

**The Influence of Frederik Willem de Klerk's Personality  
Traits on the Political Transition of South-Africa**



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## 1. Introduction

When Frederik Willem de Klerk was elected president of the state of South-Africa in September 1989, the black population did not have high hopes for a more equal political system (Gelman & Reiss, 1990, Laurence, 1990). As leader of the National Party, F.W. de Klerk was a proponent of the segregation rules between black and white, believing that the population of South-Africa existed of four racial groups – whites, blacks, coloured and Indians – and that these groups could not be politically integrated and therefore should be given separate institutions (De Klerk, 1991, p. 18). In practice, this meant that since the first victory of the National Party in 1948 in the South-African elections, the population of South-Africa was separated by race in schools, residential areas and health institutions. The National Party introduced two main policy outlines, to eventually strengthen the already existing separations between the black- and white population since the colonial era. The first one was the minimization of the class gap between the *Afrikaans*-speaking white minority, to position the white working class as an aristocratic and unified elite. The second one introduced the policy that reduced the black Africans to the position of migrant labourers, who were destined to be useful at economical purposes only and otherwise not tolerated. The implementation of these policy outlines presented the beginning of the apartheid regime, whereby F.W. de Klerk held the position as Minister of Education, therefore maintaining the strict segregation in schools and Universities and advocating the interests of the white population. The apartheid regime was widely refused and attacked by the African National Congress, an opposition party led by Nelson Mandela. Despite the many underground attacks, many ANC-members, among which Mandela, were imprisoned or forced into exile by the state (Callinicos, 1994, pp. 2355-2356). For many years, the apartheid regime of the NP was maintained and therefore fierce fully opposed to by the black African population. But in 1989, right after his appointment as leader of the National Party, F.W. Klerk called for an adjusted constitution which would entail more satisfying concessions for South-Africa's black majority. Also, after his election as president in September, he released several ANC members who were held in exile as political prisoners and lifted the ban on protesting against the state, which allowed the ANC to hold a political rally with 70.000 attenders against the apartheid regime. Furthermore, he closed the National Security Management System, the core organization of the oppression of black South-Africa. But the most radical changes were announced in F.W. de Klerk's famous speech on 2 February 1990, where he introduced the lifting of the ban on the, previously illegal, opposition groups, among which the ANC, and the abolishment of the Separate Amenities Act of 1953, which entailed the legalization of race

segregation in public services. A few days after this speech, he released Nelson Mandela, who had been a prisoner for 27 years, and invited him to negotiate a more advanced policy for a democratic and equal South-Africa (Blad & Glanton, 1997, p. 567). This transition of F.W. de Klerk – from being someone who tried to maintain the conservative policies which were composed by his party, to someone who made the first big steps in the equalization and democratization processes in South Africa – is the puzzle to be solved in this paper. The analysis of F.W. de Klerk's personality traits, based on the design of the Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA) of M. Hermann (1980, 2003, 2005), can give us a clearer understanding why he had chosen for this certain path in South-Africa's history.

## **2. The Relevance of Studying the Leadership Style of Frederik Willem de Klerk**

First, it is very likely that this political transition was also caused by multiple elements existing in the domestic and international context. The South-African economy was in decline around that time. The country had been in a tremendous economic crisis since the 1980's, whereby the economy had decreased with three per cent. When former President Botha gave his combative speech on August 1985 about the maintaining of race segregation, there was a huge capital flight out of the country and a default on the high debts on western banks. Countries like the USA and Great-Britain, with presidents Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher as important political leaders, imposed political sanctions because they felt they had no choice then to isolate South-Africa (Callinicos, 1994, p. 2355). The government took it hard, because it already suffered under great pressure from the international front. After the declaration between many countries for the independence of Namibia, South-Africa was the only remaining country with white minority rule, therefore receiving full international attention (Houston, 2014, p. 181). Another important reason for the political transition of F.W. de Klerk, is the fact that the anti-apartheid movement was morally fightable. The fall of the Soviet-Union's Marxism, made the white upper class realize that the former socialistic values had to make room for more liberal-democratic ones. The jet set of South-Africa became more cultural orientated because of education and foreign travel, to eventually set aside former NP's traditions (Callinicos, 1994, p. 2355). A study in 1988 among the white South-African elite, contained the fact that one-third of the participants felt like the apartheid regime was a threat to their security, while almost 50 per cent felt the apartheid regime was somewhat threatening state's security. Also, this research showed that the South-African upper-class did not believe that majority vote would mean the destruction of the South African economy and 90 per cent of the participants was convinced

that the abolishment of the apartheid regime would mean more global acceptance (Houston, 2014, p. 187). At last, the strength and the influence of the African National Congress was undeniable (Ayalew, 2010, p. 4). Despite the imprisonments of a lot of members, the ANC's armed struggle and the militant mass action of young blacks caused riots and protests in the streets of South-Africa. The country was slowly transforming into a pariah state. (Houston, 2014, p. 180).

These elements existing in international and domestic sphere had partly caused the political transition of South-Africa. With that being said, the following question arises: 'Why is it, despite all the international and domestic circumstances, still necessary to look at the personality of F.W. de Klerk?'. Even though one could argue that the political transition was forced upon De Klerk due to the political context at that time, he did make some big initiatives that would give reasons enough to believe that his personality is relevant (Ayalew, 2010, p. 6). Sampson (1999) argued that that F.W. de Klerk could easily have taken the same path as his predecessor Pik Botha, because F.W. de Klerk still maintained control over the state's security system, which included the military force, the police stations and the state's intelligence system. Also Houston (2014) claimed that F.W. de Klerk could have stayed in office for five till ten years without any reform. But despite the fact that the infrastructure for this course was ready, and the important fact that F.W de Klerk was known for his conservative background and his loyalty towards the NP's apartheid regime, he took the path of reform by introducing the big time-changing initiatives at his speech on February 2<sup>nd</sup> in 1990 and leaving his constituency in shock (Ayalew, 2010, p. 6). The question is: Why did someone who advocated the strict segregation rules, not take the existing road for conservative policies, but instead build the framework for a modern democratic South-Africa?

