continued to display.

The net result of the NP Government abandoning group rights to focus instead on security and stability, and of the Afrikaner Right pushing for extremist group rights models that further discredited the entire concept, was that we ended up with the dollied-up Westminster/Jan Smuts highly centralised model we have today – which the English-speaking liberals and their media had praised to high heaven (and which indeed is a sound model for the protection of individual rights) but which gave the ANC exactly what it wanted through the model's complete centralisation and concentration of political power, further strengthened by the real power given to political parties to enforce that their MP's conform to their respective party's central dictate through the party list system for choosing assembly members.

Therefore, me saying that under the then prevailing circumstances the NP had made the only sensible choice when from 1992 onward it had prioritised security and stability to ensure a smooth, legitimate transition, does not mean that the Westminster model could or should not have been improved upon by means of borrowing from the USA model instead and promoting a clear separation between the three branches of government (by insisting on a directly-elected executive president) plus the decentralisation and devolution of power to the lowest level, as

close as possible to the people. Likewise, regarding moderating the party list system by means of party primaries to nominate candidates. Such improvements would likely have been possible early on had so much time not been unnecessarily wasted. It would likely have been acceptable to a "sufficient consensus", had there been a better understanding then of what the consequences would be of such heavy concentration of power at the centre. What had been needed was better planning and political preparation from the outset on the part of the NP, so as to aim for the right goals, by means of the appropriate processes, in order to enable its voice to be heard – the reality, however, was that the NP had over the 30 months that its initial strategy had wasted, allowed itself to become completely isolated, discredited, and distrusted.

Today, ironically, those same white voices who had acclaimed the Westminster-based model three decades ago, are belatedly beginning to plead for devolution of power…

Saying that the NP Government under De Klerk had in effect in 1992 taken the only road then still open to them, does not mean that I believe that FW de Klerk and his team were effective negotiators. They had indeed gained a lot (compared to the dire situation they had been in under PW Botha) by means of the bold declaration made by De Klerk on 2 February 1990. However, the golden opportunity created was then largely squandered because it remains a fact the NP cabinet was woefully unprepared for the negotiations (which is, of course, a grave omission for the account of PW Botha).

It is not only me criticising the lack of theoretical understanding, expertise, and realistic situational awareness that De Klerk and his team showed in three key areas: lack of proper preparation, lack of negotiation theory and skills, plus the lack of a well-thought-out strategy. The renown Afrikaans historian Prof Hermann Giliomee has been pointing this out in works such as his "*The last Afrikaner Leaders*", in the introduction of which he stated: *"…(FW) was too idealistic in his assumption that parliamentary democracy could readily be restored to glory. He was not a good strategist in negotiations. He postponed resolving the contested issue of power sharing until after the ANC had mobilised sufficiently to reject it.*"

In the later chapters of the book, where Giliomee focused on FW de Klerk himself, he went on to rightly criticise the fact that De Klerk's government failed to investigate and formulate in timely manner its position on key issues such as federalism and minority protection, and as a result, its negotiators often had no clear vision going into talks. In sum, Giliomee argued that FW de Klerk's poor negotiating abilities and his inability to decide timeously between a pro-federalist or a pro-centralist strategy, negatively affected the results in the end achieved by the NP in the negotiations, when evaluated against their core initial aspirations. (It will also be remembered how both Niël Barnard and Maritz Spaarwater had bewailed the lack of a strategic plan and of proper organisational structures with which to ensure effective NP cabinet interaction with the negotiation process and proper guidance for the NP negotiation team).

## 15.18 THE LAST FORK DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS: WHICH CONSTITUTIONAL MODEL TO GO FOR? (WESTMINSTER OR USA?)

I've already explained earlier the origins and nature of the Westminster model, so that I will not dwell too much upon that again. Suffice it to remind that it was developed by elites centred round a royal court of a nascent English empire, based on the centralisation of power in the hands of that royal court and its adjunct parliament of elites, with little effective separation of powers between them, with sovereignty vesting in the king – a system designed to keep the king's diverse subjects in check and "justifying" English dominance over the conquered nations such as the Scots and the Irish with the notion that all individually enjoy the exact same individual legal rights.

We've also explored the exact opposite origins and design objectives behind the American constitution – a federal republic where sovereignty vests in "we, the people", born in rebellion precisely against British royal elite exploitation and oppression, motivated by the understood need to be able to counter overreach on the part of the central government by means of, on the one hand, ensuring a clear separation between the judicial, legislative and executive functions, and on the other, by means of empowering the citizen (through universal suffrage and the right to bear arms) as well as the lower structures of governance at state and local level (by means of maximum devolution of power down to them). Furthermore, we've explained how the American constitution provides for the

means as well as authority to legitimately counter – physically, if need be – threats to the safety and security of person and property, through the said right to bear arms and the policing powers vested originally in local and regional government, as well as the National Guard system under control of state governors.

There can, in my humble opinion, be no doubt that the American model was and is much more apt for South African circumstances than the Westminster model is. I fully comprehend that the ANC had fought tooth and nail against any semblance of federalism, and that by late 1992 and 1993 (when the constitutional negotiations really crystallised) the ANC already had achieved total dominance. Which, to my mind, simply underscores how lamentable it is that the thoroughly unprepared NP Government had not at the start made full use of the leverage it then had to push for such an American-style approach – instead completely wasting for 30 crucial months its time and leverage on pushing for the impractical and unachievable: some vague dispensation that somehow would protect and promote the amorphous notion of ill-defined "group rights". Till in the end they had little option but to tweak the Westminster model – and not for the better – making it in the end (in terms of its core structural-functional characteristics as well as practical effect) resemble even more the type of "democratic centralism" centred on an all-powerful "vanguard party" of Marxism-Leninism. And not accommodating at all, real-world counters to the very real threats of state capture, state collapse, coups, and mass lawlessness.

Only time will tell what the long-term results will be of the 1996 constitutional dispensation effectively ignoring the plural nature and geographic vastness, as well as the real-world threats to safety and security inherent to our society and country. We have already seen (with state capture, pervasive and persistent corruption, impunity, as well as the Zuma riots of 2021), glimpses of the consequences that can flow from not having provided for strong checks and balances through clear separation of powers and maximum decentralisation and devolution alongside the very good protections for individual rights – all which could have been done on the non-racist basis of voluntary association/freedom of choice, within a single South African state but federally configured with maximum devolution, without need to have contaminated it with statutorily defined notions of groups or race.

A last thought to ponder – if we play again a bit of fantasy politics – is to ask what the likes of Verwoerd and Vorster would have done, had they known back then in the sixties how things would in fact turn out in South Africa by the beginning of the nineties? In other words, that a negotiated settlement was unavoidably looming in the near future? With such foreknowledge, would they have been more receptive to the ideas favoured by their intelligence professionals such as Hendrik van den Bergh and Eschel Rhoodie, who had been urgently pleading to step away from racism (rightly calling clinging to it as equivalent to suicide) and to recognise the reality that South Africa had become one interdependent economic entity, of which the bulk of its territory in practice was shared land which had to be governed as such?

Paying the same "what if" game as regards PW Botha and FW de Klerk: Having known from the incendiary failure of the 1983 Tricameral (quota-based) constitution experiment that a group/quota approach doesn't work, why did they both persist with that approach? Especially FW de Klerk, at the launch of his laudable settlement-seeking initiative, persisting with that stillborn idea for 30 crucial months? Just as Van den Bergh and Rhoodie had correctly warned Vorster, AP Stemmet and the State Security Council Secretariat had, prior to the 1983 constitution being imposed, warned PW that excluding Blacks and imposing it without any real, inclusive consultation was to invite massive resistance. Yet PW persisted, and even though FW took on board the idea that any change needs to be inclusively and genuinely negotiated, he still persisted with the quota-based notion, despite the results of the 1983 experiment.

The "what if" question that still tugs at me, is this: What if PW Botha had, from the start of his premiership, gone the OFS/USA route instead of the 1983 group/quota model? Aiming for an entirely non-racial but federal system, to be developed in a phased manner after proper negotiation with all. Putting the ANC/SACP before a choice (which they then would likely have failed, given the constraints of their Cold War alliance with the USSR). Using exactly that Cold War context to mobilise Western support (on condition, of course, that the NP would have needed then already – as De Klerk indeed did less than a decade later – to have committed to a truly democratic non-racial system that's truly federal).

Institutionalising a strong, defensible, legitimate template for a system properly separating the three branches of government, a Bill of Rights, a directly elected president, governors and mayors, and the devolution of powers down to lower levels of governance. Would Reagan and Thatcher not have been bound to welcome the basing of such a new dispensation on the USA constitutional template?

Emphasising that the goal was to expeditiously move, by ways of negotiation with the willing, to complete non-racialism but in a managed, phased manner, systematically incorporating all non-whites from the bottom up. All the while maintaining with Mr Mandela and the ANC bilateral, confidential conversations to bring them into the process, but making it clear that the process will be proceeded with even if they don't openly join.

