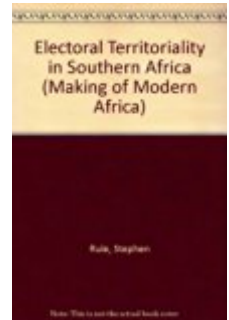


Stephen Rule. *Electoral Territoriality in Southern Africa*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000.
xvii + 322 pp. \$79.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-7546-1310-7.



Reviewed by Roger Pfister

Published on H-SAfrica (August, 2002)

The Impact of Ethnicity and Urbanisation on Elections in Southern Africa

This book is the result of the author's interest in the elections that have taken place in several countries within the southern African region since the 1990s. It is based largely on his doctoral thesis submitted to the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in 1995.[1] In this work he compared the elections in Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The case studies of Lesotho, South Africa, and Swaziland have been added to the book, and the information on the other four countries has been updated.

Rule's main concern and guiding premise for the study is as follows: "This text explores variations of voting behaviour within the states of southern Africa, with particular reference to the role of the geographically localised influences of regional ethnic territoriality and urbanism" (p. 1). For this purpose, he has gathered the available statistical data on the spread of linguistic groups and urbanisation in the relevant countries. Given the limitations of this approach, he has complemented it by adding information derived from

personal interviews conducted in the four countries examined in the Ph.D dissertation. Furthermore, Rule wrote a letter to the editors of newspapers in the same four countries, "soliciting the political views of readers" (p. 17), and use is made of the thirty written replies. All this hard and soft evidence is compared with the election results so as to examine the "extent to which there existed statistical correlations between votes for a particular political party and the demographic characteristics (i.e. spread of linguistic groups and level of urbanisation) of the electorate of each region" (p. 15). This was investigated in greater detail in four specific localities in the above-mentioned four countries, namely the Bulawayo-Plumtree (Zimbabwe), the Francistown (Botswana), the Rehoboth (Namibia), and the Chipata (Zambia) regions (pp. 15-16).

The research results are organised according to countries and in the following order: Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa, Lesotho, and Swaziland. The individual chapters contain sections on the country's history from the earliest days to the present, the emergence of po-

litical parties, and a description of what Rule refers to as the socio-spatial context. This is followed by the statistical examination of possible correlations between voting patterns and demographic variations.

Overall, the book is of high academic standards, requiring the reader to have some knowledge of political developments in Southern Africa as well as of statistical methods. It is well written and clearly structured. The reader is provided with a wealth of information about each country's history, evolution of parties, and a large number of names with which readers outside of these countries are not usually familiar. Given the scope of the study, this is inevitable. However, the reviewer would have found it helpful if a map of each country had been inserted at the beginning of each relevant chapter or in the appendix, showing the relevant geographic localities, as well as the numerous ethnic groups. Also, much of the information on a country's history seems irrelevant for the purpose of the book and its inclusion, therefore, is not really necessary. Apart from these general observations, a few specific comments need to be made on the individual chapters.

In the Zambia chapter, no mention is made of the circumstances that led to the demonstrations and public outcries against the government during 1990, eventually forcing President Kaunda to hold elections in 1991. The effect of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), imposed by the World Bank, is completely neglected. Even though this is not Rule's concern, these SAP are closely linked to his topic. In particular, the implementation of a SAP in African countries generally resulted in financial cutbacks in the education and social sectors, basic consumer goods such as maize meal were no longer subsidised, government services were limited, etc.[2] They thus seriously affected the government's ability to retain power by applying a clientele or patronage-client system of co-option. As this *modus operandi* of securing

votes in return for providing material gains went along ethnic lines, Rule should have at least touched on this issue. All he has to say on the subject of clientelism is: "Such tendencies are evident to a greater or lesser degree in the countries included in this study" (p. 10).

In the Namibia chapter, Rule speaks of "a conference in Berlin in 1885" (p. 165) that demarcated Namibia's boundaries. The correct name would have been the Berlin Conference that took place from November 1884 to February 1885. Furthermore, the recounting of Namibia's history from 1200 to 1990 in ten pages is evidently a very difficult task. Nonetheless, the reduction of information should not lead to wrong information, as evidenced by this example: "Dr Chester Crocker of the United States, convened a meeting in London between representatives of the RSA, Angola, Cuba and the United States in May 1988. An agreement was reached that there should be a cease-fire and a staged withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola, after 1 April 1989" (p. 176). It is true that Chester Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, played a central role. However, the agreement in question, decisive for Namibia's future, was signed at the United Nations in New York on 22 December 1988.

This reductionism is also evident in the South Africa chapter. Rule mentions the formation of the Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP) and the Conservative Party (CP) as conservative offspring of the ruling National Party (NP). However, on pages 218 and 220 the reader suddenly finds the abbreviations PFP and DP, without any prior explanation of what they stand for. Both acronyms stand for the same party, formed as the Progressive Party in 1959, changing the name to Progressive Reform Party (PRP) in 1974, to Progressive Federal Party (PFP) in 1977, and to the Democratic Party (DP) in 1989.[3] Given Rule's sometimes very detailed description of other facts and developments, it is incomprehensible that this was omitted.

An example of unnecessarily exhaustive information is a section in the Lesotho chapter where half a page is devoted to the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (p. 261). This project undoubtedly was and still is of great importance for Lesotho and its economy, as well as for the bilateral relations with its all-encompassing neighbour, South Africa. However, the question remains as to what this has to do with the main subject of this book. It could have been appropriately mentioned, for example, in connection with the invasion of the South African army into Lesotho after the 1998 elections. In a similar case, Rule mentions plans of the government in Swaziland to review the constitution without stating its outcome, even though this would be relevant (p. 292).