There are a few studies who already focused on De Klerk's leadership. Ayalew (2010) has studied the importance of leadership style in cultural political transitions, therefore using F.W de Klerk as a case-study. She eventually states that F.W. de Klerk had taken the revolutionary path as a necessary step for the future of South-Africa, but that he could never distance himself from the legacy of the old-white-men-regime. Her studies could partly complement with this one, despite the fact that this analysis will use personality traits to argue this conclusion. Moreover, Glad and Blanton (1997) analysed the political leadership corporation between Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk and Houston (2014) has written a historical study about the developments around F.W. de Klerk's time in office, eventually concluding that the political

road F.W. de Klerk took was courageous and time-changing. These studies are all very helpful to provide material for this case-study and are also overlapping in some parts, but with the analysis of F.W. de Klerk's personality traits, one aims to contribute to the studies about the motivations and reasons behind the democratization and equalization of South-Africa in a different way.

### **3. A Framework for Analysis**

To analyse De Klerk's leadership style, the importance of the actor specific field in International Relations (IR) needs to be argued, because it is a neglected one. Many scholars started their studies in world politics with the only assumption that states are the central actor of IR studies (Byman & Pollack, 2001, Hermann & Hagan, 1998). In most political analyses the state is entailed as a unitary and rational decision maker, and it does not matter which individual or group of individuals has made a certain decision (Hudson, 2005, pp. 1-2). This 'actors in general' theory, or 'black boxing the state' approach (Hudson, 2005, pp. 1-2), has mostly resulted in most political scholars being convinced that systematic influences like anarchy, domestic politics and foreign interdependence are so strongly present, that the individual leaders in the international system have little or no choice in their actions (Hermann & Hagan, 1998, p. 124). In the bipolar international system that the Cold War entailed, such assumptions may be useful (Hermann & Hagan, 1998, Görener & Ucal, 2011). But with the contemporary world politics, there is more room for communication and interpretation, which entails more room for the behaviour and position of individuals in the international system (Hermann & Hagan, 1998, p. 125). According to Görener and Ucal (2011), it would be a mistake to think that every politician has the same interpretation of events and will choose the same responses for every international and domestic event. Examples in history like Hitler, Napoleon, Assad and Hussein prove that the interpretations and preferences of individual leaders strongly influence the state's strategies, intentions and diplomatic power (Byman & Pollack, 2001). Kenneth Waltz was one of the first to implement the actor specific field in his studies. He considered three 'images' of international relations, immediately rejecting the first image: the idea that the behaviour of nations springs from the individual. He argued that human nature is constant and always seeking for conflict, which confronts the fact that the international world is a variable and not always at war (Byman & Pollack, 2001, pp. 111 – 114). To object the statement of Waltz, one has no know that human nature is not constant; it's a variable. Humans are not rational economical decision makers, but individuals with a broad and mixed range of

personalities, who make political decisions influenced by factors such as emotions, uncertainty and biases that often produce less than optimal choices (Görener & Ucal, 2011, p. 360). This range of personalities must be examined, to eventually measure and compare which impact they have on international relations (Byman & Pollack, 2001, p. 112). Additionally, it is important to study the instability of all these kinds of personalities. Personalities of individuals can change over time, because an individual will always react to phenomena in domestic and foreign politics and will always be limited or strengthened by domestic- and foreign connections. (Byman & Pollack, 2001, Hermann & Hagan, 1998). Thus, the actor specific field in IR is highly important, because the study of the engagement of leaders in the foreign policy process and how they frame and respond to domestic and international pressures, can explain state behaviour (Görener & Ucal, 2011, p. 361).

Depending on the work of multiple scholars, this responsiveness and framing of a leader towards domestic and international pressures is the leading framework in this paper. Contributing to this, is the work of Cerny (1988), which entailed the clear argument that political leadership can be understood as a process of interacting with wider political structures and processes and that relationships between political leaders and social structures can vary dramatically and unpredictably. Hermann and Preston (1994) stated that there exists a difference between presidents who can still maintain control over domestic and foreign policy despite structural constraints, opposed to leaders who are being drawn into the whirlpool of the demands of agencies, organizations and other existing structures. Furthermore, Hermann already presented in her study of 1980 the difference between aggressive leaders –who are independent in making their own decisions – and conciliatory leaders – who are sensitive and responsive towards the political environment (Hermann, 1980, p. 11 & 12). Later on, in 1995, Hermann sketched the difference between responsive leaders and less responsive leaders again, but made her explanation more comprehensive by saying that leaders who were more responsive towards structures could be strategic – using whatever policy seems appropriate at the moment – but also cue takers – responding heavily on the demands from important others (Hermann, 1995, p. 153).

Considering the mentions of these scholars, is it likely that F.W. de Klerk was a leader who was very sensitive and responsive towards the environment. For example, Ayalew (2010) and Callinicos (1994) had stated that the decision of F.W. de Klerk's political transition was a personal strategic one. The brilliant manoeuvre was to free Nelson Mandela, lift the ban on the

ANC and to begin agreements on ending apartheid *before* he was forced to do so. Before the ship could have sunk, he made his preparations to put him on the right side of history and to establish his position in a new political order (Ayalew, 2010, p. 5). This way, he could still control the transition (Callinicos, 1994, p. 2358). His brother, Willem de Klerk (1994) had also stated that he knew his brother as a superb politician, who could sense the demands in the political environment and could adjust his policy to whatever needs the country had. Furthermore, he stated that F.W. De Klerk '*folded faithfully to the rules of whatever pursuit he was engaged in*', therefore stating that he was someone who was very adaptive to the situation in which he was located. Contributing to this is the argument by Jervis (1996), which entailed that F.W. de Klerk was someone who was already receptive to change, despite his conservative background. According to Jervis (1996), De Klerk's visits to Great-Britain, Germany and a large number of African States could have made him more familiar with other political systems and more prone to change. According to these scholars, there are some reasons to believe that F.W. de Klerk was someone who could sense the demands from the international and domestic context, and was already someone who was open to opinions from others, therefore contributing to the political transition in South-Africa. This theoretical expectation will be tested in this paper by means of the LTA.

