

Paper for Northeast Workshop on Southern Africa 2020 Nordic Construction of International Solidarity History



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By Hans Erik Stolten

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Abstract:

My paper is a draft proposal for a review article. In its present form, it criticises an article by the Swedish scholar Håkan Thörn and situates it in the broader research debate on Southern Africa's recent history. The text under review is a few years old, but raises questions of principle, as well as persistent foreign policy issues, and provokes research policy perspectives. The text reviewed is Thörn's article-chapter "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa: Between Global Solidarity and National Self-Interest" from 2014. I criticise this Swedish text from a Danish grassroots point of view, as well as from a historical-critical perspective. Additional Danish and Swedish solidarity historical texts are included in the analysis.

The notion that the anti-apartheid support of the Scandinavian countries, and Sweden's in particular, was especially resolute has been nurtured over the years, partly owing to uncritical history writing. Much of the hitherto coverage has focussed on positive, Scandinavian government initiatives. It was, however, only after protracted, political pressure from popular, domestic solidarity movements that the Nordic countries in the last years before 1990 established effective sanctions policies against the apartheid regime. My article takes a critical look at Håkan Thörn's policy influencing writings on Nordic solidarity history. Through this analysis, I hope to contribute to a more nuanced view of the Scandinavian support. There have been differences in the way in which the Nordic countries have used their anti-apartheid history for furthering agendas of a later day, in areas such as export and small-state influence. The allocation of government resources has been most generous in Sweden and the commitment among Swedish researchers has been more persistent. In some cases, almost intimidating. This article raises some anxieties concerning cooperation and competition, particularly between Denmark and Sweden, affecting Southern Africa, during and beyond the apartheid years. It also contains some thoughts on theories relevant for analysing the history of cross-border solidarity.

Key words: South Africa, Southern Africa, history of international solidarity, development aid historiography, the international anti-apartheid movement, AAMs, global social movements, Nordic NGOs, globalisation, foreign relations, foreign policy, Sweden, Denmark, Scandinavia, African Studies.

Author's bio:

Hans Erik Stolten worked as a researcher and lecturer at the Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen through several years. He has written articles, reviews and reports on South African matters for several periodicals and was the editor of two books on the anti-apartheid movement. His MA examined the history of the South African trade union movement and his PhD dealt with the writing of history in South Africa in the 1980s. He worked as a research fellow at the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala, Sweden, for some years and was later attached to the Centre for the Study of Equality and Multiculturalism, University of Copenhagen. He has also worked at the Danish State Archives. He now does most of his work in the consulting firm Jakobsgaard Research and in the Danish NGO, Global Action.

Nordic Construction of International Solidarity History – A Danish Critique

By Hans Erik Stolten

This review article began its life alongside an article, I recently published in the South African Historical Journal, which dealt mainly with Danish support for the South African freedom struggle and the following transitional aid.¹ My article was criticised for not taking certain Swedish analyses sufficiently into consideration. Colleagues made me aware that I ought to include a specific work by Håkan Thörn in future investigations into Scandinavian solidarity history. I therefore took a closer, critical look at Thörn's research, focussing especially on his 2014 article/chapter on "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle",² partly with the purpose of comparing it to my own writings on the South African freedom struggle,³ to see how much I could learn. While I was impressed by Thörn's great knowledge of the subject, I nevertheless disagree with several of his analyses. The title of Thörn's chapter indicates that it treats all the Nordic countries equally, however, my claim is that Sweden is favoured. This has also been the case in several, similar Swedish writings on Nordic solidarity, and I might just as well have turned my critical eye on one of those.⁴ Some will see Thörn as a random victim of my offensive against manipulative use of national history writing.

In many of the state-sponsored and academic interpretations of the history of the anti-apartheid support, the Nordic governments are seen as actively supportive and in full harmony with the popular movements. An important point in Thörn's and similar academic writings is that there existed a united Nordic or even a globally united anti-apartheid movement and that the Scandinavian governments distinguished themselves by being predominantly in agreement with the popular movements and with the ANC. My agenda has been to reveal that the official support was immensely ambiguous and that the popular organisations were mostly in opposition to the "necessary policies" of the administrations. My subject is within contemporary history and it involves current political and national interests. It will raise emotions among researchers, who have been involved in history writing for policy-making in this area. To avoid any danger of being labelled as anti-Swedish, I want to stress from the outset that I usually like Swedish foreign policy considerably better than that of my own home country, Denmark. Especially after that the diminishing staff at Danish embassies in recent years to a large extent has been replaced with sales persons.⁵ Sweden has a larger population and economy, and has always been able to bet a little more on Africa than Denmark (albeit, until recently, not if

¹ Hans Erik Stolten, "Nordic Solidarity with South Africa – a Danish Perspective", *South African Historical Journal*, Vol. 71, Issue 1, 2019, pp. 94-119. This article in turn originated from a paper presented at a University of Évora seminar: Transnational Connections in Southern Africa II: The Decolonizing and Post-Colonial Experiences, October 12-14, 2016.

² Håkan Thörn, "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa: Between Global Solidarity and National Self-Interest", in Temu, A.J. & Tembe, J. N., *Southern African Liberation Struggles: Contemporaneous Documents 1960-1994*, pp. 3-38, Dar-es-Salaam, Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2014.

