



South Africa and Sweden in the UN Security Council

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Abstract

The UN Security Council is the world's most established forum for safeguarding international peace and security. It has, however, suffered from significant deficiencies in legitimacy and effectiveness. The permanent five (P5) members control the Council's agenda and block action on conflicts because of their own national interests and geopolitical rivalries. New research (see Graham, 2022; Olsson, Muvumba Sellström, and Chang, 2021; and for example, Bode, 2018; Pay and Postolski, 2022; and Farrall, Loisell and Prantl, 2020) suggests that the elected ten (E10) members are, however, able to project their own interests and preferences, and shape decisions from inside the Council, particularly on conflict situations and themes that affect Africa. Indeed, conflict in Africa makes up two-thirds of the Council's workload, and 85% of UN military peacekeepers are deployed to the continent. This short article explores the recent

memberships of Sweden (2017-18) and South Africa (2019-20). Elected states have played an active role in terms of promoting cross-cutting themes, including strengthening Africa's Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the women, peace, and security (WPS) agenda, to varying degrees. Elected members can distinguish their short tenures on the Council by signalling their contribution to global affairs through thematic events and resolutions. By presenting South Africa and Sweden's record of conduct on these themes, the article explores differences and similarities in E10 practice. The main contribution is an illustration of how elected states pursue a common agenda, using diverse methods of engagement. This variation is important for understanding the UNSC, since it demonstrates the Council's pluralist nature, and the interplay of its least powerful members through policy practices of specialization and interdependence.

Introduction

The non-permanent members have little real weight as their time on the United Nations (UN) Security Council is fleeting, two years only, and this makes it difficult to build up institutional memory in this forum as well as little opportunity to settle into, and adapt to, the working methods of the Council. Yet, some of the ten elected (E10) members strive to influence Council deliberations, decisions and debates and have a comparative impact on UNSC resolutions and decisions and are essential players in the formal and informal practices of the Council (Martin, 2020; Langmore and Thakur, 2016). Previous research and popular analysis tend to treat the Council as a unitary actor, with most attention on the permanent five (P5) states or on hot conflict issues, and to ignore the expertise being built up by the E10. Eclectic scholarly literature on the UN Security Council has underscored the gaps in knowledge about its permanent and non-permanent members (see Schia, 2017; Einsiedel, 2016; and Schrijver and Blokker, 2020) while highlighting its work on a range of thematic policy areas such as the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) (for example Bellamy, 2015); women, peace, and security (Davies and True, 2019); or climate change (Scott, 2015). To the extent that scholars have addressed the shared and competing interests among UNSC members, research has examined the five permanent members' institutional leadership (see, for example, on China in Fung, 2018; and on Britain and France in Hill, 2016). The result is a fuzzy image of weak and powerless elected states, subservient to the most powerful states and their preferences. The reality, however, is different. Many elected states have their own priorities and agendas, and are increasingly vital to the working methods of the Council and to the progression of important regional and thematic priorities. On this basis, this article compares the objectives and actions of two recent non-permanent memberships – South Africa and Sweden. Their E10 tenures offer insight to the shared and different means of navigating the Council.

This article aims to explore E10 behaviour to deepen understanding of the UNSC from the perspective of non-permanent states. Its ambition is to highlight the variation in the conduct of these states and their converging and diverging praxis in the thematic work of the Council. It is an exploration and an initial empirical step forward. It also raises insight

into how the UNSC is pluralist and not a unitary actor. The purpose is not to theorise E10 behaviour or to raise critical perspectives. This article is about something other than whether or not E10 states are pursuing particular agendas authentically or effectively. Instead, it contributes to the burgeoning discussions about what E10 states do, independently of their inbuilt handicap of impermanence and a lack of veto power. It seeks to facilitate a better understanding of E10 choices in their engagement. Indeed, even on relatively universally accepted policy issues, they choose differently.