The Leadership Trait Analysis (Hermann, 1980, 2003, 2005) is a way to explain state behaviour of political leaders and the degree of their responding towards international and domestic circumstances. With the LTA, one can examine a certain leadership style, which eventually can tell us how a leader responds towards the increasing number of agencies, organizations and other participants in policy making and how they maintain control or follow the demands of the political context (Hermann, 2005, p. 179). The LTA has been used on case studies of individuals like Charles de Gaulle, Tony Blair and Margaret Thatcher (Görener & Ucal, 2011, p. 363) in the past, but many other recent studies have also implied this analysis. For example, Görener and Ucal (2011) used the LTA on Recep Tayyip Erdogan, as this leader is of key importance to the Turkish political culture and system. A survey of Hermann & Preston (1994) examines the way a political leader acts around his advisers, because this also covers the question in what way a political leader reacts to constraints in his environment. The LTA's way of analysing an individual's political behaviour is very useful, because one can see how the individual reacts to contextual factors. A simplistic explanation of one's political behaviour is therefore prevented (Görener & Ucal, 2011, pp. 363 – 364).

With the use of seven personality traits – 1) need for power, 2) belief one can control events, 3) self-confidence, 4) conceptual complexity, 5) in group bias, 6) distrust of others and 7) task focus – one can eventually find a specific leadership style, therefore answering three core questions: 1) do leaders challenge or respect the constraints in the environment? 2) are leaders open or closed to information coming from their environment? And 3) what reasons motivate leaders to seek political office? (Hermann, 2005, pp. 179 – 185). The scores of the seven personality traits can eventually be measured through the examination of certain words said by a political leader during a verbal record, like a speech or an interview. For example, the trait ‘self-confidence’ will be scored through the measurement of words like ‘me’, ‘myself’ and ‘mine’. The scores of the traits can be compared with 87 other political leaders, to eventually determine how average or rare the score is. The trait ‘the belief that one can control events’ and the trait ‘the need for power’ say something about the way a certain leader will challenge or respect constraints in domestic and international sphere. The traits ‘conceptual complexity’ and ‘self-confidence’ give us information about the openness of a leader towards incoming information. Additionally, the traits ‘task-focus’, ‘distrust of others’ and ‘in group bias’ will help us to determine what motivates leaders to perform political actions. For instance, being motivated by one problem or goal, or being motivated by relationships with others (Hermann, 2005, pp. 179 – 185). This information gained out of the three core questions, can result into eight different leadership styles: expansionistic (focus of attention is to expand the state’s control), evangelistic (focus of attention is motivating others to join the state’s beliefs), actively independent (focus of attention is on keeping the state’s independence), directive (focus of attention is on keeping a positive reputation of the state), incremental (focus of attention is on improving the state’s economy and security through incremental steps), influential (focus of attention is on improving the state’s relationships with other), opportunistic (focus of attention is on managing the best possible result in the current situation) and collegial (focus of attention is on building consensus and sharing responsibilities) (Hermann, 2005, p. 186).

If we keep in mind the earlier mentioned expectation, it can be predicted that F.W. de Klerk’s personality traits will lean towards a leadership style which is sensitive towards the political context. According to the work of Hermann (2005), this will mean that F.W. de Klerk is someone who respects constraints, is open to incoming information and is motivated by relationships with others, instead of being motivated by one goal or one problem. This can be confirmed by the work of Cerny (1988), Hermann & Preston (1994) and Hermann (1980, 1995), who state that leaders who are responsive towards structures are cue-takers and/or strategists

who depend on opinions and demands from important others, and make decisions based on situational signals in the environment. In this way, the argument can be made that the many circumstances in the political context around the time of the apartheid regime were of great influence, but only because South-Africa was in possession of a leader who was very sensitive to those circumstances. By analysing the leadership style of F.W. De Klerk, this study tests this expectation and aims to give a clear answer to the main question: ‘What was the influence of F.W. de Klerk’s personality traits in South-Africa’s changing political system?’

#### **4. Constructing Frederik Willem de Klerk’s Leadership Profile: Method and Data**

According to Hermann (2005), there are two types of verbal materials that can be used for the analysis of a president’s personality: speeches and interviews. However, she mentions that interviews are the material of preference, because those are the most spontaneous types of verbal material. She states that one has to be careful using speeches while analysing the political leader’s personality, because those speeches are generally written by speechwriters and not by the leader itself (Hermann, 2005, p. 179 – 180). But with the analysis of the personality of F.W. de Klerk, it was rather difficult to find interviews, because his time in office was just at the beginning of the digital age. Furthermore, the communication with the F.W. de Klerk Foundation resulted in a great amount of speeches, but unfortunately not in interviews. However, according to Winter (1987) this should not be a problem. He notes that although many people would consider the fact that speeches are mainly the output of speechwriters, there is a reason to consider this not to be important. He argues that every speechwriter knows how to produce words that feel comfortable and appropriate for the political leader that has to pronounce them. Also, according to Suedfeld (1994), a contributing argument is the fact that political leaders chose their own speechwriters and review their drafts. He therefore concludes that speeches are valid material for the analysis of personalities of political leaders. An example for a survey of Hermann’s LTA with the exclusive use of speeches, instead of interviews, is the very recent examination of the leadership style of Donald Trump by Berger, Wolf and Wyss (2017).

