

Nelson Mandela and F. W. de Klerk: A Comparative Rhetorical Analysis of their Visions of a New South Africa¹

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Abstract

This study examined the rhetoric of two South African leaders, F.W de Klerk and Nelson Mandela, from 1990 to 1994, to determine their respective rhetorical visions of a new South Africa and the rhetorical strategies used to gain identification with their audiences.

INTRODUCTION

Leonard Thompson in his book *The Political Mythology of Apartheid* (1985) traces the evolution of the content of the Afrikaner myth that has justified the Afrikaner nationalist vision and legitimized the system of apartheid imposed on South Africa in 1948 when the Nationalist Party came to power. He defines a political mythology as a “cluster of the myths that reinforce one another and jointly constitute the historical element in the ideology of [a] regime” (1). The two dominant themes in the Afrikaner nationalist mythology, Thompson argues, are “mobilization” and “racism.” These themes, he explains, grew out of a need for the Afrikaners to mobilize their descendants against “British Imperialism” and the “white settlers of British origin,” and to create an official justification for the belief that the “Europeans are a superior race,” whose differences make them “incompatible” with the African (26-27). The first had lost its significance by the turn of the century, but the racism theme grew into a racist paradigm that justified the moral rightness of apartheid even when the rest of the world condemned it.

While Thompson argues that the content of political myths do not necessarily reflect an accurate reading of history, he believes they are powerful persuasive tools which can successfully legitimize the behavior of institutionalized regimes. As he points out, “Most political mythologies are linked with the state because it is the dominant institution in the modern world. Every state exerts a profound effect on popular consciousness through its use of official symbols and rituals. (9-10)

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“Political arithmetic” (the Afrikaners have been an ethnic minority) drove the racist element in Afrikaner nationalist ideology, Thompson claims, and because it was “integral” to the ideology, it was “far more tenacious” (23). Numerical inferiority aside, he argues convincingly that myths are powerful because they articulate and translate cherished belief systems deeply embedded in a culture. People cling to them even when they are exposed as unjust or historically or even biologically inaccurate (17, 20). As he states, “White South Africans remained wedded to the racist paradigm...[because] it corresponded with the ongoing structure of their own society and, indeed it was an essential psychological instrument for justifying the status quo from which they derived their power, wealth and...their security. (196-197)

In the African population a competing ideology radical in nature and liberatory in goals developed in response to the apartheid policies of racial manipulation. Encompassing different belief systems from those of traditional culture, Western religious beliefs, and those of Marxist origin, the ideology that emerged as common to all the orientations was one of RESISTANCE. Whether through peaceful means or through violent confrontation, a culture of resisting apartheid developed from below (242-243).

If challenged from enough directions political mythologies will change, erode, or unravel entirely. The change can occur from within the regime in power or from below by a competing set of political beliefs. What Thompson’s analysis does not explain, but what is important to our analysis, is how rhetorically one set of beliefs tenaciously adhered to by a culture can be overturned or replaced by a new system. We argue that rhetoric plays a major role in persuading people to transform themselves and accept new ways of thinking and behaving.

Leaders play a crucial role in this process. Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela and Frederik Willem de Klerk, the subjects of this paper, each had a vision for a new South Africa. Each man by overt acts of persuasion set out to change the way South Africans view each other; each had a plan for accomplishing that change; and each needed, through his rhetoric, to gain acceptance for his vision. De Klerk, who was rooted in the Afrikaner experience, had to lead his followers out of the apartheid mindset and into a reform mode. Mandela coming out of the resistance experience had to lead his followers beyond rejection and dismantling to rebuilding.

Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk were both born in a country called South Africa, but they traveled very different roads during their life-shaping experiences. Both men were born into prominent families, both were groomed for leadership roles, both were trained as lawyers, both were politically active rising to positions of eminence, and both became outstanding spokespersons for their followers. But as the road traveled by one was paved with privilege, freedom, and opportunity; the road traveled by the other was rocky and strewn with the barriers of oppression, discrimination, and struggle. On February 11, 1999, when South African President de Klerk announced the release, after 27 years in jail, of prisoner Mandela, their roads crossed and the stage was set for the two leaders to engage in a rhetorical contest for the hearts and minds of the South African nation.¹

The background for the events that propelled Mandela and de Klerk to the forefront of South African affairs is embedded in that country’s colonial experience. The colonial history of South Africa had been unlike that of any other African nation. Colonized by two competing European entities – the Dutch came to what is now Capetown in 1652 and the British to the same area in 1795 – the history of South Africa has been characterized by a struggle for land and political power between these two colonizing settler groups. Caught in the middle, the African over the years lost more and more of what the other two had gained: political power and land (Oliver and Atmore, 1981, p. 53). Over a century of struggle between

the two powers culminated with a British victory in the Boer War of 1899-1902. Victor and loser came together at a National Convention in 1908-9 for the purpose of creating a constitution which would unify the colonies into one South African nation. No Africans attended the convention. One writer, commenting on the new constitution, “noted with regret the contemplated union to be a union of two races, namely the British and the Afrikaner—the African is to be excluded” (qtd. in Oliver and Atmore 183).

