

REVIEWS

Compendium of Elections in Southern Africa

Edited by Tom Lodge, Denis Kadima and David Pottie

Electoral Institute of Southern Africa

This compendium examines the wave of multi-party elections that has swept across Southern Africa since 1989. Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius and Zimbabwe have long histories of regular multi-party elections, notwithstanding the success of dominant parties in holding onto power for long periods. Between 1989 and 1993 they were joined by Namibia, Zambia, Angola and the Seychelles. 1994 proved an election-filled year, with elections in Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa. The following year Tanzania held elections. Only Swaziland and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) withstood the wave. Since 1995 most of the countries in the region have held another round of national elections as well as local elections. Elections have become a pivotal element in the political landscape of Southern Africa.

The volume comprises a set of country studies. Each chapter follows a general format, providing information on the context (geographical, social and economic) and historical background, the elections and the results, and finally (and generally in most detail) the electoral system, especially the management of the elections. Fourteen countries are covered, including Swaziland and the DRC. There are separate chapters on Tanzania and Zanzibar. Mauritius and the Seychelles but not on Madagascar (without obvious explanation). The volume covers elections up to 1999 reasonably thoroughly, and elections between 2000 and early 2002 more superficially; it is clear why discussion of the elections in late 2001 (Zambia) or early 2002 (Zimbabwean presidential elections, Lesotho parliamentary elections) had to be confined to postscripts, but it is not clear why the 2000 elections in Mauritius and Tanzania are also treated skimpily.

The summaries of elections are brief but necessary, because they set the stage for discussions of electoral systems and management. What the accounts do is to show how difficult it is to categorise elections as 'successful'. Some elections are obviously 'unsuccessful', in one or other sense. These include Angola in 1992, Lesotho in 1993, and Zanzibar in 1995 and 2000. In each of these cases a close result contributed to political crisis and violence. In Angola the MPLA secured a majority in the legislative elections but the MPLA's Santos failed to reach 50% in the presidential elections. Unita's Savimbi, who won 40% of the presidential vote, refused to accept the result. No second-round presidential election was held, although Unita's key sponsor (the USA) recognised the elected MPLA government and ceased backing Savimbi. In Zanzibar neither the CCM nor the CUF accepted that the 1995 elections were fair until the CCM was awarded victory (and decided to change its tune!). In 2000, amidst chaotic administration, the CCM won again, more convincingly – but the CUF continued to refuse to accept the results, with an

ensuing saga of rerun elections, boycotts, violence and the summary dismissal of opposition MPs for boycotting the legislature. In two other cases – Zambia in 2001 and the presidential election in Zimbabwe in 2002 – the elections were clearly so deeply flawed that they cannot be considered successes. None of these elections can be considered clear successes.

But even some of the elections conducted ‘fairly’ had flaws that make it difficult to declare them successful. Electoral systems frequently produce outcomes that are difficult to consider fair; undermining the legitimacy of the elections; contributing to discord and prompting, in some cases, the losers to refuse to accept defeat. Westminster-style first-past-the-post electoral systems result in dominant parties enjoying disproportionately large majorities in several countries (including Tanzania and Botswana as well as Lesotho before the recent reforms). In both 1994 and 1999 the BDP in Botswana won only 54% of the vote but the lion’s share of the legislative seats. In Lesotho in 1993 the BCP won 75% of the vote but all of the seats; in 1998 the LCD (a splinter party from within the BCP) won 61% of the vote and all but one of the seats. In Mauritius, a hitherto competitive party system gave way to a period of dominance by a coalition of parties. Although the electoral system was not purely first-past-the-post, there were too few proportionally allocated seats to make much of a difference. The same is true of the Seychelles. Judged in terms of these outcomes, none of these elections can be considered successful.

Another problem is the advantage enjoyed by incumbents. It has been exceptional during this period for elected incumbents to be thrown out of government as a result of an election defeat. The broadened franchise allowed the African National Congress to oust the National Party in South Africa in 1994, and multi-party elections allowed former single parties to be defeated in Malawi in 1994 and Zambia in 1991. Some elections have been genuinely competitive and broadly fair: Malawi, Mozambique and perhaps South Africa in both 1994 and 1999, and Zimbabwe in 2000 (parliamentary elections). But there is no clear case of an election conducted fairly that resulted in the defeat of an elected incumbent government.

