



South Africa-Sweden Relations: An Appraisal

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Introduction

Sweden's support for the Anti-Apartheid Movement is well documented and has prompted some observers to comment that both states share a "special relationship." And while some aspects of South Africa-Sweden Post-Apartheid Relations have been interrogated by scholars and covered in the media, a more generic and comprehensive account of South Africa-Sweden Post-Apartheid Relations, as provided in this article and this special issue as a whole, is missing. Using an analytical framework, of the author's own design, that incorporates social, economic, and

political indicators, this paper provides an appraisal of South Africa-Sweden Relations while simultaneously offering a conclusion to the special issue on South Africa-Sweden Relations. This paper argues that the aforementioned framework is necessary to glean a more comprehensive understanding of bilateral relations that the two states share. Furthermore, the rudimentary understanding of South Africa-Sweden Relation provides the foundation for increased research on South Africa-Sweden Relations and Africa-Nordic Relations more broadly.

Introduction

South Africa and Sweden share a special relationship. This sentiment has been echoed by both government and the academic community alike. The roots of this “special relationship” are often grounded in the support Sweden afforded the African National Congress (ANC) in its fight against the Apartheid regime. In the post-Apartheid era, Sweden and the now ANC national government have elevated their diplomatic exchanges to the ambassadorial level. And while post-apartheid South Africa-Sweden Relations have been monitored by both scholars and the media, there remains, as the forthcoming literature review will show, a lamentable lack of scholarly attention being given to formulating a more generic and comprehensive understanding of the nature of the bilateral relationship that both states share. In response to the gap in the literature this paper, and the accompanying special issue as whole, intend to provide a more far-reaching overview of the various aspects of South Africa-Sweden Relations encompassing historical, contemporary, and possible future accounts. For its part, this paper will attempt to apprise the state of South Africa-Sweden Relations using the author’s own analytical framework for the assessment of bilateral relations consisting of political, economic, and social cooperation. This framework has emerged given the gap that exists within the realm of bilateral relations assessment frameworks which is mostly historical, emotive and exploratory in nature. The application of the author’s analytical framework finds that while South Africa and Sweden have made impressive progress in their relationship, particularly in the post-Apartheid setting (see Table 1), more can be done in the realms of social and political cooperation. Finally, this paper suggests how the discourse on South Africa-Sweden Relations can be advanced.

Bilateral relations: What does the literature say?

South Africa-Sweden Relations

As the introductory contribution for this double special issue has already noted, the literature on post-1994 bilateral relations between South Africa and Sweden is “scant.” The current literature on South Africa-Sweden Relations can be divided into two pools. The first pool of literature is rooted in history with a focus on

Sweden’s support for the Anti-Apartheid Movement (Sellström, 1999; Sellström, 2002a; Sellström, 2002b), while also making a minor reference to Swedish investment in South Africa during the Apartheid era (Magnusson, 1974). The second pool of literature is more contemporary in its composition focusing on the Gilpin Deal (Coetzee, 2020; Coetzee, 2021) and the early post-Apartheid efforts to strengthen South Africa-Sweden Relations through the Sweden-South Africa Partnership Week held in 1999 (Glover, 2021). While both pools of literature are noteworthy and help to advance one’s understanding of the bilateral relationship that both states share, there is an ever-presenting need to go further. The literature that exists at present leans towards the economic ties. As a result, there is little understanding of the political and social relations that South Africa and Sweden share given the efforts that both sides have undertaken in this areas. Furthermore, the mutual advantages to be gained in social and political cooperation are plentiful. It is worth noting that the literature tends to focus more on inter-regional relations between Africa and the Nordic states (Wohlgemuth, 2002; Kiljunen, 2016; Hammerstad, 2018; Akamo et al., 2022). This further illustrates the gap in the literature thus further necessitating the need for greater scholarly focus on South Africa and Sweden’s bilateral relations.