³ For example, Hans Erik Stolten, "History in the new South Africa: an introduction", in H.E. Stolten (ed.), *History Making and Present Day Politics. The Meaning of Collective Memory in South Africa*, Uppsala, Nordic Africa Institute, 2007, pp. 5-50; Hans Erik Stolten, "Universitetsmarxister, græsrodspopulister og intellektuelle realister i Sydafrikas nationaldemokratiske revolution", in *Kontur Tidsskrift for Kulturstudier*, Institut for Historie og Områdestudier ved Aarhus Universitet, 2009.

⁴ Most prominently, Tor Sellström's comprehensive work on the subject. To analyse this in depth would be a much more time-consuming task, which I hope to be able to undertake at a later date.

⁵ For instance, it became apparent from a hearing in the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Danish parliament 13 April 2016 that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would lose 200 positions on top of previous cut-downs. Also, Documentary, Cordua & Steno, *Radio 24/7*, 3 May 2018. Also, former top diplomat, Ulrik Federspiel, *Et diplomatisk liv*, Gyldendal Business, 2020 and in DRTV, *Deadline*, May 23 2020: "The Foreign Ministry has been cropped so that it cannot solve its task. The embassies are reduced to sales offices" (my translation); Louise Riis Andersen, "På tværs – om Udenrigsministeriets position på Slotsholmen", *Økonomi og politik*, 2020,1, pp. 143-155, April 2020.

considered proportionally),⁶ but it is only in the last years that Denmark has almost abandoned the competition and has closed down several embassies in Africa.⁷ In the period surrounding the abolition of apartheid, however, the relationship between the Nordic countries was characterised by both collaboration and real rivalry. The Swedish historians in this area seems to be more dominant, more nationally conscious and more sensitive than the Danish. This is of course not an easily proven accusation, but it is the sum of my research experiences. The use of an artificial, diplomatic language would probably not help my case much. The mere presence of an independent, critical Danish input in this field of research will be met with antipathy among some Swedish colleagues involved in what was in effect foreign policy.

An Academic Approach to Global Solidarity

The Swedish scholar, Håkan Thörn, is professor of sociology in the Department of Sociology and Work Science at Gothenburg University. He is also coordinator for Forum for Research on Civil Society and Social Movements and for the theme Global Social Relations at the Centre for Globalization and Development at the same university. Thörn's work on international solidarity is widely respected among his peers. In an introduction chapter by Sapire and Saunders his work is mentioned, for instance, and in a review article by Limb his work is seen as probing.⁸ Thörn's 2014-chapter, analysed in the following, at first glance suggests itself as a well-articulated, factual and well-disposed, coherent account. It is, however, very similar to his piece in *Documenting Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa* from 2010.⁹ The chapter mostly repeats and summarises previous research and raises few new issues.

Håkan Thörn participated in a conference that I organised in Copenhagen in 2002. Several of his later articles represent further developments of his contribution to this event, as far as I can tell. His paper is still on my website.¹⁰ At the same conference, Dr Bjørn Møller (now full professor at Aalborg University) in his discussant input pointed to some of the weak sides of Thörn's research. It can be read from the same website.¹¹

In my eyes, Thörn's approach is deceptively distanced and disinterested, reflecting a traditional, formal research method. It remains somewhat unclear, why he considers the subject important and what his personal role or views are. He does not declare his vested interest and puts nothing at stake, he raises no current problems caused by history, and has no concrete message for the present. Thörn's use of concepts is correct, insipid and slightly conflict-shy. Much of what he writes seems relatively banal and apparently neutral. However, one should always be aware that selected facts are often used as proxy for values and feelings.

⁶ Denmark spends 0,7 % of GNI and Sweden 1% on development aid according to OECD's page on Official Development Assistance (ODA) 2017. However, since domestic refugee camps etc. have lately been made part of the picture, and since the so-called return rate was already high (officially more than 40%, in reality higher); todays largest receiver of Danish aid is – Denmark. The Danish sales to the UN system in 2019 were DKK 3.97 billion and this is quite close to the amount that Denmark, according to OpenAid.dk, sent as support to UN organisations, namely DKK 4.48 billion. All in all, development aid is good business for Danish suppliers.

⁷ A research report by professor of political science at the University of Copenhagen, Martin Marcussen, published April 30 2018, shows that Denmark has gone from an 11th place a couple of decades ago to a 46th place in the power ranking of international diplomacy. Also Marcussen's analysis: "Danmarks udenrigstjeneste er alt for lille", in *Ræson*, 4 march, 2019.

⁸ Hilary Sapire and Chris Saunders (eds.), *Southern African Liberation Struggles: New Local, Regional and Global Perspectives*, University of Cape Town Press, 2013, "Introduction"; Peter Limb, "Southern African Liberation Struggles 1960–1994", in *South African Historical Journal*, July 31, 2017. Limb's review provides a nice overview of the content, but is less focussed on the political connotations.

⁹ Håkan Thörn, "Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society", in Chris Saunders (ed.), *Documenting Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa*, select papers from the Nordic Africa Institute Documentation project workshop 26-27 November 2009, Pretoria, South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa / Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2010.

¹⁰ www.jakobsgaardstolten.dk | History conference 02 | Links to papers on international solidarity and social movements not yet published ... | Håkan Thörn's paper on Solidarity Across Borders.