The structure of the analysis is based on questioning *how* the E10 state implemented its approach toward thematic issues. The article focuses on the cross-cutting themes because of their increasing prominence in Council work, and as the locus of visible efforts by elected states to contribute to the UNSC memorably and markedly (Olsson, Muvumba Sellström and Chang, 2021). The article focuses on Africa's Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the women, peace, and security (WPS) agenda, two themes that are prominent on the Council's workload (see Adebajo and Muvumba Sellström, 2022) with two-thirds of its resolutions dealing with Africa and the majority of its deployed military peacekeepers on the continent. Typically, the WPS agenda is taken up as a part of elected member campaign promises (Jormanainen, Kurath and Muvumba Sellström, 2022), and its founding resolution 1325 was adopted under Namibia's presidency of the Council in October 2000. While the US and Britain hold the pen for this thematic area, E10 members have strengthened the Council's working methods on these issues to advance its implementation. The article presents South Africa and Sweden's conduct records on these themes and explores differences and similarities in approaches. The main unit of analysis is the state's membership, and the article covers the range of thematic work undertaken through formal and informal methods. It draws in crucial relationships between the E10 state and its domestic politics and regional homes. It thus compares aspects of South African and Swedish interests and stakes at home and with other African and European states and their respective regional organisations.

South Africa's¹ situation is unique in that it is rare for an elected 10 (E10) member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to be re-elected three times in such a short period of time (2007–2008; 2011–2012; 2019–2020). Similarly, the South African government has remained unchanged over that period in as much as the governing party, the African National Congress, has remained in power since 1994 (Graham, 2022). This has helped the Republic adjust to the UN system without the added disadvantage of constant change and discontinuity. In the lead up to South Africa's latest Council term, in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly vote, 95% of the members supported the Republic's bid to join the Council for a third time (Brosig, 2018). This signals a continued and significant degree of trust on the part of the UN members in the Republic's ability to be re-afforded the chance to fill an African seat in this platform. Indeed, for the latest UN vote, South Africa was the only country endorsed by the continental body, the African Union (AU).

Sweden's most recent membership in the UN Security Council in 2017–2018 was secured in the first round of voting in the General Assembly, with 69% of votes from the body for one of the two seats available to the group of Western European and Other States. The term was its fourth in the organisation's history. Its previous memberships took place over an average of twenty-year intervals in 1957–1958, 1975–1976 and 1997–1998. Importantly, Swedish membership is also anchored in Nordic multilateralism and a coordinated policy of fielding a Nordic candidate to the UNSC for every second two-year mandate. As countries with small populations heavily integrated into global trade and security networks, the Nordic countries are sensitive to unpredictable and chaotic developments on the international scene. They prefer multilateral solutions to complex problems that affect them but over which they may have limited influence. For these states, issues such as forced migration, unabated conflict, and the impacts of climate change need addressing transnationally. Nordic countries see financial support to the UN and to peace and security as part of their respective national interests (Jakobsen, 2018). The Swedish government led by the Sweden Social Democratic Workers Party from 2014 ramped up Sweden's campaign and eventual membership objectives, strategies and initiatives along these lines, striving to also promote its own feminist foreign policy on the global stage of the UN Security Council.

South Africa and Sweden offer insight into the support of two important thematic foci of the UNSC, namely Africa's peace and security and the Council's relationship with the AU and the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda. Both foci have come to be integral to the work of the E10. In the case of South Africa, efforts to strengthen conflict management and peacekeeping by the AU have been a persistent trend in its memberships, and featured prominently. South Africa announced in 2019 that it would use its third term to prioritise the women, peace and security agenda (Graham, 2022). The Republic also expressed a drive to continue conversations around bringing the UN and AU peace and security architecture even closer together, building on this theme from its previous terms on the Council. Sweden, on the other hand, has deferred to European Union (EU) and African preferences though promoting regional cooperation (Engelbrekt, 2020). It chose, however, to centre its 2017–2018 membership on the integration of WPS into the everyday business of the UN Security Council (Olsson, Muvumba Sellström and Chang, 2021). South Africa, a proponent of WPS, has been less prone to systematic implementation of the gender equality theme. These nuances in emphasis are opportunities for mutual support and joint action. For E10 states, the way forward will be to use respective areas of strength to bolster common interests while in the Council.