This systematic approach could have very credibly been motivated by means of referencing the problematic African "big bang" decolonisation experience and the absolute need to avoid that being repeated in South Africa. All on condition that the NP then already realising (as De Klerk and the New Nats concluded by 1989) that an entirely new non-racial dispensation within a unitary state was inevitable. Which, as we know, PW Botha and the "total onslaught" adherents were absolutely refusing to acknowledge…

That "what if" is water under the bridge, of course – but it is worth pondering it, in terms of learning…

Having reiterated here the fundamental truth that by 1975 the die had in effect been cast, I will not now re-hash all over again, the large body of proof earlier presented in this eBook regarding the dysfunction and discord of the "lost decade" – which self-same dysfunction in decision-making unfortunately continued under De Klerk. In concluding this chapter of reflection, I'd rather ponder now the lessons one can take from that time of storm and error – admitting again that writing now with the benefit of hindsight is of course far easier and much more accurate than it was, back then, to have possessed the necessary foresight.

Underlining also that these are my subjective insights and opinions, offered here as "my truth" without any claim to profound wisdom or to it being necessarily correct, when seen from someone else's opposing perspective.

## 15.19 OUR HISTORY's CORE LESSONS FOR TODAY

### 15.19.1 SOUTH AFRICA'S INTERNAL CONFLICT WAS ALWAYS POLITICAL IN NATURE, NOT MILITARY – IT WAS ABOUT LEGITIMACY, AS PREREQUISITE FOR PEACE AND HARMONY

Carl von Clausewitz wrote before his death in 1831 (in his unfinished treatise "*On War*") that "war is the continuation of politics by other means". That is even more true of modern conflict than it was back when he wrote it. In those days of kingdoms and empires, war was often an economic endeavour of princes and kings. Because military conquest expanded the number of subjects capable of being taxed, as well as the territory serving as resource base – war thus being, kind of, the business/profession of rapacious nobility.

Now war falls within the domain of national governments, involving the entire state and nation…

Von Clausewitz was a fervent supporter of the then new concept of the nation-state. He thus understood the power of nationalism, and it is in that context (i.e., of the nation as state having at its disposal different tools for pursuing its political goals, among which force of arms) that he wrote that war is but one such instrument, always directed by and in service of political goals.

The logical flip side of the coin, therefore, is that military force in and of itself cannot resolve political problems.

In the case of South Africa's internal conflict, it was vital that its true nature be correctly understood by decision-makers. What was at its root (competing nationalisms) and what was the only way to resolve it? (A legitimate negotiated settlement). Yes, it was a complex situation, made doubly so by the Cold War overlay, in which the gun featured because of the communist dictum that political power flows from the barrel of a gun. Undoubtedly South Africa was a strategic prize which the Soviets had coveted, in their competition with the capitalist world. But that did not change what was truly at the heart of the struggle for the main local protagonists.

It always was, first and foremost, an asymmetrical contest for political power between **two competing nationalisms** – that of the Afrikaner versus black African nationalism. It was asymmetrical in two senses: in the military sense, the Afrikaner-led whites had overwhelming military force at their disposal; in the socio-economic and political sense, though, the black Africans had overwhelming numerical superiority as well as the international community on its side (the latter mostly because of the ANC/SACP's vast superiority in terms of propaganda), plus being indispensable to the economy as labour. This integrated nature of the state that PW Botha had sought to militarily maintain, by its very nature begged the question: how do you employ military force against a recalcitrant population forming the vast majority of the population living and working within your own borders? Per definition, that is not defence – it is oppression, pure and simple.

That the ostensible ideological orientation of the two sides in reality had played but an insignificant role, can be demonstrated by simply asking what percentage of both populations had had even the vaguest idea of what "Christian Nationalism" entailed as ideology (on the white side), or "scientific socialism" (on the black side). The fact that the ANC/SACP entirely discarded "scientific socialism" (i.e., establishing a Marxist people's republic) prior to the CODESA talks, shows how little weight ideology actually carried, compared to nationalism-fed aspiration to gain (or retain) political power as the true main driving force on both sides.

The first important lesson one should take from South Africa's conflict is, therefore, that this political contest could only be settled by means of an agreed new political dispensation meeting the minimum requirements of the parties and legitimised by having acquired "sufficient consensus" at inclusive, unconditional negotiations. Without such a settlement the conflict would have descended ever further into never-ending sectional violence, growing ungovernability, and rising international pressure, destroying the country in the process and solving nothing.

Everybody who had viewed this struggle (between competing nationalisms for political power) as essentially a national security issue to be resolved by means of the oppressive application of superior force, thus had been barking up the wrong tree altogether.

### 15.19.2 THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF PROPAGANDA IN A STRUGGLE FOR POLITICAL POWER

The second lesson is that such a political contest for power which is determined by perceptions of legitimacy, is largely won by **propaganda** – definitely more so than by force of arms. Thus, the NP (despite the powerful military that PW Botha had so single-mindedly tried to build), lost the contest for political power to the ANC/SACP, because the latter had been far superior in the use of propaganda. In fact, in that critical domain it had really been no contest…

There are three things to always keep in mind regarding propaganda. These are that, in a struggle that its essentially political in nature and which is won by he who is perceived to hold the moral high ground (i.e., perceived as legitimate) the following counts:

- you need to prioritise building the means and expertise for effectively waging counter-propaganda, even more so than building your military means;
- your side should at all cost avoid providing ammunition to the other side's propaganda machine, which latter will naturally be aimed at amplifying "atrocities" and winning the moral high ground; and
- you should not believe your own propaganda, because you need to maintain your own clarity about what is really going on.

**The first point to make about propaganda is that it is a highly skilled and resource-intensive enterprise** which requires considerable expertise, infrastructure, and means to do it right – especially in terms of networks of collaborators who serve as message multipliers. If we look at what had played out around the "*Infoscandal*" (which resulted in the destruction of the counterpropaganda means and expertise that had been built up), then that was one of the most serious own goals that the NP had ever scored against itself. Especially the wanton destruction of the international networks of influence that had been built up, when those foreign assets were hung out in public to dry – not valued at all in the parochial, self-serving pursuit of the NP's internal leadership power games…

**The second vital point to take to heart about propaganda, is to not provide the other side with ammo**. It remains a fact that Apartheid with its baggage of racial discrimination was never a product that could be sold in

the post-war world, even with the best marketing. The urgent warnings by the likes of Rhoodie, Van den Bergh, and Foreign Affairs that it was imperative to do away with Separate Development's side-baggage of racism (starting with the so-called "Coloureds") were not heeded in time. This virtually assured that the ANC/SACP – in seizing on the NP's institutionalisation of racism – would win the propaganda war, despite their own heavy baggage of communism. That fundamental error is for the account of the short-sighted "Super Afrikaner" elites and NP politicians.

The error of gratuitously providing ammo to the opposition's propaganda machine wasn't limited to the politicians, however. There were damaging "own goals" created by the Security Forces, stretching back to the inept handling of the Sharpeville tragedy, to Operation Savannah, the entirely unnecessary Soweto youth unrest debacle (why did the Police on the scene try and stop the children from marching?), the atrociously mishandled detention and death of the likes of Steve Biko, Ahmed Timol, Dr Neil Aggett, and then the snowballing descent into illegal actions as the "total onslaught" philosophy took hold (as if justifying anything and everything), such as the actions of the SADF's Civil Cooperation Bureau...

In that regard my father's April 1977 warning to his Port Natal Security Branch staff was prophetic, and merits quoting here again: "*The arena in which this psychological warfare is being waged against us with the greatest ferocity and success ... is in the general field of detentions under Security Legislation. Not only the courts but also the general public are already seriously questioning the Security Branch's alleged irregular actions; soon even the Cabinet will do so – it can be assumed that they are already feeling "uncomfortable", to put it mildly.*

*" ...the time has come when we must put our hand in our own bosom and honestly and objectively examine whether we have not, in and through our own actions, worked directly into the hands of our enemies and thus are ourselves largely responsible for our defeats. ... We must restore and build our image in the eyes of the people. If we fail to do so, we ourselves will be responsible* ***for infinite and possibly irrevocable damage to our country****."*

**The second and third points merge when it comes to understanding the consequences of your own side's propaganda.** It may indeed play well with your own side (who are not the primary audience for your propaganda, though) when, for example, as an American you start calling every challenge a "war" – such as in "war on drugs", "war on terror" and the like. It may make your own side believe that you are taking the matter seriously, when you use such forceful terms. But calling everything a "war" awards the other side a status that they do not deserve, and it tends to automatically militarise the "solution" in the minds of people. It is counter-productive, because the use of such terminology bestows upon those causing the problem the status of belligerents, as if they are "soldiers" of an opposing "army", whereas they are in fact criminals (for using violence to further their political aims).