¹¹ www.jakobsgaardstolten.dk | History conference 02 | Links to papers on international solidarity and social movements not yet published ... | "Civil Society Romanticism: A Sceptical View. Reflections on Håkan Thörn's Solidarity Across Borders".

Thörn's Method of Research

It is not easy for me to relate to Thörn's work, since my own writings always attempt to problematise in order to examine established assumptions, consider alternatives and then maybe judge more than just conclude. A researcher in international relations should not refrain from pointing out historical guilt and shame (based on credible, empirical evidence), or from trying to create incentives for action. For instance, I admittedly and openly write from the assumption that governments usually give aid/support mainly to promote national interests or sustain business sectors in their own countries,¹² and that popular, international solidarity, resting on grassroots activities, is another ballgame, bound to be in opposition to traditional, state-driven foreign policy for much of the time.¹³ Genuine solidarity history ought to be truth-telling as an act of activism. An independent counterweight to the increasing number of policy-making academic institutions with ties to governments or well-financed private foundations. An attempt to counterbalance the swing-door policy that allows academics to move unimpeded back and forth between government offices, universities and private businesses, while opportunistically changing their preferences accordingly.¹⁴ A social scientist should not shy away from research into motives and rationales out of fear of being accused of taking a journalistic approach. Motive research is necessary if historical enquiries are to be analytical and meaningful. Every historian practises it, so why not commit to it,¹⁵ instead of insisting on an alleged objectivity, like much of the half-official history writing on Nordic solidarity does?¹⁶ Since all research in one sense or another is politically influenced, I do not criticise the concoction of research and politics, but rather the lack of consciousness and the hypocrisy that surrounds the phenomenon.

¹² A recent example: In 2018, Mette Frederiksen, chairman of the Danish Social Democracy, and from June 2019 Danish Prime Minister, introduced the political party's new Africa strategy. The former Director of the Center of African Studies, University of Copenhagen, viewed it as a break with former policies, in the sense that it no longer aimed at spreading the Scandinavian welfare model, but rather at protecting Denmark against immigration from Africa by creating camps in "near areas", mainly in Northern Africa (Stig Jensen, "Afrikaforsker om S-udspil", *Alttinget*, 28. februar 2018). Mette Frederiksen, buy the way, is a former student of CAS, Copenhagen.

¹³ I do not claim that pure idealism is practically possible. I was a member of the International Secretariat of the Danish Communist Party for some years and we were obviously not good enough to distinguish between the international solidarity of the CPSU and the foreign policy interests of the Soviet Union as a superpower.

¹⁴ Just a couple of examples from Denmark in the 2010s (there are several similar, to some extent contradicting Denmark's record in the absolute top of the transparency index). Starting their political careers shortly after academic graduation, the former minister of finance Bjarne Corydon moved to McKinsey, while trade/business minister Brian Mikkelsen moved to Dansk Erhverv, a major business lobby organisation, and former minister of agriculture, Karen Hækkerup, went to Landbrug & Fødevarer, the leading agricultural lobby organisation.

¹⁵ Although there is still some reluctance to recognise the normality of normativity, subjectivity and ideological bias in historical writing, academic activism has gradually changed the objectivity concept. That does not have to result in a surrender to postmodernism or accepting fake news. The obligation to come as close as possible to the historical reality consists. Studied neutrality, however, has nothing to do with objectivity and does not reflect any scientific endeavour, but only opportunism and political necessity. Producing "balanced" accounts does not bring the researcher any scientific certainty. See, for instance, Remi Joseph-Salisbury and Treva Lindsey, "5 Principles for scholar activism", Roundtable paper delivered at the conference Scholar-Activism in the 21st Century, British Library, London, 22-23 June 2018. For more philosophical angles on this problematic, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason. On the Theory of Action*, Stanford University Press, 1994/98, p. vii; H.G. Gadamer, *Warheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer Philosophischen Hermeneutik*, Mohr Siebeck, 2010 (first published 1960), p. 274. The deceased, Danish, left-social-democratic chairman, Svend Auken, expressed it this way in a debate: "*The only things you will find on the middle of the road are white stripes and dead flies*".

¹⁶ I am referring in particular to the impressive book series funded by the Nordic countries' foreign ministries: Christopher Munthe Morgenstierne, *Denmark and National Liberation in Southern Africa. A Flexible Response*, Uppsala, Nordic Africa Institute, 2003, particularly pp. 19-21. (See my review of this book, "Danish Anti-Apartheid History", on *H-SAfrica*, May, 2005). The other books in this series were: T. Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa: Volume 1: Formation of a Popular Opinion 1950-1970*, Uppsala, The Nordic Africa Institute (hereafter NAI) 1999; T. Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa: Volume 2: Solidarity and Assistance 1970-1994*, NAI, 2002; T. Sellström, ed, *Liberation in Southern Africa - Regional and Swedish Voices: Interviews from Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, the Frontline and Sweden*, NAI, 1999; L. Soiri and P. Peltola, *Finland and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, NAI, 1999; T. Linné Eriksen, ed, *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa*, NAI, 2000.

Thörn's article is largely a summary of his own and Tor Sellström's earlier work,¹⁷ with more limited use of Morgenstierne, Peltola and Eriksen. Those who love Sellström's books must also like Thörn's chapter-article. In that sense, it is illustrative for the Swedish government-sponsored (directly or indirectly) research on the subject.

