

Review

Tom Lodge (1999) *Consolidating Democracy: South Africa's second popular election*. Johannesburg: Electoral Institute of South Africa & University of the Witwatersrand Press.

Tom Lodge (1999) *South African Politics Since 1994*. Cape Town: David Philip.

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I have always found Tom Lodge's work thoroughly researched, accessibly written, evenhanded and well-informed by contemporary debates, and these two books do not disappoint. They are exemplars of mature scholarship. Indeed, *Consolidating Democracy* is the best work I've seen on the 1999 election, and similarly, *South African Politics Since 1994*, addresses an important gap in political science scholarship. Read together they are tremendously empowering for both the student and the serious scholar as they make accessible the key facts, issues, trends and debates pertinent to almost all aspects of South African politics. Indeed, had Lodge engaged more with the debates around elite and neo-liberal trends in governance, they would be sufficient (and not just necessary) reading.

Consolidating Democracy stands fore-square in the tradition of recent work on elections in South Africa. It is a carefully crafted work, attractive in form and impressive in content, and has the particular advantage of being more consistent in methodology, style and theme than multi-authored rivals such as Reynolds (1999) *Election '99 South Africa*. Those new to South African politics will especially appreciate the glossary, and all readers will enjoy the many tables, diagrams and photographs that differentiate each clearly and cleanly laid-out chapter.

In respect of content there is very little really new in *Consolidating Democracy*, but there is no better survey text available. Lodge is supreme at integrating the various parts of current research into a tidy, conceptually

tight and accessible whole. Thus, there is no better place to start if one wants to access current work on the electoral system, the identity, behaviour and motivations of voters, party strategies and campaigning, and the election results. Lodge also has the habit of identifying an issue of emerging importance in his works, and in this case he focuses on the growing importance of the ACDP and religion in politics more generally.

As implied by the title, *Consolidating Democracy* marries a well-rounded and thorough empiricism to an analytical concern with democratic consolidation more broadly, and Lodge makes a pretty convincing argument for the health of South Africa's democracy. However, he does not really explore what is meant by democracy, and thus misses an opportunity to engage with the debates round the increasingly elite character of South African politics. This is somewhat surprising given that Lodge (1999) himself has drawn attention to precisely these trends in his excellent analysis of the contrasting processes by which the RDP and GEAR emerged. Greater comparative and/or theoretical backing would have improved his argument.

A similar assessment applies to *South African Politics Since 1994*. As someone who teaches South African politics, I found this an exciting text, as it is the only up-to-date, general survey of South African politics and there is an obvious gap in the market for such a work. Given Lodge's empirical thoroughness, ability to integrate, analytical keenness and clear style there is no better candidate for this task.

However this book does not fulfil its potential. On the whole it seems to have been taken less seriously than *Consolidating Democracy*. It is less well presented, and other than a map at the beginning, misses the opportunity of infusing the page with tables, diagrams, images and the like. Moreover, while the content is very good, (indeed the chapters on 'Who rules South Africa', the civic movement, the African renaissance and Thabo Mbeki are second to none), it is partial and less finely honed. For instance, there was nothing on the functioning of, and trends in, national government and policy-making, arguably *the* central aspect of governance since 1994. Nor was there substantial discussion of GEAR and its implications, again remarkable given Lodge's own work on this and the massive debate on the advent of neo-liberalism in South African politics.

Indeed, the failure to engage with the debate over neo-liberalism and the comparative and international dimensions that this throws up, means that Lodge omits a dynamic central to contemporary South African politics. If

the politics of race continues at party level in the rivalry between the ANC and the DP, then class politics is happening within the ANC and within the alliance, and Lodge needs to explore this more. In my view, it is only when viewed through both the prisms of the politics of race and of class that the tensions in government policy and the discourse make sense.

Nevertheless, while these are significant omissions, *South African Politics Since 1994* is still the best survey text on contemporary South Africa politics, both more empirically-grounded, analytically consistent and insightful than, for example, Adam, Van Zyl Slabbert and Moodley's *Comrades in Business* (1997).

References

- Adam, H, F van Zyl Slabbert and K Moodley (1997) *Comrades in Business*. Cape Town: Tafelberg.
- Lodge, T (1999) 'Policy processes within the African National Congress and the Tripartite Alliance', *Politikon* 26(1).
- Reynolds, A (ed) (1999) *Election '99 South Africa: from Mandela to Mbeki*. Cape Town and London: David Philip and James Currey.