While the British generally favored a policy of partial self-rule but segregation of the races, the Afrikaner element persistently lobbied for not only segregation but the domination of the Africans by the whites in every level of society. Legislation eroding African rights began with the Natives Land Act of 1913 limiting African landownership and the beginning of a series of segregation laws (Thompson, 1990, p. xix). The process was accelerated and greatly extended with the victory in the 1948 election of the Afrikaner-dominated Nationalist Party. During the years from 1948 to 1960 with the Nationalist Party at the helm, law after law codified and institutionalized the apartheid ideology into every corner of the black South African’s existence. The term “apartheid” which originally was interpreted to mean “separate” or “separate development” grew from “a political slogan into a drastic program of social engineering” (Thompson, 1990, p. 189).

The pressures of segregation and the excesses of the apartheid system pushed the African groups to respond by organizing and, after years of petitioning and seeking redress in the courts, to initiate more and more strident and finally violent protests. The ANC, African National Congress, organized in 1912, was the major instrument of protest along with the PAC, PanAfrican Congress and the SACP, the South African Communist Party. In 1964 Nelson Mandela and other leaders of the ANC as well as prominent members of the PAC and SACP were sentenced to prison for life as a result of their political activities. Pressure to relieve the diminished quality of life created by the apartheid system continued within the country and without, increasing in intensity early in the 1980’s. The South African government responded slowly, tentatively, reluctantly with some concessions: (1) by 1979 trade unions could strike, (2) by 1986 the hated Pass laws were repealed, and (3) by 1989 with the replacement of Bohta with the more moderate de Klerk as state president, the stage was set for the release of Mandela and others and the start of negotiations which would bring in April of 1994 the first all race election and the creation of a Government of National Unity (Thompson, 1990, pp. 221-242).

F.W. de Klerk, as the legally elected president of South African, and Nelson Mandela, as the most credible leader of the African National Congress, became during the transition period from February 1990 until April 1994 the major spokespersons articulating their respective visions of a new, nonracial South Africa where all races would live together as equal partners in every area of their society. Through interviews, formal speeches, debates, and other forums, the two rhetors carried on public dialogue with the South African nation and the world as their audience.²

We will argue here that while both rhetors sanctioned a process of “reconciliation” to be realized through peaceful negotiation and discussion, their respective rhetorical visions were driven by different orientations and their choices of rhetorical strategies to gain identification with their audiences were constrained by differing audience demands. De Klerk, who was proposing change at a faster rate than many in his constituencies, had to reassure them that their “lives as they knew it” would be protected and that he would negotiate hard for power sharing in the new constitution, while continuing to convince the African population of the earnestness of his intentions. Mandela had to keep his constituency united and in a resistance mode until the negotiation process began in fact, while continuing to reassure the

whites that he would protect them as well. He also had to try to woo the recalcitrant Inkhat and the Zula groups into the process.

Our paper will analyze the public dialogue between the two leaders by critically examining it at three junctures from February 1990 until April 1994 and by seeking to answer the following questions: (1) What were the respective rhetorical visions of F.W. de Klerk and Nelson Mandela for the new South Africa? And (2) What rhetorical strategies did the speakers employ in the selected messages in seeking to persuade their audiences of their respective rhetorical visions?

We expect this study to begin to fill the void of Western rhetorical scholarship on the rhetoric of African leaders. Although many rhetorical scholars in the United States have called for more critical studies, the call seems to have fallen on deaf ears: there has not been a single rhetorical study of the messages of an African leader and none on de Klerk or Mandela reported in our Communication journals.³

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

The selected speeches of Mandela and de Klerk will be analyzed on two levels: (1) to determine the rhetorical vision of a new South Africa espoused by each speaker and (2) to identify and describe the rhetorical strategies utilized by each to create identification with their audiences. Both Mandela and de Klerk sought to create identification with diverse audiences to prepare them for the great changes that were to take place in their country. Each leader wanted to draw both black and white audiences into a shared rhetorical vision in order to create acceptance for their political agenda and the promised elections that would create South Africa's first nonracial government.

The methodology used to determine each speaker's rhetorical vision will be Ernest Bormann's definition of rhetorical visions as the "composite dramas which catch up large groups of people in a symbolic reality" (Bormann, 1972, p. 398).⁴ This concept is appropriate for our study because both leaders sought to construct a new order for their society through their respective rhetorical visions.

De Klerk's developed from the 1980's when he began a prolonged attempt to persuade white South Africans of the need to "normalize relations" with the majority African population. He told the South African people in a widely reported December, 1983, speech on the occasion of a major Afrikaner holiday commemorating a 1838 military victory over the Zulus, "As in 1838, the white South African today again faces a moment of Truth—not because a political leader creates it, but because the objective facts demand it," concluding at the end of his speech that "This beautiful country, this land of milk and honey, this country bought so dearly—if we do not act correctly and in time—can be changed into a country of blood and hatred, revolution and crisis" (qtd. in Thompson, 1985, p. 224-225).

Mandela agreed that a process of "normalizing relations" should take place, but he came from a different perceptual orientation. Writing from prison, he stressed that "only free men can negotiate" (*Nelson Mandela: The Struggle Is My Life* 196). In a document prepared before Mandela's meeting with P.W. Botha on July 5, 1989, Mandela argues that,

The key to the whole situation is a negotiated settlement, and a meeting between the government and the ANC will be the first major step towards lasting peace in the country, better relations with our neighbor states, admission to the Organization of African Unity, re-admission to the United Nations and other world bodies, to international markets and improved international relations generally. An accord

with the ANC, and the introduction of a non-racial society is the only way in which our rich and beautiful country will be saved from the stigma which repels the world (*Nelson Mandela: The Struggle Is My Life* 207).