Because Hermann (2005) stated that the verbal material needs to cover a broad variety of topics, this study will use 48 speeches (see appendix) over the whole tenure of his time in office (1989 till 1994). Thus, the outcome of this study is not context-specific. Also, the speeches consist of 104.899 spoken words, which outnumbers the 5000 words that is needed for an adequate

analysis (Görener & Ucal, 2010, p. 364). With the use of the text analysis program Profiler Plus (Young, 2013) the scores on seven different personality traits can be produced and compared to the scores of 87 other heads of state. In this way, one can examine if De Klerk scores low or high on a particular trait and eventually explain his political behaviour.

## 5. Frederik Willem de Klerk's Personality Traits

Table 1 summarizes F.W. De Klerk's scores, which are composed through the analysis of the 104.899 spoken words in Profiler Plus, compared to the scores of 87 heads of state, which Hermann presented in her study of 2005. The comparison scores are based on 87 state leaders from over 64 different countries and present the mean score, but also the scores which are one standard deviation under and one standard deviation above the mean score. If F.W. De Klerk scores one standard deviation under the mean, he can be placed in the low category of a particular personality trait. The same goes for the high ranks; if he scores one standard deviation

Personality Trait	F.W. De Klerk's score	Scores based on 87 Heads of State
Distrust of others	0.1399 (low)	Mean = .41 Low < .25 High > .56
In group bias	0.1371 (low)	Mean = .42 Low < .32 High > .53
Task focus	0.6551 (moderate)	Mean = .59 Low < .46 High > .71
Belief one can control events	0.3561 (low to moderate)	Mean = .44 Low < .30 High > .58
Self confidence	0.3201 (low)	Mean = .62 Low < .44 High > .81
Conceptual complexity	0.5547 (high)	Mean = .44 Low < .32 High > .56
Need for power	0.2694 (low)	Mean = .50 Low < .37 High > .62

*Table 1: The scores of F.W. De Klerk's personality traits (Hermann, 2005), based on the analysis of 104.899 spoken words, compared to 87 other Heads of State.*

above the mean, it means that De Klerk scores high on the trait (Hermann, 2005, p. 204). In comparison with the other 87 political leaders, F.W. De Klerk scores low on the personality

traits 'distrust of others', 'in group bias', 'self-confidence' and 'need for power'. The trait 'belief one can control events' can be considered as somewhat low till average, but only the trait 'task focus' comes very near to an average score. The trait 'conceptual complexity' can be considered as a high score. Below, the different scores of the personality traits are explained, based on Hermann's research of 2005.

#### *Need for power*

When a leader scores low on this trait, just like F.W. de Klerk, one is absolutely content with the fact that another person gets credit for an achievement. This leader has no problem with sharing power. Also, 'what is good for the group, is good for himself' is one of the motives of this particular leader. In this way, he will always give up his own interests for the interests of the group. This leader wants to empower people and create emissaries, to eventually build a society with a high team spirit. Furthermore, this leader will never place persons above others and is willing to create a society based on trust and communal duty. These leaders are agents, always keen on the interests of others (Hermann, 2005, p. 191).

#### *Belief one can control events*

With a score of 0.3651, one can conclude that F.W. de Klerk's score on this particular trait is moderate to low. His score is less than one standard deviation underneath the mean, which entails that De Klerk is not very insecure about the fact if he can control what happens, but he is not very secure about it either. More likely, De Klerk comes close to someone who will wait for the situation to have a 50 per cent chance of succeeding, before making a decision. This means that he is someone who is sensitive towards changing perspectives in international and domestic context and is very willing to wait and see how a situation is likely to play out before acting (Hermann, 2005, p. 189).

#### *Self confidence*

Leaders who have a low score on this trait, are again more responsive for the context around certain events. They won't easily trust on their own instincts and are always very open towards opinions from others. Those leaders have not a very good idea of who they are and what they can do and are therefore always looking for confirmation in the environment or particular demands from others. Most likely, to enhance their self-esteem, they can become representatives or delegates of a group. Also, they are very inconsistent in decisions. A decision

will always be influenced by the demands from the situation at that moment, not from the needs and wants of the leader itself (Hermann, 2005, p. 195)

### *Conceptual complexity*

Compared to the scores of the 87 heads of state, one can assume that the score of De Klerk can be seen as a high one. Leaders who are high on this trait are considered to be more sensitive to the conceptual context than leaders who score low on this trait. They are always open for information in the international and domestic sphere, because they know a decision cannot be made without knowing all the facts from all sorts of groups. Those leaders do not rely on their first impressions, because there is always room for more data and information. Flexibility is key (Hermann, 2005, p. 196).

### *Task focus*

Task focus entails the focus of a particular leader on gaining particular goals in society opposed to the maintaining of the communal feeling of the group. For leaders who emphasize the gaining of goals, their most important interest is shifting the group towards the achievement, despite the fact that group members must sacrifice their interests. Leaders who emphasize on the group itself are more focused on the relationships inside the group. F.W. De Klerk scores moderate on this personality trait, which means that he has both of these characteristics. According to Hermann, research has suggested that leaders who fall in the middle of this trait, are often charismatic leaders. When the situation asks for it, charismatic leaders will shift their political focus between the achievement of the goal and the building of in-group relationships (Hermann, 2005, p. 197).

### *In group bias*

In group bias focuses on the likelihood of preferring one particular group in society to others. Most likely, this is the group of the political leader itself and will contain many important emotional values and withhold personal attachments. In group bias presents also a strong feeling of holding and containing the group in the society and culture of the country. Leaders like F.W. De Klerk who score low on this trait, can still value the importance of maintaining a certain group in society, but are not eager to segregate groups in terms of black and white. They will always judge persons on basis of a particular problem or development in society and not because they are part of a particular group. Also, they will never use scapegoats to resolve a problem in the domestic sphere (Hermann, 2005, pp. 199 – 201).