Assessing bilateral relations

Bilateral relations are often viewed as the foundation of international relations (Pannier, 2020: 19). Bilateral relations are best conceptualised as a means of pairing two states with one another. Rana (2018: 1) notes “[e]ach pairing works on relations in different fields for their mutual benefit, facilitating cooperation between their institutions and citizens. Countries may also work jointly to solve mutual differences or overcome disputes.” Traditionally, bilateral relations involved representing, information and negotiation; however, these functions and activities have transformed in promotion and protection with the rise of the mass media as well as diversification of actors being able to represent a state (Rozental and Buenrostro, 2013: 230). The easement of the movement of persons across the globe necessitates those diplomatic missions remain on hand to facilitate the administration, delivery, and exchange of passports, visas, and other

travel documents (Rozental and Buenrostro, 2013: 230). Promotion meanwhile concerns itself with a state's national interests. These include: trade and investment, maintaining a state's image, connect and communicate with the diaspora, commence negotiations or support the work of summit diplomacy (Rozental and Buenrostro, 2013: 230). The centrality of bilateral relations within international relations is perhaps best understood through three lenses, namely: the historical, the strategic and the numerical lens (Pannier, 2020: 19). Historically, key events saw the evolution of bilateral diplomatic practice. Beginning with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, all states were seen as equal within the international system, which resulted in Euro-centric bilateral diplomacy. Two world wars latter coupled with the rise and fall of colonial empires widened the scope of bilateral diplomatic practice so that it was no longer a Northern concept, thus connecting the former colonial empires of the Global North with the former colonies of the Global South (Pannier, 2020: 19). Strategically, bilateral relations are often considered to be the bedrock of international negotiations as mutual interests and common positions are initially determined at the bilateral level thereby allowing states to form diplomatic blocs and/or clubs more effectually within multilateral settings (Pannier, 2020: 19). On the numeric front, it should be noted that bilateral relations are a prefeed form of diplomatic practice. Between 1990 and 1999 the United Nations (UN) recorded the signing of 5,000 bilateral agreements; this coupled with the growing fragility of certain multilateral forums helps to ensure that bilateral diplomacy remains anchored firmly at the epicentre of the international system (Pannier, 2020: 20).

With the nature and purpose of bilateral relations firmly understood, the question becomes: 'how does one measure or assess bilateral relations between two states?' The answer to this question is not straightforward. This is largely due to the fact that scholars have derived different ways to assess bilateral diplomatic relations. Kielinger (1996), and Anderson (1997), in their papers on Anglo-German relations and Sino-Russian relations respectively, adopt for a descriptive approach to assessing bilateral relations whereby attention is given to the unpacking of historical detail; little to no theory is used in this approach. Adebajo (2008) opts for a similar approach

when examining South Africa's bilateral strategy on the African continent. Other scholars such as Hornsby and van Heerden (2013) offer a more conceptual approach wherein they argue that middle power states will only be seen to have strong bilateral diplomatic relations if both parties adhere to five common conditions, namely: obligation of the Global North to the Global South, moral identity, diaspora links, mutual economic interests and the risk of non-cooperation, and partnerships for development. Tam and Kim (2017) propose The Relationship Assessment of Diplomatic Interaction Outcomes (RADIO) framework to measure the success of public diplomacy in bilateral diplomacy. RADIO categorises the quality of bilateral relationships into two, namely: experimental and reputational. The former type of relationships are based on direct exposure to an entry while the latter is symbolic and is usually developed by means of hearsay from others and/or the consumption of narratives produced and distributed by the media (Tam and Kim, 2017: 216 and 217). In determining which category a bilateral relationship falls into, a number of common and bespoke variables are used. The common variables include: international bilateralism, power mutuality, trust, and empathy. Experimental bilateral relations will include relational satisfaction and relational continuance while reputational bilateral relationships will include relational attentiveness as their respective bespoke variables (Tam and Kim, 2017: 223). Pehlivanurk (2019) argues, in his assessment of Japan-Turkey relations, that Role Theory can be used to assess the quality of bilateral relations. Role Theory posits that a state's policymakers should be the primary objective of the assessment as it is their understanding and vision which informs a state's role and actions within the international system; these understandings are informed by both domestic and international factors which act upon a state (Pehlivanurk, 2019: 106 and 107). In determining the nature of bilateral relations between Asian states and China, Takahara (2021) proposes that a number of domestic and international factors influence the decision-making processes which can impact how a bilateral relationship evolves. These factors are arranged into the Four Factor Model and include: peoples, perceptions, emotions, and identity, domestic politics, economic interests, and the international environment Takahara (2021: 158 and 159). Finally, Hassan, Al Rabaani, and Nejjari (2022) argue that state identity (such as state size and state-

type) can impact the nature of bilateral relations that states seek to form as is the case with Oman and Brunei.