De Klerk's position as the leader of the legitimate government which was reluctant to relinquish its hold on power motivated him to construct a vision that would open the door for negotiation from above while controlling the pace of access to entry. Mandela's vision had to include the disenfranchised masses who were threatening to break down the door from below. De Klerk articulated his rhetorical vision in the halls of Parliament and other platforms of institutionalized power. Mandela conducted his campaign from prison from 1964 until February 11, 1990, when he was granted access to a public platform from which he spoke often to his audiences. The real dialogue between the two speakers began at this point and continued throughout the next four years as each strove to create acceptance for a new social order through their rhetoric.

The second stage of the analysis uses Kenneth Burke's concept of Identification to analyze the rhetorical strategies created by each speaker to gain acceptance with the audiences. Burke defines rhetoric as, "the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents" (1962, 567). He sees Identification as a rhetorical process to bring people together who are otherwise divided. This "acting together" Burke labels "consubstantiality." When man "act" together, Burke argues, they experience "common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them **consustantial**" (570, 579). Burke views human's symbol-making capacity as an inherent rhetorical ability which enables people to overcome feelings of estrangement and alienation. Language and the creation of "linguaging strategies" is the tool humans use to create consubstantiality (Burke, 1957, p. 3).⁵

Both Mandela and de Klerk, we argue, strove for consubstantiality with the South African nation, but in different ways. De Klerk depicted himself as the statesman in the vanguard who saw before others the collision course on which the country was heading. He projected the need to negotiate with the ANC and other groups to stave off a violent confrontation that would bring bloodshed and chaos. Mandela countered de Klerk's strategies by stressing the justice of the masses' cause and offered redemption to both white and black South Africans by calling for a moral regeneration of South African society to redress the years of apartheid's oppression.

de Klerk

The first of the three public speeches given by F.W. de Klerk that have been selected for analysis here was presented to the Parliament in Capetown on February 2, 1990. The second was delivered nearly two years later on December 20, 1991, at the CODESA conference, and the third was presented on May 4, 1994, to the party leaders and workers in Pretoria following the national election. These three were chosen because the February 2 speech is the one that announces the goals of the new South Africa, the December 20 speech characterizes the problems and hurdles faced nearly two years later through the four-year period of negotiation, and the May 4 speech presents de Klerk's views on the results of the election that brought the new South Africa into effective political power.

February 2, 1990

This speech is titled, "Normalizing the Political Process in South Africa: The Time for Negotiation Has Arrived" and was delivered to the Second Session of the Ninth Parliament of the Republic of South Africa. De Klerk presents in this discourse his vision of

“a new South Africa” that is accepted, he feels, by the “overwhelming majority” (1990, p. 290).

De Klerk’s term “a new South Africa” is a label he places on the projected reality of a more normal political process than South Africa had known for decades. It serves as a “symbolic reality,” in Bormann’s terms (398), because it allows de Klerk’s audience members to see themselves in a future drama that will consist of a changed country. Throughout the speech, de Klerk defines the character of the envisioned reality in three ways. First, it is “a negotiated understanding among the representative leaders” instead of a “growing violence, tension, and conflict” (p. 290). Second, it means “to break out of the cycle of violence and break through to peace and reconciliation” (294). Third, it will include moving away from confrontation “to a debate and discussion of political and economic points of view” (293). In short, the key terms of the new South Africa are negotiation, reconciliation, and discussion as a normal process for political behavior.

The rhetorical vision that de Klerk describes is a rejection of hostility and an acceptance of cooperation among competing interests, a rejection of restrictions and prohibitions and an acceptance of protection of individual rights and freedom of religion and economic enterprise, and a rejection of political detention and an acceptance of the release of Mandela as a symbol of the new face of South Africa. De Klerk argues that Mandela “has declared himself to be willing to make a constructive contribution to the peaceful political process in South Africa” (294). This is the heart of the rhetorical vision that de Klerk wants his audience to see. Because Mandela had changed, according to de Klerk’s claim, which may not be unrelated to the sacrifice paid in prison, a potential for a new hierarchy of power – negotiation among different groups rather than domination by one group or another – is a new reality.

Peace and reconciliation over conflict and violence must be accepted by all parties to this vision. Breaking out of the cycle of violence is possible by the bold move to release political prisoners, says de Klerk, and by rescinding the banning of organizations such as the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress and the South African Communist Party. In this way political views will be debated, not prohibited. People holding differing political positions will be accepted as part of the normal political process and encouraged to help “build a broad consensus about the fundamentals of a new, realistic and democratic dispensation.” (290).

The strategies de Klerk uses in this speech focus on what Burke calls “identification,” or an “acting-together,” in which the rhetor may be able “to confront the implications of division” by moving “from the factional to the universal” (1950, pp. 22-23). De Klerk’s attempts at identification may be seen in at least five ways.

First, he establishes connections between the proposed negotiation approach and the changes going on then in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. He claims that this changes the international climate and the support level of some of the groups in South Africa.