His book chapter deals mainly with Swedish conditions, less with Norwegian and Finnish - and very little with Danish. His sources are predominantly Swedish. Thörn emphasises Nordic similarities and downplays conflicts, as he partly admits himself.¹⁸ Nevertheless, his chapter supports the legend of a common Nordic, world-leading humanism and political progressiveness.

Theories on National Liberation, Globalisation and Social Movements

One of Thörn's main points of departure is globalisation theory. I have nothing against theory, when it actually does something for the analysis of concrete developments,¹⁹ but you can seldom prove a point by way of a theory, as Thörn seems to attempt.²⁰ For a historian, at least, it works better the other way around: when facts can be used to corroborate a generalisation.²¹ In addition, it is my experience that "neutral" theory is sometimes used ideologically to downgrade more obvious, interest-based reasoning. However, I agree that a brief walkabout among relevant theories might further understanding of the specific case of the Nordic aid. Since present appearance does not necessarily resemble nature, past or future; some degree of theoretical orientation could make it easier to distinguish between concrete manifestations and the essence of the matter at hand.²² During my own course of South Africa research, an eclectic mix of theories has recurrently been simmering in the back of my head, including African studies theory, development research, political science, international relations theory, theories on authoritarian capitalism, social history methods, united front strategies, action research, empowerment theory, participatory approaches and moral philosophy.²³ Thoughts on left-wing political tactics, together with old-fashioned, empirical source criticism, have also been useful.

Thörn, for his part, has chosen rather ambiguous and impotent theories on globalisation and social movements. National liberation theories are not part of Thörn's analysis apparatus, but since liberation from colonial suppression was what it was all about for the peoples of Southern Africa, they would have been worth considering. Liberal, anti-colonial ideas can be traced at least back to the North and South American revolutions against English and Spanish imperialism.²⁴ Anti-imperialism inspired by Marx and Lenin followed.²⁵ Thinkers from the Third World developed this further in the form of revolutionary pan-Africanism

¹⁷ Thörn discloses that his chapter/article is based on his earlier 2006-book: Håkan Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society*, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

¹⁸ Håkan Thörn, "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle", p. 5.

¹⁹ I will welcome any critique of the book manuscript, I am working on now, which have more than 100 pages of theory in the introduction chapters alone. See a draft manuscript here: www.jakobsgaardstolten.dk | Book manuscripts [...] | Monograph manuscript on South African history writing (User name: visitor, Password: laia).

²⁰ As, for example, when Thörn postulates a connection between the so-called Nordic model and the anti-apartheid support. Håkan Thörn, "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle", pp. 17-19.

²¹ Explore the difference between deduction, induction and abduction, for instance, in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

²² On the use of theory for African historical studies, see also the PowerPoint on my website: www.jakobsgaardstolten.dk | Teaching notes | Notes on study techniques: the use of theory in social science.

²³ Feel free to search my personal, annotated, online databases by using the mentioned theories as key words to find examples of literature, I have used for my own writings. See www.jakobsgaardstolten.dk | Databases, queries...

²⁴ See, for instance, William Roger Louis, "American Anti-Colonialism and the Dissolution of the British Empire", *International Affairs*, Vol. 61, No. 3, 1985, pp. 395-420, 1985; Robert Harvey, *Liberators: Latin America's Struggle for Independence, 1810-1830*, John Murray, London, 2000.

²⁵ See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *On Colonialism*, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1968; V.I. Lenin, "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism", *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, pp. 185-304, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1964 (written in 1917). Also see Irina Filatova, "The Lasting Legacy: The Soviet Theory of the National-Democratic Revolution and South Africa", *South African Historical Journal*, Vol. 64/3, 2012.

and development theory.²⁶ Radical Christian circles also developed theories supporting freedom struggles in the form of liberation theology that semantically came close to socialism.²⁷ None of these thoughts, however, offer a full-fledged recipe for international solidarity - or for the understanding of its history.²⁸ Thörn offers no considerations on national liberation theory and none on the problem of objectivity either, for that matter. During the hey-days of the national freedom movements in the 1970s and 80s, the question of partiality became central to the academic debate. One problem was what role history should play in the struggle. In the collective work *Liberatory History*, Colin Bundy, among others, attempts to establish norms for “*alternative history*”, “*Black history*” and “*peoples history*”. According to Bundy, resistance struggles should constitute a natural part of such studies. However, Bundy warns the radical historian against covering up the dark sides of the freedom struggle, which will only make the further struggle for justice more difficult. If history is to help provide guidelines for the future, then all of the dangers along the road must be uncovered. A historiography, which cannot contribute to this, has let down the social and political functions that, in Bundy’s opinion, it should acknowledge as a part of itself.²⁹ Criticism of colonialism is often inspired by liberation theory. According to Jeremy Cronin, it was to a large degree the colonial character of the apartheid regime, which made its lack of legitimacy obvious and in contravention of international law. This perception of colonialism of a special type also had implications for the international solidarity movement.³⁰ Some still consider it to be important for solidarity in cases like Palestine.³¹ The view, widespread in the West, of South Africa as an allied state with certain unpleasant deficiencies threatened to diminish the freedom struggle to an argument for gradual, democratic reforms. An acceptance from the side of the anti-apartheid movement of this “constructive engagement” position would have reduced the freedom struggle to something less than a national struggle for liberation from colonialism and thus weakened the possibilities for popular international support.³² Thörn’s analysis, on the other hand, puts disproportionate emphasis on globalisation theory. Global structures seem to be put in the foreground as a condition for any kind of development. Used as an interpretive framework, however, globalisation theory could become an explanation for everything and nothing. It often lacks the determinacy of earlier development paradigms. In his chapter, Thörn tries to concretise his previous globalisation analyses, but his distinction between national, international, transnational and global levels remains unclear and is not used efficiently. The search for a useful globalisation theory is justified, of course. The anti-apartheid movement unfolded world-wide, and I agree, when Thörn explains the Nordic support to the liberation struggle as “*a result of the interaction between the Nordic governments and civil societies, occurring under a significant influence of processes of political globalization - from above and from below*”,