South Africa

The South African Government's position at the UN Security Council, throughout its three terms on the Council in 2007–2008; 2011–2012; 2019–2020, has been dedicated to advancing African interests, including through conflict resolution efforts and the promotion of women in peace and security initiatives, amongst other initiatives (Graham, 2022). South Africa's goal for its third term was to build on the legacy of Nelson Mandela, especially since 2018 served as the centenary of Mandela's birth, and so a renewed faith in what Mandela stood for carried South Africa into its third term on the Council. By the end of 2020, South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Naledi Pandor, highlighted the Republic's attempts whilst on the Council to silence the guns in Africa, the emphasis on preventive diplomacy and inclusive dialogue shining through quite prominently, and building on the WPS agenda (Pandor, cited in DIRCO, 2021).

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Democratic South Africa has since 1994 advocated in its foreign policy for a rules-based international order, driven by multilateralism² and democratic values (see Nel, Taylor and van der Westhuizen, 2000; Spies, 2010; De Carvalho, Mutangadura, and Leijenaar, 2020; Hendricks and Majozi, 2021). It continues to view the UN as the best platform within which to promote these foreign policy goals. In 2020 in Madrid, South Africa was part of a joint statement by many countries expressing a renewed commitment to multilateralism in its ‘Reinforcing Multilateralism together building on the United Nations 75th Anniversary Declaration’ (The Presidency, 2020). Indeed, as De Carvalho, Mutangadura and Leijenaar (2020) contend, ‘multilateral institutions like the UN are important as they allow countries to pool resources and exchange ideas. They provide the space to debate and reach compromises on common approaches to development, stability and collective security’. Moreover, as Spies (2010: 89) argues, South Africa can have influence in global governance platforms if it uses its ‘multilateral specialist’ persona to harness diplomatic niche areas such as conflict resolution, for example. This suggests that even E-10 members can contribute to the outcomes of the UNSC despite innate challenges linked to time and experience on the Council. However, Hendricks and Majozi (2021: 65) criticise South Africa’s implementation of its goals in practice, arguing that although currently the Republic is in ‘a position to be a thought leader in key multilateral institutions, such as the United

Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU), especially on peace and security’, it may come to nothing if ‘the country does not invest in the necessary research and dialogue needed to achieve this’.

In relation to South Africa in this article, the two key themes highlighted by South Africa’s Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) as important areas for the Republic at the UNSC in 2019–2020 are explored (Pandor, cited in DIRCO, 2021; NAP, 2020). The themes are: the advancement of the UN-AU peace and security architecture (APSA) and the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda. Was South Africa able actively to contribute to these themes during its latest UNSC term and can these be regarded as diplomatic niche areas for South Africa in its so-called ‘multilateral specialist’ role?

South Africa and APSA at the UNSC

African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) refers to the primary tools, at the disposal of the African Union, for dealing with conflict resolution and the promotion of peace on the continent. The central pillar of the APSA is the AU’s Peace and Security Council (PSC) which was launched in 2004. Prior to this, the predecessor to the AU, the Organisation of African Unity, held the view that the main responsibility for peacekeeping in Africa lay with the United Nations (Williams, 2009). This was problematic though as the UN ‘proved reluctant to take the lead in resolving African conflicts’ (Williams, 2009: 605). The PSC became operational as the AU organ committed to responding to Africa’s conflicts. However, over the years, it has become more necessary to align the UNSC and AU PSC peacekeeping efforts, priorities, and planning, and to avoid duplication, considering that: ‘The UN and AU are the two most important decision-making institutions for crisis management in Africa, accounting for about 70% of the crises tabled for discussion by the former’ (PSC Report, 2021).