### *Distrust of Others*

This trait presents a feeling of doubt, mistrust and anxiety towards others. It is the general aspect of doubting the motives of the actions of other countries and people in the political spectrum. F.W. De Klerk scores very low on this trait, which means that he won't worry about a certain group, person or country for having wrong intentions. Of course some uncertainty about the other's actions exists in politics, but leaders who score low on this trait are able to put these uncertainties into perspective (Hermann, 2005, pp. 199 – 201).

When the examination of the personality traits is done, one can start answering the three core questions of the LTA. Because the traits 'need for power' and 'belief one can control events' is low, De Klerk was someone who respected contextual constraints (Hermann, 2005, p. 187). Also, according to Hermann, because his score on the trait 'self-confidence' is lower than the score of 'conceptual complexity', De Klerk can be considered as a leader who was open for incoming information (Hermann, 2005, p. 192). Taking this into account, one only has to decide whether De Klerk had a relationship-focus policy or a problem-focus policy. The trait 'task-focus' holds a moderate score, which includes that De Klerk could shift between a problem focussed and a relationship focussed policy. But the fact that the scores on the traits 'in group bias' and 'distrust of others' are very low, implies the assumption that De Klerk leans more towards a strong relationship-focus (Hermann, 2005, p. 197). This entails that De Klerk's profile comes closest towards one of a *collegial leader* (Hermann, 2005, p. 185). A collegial leader is someone whose focus of attention is on accommodate differences and building consensus, but also on achieving prestige by empowering others and sharing responsibility (Hermann, 2005, p. 185). Because we have located the leadership profile of De Klerk, the examining of the scores of the matching personality traits with this particular profile will be discussed in the following paragraph.

## **6. Frederik Willem de Klerk's Leadership Profile**

### Respects or challenges constraints

The traits 'belief one can control events' and 'need for power' present information about how F.W. de Klerk managed constraints in the international and domestic sphere.

### *Need for power*

His 'need for power' is very low, which entails that he does not have any problem with someone taking credit for a political achievement. No greater example is the fact that Nelson Mandela was pictured as the country's new 'hero', while De Klerk maintained a calmer agent who showed himself more on the background than front stage (Glad & Blanton, 1997, p. 567). Despite the fact that F.W. de Klerk was the one who pulled off the new political transition, many people still could not distance him from the old-white-men regime. This also occurred because F.W. de Klerk still tried to please the demands of the conservatives, while trying not to upset the proponents of the ANC. Opposed to this, after 27 years in prison, Nelson Mandela became the voice of the anti-apartheid struggle. More than 50,000 people gathered in the downtown area of Cape Town to take a look at him when he was released (Glad & Blanton, 1997, p. 568). Mandela was often recognized as the man who stopped apartheid, without mentioning F.W. Klerk's influence in the progress. This contributes to the fact that F.W. de Klerk was not a crowd pleaser like Mandela, who sang songs with his supporters. Because of Mandela's hero-status, F.W. de Klerk was always compared and outshined by him (Ayalew, 2010, p. 9). What is also important to mention about the low score of personality trait 'need for power', is the fact that De Klerk had sacrificed his own interests for the interests of the group (Hermann, 2005, p. 191) when he made the important decision for the political transition of South Africa. At some point, he knew that he had to set aside his former conservative values for the greater good of the country, therefore shocking his constituency (Ayalew, 2010, p. 6). Furthermore, around 1990, when the rallies against the new reforms were at its peak, De Klerk took the tremendous risk to organize a referendum within the white South-African population. This way, he wanted to have legitimacy to go on with the reforms. He put his career on the line, by promising that he would resign as president if he did not receive the mandate, therefore showing that he would risk his personal career for the greater good of the country (Blad & Glanton, 1997, Houston, 2014).

### *Belief one can control events*

The score on the personality trait 'belief one can control events' can be one of the most obvious examples of De Klerk being sensitive towards events in the international and domestic sphere. De Klerk comes very close to a leader who waits for the situation to have a 50 per cent chance of succeeding, before acting or making a decision. This comes close to the already mentioned argument of Ayalew (2010). She said in her article that De Klerk made a personal strategic manoeuvre by ending the apartheid regime before it ended itself. By releasing Mandela,

shutting down the security agencies and lifting the ban on political protest, De Klerk positioned himself on the safe side of history (Ayalew, 2010, p. 5). Kamin (1999) made the same argument in his article 'Getting Away with Murder and a Nobel Prize' where he states that all the domestic and international demands pointed towards the abolishment of the apartheid regime and De Klerk only needed to be the final decision maker (Kamin, 1999, p. 1). The fact that F.W. de Klerk knew he could not control the system anymore without any reform, was one of the reasons why he chose for the political transition in South-Africa. With another president in office, a person with a more self-confident way of believing that he could control what happens, another history could have been written.

With the score of the trait 'need for power' at a very low level and the score of the trait 'belief one can control events' on a low to moderate level, one can conclude that De Klerk is a political leader who respects constraints. He was sensitive for the demands and needs from groups in the international and domestic context and he wanted to achieve consensus and collaboration, because he was interested and emphatic towards the ideas from others (Hermann, 2005, p. 182 & 187). The fact that he did not feel the need to have much power of his own and the fact that his policy was influenced by the demands from other factors than his own ideology, made him the perfect agent in South-Africa's political transition. Because he respected constraints, he initiated the negotiations between the ANC members and the National Party, therefore responding to the demands and needs from contextual structures. He organized meetings like the 'Groote Schuur Minute' in 1990, where the conditions of the freed political prisoners were discussed, and the CODESA I and II in 1991 and 1992, which entailed the negotiations about the new constitution of South Africa (Houston, 2014, p. 197).

#### Openness to incoming information

The traits 'self-confidence' and 'conceptual complexity' are presenting the way a political leader will deal with incoming information.