²⁶ George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism? The Coming Struggle for Africa*, London, Dennis Dobson, 1956; Franz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre*, Francois Maspero, 1961; Samir Amin, *Imperialism and Unequal Development*, Monthly Review Press, 1977; Nzongola-Ntalaja, “Amilcar Cabral and the Theory of the National Liberation Struggle”, *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 43-54, 1984.

²⁷ Gustavo Gutiérrez Merino, *A Theory of Liberation*, Orbis Books, 1988, first version 1973.

²⁸ For a broader view on this subject area, see B. Parry, “Liberation Theory: Variations on Themes of Marxism and Modernity” in C. Bartolovich and N. Lazarus (eds.), *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 125-149.

²⁹ In H.C. Bredekamp and E.A. Messina (eds.), “Liberatory History and the Struggle in South Africa”. Proceedings of the IHR History Week ‘89, UWC, Western Cape Institute for Historical Research, *Publication Series D1*, Belville, 1990. (Reviewed in *South African Historical Journal*, Vol. 24, 1991).

³⁰ See Harold Wolpe, “The Theory of Internal Colonialism: The South African Case”, in Oxaal, Barnett and Booth (eds.), *Beyond the Sociology of Development*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975; J. Slovo, “South Africa - No Middle Road”, in Davidson and Wilkinson, *South Africa: The New Politics of Revolution*, London, Penguin, 1976; Patrick Bond, “South Africa: Two economies - or one system of superexploitation”, *Africanus, Journal of Development Studies*, 37/2, 2007, pp. 1-21. Thoughts on internal colonialism goes back at least to documents from Comintern and CPSA from 1921, but was also raised by liberal scholars, as in J.S. Furnivall, *Colonial policy and practice. A comparative study*, Cambridge University Press, 1948 and L. Markward, *The Story of South Africa*, London, Faber and Faber, 1968.

³¹ Melissa Levin, “The last Colony”, in J. Soske and S. Jacobs (eds.), *Apartheid Israel: The Politics of an Analogy*, Chicago, Haymarket Books, 2015, pp. 169-77. Also see, Paulo Henrique Martins, “Internal Colonialism, Postcolonial Criticism and Social Theory”, *Journal du Mauss, Revue du MAUSS permanente*, 11 août 2018.

³² Ben Molapo (alias Jeremy Cronin), “Marxism, South Africa and the Colonial Question 1-2”, *African Communist*, No. 113 and 114, 1988. Also, R.J. Hind, “The Internal Colonial Concept”, *Comparative studies in Society and History*, 26/3, 1984; Harold Wolpe, *Race, Class and the Apartheid State*, Paris, Unesco, 1988.

but such a statement is relatively banal – and Thörn's use of globalisation theory allocates overwhelming importance to the period of decolonisation after WW2, while it hardly involves the longer lines of western imperialism.³³ Thörn's apparently neutral formulation, “...*globalization from below interacted in various ways with political globalization from above*”,³⁴ serves a purpose, I fear. It is in effect an attempt to claim that the Nordic governments acted in harmony with the NGOs. That was not the case.³⁵ The most important AAMs found themselves in opposition to the governments for most of the time.³⁶ Not least in Denmark, where several politicians more or less openly supported apartheid,³⁷ and domestic authorities placed agents in the AAM to provoke unlawful acts.³⁸ Until 1985, the Danish intelligence service worked together with the South African police.³⁹

It would be thoughtless to regard globalisation as an all-positive, one-way process, the way Thörn seems to do. For instance, shifts in social power balances, due to the apparent success of neoliberal policies, could make resistance against extra-exploitation diminish along with the level of strategic knowledge surrounding and affecting the performance of counterforces. Populist nationalism and xenophobia are also global tendencies that could cripple international cooperation.

I think that the impact of globalisation on popular movements needs to be relativised and the predominantly national character of the anti-apartheid organisations in the Nordic countries needs to be underlined.

A possible key to the interpretation of solidarity history can be located in social movements theory.⁴⁰ A social movement is a collective actor constituted by individuals who associate themselves with a common interest and to some extent a common identity. Social movements are usually seen as autonomous of the state and established political parties. Usually social movements rely on mass mobilisation and participation.⁴¹ Thörn quite rightly attaches great importance to social movements theory, and he is right in characterising the South Africa solidarity as ”... *movement of movements: a space of intersection for a wide range of collective actors*”, but in that it did not separate itself from the Vietnam-movement or the peace-movement, for instance,⁴² and Thörn does not enlighten us on any differences or similarities. His distinction between new and old social

³³ See, for instance, Klaus Winkel, *Hvorfor er det så svært for Afrika?*, København, Geografforlaget, 2007; Klaus Winkel, ”Derfor flygter folk fra Afrika”, feature article in *Politiken*, May 21, 2019. (As a senior official, Winkel worked for many years in the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

³⁴ H. Thörn, ”Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle”, p. 31.

