

# Tactics for Transforming SA

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over each other. Crucially, it suggests that the proper tactics for a democratic outcome are to increase the mutual dependence of each main political force upon the other. No one stands to gain from winner-takes-all tactics.

Du Toit's argument may be simply stated: The foundation of any successful negotiation is that each party has some commodity to offer the other. A bargaining relationship is maintained by a mutually profitable exchange of commodities. The way for one party to increase its power is not to undermine its opponent, but to make that opponent more dependent upon it. Coercive tactics like strikes, hit squads and sanctions, which undermine the mutual profitability of the exchange, threaten the relationship itself.

The point has been partially grasped by both the Government and the ANC. By conceding the armed struggle, the ANC has locked the Government into certain commitments, thereby mak-

ernment, while weakening itself by concessions to the ANC, has gained the major prize of international recognition and a loosening of sanctions. By giving away a measure of power, each side has actually gained power over the other.

But each side has made life difficult for its opponent. The coercive tactics used in the past — sanctions and strikes by the ANC and an assortment of destabilising tactics by the Government — bedevil any future relationship. Together, sanctions, hit squads, strikes and boycotts have exacted a huge toll in human suffering and made the task of national reconciliation much more difficult. By raising the costs to their opponents, pro- and anti-apartheid forces have raised their own costs considerably. Forces have been set in motion that are eroding the basic structure of civil society. Economic hardship, unemployment, low growth, poor education and a general breakdown of law

which any future government will drink.

The point is important enough to bear repeating. If you make the country ungovernable for others, you make it ungovernable for yourself. The advocates of sanctions will have to reckon with the damage they have inflicted; at the same time they have strengthened the power of those needing to create wealth in the new South Africa. Given Du Toit's view that a liberal-democratic constitution, while eminently desirable, is not possible without the existence of a middle ground, how does he propose to create conditions under which a democratic polity might develop?

He falls back on Professor Donald Horowitz's complex proposals for an electoral system that takes account of ethnic differences and forces public representatives to compete for support across ethnic boundaries. The three contending "regime models" currently on offer — the "radical" people-ANC, the

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and the "liberal" vision of the DP — are largely incompatible, he says. The middle ground will have to be manufactured by the bargainers themselves.

One of the trickiest questions that Codesa will have to resolve is how to bring a new constitution into being by fair and reasonable means. The ANC insists that a constituent assembly, chosen by the people, should devise the constitution. The Government argues that to do so is to put the cart before the horse: a new constitution should first be negotiated and then put to the popular vote. The standoff, Du Toit argues, is unresolvable by purely democratic means. The only way out is to use undemocratic procedures — such as were used centuries ago in Britain and America, when an unrepresentative Parliament and a group of Founding Fathers respectively laid the foundations for democracy without obtaining a prior mandate from the people.

Transitional societies, the author points out, do not have the luxury of a consensus on basic

pre-constitutional matters. Yet there are examples of successful transitions that might be followed here. Democratisation by "heavyweight pact" of political parties has worked in Spain, Brazil and Hungary, while negotiated agreements by opposing forces within authoritarian regimes have been successful in Poland, South Korea and Hungary. A similarly undemocratic though well-intentioned arrangement may be needed to break the logjam here.

But the options are narrowing as the economy falters and social pressures grow. Successful transitions to democracy seldom take place in rapidly declining economies. As every newspaper reader knows, the threat posed by an underperforming economy and the accompanying social dislocation is now at least as formidable as the political conundrum confronting our constitution-makers. □

\* *Power Plays — Bargaining Tactics for Transforming South Africa* by Pierre du Toit (Southern Books.)

## Allow commonsense to guide your usage

LET commonsense be the touchstone for today's examples.

**I am finished/I have finished**

Neither is incorrect in the right context. If a man's resources are all exhausted, if he is fatally wounded, he is correct in using the first; but if he wants to tell the waiter that he has completed his meal, the second is obviously the better. I say "obviously" because commonsense tells one so.

**If/Whether**

Apropos a prospective inquiry in the taxi war in the Cape — "He will also inquire if the aims of the violence were influenced by political interference" implies that he will inquire only if there was political interference. Clearly that was not the meaning intended. The statement from SABC news should have run "He will inquire whether..." Logic of the distinction is clear enough without explanation. The simple logic of *whether* can easily be impressed upon an average English-speaking child

**Better English**



of seven.

**Appears/Seems**

*Appears* from Latin *parere* — to come into view.

"The release of more hostages appears to be on the cards," said the news broadcaster.

As *appears* here means *seems* and on the cards means *seems likely to happen*, there is too much enlargement of probability for such a bare-boned statement. A sentence without the feeble cliché-metaphor *on the cards* would have been quicker and stronger: It seems likely that the hostages will be released. Hence this suggestion to sportswriters and news commentators: for plain items abstain from poetic flights of metaphor; just state baldly.

**Ian Bruton-Simmonds**

Western hostages in Lebanon

## East politics ends

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a web naively designed to establish links with moderates in Tehran, had the effect of promoting hostages to a more valued commodity which could be used by Iran to trade for desperately needed American weapons.

The freedom of the hostages reflects the end of an extraordinary decade in Middle East politics. The threats that loomed largest in Western minds 10 years ago have by no means disappeared, but their potency has been marred

allowed the US to exercise a greater authority over the region than the most hawkish Pentagon official could have dreamed of.

The radicals have almost all run for cover. Those who ultimately bore most responsibility for the misery inflicted on the hostages and their families are now basking in the sharp increase in their approval rating among Western governments.

The freed hostages are probably