Given this sorry record, reform of both the electoral system and the institutions of election management assumes great importance. This volume pays some attention to electoral systems. Unfortunately, a key reform – of Lesotho’s electoral system, used for the first time in 2002 – was too recent to receive detailed and critical comment. Lesotho’s reform raises important lessons for other countries in the region because the legitimacy of the electoral process is likely to be enhanced if losers secure ‘fair’ representation. Lesotho’s first-past-the-post system was replaced with a ‘mixed member proportional’ system, in which one-third of the seats were allocated according to parties’ shares of the total vote, taking into account the seats won in constituencies. In 2002 the opposition parties won just three constituency seats but all forty of the PR seats, resulting in a Parliament that reflected more proportionately the electorate’s preferences.

This volume documents in more detail the electoral administrative machinery. How independent are electoral commissions? How are voters registered? How are the boundaries of constituencies demarcated? How are parties funded? Appendices set out the electoral 'norms and standards' developed under the auspices of the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa, and key features of each country's electoral system and machinery. These are the issues that are going to be increasingly important if Southern African elections are to serve as the means by which electorates can effectively hold their governments to account.

As with any compendium, some readers will find the contents useful whilst others will find them frustrating. The summaries are often superficial; key works on the countries are overlooked; the discussion of electoral machinery may be uncritical; and no clear 'argument' emerges (at least not until the Appendix on norms and standards). Thematic comparative chapters might be more incisive than country case studies. But further work will no doubt take this forward in a more critical and incisive direction. What this compendium provides are strong foundations on which further work can be based.

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One Woman, One Vote: The Gender Politics of South African Elections

Edited by G Fick, S Meintjes and M Simons

The Electoral Institute of Southern Africa

Within current literature, elections as a yardstick for democratic politics are increasingly under critique. A number of scholars observe that the study of democracy has suffered from disproportionate emphasis on elections, principally anchored within the Schumpeterian definition of democracy that centres on contestation (Harbeson 1999; Luckham, Goetz & Kaldor 2000). In other words there is a recognition that elections can no longer be conceived as the only measure of democratic politics, at least in the way that Huntington and the others conceived them. However, elections remain a specific and significant icon in the political process, particularly in the context of new democracies such as South Africa. This calls for a re-theorisation that takes cognisance of this space without collapsing into the reductionism that characterises conventional definitions of politics. Furthermore, a serious lacuna exists in terms of documenting the gender dimension of electoral process, especially in the African context, since, as the authors of this book rightly argue, much of the theory is based on the experiences of the North. *One Woman, One Vote* is therefore a great contribution to addressing the abovementioned gaps in the literature.

The book addresses itself to the following questions: How does gender shape the form and character of the electoral process and representative democracy in South Africa? What does 'the politics of presence' mean for the diversity of South African women in politics? The authors generally explore why the presence of women in politics is important; what the representation of women as a category means; and the strategies used not only to get women into politics but also to create mechanisms of accountability in political party contexts.

In the opening chapter, entitled 'Women and Democracy, Women in Democracy, Gender and Democracy', Sheila Meintjes and Mary Simons deal with the debate on gender and democracy from an historical perspective. They demonstrate the fact that the struggle for representation in the governance of South Africa was born out of a multitude of complex arenas principally relating to apartheid oppression and the stiff mass resistance to it. Specific characteristics of this resistance were the active mobilisation across races (black and white) and the particular way in which black, coloured, Indian and white women mobilised in joint organisations to fight the oppression of segregation and apartheid. A particularly interesting observation is that throughout the twentieth century women's mobilisation in South Africa rotated around the identity of motherhood. Rather than view this as a complete setback, the authors observe that the identity of motherhood 'mobilised women for a broader political struggle'. 'Rallying around motherhood made it easier for women to step into the political space, and harder for men to object' (p18). This very fact enabled a far larger number of women to enter the arena of struggle against state oppression. Much more importantly, it had a broader effect in terms of ultimately creating a deeper location and relative legitimacy of women in the definition of the 'New South Africa'.