The perpetrators of such political violence should be depicted to the public as criminals, and be dealt with primarily by means of policing – as the British consistently did in Northern Ireland, referring to the "troubles" rather than to "war" (as the self-styled "Irish Republican Army" would undoubtedly have wished for them to do). Similarly, the SAP-SB under General Van den Bergh had very successfully investigated and prosecuted the perpetrators of the ANC/SACP's sabotage campaign of the 1960s, using the common criminal courts of the land (purposely no special security courts) precisely so as not to give the MK operatives any other status than that of criminals – in that way, the sabotage campaign was soon enough brought to a complete stop.

Another nowadays popular term which can cause your own side to lose perspective, is "counter-insurgency".

To "surge in" logically means that members of a foreign force are crossing into your territory illegally, with the aim to perpetrate political violence. However, the reality usually is that those "insurgents" are not the foreigners, but in truth the indigenous nationalists, who are fighting precisely to expel the real foreigners who had come to occupy their ancestral lands…

If we take Ovamboland, for example (or more recently Afghanistan) then clearly the foreigners who had "surged in" were the SADF and the U.S. Army, respectively. They were fighting to contain the local indigenous nationalists (the Wambos, personified by SWAPO; and the Pashtun, represented by the Taliban). It remains a fundamental problem across the globe that the Anglo-world with its intellectual heritage of an imperial worldview remains fixated

with borders and territory, no matter how arbitrary, whereas the rest of the world tend to think and act in terms of nationalism and actual ethno-cultural demographic spread, with little heed to artificial colonial borders.

As long as this dichotomy of views about the sanctity of territory versus the interest of the ethnic national group remains (as in the case of Ukraine/Russia, the Balkans, Kurdistan, and much of Africa with its arbitrary colonial boundaries) then there will persist a potential for conflict – because there will be fundamentally opposing views as to who is the true "insurgent". If you are in actual fact the foreign occupier (as we were in Ovamboland) yet you act and think – on the basis of a ridiculous border drawn at the Berlin Conference a century earlier – that you are on "your" land and defending it against "insurgents", then your understanding of reality is fatally flawed and your conventional military-style actions may not be appropriate, leading to further polarisation and alienation of the local population. Which is probably part of the reason why it was the Police's Koevoet unit with its large preponderance of local Wambos in each team, using detective methods and information supplied by locals, that was by far the most successful in locating SWAPO guerrillas…

I believe that, in cases such as Afghanistan or the protection of vulnerable African states against ISIS, there should be a fundamental re-think. The world should not be sending in foreign forces drawn from conventional military formations who then go in, dressed in their foreign military uniforms and equipped with their conventional military gear. Instead, special indigenous **police** task forces should be assembled on the model of Koevoet – with its operational teams being led for the time necessary by seconded experts in such conflict zone policing, but with each operational team of a dozen or so men consisting mostly of trackers recruited from the local population and trained in detective work, public liaison and the basic paramilitary combat skills necessary for defending themselves against and surgically apprehending lightly-armed "insurgents" as and when needed, with a minimum of collateral damage.

The greatest propaganda asset that can be provided to forces such as the Taliban and ISIS is if they can point to "foreign armies of occupation" on the sacred soil of the fatherland, propping up illegitimate "puppet regimes" of "collaborators." Their worst nightmare, on the other hand, is if they are treated as common criminals (because of violent terror to promote their extremist aims), and are then being rooted out by specialist local police, acting as law-enforcers – even if strengthened by seconded experts and appropriately equipped and organised into active pursuit field teams.

No-one wants to naively send civilian police detectives into a conflict zone as if they are investigating a common case of robbery, but (as the Koevoet SAP-SB detectives very effectively showed), the choice should not starkly be between sending out detectives as if investigating everyday civilian matters, or sending in the conventional military. On the principle of horses for courses, there should be such specialist local indigenous police units – who are visibly policemen, doing detective work and are appropriately trained for that. Just as many countries have specialist police for public order situations (instead of sending combat troops in to handle that), there should be specialised police formations trained and equipped to deal with political terror, yet doing so still as policemen with a view to criminal prosecution.

Conventional military forces should be reserved for defence against conventional military threats.

**The third critically important point about propaganda** is to not allow your own side's messaging to cloud your understanding of actual reality.

Obviously, the NP's propaganda directed at its own white voters (about the twin perils of the "*Rooi gevaar*" and the "*Swart gevaar*" – i.e., the combined Red and Black perils threatening white South Africa) played well for them with the white voter audience. However, ascribing the country's difficulties entirely to this "total onslaught" being directed by the Soviets, blinded many of those in decision-making positions to the other side of the coin – namely, that their own policies were mostly to blame for generating the visceral resistance being seen on the streets of the townships. In other words, that they, with their racist policies, were actually playing into the hands of the likes of the ANC/SACP.

It fell to people such as Niël Barnard and my father to warn that one should not seek a communist behind every bush. Eventually it was the NIS with their "new paradigm" of "national intelligence" (in place of the former notion of protecting "state security") that took the bull by the horns and **told the NP Government straight-out that their race policies were at the heart of the instability in the country…**

### 15.19.3 OPTIMAL DECISION-MAKING REQUIRES FUNCTIONAL, FEARLESS, FACT-BASED INTELLIGENCE CAPABILITIES, FREE OF INSTITUTIONAL OR POLITICAL BIAS

Modern conflicts are contested with brains rather than brawn. States need to ensure that they have decision-making systems in place that are not dysfunctional, nor prone to turf-protecting discord among institutions or to uncoordinated, unilateral silo-type actions. These requirements need to be met whilst simultaneously fostering fearless, independent, and fact-based intelligence assessment – not an easy task, as the truly lamentable experiences during the seventies and eighties in the then South African security/intelligence establishment, as well as at cabinet level, amply illustrated.

One of the core problems encountered in the above regard, is the very human one of officers in institutions such as military intelligence or the security services finding it well-neigh impossible to be objective when other components of their own mother institutions are actively participating at the sharp end of the action on which is being reported. It is like having a rugby match commented upon by a member of one of the teams on the field.

This we saw well illustrated during the Vietnam War, when the Pentagon were assiduous in reporting "kill stats" (favouring their side) but were missing the point entirely as to how the political struggle was actually increasingly going against them. I experienced the very same thing happening in the case of SWA/Namibia (my altercation with AG Gerrit Viljoen, referred to earlier).

Every state entity that has as its principal line function the performance of one of the great executive duties of states (such as being responsible for policing or defending against foreign military aggression) evidently does need its own intelligence capability, as required for and focused on performing its line function. But such a departmental intelligence capability is obviously secondary to its line function and will naturally tend to be limited to the area of interest dictated by its line function. Equally naturally, those departmental intelligence analysts will be tempted to look at any contest in which their broader department is actively involved (such as a military waging a war, or police apprehending terrorists) with some subliminal bias in favour of presenting their department's performance in the best possible light.

It is therefore a reality that states do need **independent** national intelligence agencies with no own executive functions that may cause them to carry performance assessment biases – in other words, a civilian agency with a national instead of departmental perspective. Furthermore, it should serve as centralised agency which can coordinate departmental input yet can be capable of maintaining the necessary intellectual and emotional distance from the subject-matter, so as to be able to assess objectively what is really going on. An agency with licence to speak truth to power, to tell the political decision-makers what they **need** to hear, not what they **want** to hear.

It is sadly true that the best such objective, fact-based intelligence is useless if the political decision-makers don't want to accept it. Such as when Ian Smith did not heed the Rhodesian CIO's advice to not declare UDI. Or when John Vorster took umbrage against Eschel Rhoodie (backed by Hendrik van den Bergh) for urgently warning that there was a need for speed in getting rid of racism and advancing towards a negotiated settlement. Or when PW Botha rejected the wise counsel of the Secretariat of the State Security Council in 1983 that he should not unilaterally impose the Tri-Cameral constitution without proper broad consultation and inclusion of black Africans.

The main theme of this Part Three had been the dysfunction and discord within the security/intel-community (and cabinet) during the "lost decade." The ample proof provided of the calamitous consequences of that dysfunction, underscores one of the main lessons that I believe should be taken from this era, namely that it is of the utmost importance for any political system (i.e., state) to develop and maintain a correctly conceived and configured, well-functioning national security decision-making subsystem.

Fortunately, FW de Klerk (despite his preceding reputation as a conservative) did heed the intelligence assessment that the NIS presented him with in 1989, and decided to "run with the ball…"

## 15.19.4 AVOID GROUPTHINK – INSTEAD, FOSTER A CULTURE OF CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND OF SPEAKING UP

One of the most important lessons from the lamentable experience of the seventies and eighties is that enforcing groupthink on society does NOT ensure unity and coordination; instead, it suppresses critical analysis and the willingness to speak up, often when such free-thinking insights that question commonly held, politically correct assumptions are most urgently needed.

It is now patently obvious that Rhoodie and Van den Bergh had been absolutely correct in their assessments about the urgent need to be rid of the albatross of Apartheid racism, and to focus on preparing for "having a seat at the table" when negotiating a new constitutional dispensation would inevitably come round (which was not to say that they were not Afrikaner patriots or did not fervently support their group's interests being protected).