#### *Self-confidence*

De Klerk's score of 'self-confidence' is low, which entails that he was always looking for information and demands from actors around the situation to eventually decide in what way he had to act. His behaviour can be noted as inconsistent, because it is always adjusted to the demands at that particular moment in time (Hermann, 2005, p. 194). This could be proven by the fact that De Klerk adjusted his way of thinking at the very moment that many demands from

international and domestic factors pointed towards the abolishment of the apartheid regime. When he got elected in 1989 as party leader, a more responsible and insecure position than party member, De Klerk shifted the NP's policy immediately towards the liberal side, knowing that that was the thing that was called for in politics and society, on domestic and on international level (Schrire, 1991, p. 131). This is again an example of the fact that De Klerk was someone who was very sensitive to the contextual structures. Because of his low score on self-confidence, he adjusted his ideas to external demands.

### *Conceptual complexity*

De Klerk's score of the personality trait 'conceptual complexity' is high, which entails that he is again bound to contextual information, since he won't trust on his first response to the event. An example for this is the fact that De Klerk did little or nothing to intervene in the political violence between the ANC-members and the members of the Inthaka Freedom Party, which was going on from 1985. This 'civil-war' merely resulted of the fact that Inthaka's members were black civilians who took their advantages out of the apartheid regime by being dependent landlords, opposed to the ANC-members who always fought the same ruling regime. Because De Klerk did not intervene, many people considered the idea that the governmental security force was supporting the Inthaka group, mainly because Inthaka party-leader Buthelezi was known as a puppet of the government. De Klerk responded to these claims by saying that there was little to no prove about the interference of the governmental security force in the political attacks (Houston, 2014, p. 191). This perfectly explains the low score on De Klerk's 'conceptual complexity' trait, by stating that he won't trust his first response on the event and that he will always try to gain as much information and data about the situation as possible. He won't easily see things black and white, giving both sides a fair chance (Hermann, 2005, p. 196).

Because the trait 'conceptual complexity' is higher than the trait 'self-confidence', one can assume that De Klerk is someone who was generally open to information in contextual matters and will respect ideas and opinions from others. Leaders like De Klerk are very interested in the beliefs of others and are active in helping them. Also, because those leaders can't make a decision without taking into account all opinions from differentiating groups on a particular event, they handle situations case-to-case style (Hermann, 2005, p. 196). If we look at the two personality traits, one can assume that De Klerk had listened to the demands in the international and domestic environment by making the very first steps in the abolishment of the apartheid

regime despite his own conservative background. His own transition from being a conservative party member to a very progressive party leader was for many people unexpected (Laurence, 1990, p. 6). But leaders who are open towards contextual information won't act out of personal demands, but out of it demands of others surrounding a particular situation, which could make their decision-making inconsistent. Despite his own conservative thinking, he was open to many opinions and ideas from the environment, and made a decision what he sensed was acceptable under the current conditions (Hermann, 2005, p. 192).

### Motivation for taking office

Besides the information about how a leader deals with constraints and incoming information, there is another spectrum that must be analysed before the leadership profile of F.W. De Klerk can be created. According to Hermann (2005), it is important to understand the motivation of a political leader for seeking office. When using the LTA, two differentiating motivations can be found: leaders who are driven by an internal focus (a problem) – like an ideology or a specific set of values or ideas – or an external focus (a relationship) – responses from other actors or another group in international or national society. Besides this, leaders seem also to be motivated by the needs from their own group in society. Concluding, to measure the motivation of a political leader, there must be analysed why a leader is motivated for seeking office *and* how a leader is motivated towards the world (Hermann, 2005, p. 197).

### *Task focus*

The measurement of the motivation for seeking office, can be done with the personality trait 'task focus' and with a score of 0.6651, F.W. De Klerk can be called a moderate leader on this particular trait. According to Hermann (2005), because of this neutral position, De Klerk could be mentioned as a 'charismatic leader' due to the fact that he can sense if the situation asks for a problem focused policy or a relationship focused policy. The suggestion that F.W. de Klerk was a charismatic leader, could not be applied. Although many members of parliament and even many opponents thought that De Klerk was an amiable and calm human being, no one has ever described him as charismatic. In fact, De Klerk was a leader who was praised for his serene personality, but became also known as a person who was somewhat 'bland' and lacked in charismatic qualities (Welsh, 1990, Ayalew, 2010, Houston, 2014). But the fact that De Klerk is lacking in charismatic features, does not mean that he is not good at sensing what kind of policy a situation needs. As mentioned earlier, there are many examples of De Klerk being very sensitive to contextual matters. Thus, it can be assumed that De Klerk could sense if a situation

needed a problem focussed policy or a relationship focussed policy. On the one hand, De Klerk had proven himself as someone who imposed the new reforms, despite the fact that a tremendous group of apartheid proponents still existed. In times most insecure, De Klerk also organized a referendum among the white South-Africans, to legitimize himself in reforming the South-African political system, which resulted into a 66 per cent in favour of the new reforms and 33 per cent against. Thus, he presented himself as a problem focussed leader, willing to sacrifice the demands from a group of people to eventually accomplish the greater good. On the other hand, has he proven himself as a leader who focusses on receiving feedback from groups in the domestic and international environment. This can be explained by the very fact that he had listened to the demands from Europe and the United States. These demands came for example from Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan who showed themselves to be completely against the apartheid policy (Callinicos, 1994, p. 2357). De Klerk listened also to groups in the domestic sphere. As already noted, South-Africa had become a pariah state in which political violence due to the apartheid regime became part of everyday life (Kamin, 1999, p. 132). Also, the ANC had gained more and more support (Kamin, 1999, p. 132), which showed the overall public opinion and gave De Klerk no choice then to listen to it. The fact that F.W. de Klerk could sense when a certain problem in society *or* the relationship with a certain group needed his focus, makes the argument about his sensitivity towards the international and domestic context more valid. Although he was not charismatic, he could sense what kind of focus was appropriate for the situation and what the context needed around a certain moment in time (Hermann, 2005, p. 198).