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Previously, South Africa had also been heavily involved in the successful adoption of UNSC Resolution 1809 (2008), adopted with a similar goal of bringing the UN and AU closer together (Graham, 2022). During its 2019/2020 UNSC term, South Africa continued to advocate for the need for the UN and AU to work together in resolving conflict in Africa. The Republic supported UNSC Resolution 2457 in 2019, which echoed previous resolutions on the working relationship between the AU and UN. However, in his explanation of vote, South African Ambassador Mxolisi Nkosi emphasised 'the principle of comparative advantage, complementarity and burden-sharing' between the two bodies and the controversial debate over how to pay for peace operations in Africa, by using United Nations assessed contributions, which Ambassador Nkosi argued: 'provides the most reliable, sustainable and predictable means for United Nations-mandated AU peace operations' (S/PV.8473, 2019: 22).

Unfortunately, South Africa was unable to make headway on the peacekeeping finance debate during its third term. As mentioned earlier in this article, South Africa had helped to pass resolution 1809(2008) that would 'enhance the predictability, sustainability, and flexibility of financing regional organizations' peacekeeping operations under a UN mandate'. However, the debate lingered for years without any real progress. More recently, in January 2020, the UNSC failed to reach agreement on a resolution, that:

would see a 25:75 funding split between the AU and UN using UN-assessed contributions for Council-authorized AU-led missions, threatening the UNSC and AU PSC relationship. South Africa and other A3 members were caught off guard when Addis Ababa stalled the resolution to afford its heads of state an opportunity to ascertain what the 25 per cent would mean for the AU in reality at the February 2020 Summit (Graham, 2022: 19).

South Africa had failed to fully consult the AU, when in July 2019 the Republic had led an A3 delegation to Washington to seek support for its new draft resolution on this issue. South Africa was out of step with Addis Ababa's thinking, indicating that despite AU support for South Africa as a representative of Africa on the Council, this support should not be misconstrued as blanket approval for South Africa's independent

actions. South Africa had more success, although hard-won, on its interests in the WPS agenda.

South Africa and the WPS Agenda at the UNSC

Despite elements of patriarchy remaining in South African domestic society, as well as alarming stories of femicide and gender-based violence³ across the Republic (Mail & Guardian, 2022), there also exists a strong and longstanding women's movement that advocates for and ensures positive change. This translates into South Africa's foreign policy agenda too. In its first National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security 2020–2025, the NAP (2020: 2) set out to 'create a safer and peaceful South Africa, Africa, and world for women [and] girls...[to] enable meaningful participation for women in peace processes; and prioritise their needs, experiences and agency in all conflict and non-conflict contexts'. Historically, democratic South Africa has been an active participant in international forums promoting the interests of women. At the global level, the Republic has ratified the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), approved at the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women, as well as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, amongst others.

The unanimous adoption of UNSC Resolution 1325, in October 2000, on women and peace and security set the stage for further similar resolutions at the Council. The WPS agenda is 'a policy framework that recognizes that women must be critical actors in all efforts to achieve sustainable international peace and security. WPS promotes a gendered perspective and women's equal and meaningful participation in peace processes, peacebuilding and security' (Riascos, 2022). Although South Africa could be criticised for the long delay in enacting its NAP on WPS, considering that the Resolution 1326 was passed two decades ago, the Republic has 'actively worked to improve women's participation in peacebuilding and their protection in situations of armed conflict' during its latest term on the UNSC (De Carvalho and Kumalo, 2020). South Africa took the lead during its October 2019 UNSC Presidency to sponsor UNSC Resolution 2493 which reinforced the organisation's commitment to Resolution 1325 and to all forthcoming WPS resolutions. Previously,

during its first UNSC term (2007–2008), South Africa had actively supported UNSC Resolution 1820 (2008) focusing on sexual violence in situations of armed conflict (Graham, 2022).

Whereas other states, such as Sweden, have openly and publicly declared their position on WPS in multiple platforms, South Africa is overdue in indicating to the wider community what the government's WPS plan is and in implementing its own plan. Nevertheless, De Carvalho and Kumalo (2020) contend that despite this:

South Africa's plan is ... unique, as it's neither entirely a foreign policy tool nor a domestic policy – it's a mix of both. It acknowledges that the country's international engagements on women, peace and security cannot be separated from the violence women experience within its borders. It is an important step in ensuring that progressive foreign policy improves the lives of South African women.