³⁵ H.E. Stolten, ”Nordic Solidarity with South Africa – a Danish Perspective”, *South African Historical Journal*, Vol. 71, Issue 1, 2019, p. 108.

³⁶ I am using the abbreviation, AAM, not only for the British, but for anti-apartheid movements in general. It will be apparent from the context, which concrete movement I refer to.

³⁷ The later Danish conservative minister of justice, Brian Mikkelsen, got money from the South African apartheid government to a travel in the country and received funds to counteract Operation Days Work and other anti-apartheid activities. See ”Apartheidstyre støttede Brian Mikkelsen”, newspaper *Politiken*, 24. jun. 2009. The later chairperson of the Danish parliament, Pia Kjærsgaard, labelled Nelson Mandela as a terrorist. See ”Da de borgerlige ikke elskede Mandela”, newspaper *Berlingske Tidende*, 08. december 2013. MP and leader of the political party, Centrum-Demokraterne, Erhard Jakobsen, defended the regime after the Soweto-massacre. See https://da.wikiquote.org/wiki/Erhard_Jakobsen.

³⁸ Sarah von Essen, Sebastian Lang-Jensen, Rasmus Mariager, Ditlev Tamm, Rasmus Mariager, Mogens Pelt, *PET's overvågning af den antiimperialistiske venstrefløj 1945-1989*, PET-kommisionens beretning, bind 9. Justitsministeriet, København, 2009, p. 382. (Very much like when Special Branch infiltrated the British Anti-Apartheid Movement, see Rob Evans's article in *The Guardian*, Tuesday, September 27, 2005).

³⁹ Ulrik Dahlin in the Danish newspaper *Information*, December 14, 2013.

⁴⁰ For a general introduction, see A. Morris and C.M. Mueller (eds.), *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992. For a more recent analysis with focus on popular protest, see Laurence Cox and Gunvald Nilsen, *We Make Our Own History: Marxism and Social Movements in the Twilight of Neoliberalism*, Pluto Press, 2014.

⁴¹ Staffan Lindberg and Arni Sverrisson (eds.), *Social Movements in Development: The Challenge of Globalization and Democratization*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 2.

⁴² See for instance, Kim Halling Mortensen og Hans Erik Stolten, ”1960 – 1975. Den antiimperialistiske kamp og Vietnambevægelsen”, in *Det fredssyge Danmark. 100 års dansk fredsarbejde*, København, Komm.S. Historie, 1982.

movements occurs somewhat artificial, as it did in Thörn's 2009-article in JSAS, were longwinded debates on the relations between new and old social movements were in the centre, even if this study was based on activist interviews.⁴³ Thörn's social movements theory contains no analysis of the professionalisation, embedment and absorption that have increasingly made many of the larger NGOs toothless over the years and especially after the end of the Cold War. Neither does it contain any considerations of principal differences between business sector lobbyism and popular NGO activism. This is a problem because of an increasing tendency to regard both phenomena indiscriminately as *civil society* despite what used to be fundamental differences.⁴⁴ Thörn does not really distinguish between "new social movements" and solidarity movements – partly because he lacks a solid definition of what solidarity is, I think. At the time of writing, he does not seem to have been familiar with the work of the American philosopher Avery Kolers, who has developed a moral theory of solidarity grounded in equity. Kolers defines solidarity as political action on others' terms. Unlike mere alliances and coalitions, solidarity involves a disposition to defer to others' judgment about the best course of action.⁴⁵ A striking feature in Thörn's and similar works are the non-existence of a philosophical-theoretical processing of the concept of solidarity as such. For instance, all thinking in differences between a. one-sided goodness, mercy and philanthropy; b. support with the ulterior motive of the donor's own benefit; and c. mutual popular support for progressive influence, is absent. Therefore, Thörn has little understanding for the fact that both popular solidarity movements in the North and liberation movements in the South could also function as an uncoordinated, but never the less combined, force for fundamental changes in the North. (It never enters into Thörn's mind that fundamental, inner change could be necessary in such a perfect society as the Swedish). For the northern, left-wing strategists, the operation was (also) an opportunity to awaken the awareness of their fellow countrymen about the injustice of the world and the transgressions of capital - and through ordinary peoples' goal oriented, oppositional activities, change these people from "*Klasse an sich*" to "*Klasse für sich*".⁴⁶ The feminist poet, Aurora Morales, have framed it this way: "*Solidarity is not a matter of altruism. Solidarity comes from the inability to tolerate ... our own ... passive or active collaboration in the oppression of others - from the recognition that ... our liberation is bound up with that of every other being on the planet*".⁴⁷ Thoughts that are worth keeping in mind, when considering the nature of social movements.

History and Present of Transnational Solidarity and Aid

The anti-apartheid movement was not as unique as some of us would like to think. International appeals and cross-border activism are nothing new. Campaigners have long propagated universalistic values and global visions of common humanity in order to build international constituencies supporting local movements. French and Dutch activists aided the American Revolution.⁴⁸ The anti-slavery campaign - including a signature petition and a boycott of the use of sugar in tea - as much as modern human-rights movements relied on international disaffection and reaction for its efficiency.⁴⁹ African-American missionaries reported on King

⁴³ Håkan Thörn, "The Meaning(s) of Solidarity: Narratives of Anti-Apartheid Activism", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 2, 2009, pp. 417 – 436.