The traits ‘distrust of others’ and ‘in-group bias’ describe how much a political leader feels attached to a certain group and how much he or she feels obliged to protect it, because the degree of this dedication also explains a leaders’ motivation towards the world (Hermann, 2005, pp. 197).

#### *In group bias*

De Klerk scores 0.1371 on ‘in group bias’, which means that he scores very low on this specific trait. According to Hermann (2005), this means that *although* he can feel attached to a certain group in society, he does not feel the need to picture everything in black and white terms. He will only talk in ‘we’ and ‘them’ when a certain situation asks for it, therefore the groups who are the ‘we’ and the ‘them’ will always differ and are applicable to the situation at a certain moment. At very first sight, this could not be applied to De Klerk, because of the fact that many

people saw him as an ultra-conservative person who tried to maintain the segregation policy. As minister of Education, he advocated the ideas the National Party had about people of colour, by preserving the apartheid in schools and universities (Houston, 2014, p. 182). De Klerk had grown up with the norms and values of the apartheid regime and was raised by a family who had a long history in the conservative politics of South-Africa (De Klerk, 1998, Houston, 2014, Gelman & Reiss, 1990). But according to Houston (2014), De Klerk was already participating in the debates around a more modern and equal South-Africa, despite the fact that he was part of the conservative corner of politics. This could mean that he was slightly prone to change, despite his institutionalized ideology about the apartheid from his childhood. This was already confirmed by Jervis (1996); De Klerk was one of the few National Party members who travelled a lot, therefore making him more familiar with the process of modernization that many countries experienced. According to Houston (2014), De Klerk was a very loyal party member of the NP, but when he got elected on a more insecure, but also more responsible position as a party-leader, he knew that he had no choice than to make the first steps to a complete transition. According to his brother Willem de Klerk (1994), F.W. De Klerk was sensitive for ‘the slightest tremors’ and in this way, made a conversion when he became a party-leader. De Klerk was known as a very loyal party member, a ‘team-man’ who tried to maintain his party’s conservative policies, but when he became the leader of the National Party he gave himself a new job description: bringing the more liberal ideas within the party to the surface (De Klerk, 1991, Houston, 2014, Gelman & Reiss, 1990). From that moment on, he constituted many initiatives that would break the framework of the apartheid regime, therefore making the first steps in reducing the inequality between the black and white population of South-Africa. Eventually, this even resulted in the fact that De Klerk was the first politician to hold a press conference which included a strong worldwide apology for the apartheid regime. He thereby stated that the apartheid was a very wrong phenomenon from the beginning and that if he could, he would turn back time to undo it (Chicago Tribune, 1993). This explains why he scores very low at in-group bias’. His policy as a party-member was not the same as a party-leader, therefore again concluding that he listened very well to the demands of the environment when taking office. When he was positioned as a party-leader, he still valued the separate entity of his own group, but he did not see the other group as a treat (Hermann, 2005, p. 202). Therefore, he would not use one group as a ‘scapegoat’, like leaders with high scores on in-group bias would do, but instead he focused on negotiations and conferences to listen to both groups (Hermann, 2005, p. 202).

### *Distrust of others*

F.W. De Klerk also scores low on the personality trait ‘distrust of others’, which means that other actors in the international and domestic context in general does not give him a feeling of uneasiness or anxiety. Trust and distrust are more grown from past experiences, then from general ideas or thoughts a leader might have (Hermann, 2005, p. 202 – 203). An example for this is the fact that De Klerk never hesitated in organizing negotiations between the government and the members of the ANC. Mandela was, immediately after his release, invited to the governmental office. Leaders who are high in distrust would never have trusted actors with such differentiating ideas compared to the ones of the ruling system (Hermann, 2005, p. 202 – 203).

De Klerk presents a flexibility on the trait ‘task-focus’ and very low scores on the traits ‘in group bias’ and ‘distrust of others’, which entails that he leaned towards a relationship focussed policy. According to Hermann (2005), this means that F.W. de Klerk did not perceive the world as a threatening place and reacted on problems very context-specific. F.W. de Klerk accepted the fact that his country had to deal with certain constraints, therefore knowing that he had to act pulled by forces outside himself. Cooperation and negotiation on international and domestic level were again very important (Hermann, 2005, p. 200). F.W. de Klerk’s equal view towards the different groups in society, his low distrust of others and his flexibility in task-focus had made him initiate the negotiations between the government and the ANC, therefore focussing on the relationships of both groups in society and again responding to contextual structures and demands from his surroundings.

## **7. Conclusion**

It can be stated that F.W. de Klerk was a leader who respected structural constraints. This means that he focussed on the demands and rules from others, initiated negotiations, instead of stubbornly following one course of his own. Also, considering the fact that he was open to incoming information, it is certain that F.W. De Klerk was a leader whose decision making was very dependent on the opinions and needs from others, therefore producing policy what he sensed was appropriate for the situation. At last, it can be stated that De Klerk leaned towards a relationship focussed motivation, which meant he saw flexibility and responsiveness towards constraints as important factors in policy making, again initiated negotiations and acted pulled by forces outside himself. With the mentions of many scholars about a leader’s responsiveness

towards contextual structures taken into account (Cerny, 1988, Herman, 1985, Herman, 1995, Herman & Preston, 1994), the outcomes of this survey result into the fact that De Klerk was very responsive towards many components that existed around that that time. Thus, there can be concluded that the multiple structural elements like South-Africa's declining economy, the international demands and the domestic social insecurity were of great influence in the political transition of South-Africa, but only because South-Africa was in possession of a leader who was very sensitive and responsive towards those existing structures. Despite his conservative background in politics and family, he reacted on the demands from outside his own ideology and thoughts, therefore making him a leader who reflected what he sensed others would support. If South-Africa was in possession of a leader who was a proponent of the apartheid regime just as F.W. De Klerk, but drove his own course, saw the environmental constraints as obstacles and would not respond flexible towards the demands of important groups and constituents (Hermann, 1995, p. 152), a different history would have been written. With the contribution of this case-study, there can be concluded that although elements in the environment can be of influence of a particular transition, a political leader is the one who has to respond to it. This entails that the state's policy can differ based on the responsiveness of the political leader towards structures (Cerny, 1988, Görener & Ucal, 2011, Herman, 1985, Hermann, 1995, Herman & Preston, 1994).