The above literature review clearly shows how the study of bilateral relations has evolved over time. Assessment of bilateral relations has grown from a largely descriptive field to one that now has a conceptual and theoretical character. This is not to suggest that the field of bilateral assessments has reached its peak, nor that one means of assessment holds more value than the other. Each approach is chosen depending on the scope or desired outcome of the assessment. The ability to adjust the scope of an assessment provides for a shortfall in that they cannot provide a comprehensive overview of the state of relations as the social connections between the sending and receiving states. A comprehensive understanding spanning political, economic, and social bilateral connections allows for the identification of new and sustainable areas of cooperation even if tensions are afoot in another area of cooperation. This framework has been employed by author in previous research that sought to assess Nigeria-Cameroon Relations within the context of counter-terrorism cooperation.

Assessing Bilateral Relations: Political, Economic, and Social Factors

Unpacking the framework

“ The framework employed by the author posits that states do not only have political or economic interests, but social ones too. Consequently, bilateral relations should be assessed by political, economic, and social variables. The political variable refers to bilateral cooperation or common positions on areas of mutual interest and concern in the international space

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The framework employed by the author posits that states do not only have political or economic interests, but social ones too. Consequently, bilateral relations should be assessed by political, economic, and social variables. The political variable refers to bilateral cooperation or common positions on areas of mutual interest and concern in the international space (Botha, 2020: 427). Within the context of this article, political cooperation further speaks to the installation of essential instruments to ensure the facilitation of diplomatic exchanges. Economic cooperation will refer trade relations between both countries (Botha, 2020: 428). Finally, social cooperation refers to people-to-people exchanges (Botha, 2020: 428). Within the context of this article, the social variable will refer to both formal and informal diplomatic relations that may occur between two states. Formal social relations occur when the two states in question agree to initiate exchanges that have a people-to-people relations. Such exchanges may include undertakings in culture, education and research, and public diplomacy more broadly. Informal social relations occur when two states have a rich people-to-people relations that are not facilitated via diplomatic means.

The author's framework maintains that while a triffecta of harmony between the political, economic, and social variables is ideal for the neutering of strong bilateral relations, it is not required for two states to have strengthening bilateral relations. From this perspective, each veritable is assessed both in isolation as well as part of a coherent whole. This two-pronged approach not only provides a comprehensive overview of bilateral relations between two states, but it also allows for an in-depth foresight on how to sustain and energise bilateral relations in another area of cooperation if tensions arise in another (Botha, 2020: 427). It should be noted areas of cooperation may overlap between the three variables.

Applying the Framework South Africa-Sweden Relations

Given the wealth of knowledge that exists on the historical aspects of South Africa and Sweden's relationship, this analysis will primarily focus on South Africa-Sweden Relations in the bilateral exchanges following the former's democratic transition. South Africa and Sweden have undertaken firm political commitments that began in 1993 when both states

agreed to elevate the status of their diplomatic relations from a legation to an embassy thereby resulting in ambassadorial representation on both sides (Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1993: 2 and 4). To date South Africa and Sweden have entered into 22 agreements with South Africa, which span both bilateral agreements and multilateral agreements including the rest of the Nordic and Scandinavian states (South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation, 2023). The majority of these agreements (73% or 16/22 agreements) were signed in the post-Apartheid era. Refer to Table 1 for a comprehensive overview.