Unfortunately, their expert counsel was not heeded and the "Super Afrikaner" establishment machine for enforcing conformity – the AB and the Afrikaans press – forced them into the wilderness. Just as that same machine had done in 1960, at the direction of the quite autocratic Dr Verwoerd, to the DRC church delegation who had signed the DRC up to the Cottesloe Declaration against racism, and also to Piet Cillié of ***Die Burger*** newspaper, when he had written in an op-ed that consideration should be given to Coloured representation in parliament…

It is therefore not as if there hadn't been counsellors, influencers, and top leaders back in the seventies who had understood the seriousness of the situation.

John Vorster had understood the tough times that confronted white South Africa and had privately declared that Verwoerdian "separate development" was unworkable – but, in the end, he opted to maintain an artificial unity in his party rather than risk the internal conflict that would have resulted had he chosen to lead, rather than follow…

Pik Botha also had comprehended what needed to be done. But in pursuit of his own rampant political ambitions – and true to his sly style – he then chose to become chief enabler of the least competent of the contenders for NP leadership, PW Botha (because he presumably had reasoned that PW would, afterwards, be the easiest for him to replace). In that underhand way Pik Botha had empowered the most delusional school of thought in the party, only to thoroughly rue it and then having to resort – again, in his sly style – to all kinds of shenanigans to try and paint PW into a corner (only thereby succeeding in compounding the damage that PW's aggressive obtuseness was causing in such abundance).

Looking back at the thirty years from 1960 to 1990, it is difficult to grasp today how the NP Government could have deliberately ignored the rapidly mounting evidence and expert advice that negotiating a settlement would become inevitable, and that it thus was imperative to prepare for it well in advance and launch it timeously. How could it not have been understood that the environment would only become progressively worse, and that delaying meant that opportunities were being missed? (such as having had Reagan and Thatcher in charge, in the midst of the Cold War fear in the West of the USSR). That it was thus essential to urgently move ahead so as to remain in charge of the process, be able to retain the initiative, and bargain still from a position of relative strength?

The only logical answer to this was that enforced groupthink outweighed common sense, with fever dreams being preferred over acknowledging increasingly harsh reality. This was reenforced by the dysfunction and discord within the security/intel-community during the "lost decade", overlayed by the infighting and voracious personal ambitions at cabinet level.

This unfortunate situation was worsened because of the Afrikaans press, academia, and church in general not daring to publicly voice dissenting opinions or question dogma, thanks to the threat of social ostracization organised and enforced through the Broederbond.

Till at last FW de Klerk was man enough to face up squarely to reality… But then with very few cards in hand – and, unfortunately, without a functional system for strategic decision-making.

### 15.19.5 CHECK REAL-WORLD WORKABILITY OF IDEAS AGAINST PRACTICAL REALITY – NO "FEVER DREAMS"

Would South Africa have ended up in the hands of the ANC, with the latter made all-powerful by a highly centralised Westminster-based constitutional dispensation, had Hendrik Verwoerd heeded the thoroughly researched warnings of the Tomlinson Commission (which his own government had appointed) that his concept of "separate development" was in practice unworkable? If John Vorster had acted upon his self-admitted comprehension of this reality, namely that Apartheid cannot be made to work? If PW Botha had heeded the advice of his own security advisors that imposing the Tricameral Constitution would be highly incendiary? If FW had first checked, through proper SWOT-style analysis and scenario gaming, whether basing his approach to the negotiations upon an adversarial posture and hanging around his neck the albatross of "group rights" and later quota-based "power sharing", would at all be viable in the real world?

I believe that I do not need to say more about this self-evident subject…

### 15.19.6 BE SENSITIVE TO TIME RUNNING OUT EVER FASTER, IN OUR MODERN ERA OF RAPID CHANGE

We live in a world that is changing ever more rapidly, due to globalisation and advances in technology.

It is, therefore, more important than ever to be sensitive to the reality that in politics as well, time for making and implementing decisions is also running out faster and faster. Meaning, that it becomes more and more likely that delaying may result in opportunities lost – opportunities that may never return.

Hope is not a strategy. The Jews who did not heed the writing on the wall in Europe during the thirties, staying on there in hope, had come to regret it soon after…

Opportunities irredeemably lost also abound in our history. Had Prime Minister Hertzog's initiative to bring the "Coloureds" fully into the Union's political processes been implemented, then South Africa would have been immune to the charge of practicing institutionalised racism (which everyone can today see for themselves would have resulted in a fundamentally different situation for the government when confronting ANC/SACP propaganda in the era of African Uhuru).

Had Premier Vorster responded positively to the Lusaka Manifesto and heeded the advice of his experts, initiating during the first half of the seventies the same kind of negotiations that FW de Klerk was obliged to initiate less than two decades later, then it is a given that a far more appropriate new constitutional model could back then have been adopted than that which eventually was agreed at Kempton Park…

There is the misconception afoot that it was the fact that the Cold War was coming to an end that "allowed" FW de Klerk to seize the moment and initiate negotiations with no longer any fear of the Red Bear. There is superficial truth to this, but the end of the Cold War was for the NP Government in reality a moment of hugely increased peril, because it meant that the West had lost any reason for still surreptitiously backing it and were likely to begin drastically increasing pressure due to their own domestic political considerations.

The end of the Cold War also paradoxically favoured the ANC, because the West were no longer fearful that Mr Mandela and company would try and install a Marxist people's republic beholden to a threatening USSR. In combination, these two factors meant that the NP Government's bargaining position would have rapidly weakened, had FW de Klerk not initiated negotiations when he did.

It was thus truly propitious that the NP Government under De Klerk had, in the nick of time, understood the urgency of the need to settle… Inversely, though, it clearly would have been far more beneficial had De Klerk's predecessors seized the far more propitious Cold War Era to then already have initiated negotiations.

The current situation in South Africa is again very much in the balance, due to the fact that there no longer is a clear majority party. The moderate ANC faction under President Ramaphosa is hanging on by their fingernails, against the challenge by the radicals (in their own ranks, as well as the MKP and EFF) with their demands for rapid economic transformation by means of the implementation of the socialist National Democratic Revolution. The 2026 municipal elections will likely show more proof of the trend towards further political fragmentation (with communities increasingly seeking out political parties oriented towards their group's identity and interests), This will lead to even more need for coalition governments across all levels of authority.

The next general election is going to be crucial. But it cannot be simply assumed that the ANC will continue to be weakened. It may in fact retain its prior dominance if a popular and competent leader such as Patrice Motsepe is elected to replace Cyril Ramaphosa…

The key issue remains: avoid at all cost that the radicals achieve control over the levers of power.

One can but pray that those now living in South Africa in hope of better times to come, will not one day despair at not having seized the opportunity to leave, when that had still existed…

### 15.19.7 ALWAYS RESPECT LEGALITY AND THE RULE OF LAW, ESPECIALLY DURING POLITICAL CONFLICT

A lesson of great importance that the South African experience teaches us, especially for security forces, is the practical and political necessity (besides the moral imperative) to always adhere to the rule of law and to legality in all actions.

As regards the **practical** necessity to always remain legal, this can easily be demonstrated by simply asking today: what of any practical value did the many supposedly unattributable "special operations" of the "total onslaught" era exactly achieve? The blowing up of the ANC offices in London? Assassinating Ruth First in Maputo? Trying to blow up American petroleum company infrastructure in Cabinda? Operation Marion in the Caprivi/KwaZulu? And so I can go on…

None of it changed the eventual outcome for the better, even in the slightest (and most actually just had worsened the situation significantly). It is also a well-known fact that third degree methods of interrogation do not produce reliable intelligence. Accordingly, I do not believe that anybody can point to any practical benefit that ever resulted from the over-zealousness that increasingly marked security force conduct, especially from 1985 onwards – whilst, on the contrary, it did enormous harm to exactly the cause it was supposed to serve.

In the context of the **political** struggle (dominated as that was by the role of **propaganda**) it is easy to show that not adhering scrupulously to legal requirements amounts to nothing other than feeding your opponent's propaganda machine – of which the most effective form will always be **atrocity propaganda**. As I have shown, there is a clear correlation in our own history between incidents such as the mishandling of the Soweto youth riots, the unfortunate death in detention of Steve Biko and similar such events, and the subsequent imposition of ever harsher punitive measures by the international community.

Unfortunately, it is no defence to say that the other side have done worse. Or that a "total onslaught" is being waged against us, which justified a "total response" – with "all being fair" in love and war…

Propaganda wars are not won or lost on the basis of the objective truth. It is won by the ability of the machine you have created and its support networks of message multipliers to convincingly get your propaganda slant out to the widest, most relevant audience. Given that the powerful English-language press in South Africa had for decades been heavily anti-government in its stance, which carried through to the English-language media world-wide and through them to the international media, plus the fact that the ANC/SACP could rely on the well-funded international left-wing media apparatus of the Comintern, it had been even more necessary for us than for anyone elsewhere on earth that we should not have given the ANC/SACP the slightest bit of fodder for disseminating atrocity propaganda against us.