## 8. Literature

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## 9. Appendix: Speeches

Note: All speeches are received by e-mail from the F.W. de Klerk Foundation.

### 1989

F.W. de Klerk, (1989). On the Occasion of the Annual Evening of the Zonderwater Block Association, November 25, Durban North.
F.W. de Klerk (1989). Regarding the election of F.W. de Klerk as leader of the National Party.
F.W. de Klerk, (1989). At the Opening of the Headquarters Building of the Development Bank of Southern Africa at Headway Hill, November 22, Midrand.
F.W. de Klerk, (1989). On Receiving the Award as “Newsmaker of the Year”, November 29 1989, Johannesburg Press Club.

### 1990

F.W. de Klerk, (1990). To The Swiss-South Africa Association. May 23, Zurich.
F.W. de Klerk, (1990). At the Opening of the Second Session of the Ninth Parliament of the Republic of South-Africa. February 2, Cape Town.
F.W. de Klerk, (1990). To the Pretoria Press Club. March 23, Pretoria Press Club.
F.W. de Klerk, (1990). Departure Statements to President George Bush. September 24, Washington D.C.
F.W. de Klerk, (1990). Speech to Parliament. April 2, Cape Town.
F.W. de Klerk, (1990). On the Occasion of the Interdependence of Namibia. March 20, Windhoek.
F.W. de Klerk, (1990). To the Jeugd-Kongres of the National Party. March 31, Naboomspruit.
F.W. de Klerk, (1990). On the Occasion of the 75 <sup>th</sup> Birthday of the National Party of Kaapland. September 15, Middelburg.
F.W. de Klerk, (1990). On the Occasion of the Banquet of the South-African Besigheidskamer. October 30, Besigheidskamer.
F.W. de Klerk, (1990). Joint Session of Parliament. June 7, Cape Town.
F.W. de Klerk, (1990). At the Annual Banquet of the Natal Chamber of Industries. October 4.
F.W. de Klerk, (1990). After the European Tour. May 26, Jan Smuts-Lughawe.
F.W. de Klerk, (1990). Country-wide Message by the State President. December, 18.
F.W. de Klerk, (1990). Closing Dinner of the 13 <sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Frankel. February 23, Cape Town.
F.W. de Klerk, (1990). On the Occasion of the Twenty Fifth Annual General Meeting in the South Africa Britain Trade Association (SABRITA). November 15, Johannesburg.

F.W. de Klerk, (1990). Comments Regarding Cancellation of the Meeting of April 11 1990.
F.W. de Klerk, (1990). Budget Vote. April 19, Cape Town.
F.W. de Klerk, (1990). At the Café Town Press Club. March 30, Café Town Press Club.
F.W. de Klerk, (1990). To the National Press Club. September 25, National Press Club Ballroom.
F.W. de Klerk, (1990). Remarks by the State President at the Photo Session on the Occasion of the First Meeting between the Government of the Republic of South-Africa and a Delegation of the African National Congress. May 2, Cape Town.

## 1991

F.W. de Klerk, (1991). On the Occasion of the European Area Conference of the Young Presidents Organisation. February 21, Cape Town.
F.W. de Klerk, (1991). At a Banquet in Honour of Mrs Margaret Thatcher. May 15, Cape Town.
F.W. de Klerk, (1991). On the Occasion of the Presentation of the Newsmaker of the Year Award. February 22, The Johannesburg Press Club.
F.W. de Klerk, (1991). To the Institute of Directors. April 23, London.
F.W. de Klerk, (1991). To the South-African Institute of International Affairs. November 19, Johannesburg.
F.W. de Klerk, (1991). To the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. May 30, Johannesburg.
F.W. de Klerk, (1991). Introducing Remarks on the Occasion of the First Meeting with the CODESA World Trade Centre. December 20, Kempton park.
F.W. de Klerk, (1991). At the Aspen Institute Conference. April 4, Cape Town.

## 1992

F.W. de Klerk, (1992). After the Award of the UNESCO Houphouet-Boigny Peace Price. February 3, Paris.
F.W. de Klerk, (1992). On the result of the Referendum. March 18, Tuynhuys.
F.W. de Klerk, (1992). On Receiving the Prix du Courage Politique Award by the Politique Internationale. February 4, Paris.
F.W. de Klerk, (1992). To the Pretoria Press Club. September 16, 1992.
F.W. de Klerk, (1992). At the Opening of the Fourth Session of the Ninth Parliament of the Republic of South-Africa. May 16, 1992.
F.W. de Klerk, (1992). At CODESA. May 16, Cape Town.
F.W. de Klerk, (1992). Closing Remarks at CODESA II. May 16, Cape Town.
F.W. de Klerk, (1992). Addendum to Opening Address.

## 1993

F.W. de Klerk, (1993). Presentation of the Nobel Peace Prize. December 10, Oslo.
F.W. de Klerk, (1993). To the National Press Club. July 2, Washington.
F.W. de Klerk, (1993). At the Acceptance of the Philadelphia Liberty Medal. July 4, Philadelphia.
F.W. de Klerk, (1993). To a Joint Session of Parliament. March 4, Cape Town.
F.W. de Klerk, (1993). At the World Economic Development Congress. September 25, Washington D.C.

## 1994

F.W. de Klerk, (1994). To the Fifth Session of the Ninth Parliament. February 28, Cape Town.
F.W. de Klerk, (1994). On the Occasion of the Election Results. May 2, Cape Town.
F.W. de Klerk, (1994). To Parliament. April 25, Cape Town.