Second, he establishes connections between the negotiation process in the political arena and the other elements in South African life, such as human rights, the economy, foreign relations, and the death penalty. De Klerk is careful to discuss these other matters first as part of the framework in which to consider the negotiation process. He knows his audience is concerned about the “the Normal processes of legislation and day-to-day government” (“The Time for Negotiation” 290), so these dimensions are viewed in the overall picture as it relates to negotiation.

Third, he accepts the “important shifts of emphasis in the statements and points of view” of the important organizations in political life as indicating “a new approach and

preference for peaceful solutions” (294). This acceptance allows de Klerk to justify the bold move toward negotiation without appearing to back down from his political stance. Accepting this change in language is a symbolic move by the government to identify with the opposition.

Fourth, de Klerk announces that the changes in restrictions and detentions that he proposes are immediate, thus making clear to his audience that he is sincere in removing barriers that had caused confrontation and division. His initiatives were intended to move from the factional to the togetherness that Burke describes in the strategy of identification.

Fifth, de Klerk announces the release of Mandela as the symbol of his good faith near the end of the speech. After announcing all the changes that the government will make, de Klerk makes this move to prove that he is “serious about bringing this matter to finality without delay” (294).

These five measures are intended to reduce the psychological and political distance that had existed between the government and the significant organizations opposing apartheid. By using the strategies to remove division and create identification with his audience, de Klerk in this history-changing discourse presents his vision for a new South Africa and the strategies for creating the possibility of acceptance.

December 20, 1991

Almost two years after the crucial speech in which de Klerk first set forth his vision of a new South Africa, he addressed the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa) near Johannesburg. In this speech de Klerk faced some of the realities of his rhetorical vision by acknowledging the problems. He repeated his dream of realizing for all South Africans as sharing fully in all that South Africa had to offer. This included a stabilized country which could be called the “the locomotive of economic prosperity on the continent” and one which could “play a constructive international role” (*FBIS-Afr*, 23 December 8).

The vision also included a fully democratic constitution where “the pillars of apartheid” are removed and where even the transitional government is fully participatory. One of the issues anticipated at the Codesa conference was the argument over the nature of the transitional government. De Klerk argues that the constitution must be changed so that “a negotiated form of transitional government” could be implemented (9). The discussion of the transition government that would make way for the fully-elected democratic government was a new part of the vision compared to his 1990 address.

The third part of the rhetorical vision that emerges in the address as Codesa is de Klerk’s view that the African National Congress would have to do something about the violence that had continued. He says that the “ANC has not yet terminated what it has itself defined as the armed struggle” (1991, p. 9). The problem with this is that such an organization “which remains committed to an armed struggle cannot be fully trusted...” (p. 9). The rhetorical vision de Klerk sees is one where trust and confidence are more compelling than “distrust and suspicion.” This aspect of the vision was not being realized at the time of the Codesa conference.

This fact made it necessary for de Klerk to use strategies that otherwise might not have been necessary. For example, in the Codesa speech, de Klerk finds himself criticizing fairly severely the ANC for its failure to terminate the violence and distrust.

He accuses the ANC of holding contradictory claims that have to be reconciled at this conference and by implication of “propagating” only the truth that fits its case as opposed to seeing and understanding “the truth that may not suit [their] case” (10)

De Klerk does use a positive strategy, however, of holding out options to his “opponents” by emphasizing that the government’s report on constitutional models was going

to propose “a wide variety of constitutional options relevant to the process of constitution making on which we have embarked” (10).

His address begins and ends on a positive approach by stressing building of bridges and of a dream in which all have a fair share, but midway through he warns of the choice they all face “between peace through negotiation, or a power struggle through violence” (9). This alternative is what he set out in his 1990 address. He is again repeating it here at the Codesa conference.

May 4, 1994

The third speech text being examined is the one de Klerk presented at the National Party headquarters in Linwood, Pretoria, as broadcast by the BBC. The rhetorical vision de Klerk describes in this speech is the same one he described four years earlier. He specifically refers to the vision he proposed at that time and claims that it has arrived.

Four years and three months ago I said in Parliament that the time had come for us to break out of the cycle of conflict, tension and violent struggle in which we had been embroiled for decades. I said that the table had been laid for sensible leaders to begin talking about a new dispensation and reach an understanding by way of dialogue and discussion. During the past week we have seen the realization of that vision. We have a new and dynamic constitution; we have the assurance that there will be no domination of any South Africans by any others; we have seen the end of discrimination; we have equality before the law; minority rights have been secured; individual rights and all these other rights are guaranteed by a charter of fundamental rights and by a strong and effective constitutional court; and during the past week we have held our first universal franchise election
(1994 [1]).

This statement, though given at a time when his party had lost the election, places the election in a context of victory, because the vision had been accomplished. The new dispensation, as he calls it, was now in place.

The essential character of this vision was the expectation that the one-time opponent of the government, Nelson Mandela, would perform admirably. De Klerk announces here that Mandela’s role during the four years had been “a leading and honorable one” that had made “a constructive contribution to the peaceful political process in South Africa” ([2]). De Klerk thanks and congratulates Mandela as the newly elected president assumes the highest office in the land where he had once been a prisoner.

The vision is realized not only in the person and symbol of Mandela as the first president of the “new South Africa,” but it is seen in the new Constitution and the “vibrant economy” that can now be realized by all the citizens.

The final aspect of the rhetorical vision de Klerk presents in this speech of “victory” is the role of his National Party in the new era. He claims that his party, though it did not win the election, serves as a “miracle” example and represents “the nucleus of our new nation” because it had “achieved the reconciliation which South Africa as a whole needs” ([3]).

