The New Multilateralism in South African Diplomacy edited by DONNA LEE, IAN TAYLOR and PAUL D. WILLIAMS
New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Pp. 232. £55.00 (hb).
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This edited volume provides a valuable overview of the South African government's post-apartheid approach to multilateralism and diplomacy. Edited by three credible scholars of International Relations, the collection presents a general introduction to the key debates surrounding the role of an emerging middle power in multilateral fora, and the potential challenges and contradictions that this entails. Ian Taylor, in particular, is well known for his scholarship on South African foreign policy, and succeeds in contributing to a useful book for students and scholars interested in South Africa's post-apartheid approach to diplomacy and foreign relations.

The book begins with an excellent introductory chapter, written by the editors, which familiarises the reader with selected theoretical approaches to multilateralism within the field of International Relations, and also to the study of South African multilateralism in the post-apartheid period. This chapter draws substantially on the neo-Gramscian theoretical framework informing Taylor's scholarship, and provides a solid foundation to engage in a critical discussion of South Africa's reformist tendencies on the world stage. The book then proceeds with chapters dedicated to specific sites, or issues, of South African multilateral engagement, including: the United Nations (UN); the World Trade Organisation (WTO); the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM); the European Union (EU); South Africa in Africa; the Southern African Development Community (SADC); the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); and South African peace operations. Finally, the editors' concluding chapter stresses the importance of contextualising South Africa's diplomatic activities within its broader acceptance of neoliberal orthodoxy. The editors argue that its various forms of multilateralism 'are often serving to legitimise and entrench existing global, continental, regional and national power structures' (p. 216).

As in all edited collections, some chapters in this book are stronger than others. The chapters written by Lee (WTO), Williams (peace operations) and Taylor (NPT) are outstanding, and provide coherent analysis regarding the difficulties and contradictions involved in the South African government's reformist approach to international diplomacy. However, other chapters fail to offer a similar level of analytical rigour. For example, the chapter addressing South Africa's participation in the NAM lacks analysis, and is instead a broad descriptive account of the NAM's history and recent meetings. In addition, the fact that not all contributors to the volume share the editors' theoretical perspective results in what some might consider a slightly inconsistent or confusing read.

Despite these minor criticisms, the editors have succeeded in formulating a productive introductory text to address the complexities of multilateral diplomacy for the contemporary South African state. Furthermore, this collection should stimulate interesting questions and discussion regarding issues such as *who* South Africa's foreign policy is intended to serve, and how the South African state has 'exhibited a variety of multilateralisms depending on the setting, the issue and the

audience in question' (p. 221). Overall, this is an important contribution to the contemporary debates and discussion concerning South Africa's post-apartheid foreign policy.

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Democracy and Elections in Africa by STAFFAN I. LINDBERG
Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006. Pp. xiii + 227. £36.50 (hb), £16.50 (pb).
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Recent post-electoral violence in Kenya and massive irregularities in the 2007 elections in Nigeria seem to confirm the widespread view that African elections are principally flawed or have little meaning in the African context: democratisation, it is often concluded, has not taken root south of the Sahara. This view has to be put into perspective, and Staffan Lindberg's book is well positioned to correct this popular Afro-pessimistic cliché.

The book is well structured and, notwithstanding a thorough theoretical discussion in the first chapters, very accessible to the reader; it remains close to individual cases by providing rich anecdotal evidence. However, its main strength is its solid and systematic empirical foundation. More than 200 elections in Africa between 1989 and 2003 are systematically assessed vis-à-vis a large number of pertinent variables (such as turn-out, acceptance by losers, electoral violence, subsequent turnovers, opposition boycott, competitiveness etc.), which are then grouped into three dimensions describing the democratic quality of elections: participation, competition and legitimacy. This sound database is then used to demonstrate that since 1989 the quality of African elections has, on average, improved. Particularly when a regime manages to hold more than three elections, it is fairly likely that these will be free and fair, and that no breakdown will occur afterwards. Apparently, elections in Africa have a 'self-reinforcing power'. Lindberg then moves to what is probably his most provocative hypothesis, 'that improvement in democratic qualities tends to occur not only in conjunction with but as a causal effect of electoral activities' (p. 117). An empirical analysis demonstrates that increases in democratic quality, measured independently from electoral activities, tend to be stronger directly after elections than in non-electoral periods. A multivariate analysis shows that, even when other important determinants of democracy are controlled for, the number of previous elections remains statistically significant, and explains about a quarter of the variance in democratic quality. Unlike many other books on African politics, this one has a happy ending: from the empirical evidence presented, Lindberg draws the conclusion that donors are right to focus on elections to promote democracy in Africa.

The 'democratisation by elections' thesis and the related policy recommendation, however, leave a somewhat uneasy feeling. In empirical terms, this is mainly because some explanatory variables for democratisation – particularly the role of the military and the quality of inter-communal relations (measured only by the relative number of ethnic groups), not to mention political culture – are left out of the multivariate analysis. Thus, the causal relationship between repeated