In the end, the fact that – because of our preceding human rights record – Mr Mandela could get away with his "Third Force" claims whilst his ANC/SACP were waging a bloody "people's war" that swung the balance of power in their favour at a critical time, can largely be ascribed to the fact that our previous misdeeds had lent credence to Mr Mandela's propaganda claims. At a minimum, it was our own past record that had hamstrung Mr de Klerk from making our undefeated security forces a bigger factor for the good in the transition. Ideally, he should have been able to pitch them as the key guarantors of the stability and security that the negotiations required, to thereby strengthen a claim that De Klerk badly had needed to be able to make – namely, that his government represented the moderate middle, as the essential facilitators and protectors of the process…

So, let us not be naïve about what the hugely negative image that had been created of us on the basis of our own indiscretions, had in the end cost our own side…

As regards the **moral imperative** of respecting legality and the rule of law, that shouldn't require lengthy justification here. It should be obvious that one cannot claim to be defending Judeo-Christian values against communist barbarism, if you yourself are guilty of not respecting those self-same values…

### 15.19.8 IN PLURAL SOCIETIES SPREAD ACROSS VAST NATIONAL TERRITORIES, POWER SHOULD BE SEPARATED AND DEVOLVED, NOT CONCENTRATED

Since these are my reflections on the "old order" in its twilight years, I'm not going to indulge my instincts as lawyer and political scientist to expand here at length on all that may conceivably be improved in our current constitutional model. However, it is such an important subject that it cannot be merely ignored either, because the transition and the last three decades in general had brought forth some very important lessons.

It has been a fundamental reality throughout history that political power seems to hate any notion of being shared. The natural inclination has always been strongly towards a pyramidal, hierarchical order, ultimately placing power in one pair of hands.

The antidote to this is not to try and share executive power mathematically. It lies in strictly separating the functional components of power (legislative, executive, and judicial) and furthermore to devolve it down as far as possible, to create counter-poles of power serving as checks and balances on each other.

The first of these issues, that of separation of powers, relates to what is in effect unfinished business. Under pressure of time, the issue of a directly elected president was not definitively concluded at Kempton Park, nor by the new National Assembly when (also under severe time pressure) it had, sitting as Constituent Assembly, to refine and adopt the final constitution. You may recall that the matter was punted down the road – the Van Zyl Slabbert Commission was appointed to gauge public opinion and report back to parliament. Their finding was that an overwhelming majority of voters indeed wanted a directly elected executive president, and the idea seemingly also carried sufficient support among political parties to make its adoption quite likely.

Unfortunately, President Thabo Mbeki saw the introduction of such a new directly elected system as an opportunity to extend his own stay in office (on the basis that being directly elected would not be a third term for him, but in effect a re-set, being then supposedly his first new term of two more under the new dispensation). This infuriated his opponents within the ANC and contributed to his ousting as party leader at their Polokwane conference. With Mbeki leaving, the initiative to directly elect the president on an own mandate also went out the door (it did not suit the radical wing of the ANC under Zuma, because they knew that their man would not be elected by the voting public in such a direct election).

What is really at stake in this matter, is to have a clear separation of powers between the executive, the legislature and the judicial branch of government, USA-style. The Westminster system gives the majority faction in the majority party effective control over all three branches, which is far too much of a concentration of power in a plural society – as we have seen over the past three decades, but especially during the Zuma presidency. It will certainly help protect minorities if a true separation of powers is incorporated into any amendments of the current constitution – particularly by means of instituting direct elections for an executive president with an own electoral mandate (as in the U.S.A.) because that will enable a true separation of the three branches of government.

It will also oblige parties to put up presidential candidates with broad appeal, which would favour moderates over radicals. What using a system of primaries at all levels would do, is to also limit the power of the central party apparat over the individual representative, who through the primaries will gain an own mandate instead of being "deployed" (or removed) at the whim of party HQ.

What the experience of the past three decades also teaches us is that the current highly centralised form of government needs to be replaced by a maximal devolution of powers to the lowest practical level, to bring government as close as possible to the communities it must serve. Having provinces means little if they cannot autonomously look after matters such as policing, education, health, public transport, electricity generation, water supply and the like within their own jurisdictions, without some national department at central government level being able to override them. Very few countries have, for example, just one centrally controlled national police force…

Setting aside the normative-legalist constitutional dimension and looking at the Behaviouralist dimension of real-world comportment, it is the clear that the best outcomes result when there isn't a natural majority composed of one homogenous interest group. If we elevate race to the dividing line, then whites, "Coloureds" and Indians will always lose, because we are making the majority, the Black Africans, such a distinct interest group. Do not give Blacks reason to unite against the rest. Let each interest group find its own political home of comfort, leaving it to culture and shared values to determine the allegiance of the individual. Not a nice-sounding but impractical geographic or territorial "home of comfort", but in terms of political party of choice.

In the above regard, it is key that the majority must not see you as minority as a threat. If you are seen as a threat capable and intent upon depriving them of something they value, then they will unite against you as minority. If the majority no longer see the minority as a threat but rather as an asset that enables the unlocking of common benefit, then they will value you as minority. It is a question of trust and freedom of fear – when fear is gone and there's trust that you are intent upon contributing, then the need for a defensive posture is gone and people instinctively switch to looking for ways of winning together, wanting the best players to represent them (just look at the example of the Springboks). Humans are geared to first protect the self against threat (defence) and only thereafter to think about how to profit.

Fear leads to a laager mentality, with polarisation then tearing society apart. If a white minority is not seen as threat, and groups in the majority fear each other more than they fear whites, then whites become the choice of reason as to who should be elected to govern, to keep the distrusted "other lot" out. The need, therefore, is to arrive at a position where it is in the collective majority's own best interest to allow individuals who happen to be white but who possess the skills and values required, to help steer and stabilise the ship of state, thus working on both fear and greed (and lest you think this is an oversimplification of how humans make choices, remember that this is exactly how stock market investment and business entrepreneurship fundamentally is driven).

### 15.19.9 LEGITIMACY IS KEY – THEREFORE PROCESS CAN BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN CONTENT

To my mind, one of the most important lessons to learn from South Africa's transition is that in real life (as opposed to the pages of textbooks on Constitutional Law and Political Science) the PROCESS whereby a new constitution is arrived at takes precedence over the finicky final CONFIGURATION of its CONTENT. This is due to the fact that the top-ranking priority always needs to be to achieve **LEGITIMACY** (because, without legitimacy, there will not be acceptance and thus there cannot be security and stability). Legitimacy depends not primarily on the eventual shape and content of the constitution, but fundamentally on whether the PROCESS followed to develop it was inclusive and open and had mustered sufficient consensus.

Stating this is not to postulate a theory, but simply the observation of a practical political reality.

I do not agree with academic historians such as Hermann Giliomee when he decries the era of John Vorster as "arid", as Vorster having busied himself with foreign relations whilst supposedly "waddling around in a pool of complacency" on internal policy – with Giliomee saying so because Vorster did not publicly push "changes" in policy content in the same way and as frequently as PW Botha would later periodically punt. Vorster had

understood what PW didn't, namely that PROCESS was key – that even good and necessary change will be shot down from the left as too little, too late, or on the other hand be seen by those on the right as an abject sell-out and thus lead to schisms and the loss of unity, if an appropriate PROCESS is not followed to move the electorate from position A to position Z.

Affecting change in South Africa had always faced as its biggest obstacle the fact that, at least as regards the whites, South Africa indeed had been a true democracy. The only way in which the white electorate could conceivably have been moved to accept the radical changes inevitably required was to present them with a fundamental choice, such as was done in the Namibian referendum and FW de Klerk's 1992 referendum. Take it or leave it.

The PROCESS could not be the normal one of presenting reasoned resolutions incrementally to party congresses for approval. As PW Botha soon enough discovered, the latter way had been the road to discord, schism, and the eventual loss of the bargaining power that had been inherently dependent on Afrikaner unity.

Vorster knew that Grand Apartheid was not workable – he had said so in private to personal confidants. One such instance was to his physician Dr (Colonel) Georg Scharf, who recently confirmed this on the air in an interview with ***Nongqai***'s Brig Hennie Heymans on Radio Pretoria in their programme "*Veteraan, tree aan".* (Incidentally, Dr Scharf confirmed that both PW Botha and FW de Klerk – to whom he also was the official physician – had also stated to him that they had come to the conclusion that Apartheid couldn't work in practice).

Vorster knew that his electorate had to be moved practically 180 degrees on policy (as FW de Klerk eventually had no choice but doing). Vorster and his team knew that open, inclusive negotiation was inevitable and also that it was the only way to achieve legitimacy (a reality which PW Botha refused to entertain, being wedded to the theory of the top-down, closely managed imposition of incremental change). What was needed was real-world models for white voters to concretely see that African Uhuru could indeed be stable, secure, and reasonable, if legitimately negotiated. That was what was behind Vorster's focus on foreign relations, especially his efforts to get the conflicts over Rhodesia and SWA/Namibian peacefully resolved. So that these hoped-for models could show the way also for South Africa.