In sum, the rhetorical vision de Klerk had in 1990, he now claims four years later to have been realized as he points to the revised constitution, Mandela’s election, and the model of his National Party as the successful elements in place for the continued building of the new South Africa.

The rhetorical strategy de Klerk uses in presenting this vision is, not unexpectedly, very self-serving. At the party headquarters, he can be expected to identify with his audience in very specific ways. He identified the National Party with victory, not defeat—victory for “the South African people” ([3]). He identified the National Party with “the task of healing and reconciliation” for the nation as a whole that now lies ahead.

Finally, he expresses appreciation to all those who worked hard to achieve this national victory. Officially, de Klerk is announcing the end of divisions and confrontations as the recent election symbolizes the bringing together of the South African people for moving ahead in “working for national reconciliation and reconstruction” ([3]). The election process amounts to an “acting-together,” to use Burke’s term again, of all of South Africa, whatever the race or the political orientation.

In one final effort of transcending the historic moment, de Klerk seeks identification also with a higher power as he concludes, “A power greater than man had given South Africa the spirit, the chance to go forward in peace. God Almighty has been kind to us. Now it is up to the political leaders to join together, to work together, for the good of our people...” ([3]). The commitment to the working together he believes is a realistic one that will succeed in the future because of the success of the previous four years of preparation for this symbolic moment of triumph.

The new hierarchy of the new South Africa – all the people, not just the dominating – de Klerk sees as “an important milestone in the history of [the] country, perhaps the most important that [they] will ever see” ([3]).

Nelson Mandela

The first Mandela speech selected for the analysis was given to a mass rally in Capetown on February 11, 1990, the day of his release from prison. The second and third speeches were given by Mandela at the December 20, 1991, Codesa Conference while the fourth was his speech on May 4, 1994, acknowledging victory in the election broadcast to the nation over nationwide television from the Carlton Hotel in Johannesburg. The February 11 speech was chosen because it was crucial for Mandela as his first public response to de Klerk, the December 20 speeches (Mandela gave two speeches, one announced and other unannounced) given nearly two years later represented a direct public clash by Mandela and de Klerk over the issue of violence and who was responsible for it which came to be one of the sticking points that threatened to derail the negotiations over the four years. The final speech presented on May 4 represents Mandela’s response to the culmination of his dream: the first all race election in South Africa.

February 11, 1990

This speech is entitled “Apartheid Has No Future: Africa is Ours” and was presented to a mass rally at a stadium in Capetown on the evening of February 11, 1990. In this speech Mandela tells his audience that “Today the majority of South Africans, black and white, recognize that apartheid has no future”(Mandela, 1990, p. 295). The rhetorical vision he articulates projects a symbolic representation of the new South Africa he wants.

The rhetorical vision Mandela projects in his first public, face-to-face contact with his followers illustrates Bormann’s concept of a “rhetorical vision” as “composite dramas which catch up large groups of people in a symbolic reality”(p. 398) because he describes for his audience a symbolic future that they can imagine and participate in, a future which can become a reality, if they will accept it. The vision of a new South Africa he projects in this speech contains elements of both resistance and negotiation. Resistance must continue, he

tells his audience, because of the “incalculable destruction” apartheid is still wreaking on the people of South Africa and negotiation because the South African government is the person of “Mr. de Klerk has gone further than any other National president in taking real steps to normalize the situation” (p. 296). The future goal that can be realized through this vision will be “a united, democratic and nonracial South Africa” that will live together in “peace” and “racial harmony” (p. 297). He defines the vision on three levels.

First, the struggle must continue, Mandela asserts, because “the factors which necessitated the armed struggle still exist...the economy lies in ruins and our people are embroiled in political strife” (p. 297). The struggle means the people taking it upon themselves to initiate “decisive mass campaigns” because even though there is more hope now for a negotiated settlement, it is only through continuing to exert pressure on the government that the period of peaceful negotiations can begin. The international community must continue to apply pressure as well by not lifting the economic sanctions against the regime. These measures will help to create a “climate conducive to a negotiated settlement” (p. 297).

Second, Mandela’s rhetorical vision proclaims negotiation as a projected reality that will grow out of the first. Negotiations is the preferred reality but there are many obstacles to overcome before the climate is right. “Normalizing the political situation” will create “free political activity” which will enable the opposition groups to meet, consult, and make decisions about the actual negotiations themselves. Only then can negotiations begin to “dismantle apartheid” and a democratic process initiated (297).

The depiction of a future that is driven by the urgency of “now” characterizes the third element of Mandela’s rhetorical vision. De Klerk “is a man of integrity,” the international community had placed sanctions on the South African nation, and “the sight of freedom looming on the horizon” mandates that “Now is the time to intensify the struggle on all fronts” (297). The first two elements in the new symbolic reality that Mandela constructs for his audience can not be realized without an understanding that timing is crucial.

Mandela names the goals of his rhetorical vision: a united, free, nonracial South African society. This imagined future will come true, but the people must accept the burdens of continued struggle and the hopeful outcome of the opening of a process of negotiation that will bring the revolutionary concept “democracy” to South Africa.

Mandela strives for identification or, as Burke would describe, “acting together” with his audience in a number of ways (Burke, 1950, pp. 22-23). Five stand out as most important.