In the final chapter, "Conclusions: Electoral Territorialism" (pp. 309-22), Rule nicely and appropriately brings together the findings from the various country studies. The central message is that ethnicity decisively influences the outcome of elections in the countries under review: "notwithstanding non-racial policies and extensive nation-building projects, it is apparent that ethnicity plays a pivotal (albeit subconscious in some cases) role in determining voting behaviour in southern Africa. As is the case elsewhere in Africa, the overall electoral geographies that exist in southern Africa are unmistakably related to ethnic population distributions" (p. 311). The only countries that are exceptions to this rule, according to the author, are Lesotho and Swaziland with their high degree of ethnic homogeneity due to their small territorial size. However, Rule shows that urbanisation also has the potential to change the voting behaviour based purely on ethnicity: "The pattern has been disturbed only by labour migration to the urban centres and commercial farming areas" (p. 316). A case in point is the voting behaviour of the Zulus in South Africa, where a large percentage of the male population has migrated to the urban areas surrounding Johannesburg to find employment on the mines. As a result, Rule discerns a "voting cleavage amongst Zulus" (p. 245). With

this, he finds himself in full agreement with Marxist ideas whereby ethnicity was only a transitional phenomena that will be overtaken by class divides resulting from industrialization. He thus refutes the view by Glaser, a Marxist scholar himself, who recently suggested that ethnic identity in South Africa "is certainly widely and deeply embedded in the consciousness of South Africans and a basis for their collective allegiance and action." [4] In the conclusion, Rule takes his argument one step further by plausibly proposing: "the emergence of economic class differences ... is thus in progress in the cities of the sub-continent.... Whereas regional and ethnic ties still play the most prominent underlying roles, it is apparent that urbanisation causes the weakening of these ties over time" (pp. 317-318).

Rule's study has been a very ambitious project. Any researcher on such a topic in Africa is confronted with a multitude of obstacles, such as the availability of comprehensive and reliable statistical material, as well as travel in uneasy terrain to do fieldwork. Rule is to be commended for having taken up the challenge. The case studies that were originally contained in Rule's thesis are the most innovative, and particularly the one on Zambia where interviews and written letters from newspaper readers are extensively used. The other country chapters are not nearly as rich in content, since Rule merely relied on his experiences as an election monitor in 1998 in Lesotho and Swaziland, and a "lifelong interest in local politics," complemented with "formal research" on the 1999 elections in the case of South Africa (p. 17). However, the reviewer cannot help having the impression that these three studies were also included to improve the marketing facility of the book. While such considerations by a publishing house have their rights, a more substantial effort should have been made to avoid the uneven level of quality. Rule's main conclusions do not really reveal anything substantially new, but his very comprehensive collection of data and the analysis on a micro-level confirm and substantiate as-

sumptions regarding the centrality of ethnicity on election outcomes. With this, the book provides important insights on an important aspect of political developments in Southern Africa.

On the negative side, the work of the publishing house Ashgate deserves criticism. First, some of the maps that reflect statistical data can only be read with difficulty as they are in black and white. This applies to a map detailing the results of Namibia's regional council elections of 1992 (p. 201) and the strongholds of Lesotho's parties in the 1998 election (p. 274), while the map that details South Africa's national vote in 1994 (p. 225) cannot be used at all. Second, the reviewer noticed several sentences with grammatical errors or a missing word (pp. 123, 261, 281, 288). Third, it is to be regretted that it was not possible to give the correct full names for the abbreviations of political parties with Portuguese names, namely the FNLA, FRELIMO, MPLA, and UNITA (pp. xv-xvii). It would have been better to use the English full names if letters such as ç, ã, or ê do not figure on Ashgate's computers. A similar scenario applies to a book title in French without any é or è (p. 64). Finally, the bibliographies pertaining to each chapter proved to be the most disturbing feature. They are full of inconsistencies, with incomplete and even incorrect information. To mention but the most serious cases: Ruth Weiss's book on *Zimbabwe and the New Elite* was published in London, but not by I. B. Taurus as indicated, but by the British Academic Press. Even though the South African weekly *Mail & Guardian* has changed its name several times, it has never been called *Daily Mail & Guardian* (p. 213).[5]

Notes

[1]. Stephen Rule, "Electoral Territoriality in Southern Africa: A Comparative Study of Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe," Ph.D., University of the Witwatersrand, 1995.

[2]. Peter Gibbon, Yusuf Bangura and Arve Ofstad, *Authoritarianism, Democracy and Adjustment: The Politics of Economic Reforms in Africa*

(Uppsala: Nordic Institute of African Studies, 1992), p. 160; Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, "Popular Protest and Political Reform in Africa," *Comparative Politics* 24:4 (1991-1992): pp. 429-30.

[3]. Gwyneth Williams and Brian Hackland, *The Dictionary of Contemporary Politics of Southern Africa* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 210-2.

[4]. Daryl Glaser, *Politics and Society in South Africa: A Critical Introduction* (London and Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2001), p. 143. (Reviewed by Roger Pfister in H-Africa on 17 April 2002.)

[5]. *Weekly Mail: The Paper for a Changing South Africa* (1985-93); *Weekly Mail & Guardian* (1993-95); *Mail & Guardian* (1995 to the present).

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Citation: Roger Pfister. Review of Rule, Stephen. *Electoral Territoriality in Southern Africa*. H-SAfrica, H-Net Reviews. August, 2002.

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