⁴⁴ See A. van Rooy, "Activism's Bumper Decade", Chapter 2 in his *The Global Legitimacy Game: Civil Society, Globalization, and Protest*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004; R. K. Nielsen, *Ground Wars*, Princeton University Press, 2012; Louise Skotte Møller et al., *Penge og politisk indflydelse - en rapport om erhvervslivets skjulte magt i dansk politik*, Global Aktion, København, 2019.

⁴⁵ Avery H. Kolers "Dynamics of Solidarity," *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 20/4, 2012, pp. 365-83; A. Kolers, *A Moral Theory of Solidarity*, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 40, 46, 52. On the same subject, see C. Arnsperger and Y. Varoufakis, "Toward a Theory of Solidarity", *Erkenntnis*, 59/2, September 2003, pp. 157-188.

⁴⁶ Or, as a modern-day educator would probably say: "Show, don't tell". See Karl Marx, "Das Elend der Philosophie", in *MEW*, Band 4, Dietz Verlag, Berlin-DDR, 1969, p. 180 (originally 1847).

⁴⁷ A.L. Morales, *Medicine Stories: History, Culture, and the Politics of Integrity*, South End Press, 1998, p. 125.

⁴⁸ See William Roger Louis, "American Anti-Colonialism and the Dissolution of the British Empire", *International Affairs*, Vol. 61, No. 3, 1985.

⁴⁹ See, for instance, M. Kaye, *1807-2007: Over 200 Years of Campaigning Against Slavery*, London, Anti-Slavery International, 2005; M. Keck and K. Sikkink, "Historical Precursors to Modern Transnational Social Movements and Networks", Chapter 2 in Guidry, Kennedy and Zald (eds.), *Globalizations and Social Movements*.

Leopold's regime in the Congo, etc.⁵⁰ A more conscious source of solidarity was the working-class internationalism that began to emerge after the 1848 revolutions. It was too weak to help the Paris communards in 1871 and too insubstantial among the pre-WW1 social democrats to keep the workers away from the battlefields. It was activated again by Comintern after 1921, and later again in another fashion by the Socialist International. Internationalism has had special importance in colonial and postcolonial settings, since activists in Asia, Latin America or Africa have been urgently aware of the way global forces have affected their possibilities.⁵¹ The importance of the Communist International, and after the Second World War of the Eastern Bloc, for the anti-colonial struggle, should not be underestimated (to which extent the outcomes were good or bad actually deserves continued research).⁵² Several social democratic parties were founded as sections of the First International. Most communist parties were established as sections of the Third International, as a result of the experiences leading up to the First World War, which had shown the weakness of isolated, national movements when confronted with populist nationalism and militarism. Since the mainstream social democratic parties increasingly took on government responsibility in western countries, their solidarity (after 1949, especially in NATO member states) often had to be less unambiguous than that of the left wing. However, trade union control and government involvement also went hand in hand with greater economic possibilities, and the Nordic social democratic parties and trade unions eventually implemented a more low-voiced, sometimes indirect, but relatively extensive aid to a wide range of freedom organisations in Southern Africa. A striking feature of the first 10 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall (even if less pronounced in the Nordic countries) was the decline in popular, political solidarity with the Third World.⁵³ Large parts of the undogmatic, intellectual left wing in Western Europe had had an idealistic expectation that democratic socialism would gain popular strength and unselfish solidarity would bloom when liberated from the double burden of communist dominance and anti-Soviet ideological attacks. Many got disappointed though. The breakdown of "real existing socialism", and of many communist parties and communist influenced organisations, also had seamy sides, such as loss of alternative power bases, organisational discipline and political education. In the case of Denmark, Rasmussen have shown that the communist party, DKP, together with allied trade unions, provided the organisational strength of many of the people's movements, including the AAM, and how several important movements vanished when DKP more or less dissolved.⁵⁴ The Danish social democratic historian, Søren Mørch, expressed the situation this way: "*The price of insurance against social upheavals has gone down*".⁵⁵

Despite much talk of partnership and local ownership, the triumph of neoliberal globalisation meant that transnational companies spearheaded a new confidence in trade more than in aid, which promoted private foreign investment with high return rates at the expense of politico-economic support of national solutions.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ A. Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1998; C. Tilly and L.J. Wood, *Social Movements 1768-2012*, Routledge, 2015.

⁵¹ See, for example, Reinhart Kössler und Henning Melber, *Globale Solidarität? Eine Streitschrift*, Frankfurt am Main, Brandes & Aspel, 2002.

⁵² Especially important in this connection were probably the International Department of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee, The Department for African Countries in the Soviet Foreign Ministry and the Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee. See, for example, *South African Communist Speaks 1915-1980*, London, Inkululeko Publications, 1981; A. Davidson et al., *South Africa and the Communist International. A Documentary History*, Vol. 1-2, London, Frank Cass, 2003. However, the Soviet Union also had double standards and sold military products to South Africa, as documented in H. van Vuuren, *Apartheid, guns and money: A tale of profit*, Jacana, 2017.

⁵³ Steen Christensen, *Mod undertrykkelse - for frihed: Socialdemokratiet og befrielsesbevægelsen i Afrika, Latinamerika og Asien efter 1945*, København, Fremad/AB, 2001, p. 15.