The chapter by Cathi Albertyn, Shireen Hassim and Sheila Meintjes takes on the issue of representation and participation outcomes for women. With 27% women in parliament South Africa ranks high on the world scale in terms of women's representation – well beyond the regional average (about 11%) as established by the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU). The concern of the authors then relates to the question of 'women making a difference', interrogating conventional wisdom in gender debates that attempt to link women's representation in parliament to the positive impact on the gendered nature of laws and policies of the country. Employing what is termed 'indigenous historically based concepts and practices of democracy and equality' (p 25) the authors argue that the increased presence of women in the legislature is not only politically and theoretically justifiable, but is also desirable on the basis that a more representative parliament is a more effective institution. This also relates to the whole issue of citizenship addressed by Fick in chapter three, where the author engages with the complexity of the category of citizenship beyond formal definitions to take into account structural limitations to women exercising the right to full citizenship.

In chapter four Julie Ballington documents the mechanisms that enabled women to become representatives, and the importance of the critical mass of women

in parliament. Dealing with political parties, gender equality and elections in South Africa, Ballington demonstrates the significance of political parties and electoral systems to the presence or absence of women in national legislatures. She demonstrates how, in the context of South Africa, the ANC's commitment to a quota in favour of women has enhanced their representation, making a radical shift from the apartheid era where, for instance, between 1910 and 1980 only 19 (white) women had ever held seats in the House of Assembly. Two other important factors that are analysed relate to women's activism throughout the liberation struggle and the PR electoral system adopted in 1994, especially in the context of the landslide victory of the ANC.

In what she terms the 'dual politics of representation' Shireen Hassim, in chapter 5, is concerned with bringing out the distinction between women's participation in party politics and women's organisations in civil society, and how women as a group came to constitute an electoral constituency in South African politics. Part of the concern also relates to the relative demobilisation of women's organisations as most key actors ascended to political and government posts in the new democracy. Hassim makes a compelling case for greater numerical representation of women, without pre-judging the ways in which representatives will take up gender inequalities once they are in the legislature. She also argues that a critical mass has the potential to dilute the dominance of the hegemonic group, creating space for a variety of interests to be articulated.

Amanda Gouws (chapter 6) considers the gender gap in voting behaviour and argues that where men and women vote on the same issue there will be no such gender gap. Gender gaps arise at three levels: one, between the level at which they participate as voters and at which they become representatives; two, between the presence of women representatives and their effective participation in policy making; and three, between participation in the legislature and appointment to executive positions.

In chapter 7 Ballington examines the need to encourage women's participation in elections through voter education, with the aim of accounting for the successful democratic process of mobilising and educating all South Africans, despite substantive differences in race, gender and class. The analysis looks at voter education at both national and local government level, with specific emphasis on education directed at women voters.

Do electoral systems matter? This is the question addressed by Meintjes and Simons in chapter 8. The authors explore electoral models from a gender perspective and examine the argument normally advanced that proportional representation (PR) systems are better for women. Through a concise historical account the chapter shows how PR was preferred by the different parties involved in negotiating the Constitution of the 'New South Africa', in view of its potential for representing diversity. However, the argument here is that PR on its own does not seem to answer the question but rather other factors, including open or closed lists, and positive measures such as quotas and economic empowerment have to come into play.

In chapter 9 Alice Coetzee and Subethri Naidoo consider the significance of local government to women and suggest that women should be fully involved at this level, as an arena of development and local service delivery. The authors once again disprove one of the conventional arguments that women find it easier to participate in local level politics because it is closer to their domestic responsibilities. Evidence is given to suggest that women have increasingly been squeezed out of local decision-making and that, in fact, gains at the local level have been brought about mainly by the intervention of organisations and lobbies at the national level. The chapter shows that the representation of women varies from council to council, with a tendency for more representation in urban as opposed to rural areas, and in constituencies where the ANC dominates. More importantly, the authors observe that the patriarchal nature of councils, both in structure and operating culture, calls for conscious and continued mobilisation of gender activists at local government level if gender transformation is to be achieved beyond numbers. In the same chapter, David Pottie's postscript provides a brief update of women's representation after the local government elections in December 2000, conducted on the basis of a mixed system (Ward and PR). The figures presented correspond to a general pattern of party support, suggesting that while South Africans are willing to elect women as ward councillors, their choices are primarily determined by party preference. Once again the positive effect of the ANC's dominance is very clear in the figures provided.

The checklist for gender equality in elections that is provided in the appendix is an invaluable instrument that countries and gender activists can employ in voter education, election monitoring and other related activities in the gender struggle.

The book contains a wealth of information, dealing with wide-ranging facets of the gender politics of elections. *One woman, One Vote* combines theoretical engagement with concrete historically grounded analysis of the national and local government elections in post-apartheid South Africa. The authors engage carefully with debates in feminism (and/or feminist critique of political theory) and the whole notion of transition politics, blending this into the understanding of the gender politics of the elections in South Africa.