Table 1: A summary of bilateral and multilateral agreements between South Africa and Sweden from 1994-present

Title of agreement	Date of signature	Date agreement entered into force
Memorandum of Understanding on South African - Swedish Development Cooperation	28-11-1994	28-11-1994
Convention for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income	24-05-1995	25-12-1995
Agreement on General Terms and Conditions for Development Co-operation	17-10-1996	17-10-1996
Agreement on the Promotion and Reciprocal Protection of Investments	25-05-1998	01-01-1990
Agreement on Co-operation in the Fields of Science and Technology (South African-Swedish Research Partnership Programme, 1999-2005)	23-11-1999	23-11-1999
Agreement Concerning Defence Cooperation	02-06-2000	02-06-2000
Memorandum of Understanding on Air Services between Republic of South Africa, Denmark, Norway and Sweden	09-11-2001	09-11-2001
Bilateral Air Services Agreement	09-11-2001	26-09-2002
Exchange of Notes Relating to the Designation of Airlines in Terms of Article Three of the Air Services Agreement	11-09-2001	26-09-2002
Memorandum of Understanding on Co-operation in the Area of Public Service and Administration	29-04-2005	29-04-2005
Declaration of Intent between the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Governments of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden Concerning Partnerships in Africa	09-06-2008	09-06-2008

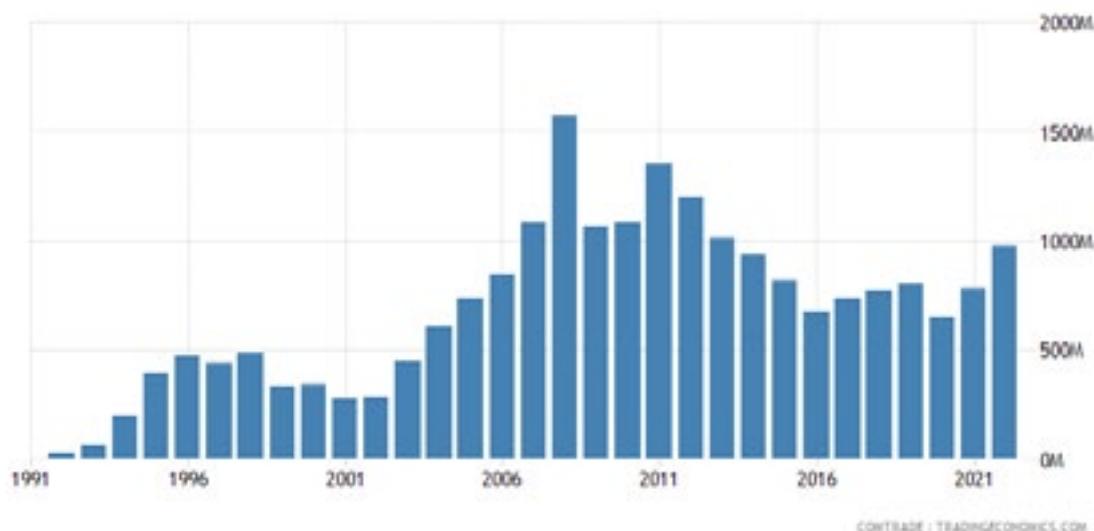
Protocol Amending the Convention for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income	07-07-2010	03-18-2012
Agreement between the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Government of the Kingdom of Sweden on Cooperation in the Fields of Science, Technology and Innovation	10-11-2013	Not in force
Letter of Intent between the Department of Environmental Affairs of the Republic of South Africa and the Ministry of the Environment and Energy of the Kingdom of Sweden in the Field of Environmental Protection and Climate Change	20-10-2015	20-10-2015
Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Government of the Kingdom of Sweden on Cooperation in the Field of Arts and Culture	25-09-2020	25-09-2020
Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Kingdom of Sweden and the Government of the Republic of South Africa on Cooperation in the Field of Environmental Protection and Climate Change	11-11-2021	11-11-2021

(Source: DIRCO's Treaty Section)

Table 1 clearly shows that the standard of political cooperation is encouraging. To this end, a number of essential instruments are in place with common positions on matters of defence, climate change, and cultural exchanges in place. The foundation for this, and other forms of cooperation, was laid down in November 1999 when then Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson led a delegation of an estimated 800 Swedes to South Africa to participate in the Swedish-South African Partnership Week (SSAPW). The SSAPW saw the hosting of 70 events across six cities in South Africa (Glover, 2021: 42). Notworthy outcomes of the SSAPW included the establishment of the South Africa-Sweden Bi-National Commission, both national soccer teams playing against each other, a number of workshops and seminars on possible areas of cooperation were held in Cape Town, and finally, a tradeshow was hosted in Johannesburg (Glover, 2021: 42). Sweden had invested SEK 25,000,000 into the SSAPW; this was more than double then what Sweden had invested into the World Expo held in Lisbon over a four month period in 1998 (Glover, 2021: 42).

