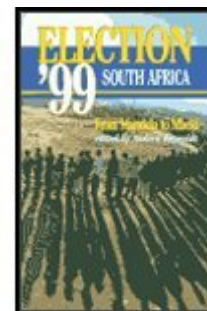




**Andrew Reynolds, ed.** *Election '99 South Africa: From Mandela to Mbeki*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999. xiv + 218 pp. \$24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-312-22871-2.



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## 'South Africa's second democratic election'

Since the end of 1989 the African continent has witnessed new, inclusive, multi-party legislative elections in thirty-five states. By the end of December 2000 some twenty-three countries had held second elections. The issue of elections is not only important to scholars interested in party politics or electoral systems; it is of particular significance to those interested in the democratisation process, not only in South Africa, but also in the rest of Africa. Without elections there can be no democracy despite the fact that you can have elections without democracy. Furthermore, there is no doubt that free and fair elections are a necessary, although not sufficient, condition for the successful consolidation of democratic dispensations. Although the first democratic elections in a country generally generate great international interest and support, and are regarded as an important step in a democratic transition, the importance of second elections should not be overlooked. These elections can help to determine whether the electoral process has contributed to the deepening of democracy or, on the other hand, whether it has had a destabilising effect. In the latter case, the electoral process can actually constitute a serious setback for democratisation, particularly where free and fair contestation is systematically disregarded. Unlike the first democratic elections in a coun-

try, second elections are generally characterised by, for example, significantly less international media attention and far fewer international observers—both of which usually serve as an important legitimising force during first elections. In addition, while money is seldom a problem in the first elections in many countries, raising funds to conduct second elections is often a problem for emerging democracies.

A review of South Africa's second election is therefore useful—not only in determining its contribution to democratic consolidation, but also as a means of comparison (and example) to other elections in newly democratised states. Two books on the 1999 elections have been published within six months of the elections. The first of these is Tom Lodge's *Consolidating Democracy: South Africa's Second Popular Election* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1999) and the other, the book under review, is *Election '99 South Africa: From Mandela to Mbeki*, edited by Reynolds and consisting of nineteen contributors, each responsible for a separate chapter. *Elections '99* follows *Election '94 South Africa: An Analysis of the Campaign, Results and Future Prospects* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994) of which Reynolds is the sole author.

Despite its title, the book is not really an election analysis, nor is it an analysis of the major features of the

period 1994-1999. The five years between 1994 and 1999 are encapsulated in two short chapters at the level and style of a first-year textbook. Chapter one merely provides an overview of the newly established national government institutions—i.e. the Constitution, Government of National Unity, the Deputy Presidency, the organisation of the National Executive, Parliament, parliamentary committees and the National Council of Provinces. This is followed by an overview of the first five years of provincial government which includes the 1994 election results, the provincial powers, the provincial legislative record and financial sustainability.

The third chapter by Robert Mattes and others is a well-researched contribution that reviews public opinion and voter preferences between 1994 and 1999. Particular attention is paid to public opinion on economic performance, government performance, and perceptions on how government handles key issues. This is followed by trends in political party support. This chapter provides *inter alia* new insights into party-identification, 'racial' and 'ethnic' voting and the implications for the future of the ANC's electoral strength as well as the potential for electoral change.

The bulk of the book (six chapters) is devoted to a discussion of each of the parties represented in Parliament since the 1994 election. The African National Congress (ANC), the Democratic Party (DP), the New National Party (NNP, which has since formed the Democratic Alliance with the DP) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) are each discussed in a separate chapter, while the remaining two chapters provide an overview of the small parties (those with one or two seats in Parliament). Party campaigning/electioneering is the central focus of these chapters. The election results are provided in the second-last chapter by Reynolds.

The three remaining chapters are devoted to the media and elections, the gender dimension of the elections and a conclusion on the future of South Africa under Thabo Mbeki in terms of democratic stability.

Most chapters lack an in-depth analysis and rely heavily on newspaper articles rather than available primary sources. Some new insights and perspectives do emerge in some chapters, particularly singling out those by Robert Mattes and his co-authors on Public opinion and voter preference (already noted); Gerhard Mare on Inkatha; Willie Breytenbach on the NNP; Jessica Piombo on the United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP), Minority Front, African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) and Federal Alliance (FA); as well as the future under

Mbeki by Frederik van Zyl Slabbert. Although the chapter on the ANC by Tom Lodge greatly resembles a chapter in his own book (referred to above) it is well researched.

The chapter on the media and elections is very disappointing. The role of the media in democratic elections in the majority of African states has been a major source of contention. The major problem has been the bias of the state-owned broadcasting media, on the one hand, and government clampdowns on independent newspapers, on the other. This chapter mainly deals with the print media (which is privately owned) in electioneering in South Africa, and more specifically with three aspects: the media and voting preferences, the media and opinion polls, and newspaper endorsements and editorial independence. Although some profound statements are made, this chapter, like most of the chapters in this book, falls short of making a significant contribution to the general issues of democratisation and electoral politics.

The chapter on gender and the election addresses important issues such as women in party campaigns, the nature of the electoral system with regard to women's election to political office and the implications of the 1999 election results for women. However, again what is lacking is an adequate account of the full content of party campaigns in drawing conclusions on the extent of gender sensitivity.

A major problem with the book is the lack of a definite focus and a lack of editorial co-ordination. Although the book does not really make a significant contribution to the literature on democratisation, it could have (with some editorial co-ordination and linkages) provided more durability as a reference text for scholars on South African politics. A theme that could have been developed easily from some of the existing chapters is the future of South Africa's party system.

Since the first elections in 1994, which resulted in the very large majority support for the ANC, which was then repeated in the first local elections in 1995, the likelihood of South Africa becoming a one-party dominant state has been an issue of scholarly attention and debate. An analysis of the various parties campaign efforts and party manifestos could have, for example, provided some insight into the potential threat of the opposition parties to the ANC, particularly in terms of presenting alternative policies. A focus on the perceived racist residue in parties such as the DP, NNP and some smaller parties is another related issue which could have been dealt with. A linkage could have also been established with the voter

preferences and reasons for these preferences analysed in chapter 3 as well as with the final election results provided in the second-last chapter.

The impact on opposition politics of the ANC's own simultaneous commitment to neo-liberal policies (for example GEAR, the macro-economic policy) and its strong emphasis on service delivery by the state as referred to in the chapter by Lodge, could have further complemented the analysis of the future of the party system in South Africa. Part of this theme could also have been an elaboration on the possibility of alliances between opposition parties and the future impact of this on opposition politics and the party system.

After reading this book one is unfortunately left with a feeling that it was written in a short space of time, and this may account for the superficial discussions of some of the chapters. The apparent need to publish a book on the 1999 elections within six months of the election has certainly meant that an in-depth analysis of the elections

has been forfeited. Although it might not have been the idea to provide the ultimate analysis of the 1999 elections, the final assessment of such a work is inevitably guided not only by its contribution to the scholarly work on democratisation and electoral politics, but also its durability as a reference work. Given the fact that only one chapter is devoted to the election outcome, and that the chapters on the various political parties hardly make any reference to the impact of the election results on the parties and the party system (probably due to editorial dictate), the authors could have devoted more time to in-depth research and analysis.

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