In the case of SWA/Namibia, where the BfSS and DFA had facilitated the Turnhalle process of negotiation and alliance-building, that territory's decidedly conservative white voters approved the new non-racial constitution that resulted from that process with a more than 90% majority in their referendum on it – showing that the Vorster team's assumptions and process-based strategy for gaining public acceptance for fundamental change whilst maintaining unity, had been correct. FW de Klerk was to achieve a 69% "yes"-vote in the 1992 white referendum, approving of his decision to inclusively negotiate a new non-racial constitutional dispensation based on universal franchise (on which occasion De Klerk in effect had used the Vorster formula for legitimizing and cementing in place, politically speaking, the enormous leap on policy that he was asking white voters to make).

During the seventies Vorster was trapped in the reality that there were things which he clearly knew were unavoidable and thus necessary to address, but which he at that stage simply couldn't discuss publicly with his electorate – at least not without very careful preparation, if he wanted (as he did) to maintain unity, because Afrikaner unity would represent bargaining leverage. What he and his team understood was that this was a PROCESS challenge, more than one of policy CONTENT. People are conditioned more by concrete examples that they see with their own eyes, than by formula-based theoretical solution that they are promised by politicians from the electoral stage.

Vorster therefore knew that his main task was to condition his people for the new realities. As said, this could be achieved through successful negotiations on Rhodesia and SWA/Namibia, but also through credible, authoritative influencing on key topics through things like commissions of enquiry, plus by means of promoting within the NP young leaders with a progressive outlook – especially those capable of moving the masses along with them.

What proof do I have of Vorster's supposed "reformist" intentions? Of his intention to settle, rather than to shoot it out? Vorster was both lawyer, activist politician, and parliamentarian, meaning that he understood full well that

**settlements** can only be reached through negotiation and compromise, reached inclusively among all with a stake in the dispute. This difference between striving to **settle** or offering instead **change**, goes far deeper than mere semantics (it touches on the core difference in strategy between the Vorster team and the PW Botha team, and their understanding of reality). "Change" can indeed be unilaterally dictated from above. It can be fundamental or cosmetic. It need not result from consensus and can be imposed. Offering "change" (as PW Botha did) does not necessarily go to the core of the dispute and does not – in and of itself – solve or settle the fundamental problem of legitimacy.

On the other hand, aiming to **settle** a problem of necessity requires that the very heart of the matter be inclusively addressed through negotiation – which, in South Africa's case – was always the issue of equal political rights for all its citizens.

My assessment of the cornerstones of the Vorster Team's strategy of seeking settlements (as I saw it being implemented in SWA/Namibia) was that it was based on:

- A correct understanding that the challenge was a political one, about full human rights for all, and therefore that – given the trends of the time – negotiating a non-racial, inclusive, and equal new dispensation was an historical imperative, as demonstrated in the case of SWA/Namibia (and, with negotiations being inevitable, that **national strategy should be aimed at ensuring the best possible seat at the negotiation table**).
- An understanding of the vital importance of propaganda (and the means to counter it) in the political struggle ahead, and thus of the need to eliminate all aspects of the old order capable of being exploited by the opposition's propaganda machine – all manifestations of blatant racism, in particular.
- The importance of retaining Afrikaner (and white) unity, in terms of strengthening the government's leverage at the negotiation table.
- The necessity of maintaining full control over the internal security situation at all times, to ensure stability (and avoid stratagems such as the "people's war" being employed to skew the political process).
- An acceptance that focusing on passing "change" measures that do not address the core political challenge affecting aspirations and legitimacy (i.e., that of equal rights for all) is politically senseless, because it will divide and distract the white electorate whilst always still being portrayed by the other side as "too little, too late" – thus not achieving anything, and essentially playing out the government's concessionary cards before the negotiations even start; from there that engaging in "change" as such wasn't a Vorster priority – he was intent on thoroughly settling the core issues, which required the focus to be on preparation of the negotiation "table" and on ensuring **legitimacy**, i.a. through buy-in from key opinion-formers such as the heads of the Frontline black states (from there his détente strategy).

Vorster had deliberately steered clear of public pronouncements on policy content, knowing that that likely would result in further schisms (he already had had to deal with Dr Albert Hertzog and the HNP).

Furthermore, the negotiation table would dictate the eventual form and content of constitutional change, so that trying to make changes beforehand was in effect to play out your cards in advance, without it being relevant to the final constitution – and, in any event, such incremental changes imposed from above prior to true negotiations would always be depicted (as PW Botha was to find out) as too little, too late.

What Vorster did do, on the public record, was to warn that comprehensively **settling** the region's conflicts was essential, because the alternative to settling "was too ghastly to contemplate".

While Vorster was talking about **settling**, with legitimacy bestowed by means of negotiating the terms and gaining external support for it through détente, PW Botha was talking about **change**, without definition or the end-plan outlined ("adapt or die"). The Vorster team were actively testing negotiation strategy and white electoral reaction in SWA/Namibia, with a view to a non-racial settlement and preparing whites for that reality; the PW Botha team were actively using the SWA/Namibia and Angola theatre as testbed for weapons systems and as training ground for providing our troops with combat experience, thus preparing whites for the clash of arms over whose land South Africa was (i.e., the trial of strength that they saw as inevitable).

As regards documentary proof of Vorster's reformist intentions (existing outside of the record of his cautious public statements), I don't know of any State Security Council memoranda or any such confidential documentary proof in which his team's strategy was succinctly and cogently developed in one single document. However, what I do know as intelligence analyst, is that one can largely read from a political leader's known actions and choices what his intentions were – as the saying goes: deeds speak louder than words. In this regard, what he had been facilitating with his détente initiative and the careful roll-out in SWA/Namibia of a process that was utterly the opposite of Verwoerdian Apartheid, stand clear for all to see.

The fact that Vorster had appointed known reform-minded academics such as Erika Theron and Nic Wiehahn to head hugely important commissions like those on the "Coloured" question and labour relations (important because they touched on topics at the very heart of Verwoerdian Apartheid dogma) is indicative of his intention for these commission reports to move public perceptions in the desired direction (whilst leaving him the privilege of picking and choosing which of the recommendations he would go with, at any given moment). Exactly as the Wiehahn report did, by sealing in place the reality of black urban permanency.

Similarly, the young MP's who Vorster promoted – such as Wynand Malan and Dr Denis Worrall, were well-known for their reformist thinking.

Perhaps most indicative of the direction in which John Vorster at the end of his career wanted his electorate (and the country) to move, was when he not-so-subtly tried to position Pik Botha to succeed him as prime minister – knowing that Pik Botha was definitely a reformist, and probably the best able among the succession contenders to bring the electorate along with him.

What had caught out Vorster's methodical process-focused approach (which of necessity requires time to implement) was the sudden collapse of the Portuguese Empire, and then the disastrous consequences of PW's unauthorised attempt to capture Luanda (Ops Savannah), which had robbed the whites of their "aura of invincibility" and thus had set off an unstoppable "nuclear chain reaction" of self-reenforcing events which then quickly sunk Vorster's détente initiative (which as strategy clearly had been aimed at legitimising negotiated settlements). Matters were also not made easier by Vorster's deteriorating health.

As explained in detail in Part Two of this series, I had personally seen the process in SWA/Namibia in action when I headed the relevant analytical sections at the BfSS/DNS/NIS. There it had unequivocally showed (before PW Botha pulled the plug on it) that such a process-focused approach of carefully preparing for a negotiated solution was necessary, effective, and capable of moving a conservative white electorate of that era to acceptance of a non-racial dispensation.

Mr De Klerk chose the same process formula when he opted to negotiate a comprehensive settlement and to hold a whites-only referendum to mandate his entering into negotiations for a new non-racial constitutional dispensation based on universal suffrage. Similarly, when in 1992/1993 he decided to accept that security and stability and thus legitimacy should be the government's primary goal in the negotiations (and no longer the inclusion of constitutional clauses on group rights) this decision was nothing other than the acceptance of the practical reality that in negotiations, matters of PROCESS (focused on assuring LEGITIMACY) can trump the configuration of CONTENT in importance.

An objective analysis of the reasons for the failure of De Klerk's team to achieve their initial goals at the negotiation table, furthermore demonstrates that that failure had been due to not being focused enough (in the first two years after the February 1990 announcements) on the PROCESS dimension of how to successfully conduct negotiations – on preparing adequately, first clarifying for yourself strategy and procedures, on countering the propaganda that the opposing parties were bound to let loose, and on building trust cooperatively through confidential, bilateral pre-negotiations designed to reach consensus on methodology and on a framework regarding the desired outcome.

Of course, the main defect had been that (under PW Botha) the necessary preparation of the terrain for negotiations had not been done at all, in the years leading up to De Klerk's historic initiation of the process with his 2 February 1990 speech.

All of the foregoing substantiates why I remain convinced that, had we entered already during the **first half of the 1970s** into the same kind of negotiations as those to which De Klerk had to accede just twenty years later in 1990 – but then of course with the insightful and competent Vorster team at the helm (with their real-world understanding of the importance of the two big "P's" of practical politics namely POWER, and PROCESS, and with then a far more propitious international environment and economic as well as security situation at home), it would indeed have been possible back then to have struck a better deal.