First, he is careful to “salute,” “greet,” and “pay tribute” to all the groups who have participated in the struggle while he was in prison. He mentions by name all the organizations, individuals, groups, and nations who have contributed: The African National Congress, The South African Communist Party, Comrade Oliver Tambo, General Secretary Joe Slovo, the working class, traditional leaders, the youth, women, the world community, the front line states and others (Mandela, 1990, pp. 295-296). He connects the need to continue to resist with those who have struggled in the past because, as he exhorts his audience, “It is only through disciplined mass action that our victory can be assured” (296).

The second base of identification Mandela seeks to create with his audience is to strengthen his tie to the ANC and create credibility for that organization as the “leader of the great march to freedom” (p. 295). He carefully minimizes his role in the negotiation process and points out that he is “a loyal and disciplined member of the African National Congress.” Further, he recommends that “No individual leader is able” to assume responsibility for the enormity of the tasks ahead (p. 296).

Third, he strives for identification with the international community by connecting their “campaign to isolate the apartheid regime...and international sanctions” with the projected reality of creating a climate that can begin a negotiated settlement (296-297).

The fourth base of identification is with the white South African. He refers to them as “compatriots” and invites them to “join us in shaping a new South Africa” where they will find a “political home” (296). He wants all the people, in Burke’s terms, to transcend their differences, divisions, and particularities to become part of something greater than themselves (Burke, 1962, p. 835).

His last and most powerful base of identification is himself and his persona as one with the masses. He tells the people that he “stand[s] before them not as a prophet but as a humble servant of you, the people.” He has nothing to live for but to serve the people and he promises, “I...place the remaining years of my life in your hands” (Mandela, 1990, p. 295). He concludes his speech with a reiteration of his words spoken during the 1964 Rivonia trial, reminding his people that “They are as true today as they were then.”

“I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the idea of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.” (297)

The five strategies of identification described above are meant to strengthen Mandela’s ties to the movement and its goals. By bringing as many groups as possible into the struggle, he hopes to create unity and commitment to the mass struggle which he believes will hasten the day when his vision of a “democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunity” will become reality (207). By inviting blacks and whites alike to participate in this new social order, Mandela offers a mechanism to relieve the guilt of many white South Africans who felt shame over the oppressiveness of their apartheid society and Mandela’s proposed rejection of the hierarchy that built it. By participating, by helping to build the new order, they can gain in Burke’s words “redemption” (Burke, 1954, pp. 274, 282).

December 20, 1991

The second speeches we will analyze here are entitled “Codesa Is the Fruit of Sacrifice and Struggle” and “The National Party and Their Government Talk Peace While Conducting A War.” Both were given at the opening of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa) on December 20, 1991, at the meeting including nineteen political parties and organizations, including the ANC, the Nationalist Party, Inkatha, various homeland officials, and the South African government. Mandela gave one speech as a prepared text as part of the formal opening of the conference and the second speech as an impromptu effort when he again requested the floor after de Klerk’s speech at the same conference. The two speeches will be analyzed as one text.

Mandela’s speeches at the opening of the Codesa Conference reveal a much more detailed and explicit description of the nature of the new world order he wants to construct in his rhetorical vision of a new South Africa than the general outline presented in his first remarks on the day he was released from prison. In the first Codesa speech he wants to focus on the nature of the negotiations and the negotiating process and downplay the theme of resistance. But because of de Klerk’s attack on Umkhonto we Sizwe (the paramilitary wing of the ANC committed to violent confrontation), Mandela finds himself unexpectedly talking about resistance. He expands upon his rhetorical vision in three ways.

First, he defines the terms of the negotiations at what he labels a conference where “history grants all of us a unique opportunity” (“Codesa Is the Fruit of Sacrifice and Struggle” 148). The delegates much reach a consensus on the “definition of democracy,” they must “invalidat[e] the prevailing constitution” and create “an interim government” which will guide the process toward the creation of a new constitution which “both engenders respect and enjoys legitimacy” accomplished through “an elected constitution-making body, namely a constituent assembly” (150-151). By explicitly describing the goals of the Codesa conference, Mandela explains how it is an instrument for realizing his rhetorical vision. Through the meeting, that part of the vision which expects peaceful negotiation via cooperation among all competing interests can be realized. In short, Mandela’s vision of a truly democratic society whose institutions reflect the will of ALL the people is reaffirmed in his opening speech at Codesa.

Secondly, Mandela reiterates as in his February 11, 1990, speech, the urgency of starting the negotiation process NOW. He exhorts the audience to remember that the “people who need freedom in South Africa...the black people...need it now because their economic situation and welfare deteriorate daily” (pp. 148-149). He underscores the call for immediate action by reminding his audience of the “historic opportunity” the occasion offers and with the strong recommendation that “The message of the ANC through Codesa is straightforward, clear, and for all South Africans: the time for one South Africa, one nation, one vote, one future is here” (148).