The analysis offered by the different authors critically subjects feminist debates to concrete enquiry, bringing out some useful generalities and specificities. For example, the discussions on quotas for women and the arguments that different parties gave in favour or against, especially during the negotiation process, offer a useful comparison with other countries such as Uganda and India, where quotas have had contradictory consequences. Indeed, the book demonstrates the need for gender analysis to take on the concrete politics such as the role of electoral systems. These cannot be considered in a social vacuum but rather depend on a range of other factors. The case of South Africa, for instance, where the role of the PR system has been enhanced by the landslide victory of the ANC and the gradual contagion effect to other parties is very revealing. The book makes a unique contribution to the theorisation of women's location in transition politics especially in relation to

positive gains, as opposed to concentrating on how women normally lose out in such situations. The role of the Women's National Coalition (WNC) brings out the other side of women's position in transition – not that of a victim but rather as a legitimate actor in the definition of a democratic South Africa.

The book, however, does not document lived experiences of men and women, for instance in selection and other party activities, which would have breathed more life into the analysis. The reader would have been more interested to see how the actual gender terrain is unfolding in the new South Africa with regard to people's identity and interaction in such processes. In that way, the book would have adequately re-theorised conceptions of issues like citizenship, as well as broadened the definition of the political generally, to offer a fuller understanding of electoral politics in South Africa. Furthermore, the role of traditional authority is assumed rather than problematised. It would be interesting to find out why, despite the strides made, we still have to talk about 'the role of traditional leaders'. What is going on here? What do we mean by traditional? Is it the same thing at all times? Who are the actors? Who is in who is out and with what consequences with regard to electoral politics?

Despite these minor shortcomings, the nine chapters constitute a fine collection of ideas. *One Woman, One Vote* provides new insights into the understanding of gender and electoral politics in the South generally and the politics of transition in particular. The authors also employ a unique style that makes difficult arguments seem self-evident. This is a book that scholars, activists and development practitioners grappling with the question of gender equity in political space cannot afford to ignore.

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*Security and Politics in South Africa: The Regional Dimension**

By Peter Vale

UCT Press; Lynne Rienner Publishers

This is an important and impressive book, and one that I hope many will read and talk about. Writing with verve and passion, Professor Peter Vale, the recently appointed Nelson Mandela Chair of Politics at Rhodes University, provides a lucid and groundbreaking analysis of South Africa's post-apartheid regional security system. It is a complex book, at times necessarily theoretical, at others deeply historical, and always richly comparative and insightful. It is one of those rare books that makes new connections from old themes and adds new themes to understanding South African politics and history. The main argument of the book is straightforward and both damning and liberating: South Africa has failed to transcend regional dominance, differentiation and exclusion based on the interests of the powerful in the new nation state after 1994; whereas histories and flows of people, ideas, communities, needs and futures are based on an integrated regional whole that could and should transcend the narrow interests of the nation state itself.

Professor Vale shows how the idea of Southern Africa is a product of modernity. Although modernity has delivered much to Southern Africa, it has delivered only one way to order the political. He says we need to look beyond states for new forms of community and thus also new understanding of what makes up the region. The opposite of this is the idea of sovereignty, upon which is based much of what makes up security in the region. Sovereignty, he says, is a weasel-word, easily twisted to suit the purposes intended by the South African state, its builders, and its long time patron – capital. In short, he argues, states have failed to deliver community in Southern Africa, and the post-apartheid state is as guilty of this as were its predecessors. Social constructions of Southern Africa are made and remade through intricate forms of human interaction, historically and in the present day, and this is why, looking beyond states for new forms of community promises to deliver an entirely new understanding of what constitutes region.

It is only in these new ways then, Peter Vale argues, that we can overcome security and community as forms of terror and violence. We need to think of the region as a place of multiple belongings, rememberings and communities of interaction; a place where the everyday and the social form the way to secure the everyday life of people, free from violence, terror, and the sovereign state, with its agents, agencies and orthodoxies of forced security. The sovereign nation-state, building the same old communities and behaving as of old in the region is not, Professor Vale reminds us again and again, the natural order of things. Things can change, they must change, and the vision for the future offered by this book is one I would choose any day.

Prof Gary Minkley FHISER

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