Which I state here not to cry over spilt milk.

My purpose is to illustrate the importance of **timing**, plus the point that **process** is more seminal to real-world success in negotiations than the often normative-legalist detail of the content being haggled over (on condition, of course, that the content proposed is broadly acceptable).

Acceptable, as in the ANC not pushing for a people's republic, for example, or at the other end of the spectrum not pushing for a race-based white secession to a separate sovereign paleface homeland. Also, on condition that the final content's behavioural impact on the actual exercise of political power need be thoroughly assessed and properly be taken into account, to pre-determine its likely real-world practical loopholes and consequences (rather than opting for politically correct nice-sounding phraseology pleasing to textbook legalist and normative theorists, but which have serious consequences in terms of over-concentration of power and/or corruption-facilitating weaknesses in the hands of unscrupulous politicians, when such airy-fairy formulae are applied in the actual world of realpolitik).

## 15.19.10 NO TO RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION BASED ON ARBITRARY ATTRIBUTES

Afrikaners have always been good at adopting things developed by the English (such as rugby and cricket) and then beating them at their own game.

The one thing we should not have adopted was the English colonial tradition of racism. Most definitely we should not then have pushed ahead to surpass them by institutionalising it under the hateful-sounding name of Apartheid.

There may always have been personal prejudice to some or other degree among many at the Cape, but institutionalised racism was never part of our early tradition. Many of the oldest Afrikaans families would not now be here, if Petty Apartheid rules against mixed marriages had been applied in the VOC or Batavian Cape. The Great Trek may not have happened, nor the *Gelofte* (vow) been written, had Trek "secretary" Jan Bantjes been excluded from the Trek leadership because of his skin colour…

Racism and white supremacism have been the Afrikaner's Achilles heel, which has caused us to get trapped into this paradigm where obsession with skin colour blocked natural identification with those with whom we share a mother tongue and instead lumped us with our erstwhile enemies, the English-speaking white South Africans, purely because of whiteness. What has the fact of being "white" ever really done for us? We don't speak "white". White imperialists have killed many times more of us than non-whites ever had. Copying and reenforcing the institutionalised racism of the Empire had merely put a huge target on our own backs in the post-war world. It alienated us from our fellow Afrikaans-speakers, as well as from our fellow South Africans of colour.

Pointing this out does not mean that I believe white Afrikaans-speakers to be better than any other group. Or that we should not always be, first and foremost, proud South Africans. Nor does it mean that we have anything against our English-speaking compatriots – their language is actually a wonderful gift to our nation, enabling us to easily communicate with the world (and with each other).

The argument here is not about being **against** any particular language group, or against any group or groups, for that matter, however defined.

What we should be against is racism, whether it manifests as white supremacy or black supremacy.

In essence, we should always be against any notion of one group being against any other – being proud of your own, does not mean that you have to be **against** any others with whom fate has dictated that you share a country, with all groups being an integral part of a plural society (what we should actually celebrate, is that the Lusaka Manifesto had confirmed us to be fellow Africans, not settlers, as they had labelled all other white colonists elsewhere on the continent to be).

Being proud of our own language and culture does not mean that white Afrikaners need to break away to some separate, sovereign own "Boerestan" statelet – what would trekking anew to some corner of the sub-continent benefit the vast majority of white Afrikaans-speakers, who live spread across the length and breadth of the country? Why give up our birthright of being part of a country as beautiful and bountiful as South Africa (for which our forefathers had sacrificed so much), in order to withdraw into some small hived-off corner?

Saying that we should reject the colonial paradigm that lumped Afrikaners and English together based on whiteness, does not mean that we should hate the English-speakers. What I'm saying, is that we should not be legalistically classed with them purely on the basis of our skin colour. We should join hands because we actually want to be associated with them of free will, on the basis that we are all – first and foremost – South Africans with a shared history, shared interest and (willy-nilly) a shared destiny.

All of the groups who have moved into this sub-continent at various times in history and from various origins, have been inextricably bound together by fate, and (as I've seen demonstrated in Franschhoek) it is only through accepting that reality and working together as "South Africa Incorporated", that the vast potential of this country and its peoples can be unlocked.

It remains truly ironical that we white Afrikaners were the one group in the colonial world who adopted the "kitchen language" of our non-European brethren as our language, discarding our European tongue. So that we called ourselves Africans, proudly adopting as our own a language born on African soil – yet then we became fixated with the fact that we still have European skins…

For me, the biggest lesson of our history is that the one thing that had most caused the wrath of the world to descend upon us was the fact that we had elevated skin colour (something entirely arbitrary and outside of the control of any human being) into serving as the key determinant supposedly defining ourselves, and as basis for according our people privileges which we denied to others because of their different skin colour. If only we had stuck to our Old Cape and Batavian roots, or had (belatedly) listened to Prime Minister Hertzog, back in the 1920s, about the need to bring the so-called "Coloured" fellow Afrikaans-speakers back into our political system – then our recent history could at least have escaped the shame of racism and probably would have turned out very differently…

The best test demonstrating the absurdity that racism had been, is to simply look at what had happened (or rather, not happened) when, finally, it was banished. Did the heavens cave in when we started playing rugby against non-whites? (Now with non-whites in the Springbok team, *nogal*?)

No!

Actually, since abandoning racial discrimination in sport, our rainbow nation rugby teams have won the world cup a record four times.

The same applies to the Group Areas Act. The Mixed Marriages Act. What negative effects have their abolition had? None! So, obviously, the fact of having enacted these extremely hurtful and harmful measures in the first place, had not served any real purpose, apart from gravely harming ourselves.

If we as "white" Afrikaners truly value the language we share with a majority of fellow-speakers (who had actually originated it) and who happen to have a bit more non-white DNA than we have, and if we cherish our common culture and if we want to see both language and culture (and us ourselves) prosper on African soil, then now is the time to definitively rid ourselves of this fallacious notion of a "white" South African nation and embrace again

that African-ness that a Hendrik Biebouw had proclaimed and that our adoption of the Afrikaans language had exemplified.

What we need to work at re-establishing, together with all of our fellow Afrikaans-speakers, is that spirit of 1806 at Blaauwberg… (not to go and shoot the British, or anyone else for that matter, but to again stand up for one another and be counted in and for the country of our birth – instead of standing on the sidelines, as we now find ourselves voluntarily consigned to).

To stop seeking solutions in hiving off and trekking (nowadays trekking in our heads) but rather to accept reality, accept the circumstance that Destiny had chosen for us, and start building from the bottom up again, through cooperation – thereby making plain the tremendous value we are capable of adding to this society.

### 15.19.11 NEVER FORGET THAT POLITICS IS ALWAYS ABOUT THE EXERCISE OF POWER

Although it is difficult to prove, I do believe that psychology had also played a role in leading the NP Government to focus in such normative-legalist manner on the drafting of the constitution instead of giving priority attention to the real-world behavioural dimension of what they in truth had embarked upon, which was the hand-over of power to the ANC. Despite the initial hubris – or, perhaps more truthfully, the wishful thinking – among some about beating the ANC (in alliance with the IFP, and banking on the white, “Coloured” and Indian vote) I believe there was a resignation to the reality that they were in fact engaged in the abdication of power. That the ANC would inevitably win, and that their focus should therefore be on constraining that victorious ANC as much as possible by means of legal stratagems.

That ended up as being one of the most significant differences in approach between the ANC and NP – the ANC was single-mindedly focused on gaining as much power as possible, knowing that the street would above all determine that, while the NP was acting like a bunch of lawyers trying to draft a crafty contract…

What this psychological resignation had resulted in (when coupled with the NP’s academic formation and experience) was the normative-legalist prioritisation of constitution drafting – seemingly not realising that by abandoning the political battlefield to the ANC it would gain so much leverage that it would be able to unilaterally dictate the terms of that self-same constitution drafting. By not looking at political power behaviourally and therefore not understanding correctly that they needed to find practical, cooperative ways and means of exerting influence positively (as the business community had done), the NP had lost sight of the reality that politics first and foremost is always about power – in the real sense of its wielding, not in terms of trying to set paper parameters. Psychologically, they had been pre-disposed to regard the ANC adversarially, not appreciating that being present on the political battlefield I referred to does not necessarily signify being there in the form of enemies – that it could be far more beneficial to be allies.

In the new reality of coalition governance, it will be essential to analyse and assess the opportunities and threats presented by each such situation with foremost attention to its implications and options relevant to gaining or significantly influencing the exercise of power, and not merely in terms of the paper prescripts of constitutional law.

### 15.19.12 THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF FUNCTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR ANALYSING AND DEVELOPING STRATEGY

Perhaps the most abiding lesson to be drawn from the negotiated transition – as you would have seen reflected throughout this eBook – is the vital importance of having the benefit of a fully functional system for formulating strategy before embarking on political decision-making. Of course, hand-in-hand with this goes the willingness of decision-makers to take heed of such advice…

Because this has been dealt with so exhaustively throughout this eBook, it suffices to list it here as one of the most critical lessons to be kept in mind, when in future consideration needs to be given to political decision-making at any level, particularly as regards coalitions and the like. Political formations absolutely need to have this capacity in place, if they are to choose optimally between the different options that are inherent to any complex situation.