South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Naledi Pandor, chaired the open debate before the resolution was adopted and the Republic had to lead very difficult negotiations to enable the resolution to pass through a Council consensus. By taking a very public stance in pushing through UNSC Resolution 2493, the South African government was able to demonstrate its investment in the WPS agenda.

It is important to note that 'informed consensus and dialogue became important for South Africa, which together with Sweden, had led an initiative since late 2018 for E10 members to get together and up to speed on Council working methods. South Africa saw this as a way to strengthen the role of the E10. Even after South Africa left the Council, it continues actively to host these monthly meetings in Pretoria, and globally, to engage E10 diplomats in following Council themes and debates' (Graham, 2022: 18–19).

Sweden

Sweden's objectives for its most recent tenure on the Council in 2017–2018 centred around strengthening the rule-based international order. It placed four themes or priorities as its guiding strategy:

international law, human rights, gender equality and a humanitarian perspective. The Swedish bid for a Council membership was announced in 2004, but its campaign only took real shape in 2014 (Engelbrekt, 2020: 34). The overall campaign promised a Swedish tenure that would concentrate on creating opportunities for the Council to work effectively. It underscored that 'the Council's agenda was Sweden's programme of work' (Government of Sweden, 2017: 2). The overriding problem for Sweden and indeed, the Nordic viewpoint, was that at a time of global turbulence and change, the UNSC was underutilized, increasingly perceived as irrelevant, and hostage to the geopolitical preferences and strategies of the P5. Membership in the Council also had an intrinsic benefit to Sweden's foreign policy capacity. Engelbrekt (2020) notes that a term in the UNSC places extra demands on a state the size of Sweden, requiring additional government financial and human resources and prioritization of the Council in the foreign policy arena. Arguably, however, the experience of the UNSC membership is considered by Swedish diplomats as integral to developing the foreign service's competence and building up its global networks and thus, an investment for the future. During the Swedish membership period the Council adopted 115 resolutions and 48 presidential statements and issued 180 press statements (Government of Sweden, 2019: 6).

Sweden and APSA at the UNSC

The Swedish engagement on APSA was also hinged upon its overall development strategy and policies. The Gambian crisis started off Sweden's term, coinciding with its first presidency month in January 2017. Swedish representatives supported cooperation among the Council; the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS); the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); and the AU (Government of Sweden, 2019: 54). Its permanent mission also worked closely with Senegal's (a member of the Council during 2016–2017) on the resolution supporting Adama Barrow, who was the winner of the December 2016 elections. The resolution reflected the position of ECOWAS and the AU and was passed unanimously in the Council (Resolution 2337, 2017). Among the other conflict situations featured in the Council's work were South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Horn of Africa, and the Sahel

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(Government of Sweden, 2019). In these situations, the Council acted to address peace processes and peace support operations, and these were not particularly controversial. Indeed, peacekeeping operations in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia were terminated during Sweden's membership. In addition, the Security Council lifted sanctions against Eritrea in November 2018. Sweden, in its second presidency month of July 2018, promoted cooperation between the UN and the AU and the inclusion of African civil society. During this presidency, Sweden's Foreign Minister Margot Wallström also participated in a joint trip for the UN and the AU to the Sahel region of West Africa (Chad and Niger). The one challenge faced by Sweden was the need to follow up on the murders in the DRC of UN experts Zaida Catalán, a Swedish national, and Michael Sharp, an American (Government of Sweden, 2019: 118).

Sweden's approach was also further complicated because it was strongly aligned with African states but shared European perceptions about the framework for financing African peacekeeping. In 2017, the Secretary-General, António Guterres, offered a set of proposals on UN-AU decision-making and UN financing of African peace support operations. Stockholm agreed with various proposals – also from the African elected members, generally from Senegal in 2017 and more specifically from Ethiopia in 2018 – for concrete steps towards cooperation, including access to UN financing from its budget (Government

of Sweden, 2019: 44). It saw the importance of access to regular, and predictable funding for peacekeeping but sided with the broader EU set of conditions for accountability to human rights principals (Government of Sweden, 2019: 45). In the end, however, this position undermined support for financing as envisaged by several African states, and eventual withdrawal of the AU's trust in a good faith effort by the more affluent countries on the Council.