Both South Africa and Sweden have also become keen trading partners. Swedish exports to South Africa increased sharply following South Africa's transition to democracy. Figure 1 illustrates this phenomenon. However, it should be noted that there is an imbalance of exports between both states. Swedish exports to South Africa total an estimated SEK 10,000,000,000 (or \$962,361,000) while South African exports to Sweden total an estimated SEK 3,000,000,000 (or \$288,708,300) (Embassy of Sweden, 2023).

Several outlets such as Business Sweden, the Swedish Trade Council, and the Nordic-South African Business Association are in place to help drive trade and investment between the two states. In February 2021 the Swedish Embassy collaborated with Business Sweden, the City of Cape Town, Invest Cape Town, Wesgro, and The Loudhailer to launch the Cape Town-Stockholm Connect (CSC) Initiative. The CSC has been designed and introduced to concert an array of actors including companies, developers, customers,

Figure 1: Swedish exports to South Africa from 1991-2022

(Source: Trading Economics, 2023)

investors, entrepreneurs, and institutions from both cities to promote economic exchanges (Wesgro, 2021). As Ambassador Håkan Juholt noted at the time: “It’s time to accelerate and intensify business exchange between Stockholm and Cape Town. Geographical boundaries don’t exist in the digital world, but we have identified gaps when it comes to knowledge and understanding about the respective markets. By connecting these two nodes of digital excellence, we want to close those gaps and create new business opportunities.”

A CSC Business Summit was held in April 2021 which brought together companies, developers, customers, investors, entrepreneurs, and institutions to brainstorm possible means by which both cities could collaborate to connect both regions to new markets (Silicone Cape Initiative, 2021). In the September of the same year, the CSC hosted a webinar to layout solutions to gender inequalities that are present in the technology sector within both countries (iAfrica, 2021). More recent activities of the CSC have been less widely publicised and are therefore harder to showcase.

On a social level, both states enjoy warm bilateral relations. While there have always been cordial relations between Swedes and South Africans, there

are a number of commitments within the various bilateral agreements that have been entered into over the years. Following the SSPW in 1999, South Africa and Sweden signed a bilateral agreement resulting in the establishment of the South African-Swedish Research Partnership Programme (the Programme), which ran from November 1999 until March 2005. Article Three subsection two of the agreement notes: “[the] overall objective of the Programme is to facilitate, promote, develop and support research co-operation between the two countries in spheres of mutual interest in all domains of science on the basis of equality and mutual benefit” (DIRCO, 1999: 3). Subsection four of the same article goes on to note that: The specific objective of the Programme is to facilitate co-operation between South African researchers at universities and technikons and Swedish researchers at universities and university colleges by financing their joint research proposals” (DIRCO, 1999: 4).

In June 2000 South Africa and Sweden entered into a bilateral agreement pertaining to defence cooperation. The scope of the defence agreement places a further emphasis on knowledge-sharing as can be seen in Article One of the agreement: “The Parties shall promote cooperation in defence related matters, especially in the fields of research,

development, projection, acquisition, logistic support and peacekeeping matters in accordance with the terms of this Agreement and any associated annexures, subject to each Party's domestic law and contractual or international obligations." In October 2013 both counties would attempt to expand their cooperation in the area of research by signing a bilateral agreement fostering cooperation in the areas of science, technology, and innovation. This agreement mandated the Ministry of Education and Research in Sweden and the then Department of Science and Technology in South Africa to coordinate exchanges of research and ideas between experts and institutions in both states (DIRCO, 2013: 1 and 2). This agreement is not in force at the time of this writing (see Table 1).

Despite the above development, collaboration in the area of research saw an enhancement with the launch of the South Africa-Sweden University Forum (SASUF) in 2017 by a cohort of university vice chancellors from both South Africa and Sweden who submitted a funding application to the Swedish Foundation for Cooperation in Research and Higher Education, otherwise known as STINT. To date, SASUF has connected over 3, 000 students and researchers from both states and has become an essential instrument for the practice of knowledge diplomacy (see Sven Botha and Helin Bäckman Kartal for more information on South Africa and Sweden's practice of knowledge diplomacy).

