

Thomas K. Ranuga. *South Africa under Majority Rule: A Study in Power Sharing, Racial Equality and Democracy.* Lewiston and New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000. xi + 252 pp. \$109.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-7734-7716-2.



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In this book, Thomas K. Ranuga examines "the attitudes of final year university students to the concepts of power sharing, equality and democracy in South Africa in the aftermath of the country's historic transformation from the system of legalized racism called apartheid to a non-racial and democratic society" (p. 217). The study is based on student surveys, with a total of 930 respondents, from the following nine South Africa universities: University of the North, University of Zululand, University of Fort Hare, University of the Western Cape, University of Durban-Westville, University of the Witwatersrand, University of Cape Town, University of Pretoria, and University of Stellenbosch. We may note in passing that this study has left out students from the Rand Afrikaans University, University of Port Elizabeth, University of South Africa, the University of North-West, University of Natal, University of Venda, and Vista University. Readers are not told why students from these other universities were not considered for this study. One wonders what would have been the final findings of this study,

were students from all South African universities surveyed.

Ranuga states:

"the purpose of the study was to test the power-sharing formula and related questions in one major and significant group, the university student population from whose ranks would most likely emerge the future rulers of the country. The research targeted final year students whose long educational background at university level would have equipped them with the necessary intellectual and analytical tools to comprehend the questionnaire and provide lucid and meaningful response." (p. 217)

The study was conducted using a sociological approach and was undertaken in 1995, just a year after the first democratic elections of 1994, which ushered in the administration of President Nelson Mandela with the African National Congress (ANC) as the governing political party.

Mandela's government introduced, for the first time in South African politics, concepts such as power-sharing, democracy, Government of National Unity (GNU), the Reconstruction and Devel-

opment Programme (RDP), and a new constitution. Indeed, such concepts were very fashionable in the new (post-April 1994) South Africa when the study was undertaken in 1995. Other concepts, which occasionally entered political discourse during the constitutional negotiations preceding the 1994 first democratic general elections, included unitary structure, federal structure, consociational structure, and majority rule.

The author makes an assumption that future leaders of South Africa will be university graduates. This remains a debatable assumption, given the nature of South African politics, especially the succession to the executive office (presidential office).

The findings of the study were that "the majority of respondents (51 percent) were strongly in favor of power sharing in the new South Africa and a significant number (36 percent) were moderately in favor of it. Power sharing was so strongly favored by the respondents that it was considered by an even greater majority (70 percent) to be a basis for democracy than majority rule" (p. 194). However, the notion of power sharing that existed at the time of this study proved to be short-lived, for the Deputy President F. W. de Klerk of the National Party, which had practiced apartheid from 1948 to March 1994, withdrew from the government of national unity before the end of Mandela's term of office. By so doing, he compromised power-sharing arrangements, which the respondents of this study are reported to have strongly favored. With de Klerk's withdrawal of his National Party from the GNU, what was left of the power-sharing formula was between the African National Congress and Mongosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), largely based in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal and predominantly supported by the AmaZulu people. The notion of majority rule is not yet fully applied in post-1994 South Africa politics. South African politics, especially the nature of opposi-

tion politics, is still a subject of scholarly attention.

A major weakness in Ranuga's study is his neglect of the political orientation and affiliation of the students he surveyed. Consequently, his students appear as apolitical. Yet, students in South Africa are generally organized along political formations. It could be argued that it is such formations, rather than academic qualifications, which are contributing to succession to political position/office. By ignoring this aspect, Ranuga has missed a significant angle from which to analyze future trends in South African politics. Students in South African universities are largely politicized, and to present them as depoliticized, as Ranuga does, is to overlook some significant undercurrents in their views.

Ranuga's work suffers from another important omission, namely a lack of conceptual framework. The book relies exclusively on the responses of 930 students, who are all faceless, i.e. no single student is mentioned by name. Ranuga has completely ignored insights from other scholars, who have explored similar topics elsewhere. Some of the topics, which Ranuga refers to in passing in his work, such as affirmative action and RDP (now replaced by Growth, Employment and Redistribution [GEAR]), are proving to be serious issues of contestation in a post-April 1994 South Africa. Other concepts, such as the Black Economic Empowerment, have emerged. These are attempts to address some gaps in the transformation, which was still in the formative phase when Ranuga conducted his study in 1995.

At the heart of events studied by Ranuga is the future and nature of the white master narrative, which had been shaping the South African political-socio-economic landscape since the emergence of European colonialism in the country in 1652. The white master narrative had ensured whites a dominant position in South Africa until April 1994. The disruption of such a narrative by the events of 1994 brought about soul-

searching among whites, including white students, who are included in Ranuga's survey. For a nuanced understanding of the unfolding South African political landscape since 1994, Ranuga's work ought to be read together with those of Melissa Steyn and Sampie Terreblanche.[1]

The preface of Ranuga's book is written by Toby E. Huff, Chancellor Professor at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. Huff employs dated terms such as "non-white," which could have been avoided. He writes, "But with the establishment in 1994 of the Government of National Unity, the holding of the nation's first non-racial elections, and the imposition of a new constitutional order, a whole new range of questions loom ahead" (p. v). Yet South Africans largely think of the constitution within the current political dispensation as a negotiated one, instead of an imposed order that Huff suggests. Huff also writes, "Undoubtedly one of the most striking findings of this study is the fact that the majority of South African university students--Black, Colored, Indian, White and Afrikaner--all agree that some form of power sharing is necessary..." (p. vi). Readers may be left wondering as to the difference between white and Afrikaner, for an Afrikaner is a white person whose first language is Afrikaans. A distinction is usually made between an Afrikaner and an English-speaking South African, but not between a white and an Afrikaner. There are also some minor typos in the preface--for example, "south Africa" instead of South Africa, and "F. de Klerk" instead of "F. W. de Klerk" (p. v). In sum, the preface would need some polishing should this book be reprinted as a revised edition.

Ranuga's book still has value, notwithstanding the above-mentioned shortcomings. It explores students' preferences, including their idealism for power sharing over majority rule in the new South Africa. The book does not anticipate contentious issues such as affirmative action,

Black Economic Empowerment, and racial polarization. It partially captures the euphoria of independence and anxiety as expressed by university students.

Note

[1]. Melissa E. Steyn. *"Whiteness Just Isn't What It Used to Be": White Identity in a Changing South Africa* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001); and Sampie Terreblanche, *A History of Inequality in South Africa, 1652-2002* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press; KMM Review Publishing, 2003).

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