On a broader scale, Sweden strove to promote E10 dynamics, which became a priority of its membership. These efforts were central to Stockholm's concern that the P5 dominated formal and informal tools of the Council in their favour. In November 2018, Sweden initiated a meeting of the then and incoming elected members with the Secretary-General. Such an engagement aimed to encourage regular and routine informal briefings from the Secretariat on situations that were not already on the Council's working agenda (Government of Sweden, 2019). Finally, Sweden supported Security Council reform and increased geographical representation, primarily of Africa. These policy stances about membership and capacity were Africa-centric and ultimately part of Sweden's conception of how best to promote the shoring up of Africa's peace and security.

Sweden and the WPS Agenda at the UNSC

Sweden aimed to make the Council a more credible and consistent force for protecting and promoting international peace and security. Significantly, as the first country in the world with a feminist foreign policy, Sweden sought to achieve this broader aim by incorporating gender equality into its objectives, strategy and choices. Furthermore, in every negotiation, discussion and result of the Council, it would pursue integration to make the WPS agenda 'core UNSC business.' Previous E10s, such as Spain (2015–2016), already preferred to forego introducing new WPS norms for implementation. This was taking it one step further.

The strategy called for systematic integration of gender in work with the Council in country-specific conflict or country situations. Stockholm believed that its efforts would be more meaningful if focused on implementation within the context of addressing

substantial gaps facing women and girls and men and boys in clear and pragmatic ways rather than generating new thematic priorities. The focus on specific situations was characterised by proposals to increase women's meaningful participation and inclusion in conflict resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding and to prevent or stop patterns of conflict-related sexual violence. In concrete terms, Sweden would pursue WPS integration in all UNSC outcomes – press statements, presidential statements, resolution texts and all other documents and activities (Olsson, Muvumba Sellström and Chang, 2021).

Olsson, Muvumba Sellström and Chang (2021) have carried out a systematic analysis of the Swedish engagement on WPS. First, they underscore Sweden's strategic and systematic approach to WPS. Second, the approach produced achievements primarily in normalising the integration of a gender perspective into Council decisions. In their view, the membership translated into two new realities. First, it led to greater accountability for gender in reports from the Secretariat, improved mandates and feedback from UN departments and representatives of the Secretary-General about how WPS was being implemented. Second, it created a new standard of integration of concrete, context-specific, operational language in Council resolution drafts, presidential statements, press statements, committee reports, reports of the Secretary-General and briefings to the Council. The integration approach involved persistent, tailored navigation of the formal and informal working methods of the Council.

Swedish representatives regularly and consistently 'raised their hands' about gender. The study by Olsson, Muvumba Sellström and Chang (2021) shows that UN staffers started to pre-empt Swedish questions by reporting on gender issues in the first year of the membership. Regarding putting the language in Council resolutions, Sweden was not tied to the previous language approved for resolutions by the theme's penholders – the UK (for WPS broadly) and the US (for conflict-related sexual violence). Instead, Swedish representatives canvassed advice, evidence and ideas from civil society in conflict situations, other member states, and their foreign service experts to provide credible and timely advice. Sweden also championed the idea of having more women civil society briefers, and it was during its

second presidency in July 2018, that the Council first achieved gender parity in briefers. Sweden also sought to engage officials in the Council early on and to propose WPS language at the early stages of drafting. Evidence of success includes changes to the language in new resolutions for conflicts with older mandates, including in the DRC and Mali. The legacy of Sweden's WPS approach is not secure since the robust language in UNSC resolutions may not necessarily lead to implementation on the ground. However, since the end of 2018, there has been a persistent increase in WPS language in Council resolutions (as noted in Adebajo and Muvumba Sellström, 2022: 5).