The social linkages between South Africa and Sweden moved on from research to include closer cooperation in arts and culture. In March 2017, Hedda Krausz Sjögren became Sweden's first Counsellor for Cultural Affairs on the African continent. Krausz Sjögren's experiences and achievements are documented in her own article of this special issue and will therefore not be discussed in-depth here. However, it should be noted the creation of this diplomatic posting helped to fulfil a long-term commitment to cooperate in arts and culture via a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on the subject in September 2020, which was fuelled by a later of intent pertaining to the same subject which was signed in 2015. The MoU notes that its purpose "is to maintain and develop an intercultural dialogue and to enrich knowledge of the other country's culture and arts and promote cooperation between cultural institutions, independent groups

and individual artists. The Participants will encourage exchanges between artists, representatives and experts in various fields of culture and the arts" (DIRCO, 2020: 1). The MoU is rooted in the desire to "consolidate and strengthen the friendly ties and reciprocal understanding between [Sweden and South Africa's] peoples" with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of life for people from both states (DIRCO, 2020: 7). Moreover, the MoU will span cooperation in the areas of: schools of art, associations of artists and writers, museums, archives, film, and other heritage orientated institutions (DIRCO, 2020: 8). Some of the areas of cooperation in the area of culture include The Future of Fashion Indaba, the collaboration between H & M and Mantsho, and the Digitally Yours Campaign hosted by the Embassy of Sweden at the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Embassy of Sweden, 2021; Mbude, 2019; Botha, 2023). It is also important to note that the Sweden and South Africa have enjoyed some successful informal social relations as is the case in the higher education space. For example, cooperation between practitioners of higher education has also resulted increased awareness pertaining to gender-based violence (see Cornè Davis's article for more on this collaboration).

Discussion: Unpacking the special issue

The application of the author's framework to South Africa-Sweden Relations has yielded a pensive of insights spanning the individual and the collective. Politically, both states have made encouraging progress by maintaining bilateral relations at the ambassadorial level and have bi-national commission at the level of vice heads of government. Additionally, a vast number of bilateral agreements spanning travel, defence, research, higher education, arts and culture, and environmentalism and climate change have all been initiated. The progression of bilateral cooperation suggests that the firm political foundations have allowed economic and social cooperation. On the economic front, South Africa and Sweden have enjoyed a keen partnership. However, it should be noted that there is an imbalance in trade with Swedish exports to the Republic outweighing South African exports to the Kingdom. Despite this imbalance, both states still work together on connecting the markets within both states; the Cape Town-Stockholm Connect Initiative is indicative of this. Finally, there has been much social cooperation

between South Africa and Sweden. The joint commitment to research and the exchange of ideas and knowledge, both within traditional research, science, and technology agreements, formal research forums such as SASUF, and within a broader sense as is indicated in the agreement on defence cooperation and the MoU on arts and culture suggests social cooperation is the strongest type of cooperation both states share. Combined, the three variables suggest South Africa and Sweden have established a strong bilateral relationship which is rooted in historical solidary and sustained through a collective desire to cooperate on issues of mutual concern. However, it should be noted that the possible expansion of the BRISC bloc and South Africa's neutrality over Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2021 may cause tensions in the relationship going forward, as discussed by Beakkvold and Hattar's article in this special issue.

This special issue has provided a number of unique contributions which result in a greater understanding of the relationship South Africa and Sweden have come to form and, perhaps more importantly, what could be done to sustain and strengthen it going forward. Anna-Mart van Wyk and Tove Sternehall ground the special issue by offering enriching insights into Sweden's opposition to Apartheid and how this would come to shape initial trade relations between both states respectively. Suzanne Graham investigates how both states grapple with the concept of good international citizenship and finds that both South Africa and Sweden bear the credentials of good international citizens to some extent and further notes that common positions on human rights and UN working methods provide avenues for future cooperation. Comparative studies by Pragna Rugunanan on migration and Suzanne Graham and Muvumba-Sellström on E10 membership to the UN Security Council provide insights on a host of domestic and internal issues of concern, which paves way for an opportunity for political leaders, diplomats, and scholars to reflect on how South Africa and Sweden could share examples of best practice and lessons learnt in their dual capacity as middle powers. Other contributions such as those by Elise Dermineur Reuterswärd and Unathi Kolanisi, Hedi Richards, and Lipnizki, Corné Davis all illustrate the strong social bonds South Africa have formed via research collaboration. Finally, the contribution by Stiehler-Mulder and Tselepis introduces an enhance

of the principles of sustainability and how they are applied within the fashion industry yielding a means of fostering closer economic and social ties between Sweden and South Africa. May these forms of cooperation evolve and thrive.