The third element of Mandela’s rhetorical vision that he reaffirms at Codesa is the need for resistance to continue – armed if necessary. He is constrained to argue for this in response to de Klerk’s attacks on Umkhonto we Sizwe as the obstacle to moving along the negotiation process. In his response to de Klerk’s speech, Mandela shifts the responsibility for the violence to de Klerk and vigorously justifies the ANC’s right to defend itself against a “government – with all its capacity to put an end to violence – [that] had done nothing to stop the slaughter of innocent people” (“The National Party and the Government Talk Peace While Conducting A War” (155). He condemns de Klerk further for using the Codesa platform for his own political advantage, thus eroding the mutual trust between them (156-157). Nevertheless, Mandela stresses that he is still “prepared to work with him [de Klerk]” to bring about “democratic changes,” insuring that he is still committed to the process of negotiation if “we are candid and open with one another” (158).

Mandela’s speeches at Codesa make clear that his rhetorical vision for a new order in South Africa is still unrealized. More important, it is being thwarted by de Klerk’s behavior. The heated exchange between the two rhetors produced a serious rupture in the process for creating a “nonracial, nonsexist, democracy” in the South African nation (152).

Mandela uses two primary identification strategies at Codesa to draw his audience into his rhetorical vision. First, he brings all the opposition groups into the Codesa political process by speaking in English, Afrikaans, and Zulu through his first prepared text, addressing the concern of each audience. He invites the Afrikaans resistance groups to “join Codesa now” and he calls for all to place the “national interest” above “sectional interests” (“Codesa Is the Fruit” 148,151). The ANC’s credibility as the leading opposition group is bolstered once again by reminding the gathering that “For eighty years, the ANC has led the struggle for democracy in South Africa” (146).

The second basis of identification Mandela extends to his audience in the second Codesa speech (1993) is the militant persona he assumes in launching his scathing attack on de Klerk. By standing up to de Klerk in a national forum and depicting him as the “head of an illegitimate, discredited minority regime” with no moral standards, Mandela establishes

himself as a warrior, a strong uncompromising leader who will not be bullied by the leader of the white government (1993, p. 153). This side of Mandela must have served as a very satisfying image to the rank and file of the opposition, particularly to those who remembered the fearless freedom fighter of the 1950's and 1960's.

In the Codesa speeches, Mandela uses both inclusive and exclusive bases of identification: inclusive to invite identification by all the groups engaged in the negotiation process; exclusive by denying legitimacy to those who act in ways to subvert the process. He still wants leaders and followers to "act together" but according to his definition of proper behavior.

May 4, 1994

On May 4, 1994, Mandela gave his election acceptance victory speech from the Carlton Hotel in Johannesburg. His rhetorical vision of a nonracial, democratic election with the ANC emerging victorious had been realized. The symbolic reality he had been projecting to the South African audiences in his rhetoric during the past four years has become a social reality. Mandela declares it a time to "celebrate the birth of democracy" (British Broadcasting Corporation [2]). He tells his audience that it "is indeed a joyous night for the human spirit" and speaks of their "beloved" country (BBC [1]). The election has served to affirm his rhetorical vision of South Africa as an example to the world and he tells the people that "this is one of the most important moments in the life of our country" ([2]). In Burkeian terms, the country had reached an ultimate transcendence by the setting aside of differences that took place in realizing a multiparty, nonracial, democratic election (Burke 1962, p. 716). The South African nation had reached a higher level of consubstantiality by "acting together." He affirms this by pointing out that "We might have our differences, but we are one people with a common destiny in our rich variety of culture, race, and tradition" (BBC [3]).

Mandela also reaffirms his rhetorical vision of a new South Africa in this speech by reminding his audience of the heart of that vision—a better life for all South Africans. He tells his listeners that the "entire ANC leadership will immediately begin tackling the problems our country faces... this means creating jobs, building houses, providing education, and bringing peace and security to all" ([2]).

The rhetorical vision Mandela has been presenting to the South African people in his rhetoric over the last four years has become a reality. The themes of resistance, negotiation, and urgency have spun out from Mandela's speeches to the South African nation. They have created something the rest of the world thought could not happen, and they did it through a democratic process. At the end of his speech, Mandela expresses the regret that "in some areas we may not have done as well as we had hoped" but he reaffirms his belief in the democratic process and points out to his audience "that is how democracy functions" ([3]).

Mandela uses three rhetorical strategies in his election victory acceptance speech to identify with his audiences on several levels. He congratulates de Klerk, the ANC, the democratic movement, the liberation movement and the "ordinary humble people" who participated in the election ([1,2]). All those who participated in the election can identify with their "contribu[tion] to the better life" of the South African people, Mandela tells them. And, they can expect to continue to participate in the new government which Mandela predicts will adopt the "habit of accommodating" the views of representatives from all the political groups who won power-sharing in the new government ([1-3]). Other groups would identify with these words because it gave them hope that they would not be shut out and that their interests would be acknowledged.

As a loyal and disciplined member of the ANC, it is predictable that Mandela would continue to use bolstering strategies to build the credibility of his organization and credit them with achieving the victory they deserve. He speaks of “an ANC government” and claims that they have won out as the “majority party” because they had a program, a blueprint for the rebuilding job ahead: “the Reconstruction and Development book” which will set the agenda for the new government and be the “cornerstone” upon which the new edifice will be built ([2-3]). Identification is sought with the party rank and file when Mandela places “collective leadership” and the “organization” above his own position as president ([2]).

Third, Mandela seeks identification with the masses by depicting himself not as a leader above them, but as one of them. “Leaders come and go,” he reassures the people, and “...the ideas I express are not the ideas invented in my own mind.” He and the other people are of one mind; he is “humbled by the courage” of the common man; his “heart is full of love” for them because they are “South Africa’s heroes” ([1-3]). Burke would see this as the striving for a perfect identification where the people and the leader are one. (Burke, 1962, pp. 799, 817, 835). Mandela does not wish to become a prophet or a bureaucrat, but the leader of the ANC and the leader of all the South African people.