An extremely useful tool now available for this purpose, is the use of Artificial Intelligence – in conjunction, always, with the most important mental attribute: an open, critical mind capable of lateral thinking.

### 15.19.13 WHEREVER POSSIBLE, A COOPERATIVE APPROACH IS ALWAYS BETTER THAN AN ADVERSARIAL ONE

This is again a lesson that needs no further elaboration here, given the proof earlier presented. Former enemies can learn to cooperate, when they understand their shared interests and the mutual benefit that cooperation can unlock (as opposed to the obvious negatives inherent to continued conflict). Cooperation does not require abandonment of own values or identity either. What it requires, is sound situational awareness derived from proper prior analysis, and competent planning of the engagement strategy, making use of the guidance provided by behavioural theory and the tools associated therewith. Perhaps the best proof of this during the negotiated transition was the success achieved by organised business through the Brenthurst Group's well-planned and expertly managed engagement via the "Mont Fleur" process with the ANC/SACP, which succeeded in fundamentally changing the latter's vision regarding the economy.

## 15.20 WITH ALL SAID AND DONE, WE (AND, YES, DE KLERK AND THE NP) DO HAVE MUCH TO BE PROUD OF

Undoubtedly there was much that was worthy of criticism that came to pass during the NP's rule, particularly during the latter part of John Vorster's premiership and the "lost decade" under PW Botha – as I've presented proof of in this Part Three. It was an era marked by dysfunction and discord regarding strategic decision-making, and of damaging back-stabbing among politicians. Presenting a balanced perspective on that era does however require that I give recognition as well to the much that was good that was also accomplished, often despite the problems alluded to earlier. There should also be recognition to the particularly difficult and complex times that the NP had to navigate, due to the very fundamental changes that occurred in the external environment after WW2 and which of necessity altered dramatically the geostrategic balance of power and thus the assumptions upon which NP policies had been based (with the most impactful of these being the ignominious end of colonialism, the arrival of Uhuru at South Africa's borders with the collapse of the Portuguese Empire, and then the fall of the Berlin Wall and dissolution of the USSR, which removed completely the Cold War rationale for the West to continue surreptitiously supporting the NP Government).

Whether the NP politicians that had preceded the De Klerk era deserve high marks for insight, realism, as well as for having demonstrated the necessary basic skills at strategic decision-making and leadership is today in my own mind very much up for debate. With hindsight it is undeniable that it was their unwillingness to lead (despite self-admittedly knowing that the Verwoerdian dream was unworkable) that resulted in crucial, non-repeatable opportunities slipping by unexploited.

Compared to the flagrant failures in governance that we have today, it is obviously true that the Civil Service in general had been far better under the NP government. It is furthermore obvious that those public servants and security force members were constitutionally bound to execute the often-unwise laws and policies of the NP as government of the day. However, attitudinally the general approach to the non-white populace on the part of bureaucracy in general had unquestionably helped to sow the seeds of the NP's downfall (and with it, white rule).

As regards the Security Forces specifically, as we have illustrated earlier they far too often provided the expert propaganda machine of the ANC/SACP with exactly the kind of ammunition they had need for their atrocity propaganda. However, acknowledging here that sad reality does not mean that there wasn't much to be justifiably proud of. Probably the main achievement on the part of the Security Forces is that they had, during the Cold War, prevented that a people's republic be imposed upon South Africa through a Marxist revolution. It was the success of the Security Forces that convinced the ANC/SACP that they needed to negotiate, because they clearly were not going to be able to take power through the barrel of a gun.

It was also the intelligence community, more specifically the NIS, who in the end convinced the NP Government that its race-based policies were a primary cause of the instability in the country, and that the white government

would not be able to hold on to power indefinitely simply based on physical force – thus, that a settlement had to be negotiated, in which security and stability needed to be the main priority.

On the part of the nation as such, all can be proud of the fact that – despite the widespread international belief that South Africa would descend into a bloody race war – we pulled off the miracle of a largely peaceful hand-over of power.

Another proud moment was when we became the first country to voluntarily dismantle our NBC weapons of our own accord – the development of which had in itself been a huge achievement (even if the manner in which the dismantling was politically and diplomatically handled, had not fully exploited the leverage that this could have provided).

What is undeniable is that the NP Government had bequeathed to the nation not only a new constitutional dispensation arrived at mostly peacefully by means of the "miracle" of a negotiated transition, but a fully functional modern state with one of the world's leading economies – a legacy that was orders of magnitude ahead of any inherited by other new governments in the rest of post-colonial Africa.

The fact that, following upon the transition South Africa has been functioning over the past thirty years as a stable democracy (even if often without lights) is also some kind of record for an African country.

## 15.21 WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR SOUTH AFRICA?

What I've experienced in Franschhoek (as earlier described) has shown me that success is possible for South African communities, if they decide to work together on a non-ideological basis of practical realism, when whites are willing to get stuck into the scrum and make their expertise available for the common good, and non-whites are willing to accept such a contribution of expertise and experience.

What my experience in Latin America has shown me is that the race-based societal divisions that to this day plague so many Anglophone ex-colonies need not be a given in pluralist societies. When church and state did not and do not institutionalise racism and instead emphasise that we are all God's children, then diversity is recognised as part of the cultural richness of a society and is valued and respected. In the end, the true character and the progress of a society is determined by the values it has made its own – not by the colour of its skin (in other words, Europe today is developed because of its ingrained system of values, not because of skin colour – Japan and the like have advanced to the same level of development because it adopted similar values, not because it started bleaching the skins of its inhabitants or changed their eye shape).

So, what does the future hold for Afrikaners? The first fact of life to underscore, is that those who proudly speak Afrikaans as mother tongue will continue to life dispersed across Southern Africa – they will not allow themselves to be consigned to some "Boerestan" backwater. The second immutable reality is that those who speak Afrikaans will – proportionally – ever more decidedly be people of colour and not "pure white" (not that many of us historically ever were!). The third incontestable fact is that our future will be inextricably intertwined with that of all others who call Southern Africa home.

Our forebears have been responsible for remarkable achievements – from the Khoi defeating D'Almeida, to bringing the Republicanism of the Enlightenment to these shores, with Hottentot, Slams, and Boer fighting shoulder-to-shoulder at Blauwberg to try and preserve it. Afrikaans-speakers opened up the interior with the Great Trek to the north-east, whilst to the north-west Jonker Afrikaner in 1840 settled and named what was to become Windhoek, building the first church there. We fought the mighty British Empire to a negotiated settlement from which we emerged as the political winners – admired the world over for our fighting spirit and tactical genius. There were equally remarkable scientific and industrial achievements, such as the world's first heart transplant, an own nuclear enrichment capacity, and well-run state enterprises such as Iscor, Eskom, and Armscor. Politically, the very same NP that had institutionalised racism had in the end initiated and successfully overseen the negotiated transition to a non-racial New South Africa – where the world had genuinely expected a bloody race war, De Klerk and his white Afrikaner government had delivered what was hailed as a miracle…

Since that miracle, on the sporting field, South African rugby and cricket have won world cups – serving as excellent examples of what Mandela's Rainbow Nation can achieve when all cooperate for the common good and merit guides the selection of our representatives.

If we keep our eyes on the ball and cooperate on the basis of values with all such others to keep the radicals away from the levers of government power, building partnerships from the bottom up, starting locally, then the New South Africa possess the wealth of resources that can ensure its success.

Afrikaans-speakers need to consider that they are the third-largest linguistic group in the country (Zulus 24.4%, Xhosas 16.3%, and Afrikaans-speakers 10.6%). If those who cherish their mother tongue and wish to preserve their shared cultural heritage, then Afrikaans-speakers of all hues need to co-identify and leave skin colour behind. Not to try and dominate others (they will still be just 10% of the total population and therefore will need to cooperate as much with the rest, economically and politically, as they need to culturally cooperate among themselves with initiatives such as a Reddingsdaadbond #2).

Can we overcome the superficial that divides us, to build together upon the intrinsic values we share and which provide us with a basis for unity of action amidst our diversity?

It will not happen by itself – it will require determined, brave leadership of the kind that Nelson Mandela in particular, but also FW de Klerk (in breaking with the past) had provided at a critical moment in time. It will require insight, which must start with an understanding of the unvarnished truth about our own history. What it will also require is that we base our decision-making upon proper, clinically cool analysis, using the best theory and tools available, rather than go with "gutfeel", historic prejudice, and emotion. Above all, that we adhere to fundamental values such as doing onto others as you wish done onto yourself...

What the future holds for South Africa I cannot say. But what I do know, is that it will always be the most beautiful country on God's green earth… (and I've been fortunate to have seen more than seventy of them with my own eyes).

**Willem Steenkamp**