Conclusion: Proposing a new research agenda for South Africa-Sweden Relations

The purpose of this article was to provide a means of concluding this double special issue on South Africa-Sweden relations by offering a brief appraisal of the bilateral relationship shared by both countries. This appraisal was undertaken by employing the author's own analytical framework which considered the political, economic, and social aspects of South Africa and Sweden's relationship. In doing so, their bilateral relationship could be understood both individual silos and as a coherent whole. The application of these three variables finds that the Republic of South Africa and the Kingdom of Sweden have established a stable bilateral relationship steeped in rich historical context. This has resulted in the emergence of a keenness to cooperate in areas such as trade, defence, climate change, research, higher education, and science and technology. Of the three areas of cooperation assessed in this paper, social cooperation is the strongest while economic cooperation is the weakest means of cooperation. The strong social cooperation that both states share is thanks to an evergreen commitment to higher education, research, and past work in arts and culture. Political cooperation remains lukewarm and under threat given ongoing geopolitical tensions on the international stage.

With possible tensions afoot it is important to look beyond the ordinary discourse on bilateral relations and consider how the stronger variables within the South Africa-Sweden relationship could be leveraged to help sustain the relationship. This special issue has provided a number of possible leads as how this could possibly happen with four possible areas of further research emerging. Firstly, both states share common positions on key international issues which should be explored in greater detail to see if and how these political platforms can be leveraged to ensure future cooperation. Furthermore, cooperation between South Africa and Sweden from April to December 2005 aimed at strengthening the institutions of the state in the Democratic Republic of Congo provides

a unique opportunity for reflection and evaluation as such cooperation could be extended to other states in need. Secondly, both states are middle powers and regional hegemony which places them in a unique position as ideal case studies for scholars to compare and contrast within both classifications. Thirdly, both South Africa and Sweden have demonstrated an ardent appetite for knowledge generation and exchange. Nowhere is more potent than SASUF. As a result, future research should focus on the impact SASUF exchanges are having. This research should focus both on the impact individual SASUF-funded projects are having on the communities in which they implemented, and how cooperation and collaboration via SASUF is impacting people-to-people perceptions of both countries. Lastly, South Africa has at times been found to collaborate multilaterally with the wider Nordic region. This provides researchers with an opportunity to reinvigorate the broader research agenda on Africa-Nordic Relations focusing on regional and international issues of mutual concern. It is hoped that this special issue has provided a platform for much food for thought as governments, diplomats, students, and scholars continue their work to foster ties between both states and ultimately both regions.

Notes

1. The author acknowledges that Anderson's work discusses the concept of strategic partnerships within international relations. However, it should be noted that Anderson's work offers little conceptual and theoretical insights into what constitutes a strategic partnership and instead focuses on a chronological order of events. Hence, the citations categorisation. It should also be noted that strategic partnerships are not considered in this paper's literature review on bilateral relations as strategic partnerships require a firm bilateral relationship to be in place before it can be elevated to the level of a strategic partnership. For an assessment of whether South Africa could formulate a strategic partnership with Sweden and wider Nordic region, refer to Beakkvold and Hattar's article in this special issue.
2. The terms 'Nordic' and 'Scandinavian' are not to be used interchangeably. Nordic states include: Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark while only Norway, Sweden, and Denmark are classed as Scandinavian. This difference is noted as one of the agreements mentioned in Table 1 are limited to the Scandinavian states.
3. While this paper is primarily concerned with bilateral relations, multilateral agreements are included in Table 1 as they help to enhance the analysis offered in this paper.
4. This is a multilateral agreement between South Africa, Sweden, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
5. Values for Figure 1 are in US Dollars.

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