Discussion

This article has highlighted the different ways that E10 states approach their respective aims on the UN Security Council. It contrasts South African and Swedish memberships in relation to Africa and APSA; and to gender and WPS. The presentation of these elected member strategies and approaches in two important thematic praxis demonstrates the variation in conduct of E10 countries, even on similar priorities for their memberships. The variation can be depicted as a reflection of the plural nature of the Council, and points to specialisation and interdependence by elected members. While South Africa's approach to APSA was integral to its identity as a frequently elected African state on the Council, its achievements can be traced to particular outcomes in earlier membership terms, particularly with regard to cooperation with regional bodies, and relations between the UN and the AU. In its 2018–2019 term, Pretoria continued to pursue better collaboration in favour of African interests and to support specific UNSC decisions – evident in terms of particular resolutions. Sweden also actively supported engagement with African regional organisations. However, on UN financing of AU peacekeeping, it conditioned its support and remained rooted to European framing on the issue. On WPS, South Africa continued to use a strategy of key resolutions, proposing UNSC resolution 2493 that sought to reaffirm the normative framework of WPS. In contrast, Sweden, instead focused on integration of WPS into UNSC resolutions. It is difficult to say which approach, for which theme, will yield the most lasting and meaningful results. South Africa's membership included signature, thematic

measures on both APSA and WPA; while Sweden had an integrated approach albeit to a lesser degree on APSA than on WPS. Each country leveraged its capacities and preferences differently.

The analysis of the South African and Swedish memberships would benefit from further comparative research on other E10 states and their tenures, and yet, the differences in approach to APSA and WPS suggest that one can discern that the non-permanent membership can involve specialisation and that states' varied approaches, certainly on thematic issues, nonetheless allow for interdependence within the E10 group. On APSA, there is clear specialisation on the part of South Africa. Its sense of ownership on building better UN-AU cooperation, utilising its turn in the presidency for special APSA thematic work, and supporting various resolutions, is evidence of Pretoria's prioritisation of APSA. However, its leadership on peacekeeping financing for Africa, including leading a delegation of the A3 in negotiations in Washington, suggests more. South Africa was specialising in the APSA theme, including by setting out on its own approach, beyond the AU's own guidance and preferences. Sweden also specialised, but on WPS. Stockholm's approach of integrating WPS into every resolution and outcome of the Council, rather than on a signature event was critical to its own identity as the first country in the world with a feminist foreign policy. Its decision to try to mainstream rather than to engage in thematic special events or signature resolutions meant that it was also applying some of its own expertise in weaving gender analysis into the everyday work of foreign policy and development assistance, and pointedly was an attempt to fundamentally advance the WPS agenda at the Council; much as South Africa boldly went its own way on APSA and financing for peacekeeping. These specialist approaches, however, did not mean that South Africa and Sweden were working entirely independently. Their approaches fit neatly within stated ambitions of other E10 states and broader thematic priorities. This demonstrates the interdependence of E10 thematic work. Given the short two-year terms available for enacting their priorities, E10 state agendas and strategies appear to be in sync with general praxis of themes, over time. Sweden's WPS work was built also on the lessons from Spain, Indonesia and going back to the first state to host a special session on the theme, Namibia, in October

2000 (Olsson, Muvumba Sellström and Chang, 2021). South Africa engaged the other African members of the Council in its APSA work (Graham, 2022). Both countries' respective thematic work on Africa and gender, APSA and WPS, should also be understood as mutually reinforcing and complementary.