The three rhetorical strategies of identification utilized by Mandela in his acceptance speech illustrate the effort he exerts to bring all groups into a truly democratic political process. He wants this process to continue when he is gone because it is the people “acting together” that is crucial to the success in creating South Africa’s first nonracial, democratic society. Nelson Mandela will go, but it is his most ardent wish that all South Africans will build their future together to continue to realize his dream.

SUMMARY

In comparing the rhetorical visions and strategies of Mandela and de Klerk, a number of differences can be identified.

- First, Mandela tends to use the language of building a country that is “non-racial” while de Klerk likes to use the words “all the people,” not even mentioning the word race.
- Second, Mandela describes a vision that is not personal so much as it is that of the ANC, while de Klerk’s is one that is a people-oriented vision. He sees himself as running ahead of the people in his leadership.
- Third, Mandela sees the ANC not so much as a party as an organization to share with all who share its goals. De Klerk sees his party as a party that is for all the people.
- Fourth, Mandela finds it difficult to speak for himself but easier to speak for the people. He does not see himself as a Messiah. De Klerk speaks for himself and is not hesitant to do so.
- Fifth, Mandela acts like a politician but does not want to be one, while de Klerk wants to be a politician.
- Sixth, de Klerk refers to a higher religious authority (God) in his speeches; Mandela does not use references to God, although he does pay deference to the religious leaders who have resisted apartheid.

The three areas in which they both are similar are that they both want legal institutions to be in place, they both want a free, democratic society for all people, and they both claim rhetorical legitimacy—the right to speak for their constituencies.

Nelson Mandela and Willem de Klerk shared a vision for a new South Africa. Many thought their visions could never merge. Thompson concludes in his book, *The Political Mythology of Apartheid*, that given the white regime’s (1990) tendency to cling to the

Afrikaner myth and the black movement's radical liberation mythology, there was a great likelihood that "black South African Mythology will become overwhelmingly anti-capitalist and anti-Western" (p. 243). Writing in 1993, David Ottoway in his book, *Chained Together: Mandela, de Klerk, and the Struggle to Remake South Africa*, asserts that both Mandela and de Klerk had "missed their historic opportunity to become the first great bridge builders of the new South Africa," and that they should "pass the baton to a new generation of peacemakers and bridge builders" (pp. 271-272). The two authors cited above and much of the rest of the world miscalculated both Mandela and de Klerk's commitment to their visions. We would conclude that it was through the sustained belief of both leaders that the process they had initiated in 1990 could and would work that brought their visions together through periods of heightened mistrust, daily violence, and political intrigue during the 1990-1994 period. Their rhetoric during this period contributed to their commitment to the new South Africa that could evolve peacefully through trust, negotiation, and compromise. In the end it was Mandela who summed up the image that riveted the world, "I watched along with you all as the tens of thousands of our people stood patiently in long queues for many hours, some sleeping on the open ground, overnight, waiting to cast this momentous vote"(BBC [2]).

Notes

1. Mandela was groomed for royalty in the Thembu tribe of the Transkei; de Klerk was born into a family of distinguished political figures. Mandela practiced law with Oliver Tambo in Johannesburg; de Klerk practiced law in Vereeniging. Mandela was an outstanding ANC speaker before his trial and prison sentence; de Klerk became an outstanding speaker within the National Party. See *Nelson Mandela: The Struggle Is My Life* (London: Heinemann, 1965) and Leonard Thompson's *The History of South Africa* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990) 242.

2. Mandela and de Klerk's speeches may be found in *Vital Speeches, the New York Times, United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service-Africa*, and collections of Mandela's speeches compiled by the ANC and published primarily by Pathfinder Press in New York. *Nelson Mandela Speaks: Forging A Democratic, Nonracial South Africa*, 1993; *Nelson Mandela: No Easy Walk to Freedom* (Heinemann: London, 1965); *Nelson Mandela: The Struggle Is My Life*, 1990.

3. A search of the Index to *Journals in Communication Studies Through 1990*, ed. Ronald J. Malton (Virginia: Speech Communication Association, 1992) turned up no studies of the speeches of an African leader. The index includes 19 different scholarly journals and indexes them as far back as 1915.

4. Our application of Bormann will not include an extended Fantasy Theme Analysis. To do so would mean identifying the actors, the scenes, and the themes in each speaker's rhetorical vision. Our use of Bormann's concept of Fantasy Theme analysis is meant to examine the speaker's words to locate his universe of discourse to determine how each "sees his world." For a fuller explanation of Fantasy Theme analysis, see Ernest Borman, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 58 (1972): 396-407.

5. Bernard Brock (1985) interprets Burke regarding his concept of verbal symbols as ways of acting. He states that "verbal symbols are meaningful acts from which human motives can be derived. These motives constitute the foundation or the substance of the speech." See "Rhetorical Criticism: A Burkeian Approach," *Methods of Rhetorical Criticism: A Twentieth-century Perspective*, eds. Bernard L. Brock and Robert L. Scott, 2nd ed., rev. (Wayne State UP: Detroit, 1985) 348-359.

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