Debate and discussion about the UN Security Council's elected members tend to pivot toward the issue of the UNSC's reform (see, for example, Adebajo and Muvumba Sellström, 2022; and Security Council Report, 2022). A consensus seems to be emerging, however, with important P5 countries such as the US, China, and Russia openly agreeing that Africa should be allocated a permanent seat on the Council (Security Council Report, 2022). Notwithstanding the relatively novel shift toward reform of the Council, non-permanent membership plays a vital role in the context of global governance systems. Non-permanency in the UNSC sets up its members for relative accountability to peer states, converging at times with a global audience of Council-watchers such as the media and civil society. Small, middle power, and emerging states are equally subject to rigorous processes. The system of rotational tenures ensures that countries must campaign for election and that their legitimacy is derived from a vote by secret ballot in the UN General Assembly. The two-year terms are distributed across geographic regions, and the election process is intense and competitive. Members are therefore also keen to demonstrate their ability to be on the main stage of international peace and security. Elected members regularly introduce new issues, voices and processes into the Council, championing thematic issues such as climate and security, WPS, and human rights issues. While observers often focus only on P5 dynamics, the E10 as a group is increasingly vocal and visible, and its members host special sessions, joint media engagements and, increasingly, common positions. While they do vote primarily in their interests or regional affiliation and have yet to perform as a coherent group by utilising their joint veto, E10 membership is an opportunity to display leadership. Some key non-permanent states are also keen to build up institutional memory and intra-group relations of the E10 group.

The possibility that an E10 state can accomplish all of its objectives is unlikely. The term in the Council is a short two years, with frequent interruptions and crises

and an evolving agenda. The P5 have institutional mastery of UNSC working processes due to their permanence, their veto power and their dominance over the 'penholder' system and thus, the drafting process for Security Council resolutions. Elected states are often left only to chair working committees and face an avalanche of diplomatic bureaucratic administration in these bodies. Finally, elected states are simply less well-resourced, with small and global South countries least likely to have sufficient human resources to substantively cover all the conflict situations, thematic debates and managerial matters that are within the remit of Council membership. It would help if they could bolster their capacities individually and collectively through information-sharing and cooperation.

South Africa and Sweden sought to see the group of the E10 work better together and jointly convened elected members at the capital level, outside New York, in Pretoria, in November 2018 (Government of Sweden, 2017; Olsson, Muvumba Sellström and Chang, 2021). The ambition was that this gathering would become an annual meeting and provide an opportunity to strengthen E10 cohesion and prepare incoming members. Perhaps, through such initiatives, E10 states may leverage their comparative advantages in policy knowledge and expertise, networks and resources to jointly advance their respective and collective agendas.

Conclusion

This short article explores the recent memberships of Sweden (2017–18) and South Africa (2019–20) in the UN Security Council. It focuses on the work each state enacted in two cross-cutting themes, APSA and the WPS agenda. New research (see Graham, 2022; Olsson, Muvumba Sellström and Chang, 2021; for example, Bode, 2018; Pay and Postolski, 2022; and Farrall, Loiseil and Prantl, 2020) contends that E10 states are active participants in the UNSC and project their own interests and preferences, particularly on conflict situations and themes that affect Africa. Thematic work is a significant aspect of non-permanent membership. It is beyond the confines of geopolitical rivalry and institutional dominance of the permanent members, who control the penholder system and have outsized roles in determining outcomes for the Council's work on conflict situations.

Thematic work does allow E10 states to demonstrate their leadership in global affairs. African peace and security, broadly, is ideally suited to thematic emphasis. Most of the Council's workload is on conflict situations in Africa, and the body's cooperation with the AU has advanced significantly. The WPS agenda is universally proclaimed as a priority of every elected state. By presenting South Africa and Sweden's records of conduct on these themes, the article explores differences and similarities in E10 practice. It illustrates the variation of the E10 and explores how elected states pursue a common agenda while using diverse approaches. This variation demonstrates how the UN Security Council is pluralist and highlights the specialism and interdependence of E10 engagement.

Notes

1. In this article, reference to South Africa will be used to represent the Government of the Republic of South Africa.
2. Multilateralism in foreign policy refers to a specific choice by at least three or more states (and other actors) to advance international cooperation, usually through an arranged institution or organisation, in order to respond to common challenges. Dervis (2020) weighs in on the continued value of multilateral organisations such as the UN. He states that 'the universal U.N. membership...is uniquely valuable in allowing countries with different political regimes to cooperate, provide global public goods and achieve important economic and social goals on which they can all agree' (Dervis, 2020).
3. In 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa referred to gender-based violence as South Africa's 'second' 'devastating epidemic' (the first referencing the coronavirus pandemic that swept the globe in 2020) (quoted in Ellis, 2020).

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