⁵⁴ Søren Hein Rasmussen, *Sære Allianceer*, Odense Universitetsforlag, 1997, pp. 263, 266, 281.

⁵⁵ Søren Mørch, *Den sidste Danmarkshistorie. 57 fortællinger af fædrelandets historie*, København, Gyldendal, 1996, pp. 434-435 (My translation).

⁵⁶ In current Denmark, encouraged by Danida's 2016 strategy: *Danida Market Development Partnerships*. Further evidence lay outside the frames of this contribution, although, I am convinced they could be provided through comparisons of aid agency evaluations, UN statistics, NGO-balance sheets, foreign policy accounts of export subsidies, tax policies in recipient countries, investment patterns, etc. See, for instance, R.W. Stone, "Buying Influence: Development Aid between the Cold War and the War on Terror", working paper, University of Rochester, 2010, p. 11: "*A result of the linkage between trade and aid is that aid is shifted to countries that are able to absorb developed-country exports, and away from the countries that are least able to afford them*".

In non-competitive economies, this had negative consequences for a large part of the population.⁵⁷ This development also had brighter sides, though. Since NGOs were no longer considered a threat to the system, a larger part of the ordinary development aid was canalised this way, which resulted in paid activist positions and more professionalism.⁵⁸ But then again, this tended to make the organisations more dependent of the national foreign ministries than of grassroots mobilisation. Nowadays, Nordic trade unions and NGOs still, but probably to a lesser degree, use their own member-financed funds for political solidarity. At the same time, they benefit from state funding by running development projects.⁵⁹ The share of funds allocated to administrative expenses pay for salaries and activities. To what extent these funds are used for other tasks than the specific projects is difficult to guesstimate. Street campaigns that were previously carried out by idealistic activists are now handled by paid *facers*. Contingent upon that the projects actually help southern NGOs in their rights-struggles, the state support is obviously constructive, but to the extent that it makes the “charity industry” addicted to the domestic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it becomes problematic. Even though this development has escalated over recent years, it already applied to some of the AAM NGOs. None of these issues are treated in any depth in Thörn’s chapter, even if he is building it to a large extent on social movements theory.

The relation, where a solidarity movement could function partly as an external dimension of a liberation movement’s national struggle could become outdated, simply because the possibilities of national liberation policies as such could have reached a dead end. Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt assert that traditional anti-imperialism is no longer relevant. In *Empire*, they argue that imperialism is no longer the practice of any one nation or state. Rather, the “Empire” is a conglomeration of all states, nations, corporations and media.⁶⁰ The conclusion may be that the solidarity movement of the future must be a truly international movement focused on what is more and more frequently named “global apartheid”.⁶¹

After 1990, a range of historical studies of concrete solidarity cases have emerged internationally,⁶² while fewer theoretical or principled works have been written on the theme of North-South political, anti-apartheid solidarity as such.⁶³ Thörn deserves praise for at least bringing selected theories around this into play. During

⁵⁷ See, for instance, Poul Engbert-Pedersen (ed.), *Limits of Adjustment in Africa: The Effects of Economic Liberalization, 1986-94*, Centre for Development Research, 1996, Oxford, James Currey, 1996.

⁵⁸ In Denmark promoted by *The Civil Society Strategy*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 2008: “The updated Civil Society Strategy relates to the assistance provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark through the Danish civil society organisations”.

⁵⁹ A single, random example: Ulandssekretariatet (joint aid office for the Danish national trade union associations FTF and LO) from 2011 supported democracy projects in Paraguay, fully financed by Danida. Jørgen Assens, Head of Programmes at LO/FTF Council, does not agree in my appraisal. In a correspondence, he emphasises that the political trade union solidarity should be considered as completely separate from the state-supported aid projects. A final judgment would be dependent on in-depth accounting analyses, I guess.

⁶⁰ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, 2001, pp. 59, 138.

⁶¹ See, for instance, Patrick Bond, *South Africa and Global apartheid. Continental and International Policies and Politics*, NAI Discussion Paper, 25, Uppsala, 2003.

⁶² For instance, Stefan de Boer, *Van Sharpeville tot Soweto: Nederlands regeringsbeleid ten aanzien van apartheid, 1960-1977*, Den Haag, Sdu / Netherlands Archives Committee, 1999; David Lawrence Rhodes, ‘The Anti-Apartheid Movement in Britain’, M.Phil., University of Oxford, 2000; Gurney (ed.), *Anti-Apartheid Movement*; Henning Melber and Reinhart Kössler, “The West German Solidarity Movement with the Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa. A (Self-) Critical Retrospective”, in U. Engel and R. Kappel (eds.), *Germany’s Africa Policy Revisited*, Munster, LIT, 2002, pp. 103-126; H.E. Stolten, “Om Solidaritetshistorie” in Larney, Nielsen, Mac Manus and Gunnarsen (red.), *Aktivister mod apartheid*, København, SAK, 2004.

⁶³ One of the most interesting is definitively Håkan Thörn, *Anti-apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

recent years, several works dealing theoretically with globalisation,⁶⁴ aid policy,⁶⁵ South-South relations,⁶⁶ or even critically with NGO participation in nationbuilding,⁶⁷ have been published, while most works on political solidarity movements have been limited to concrete case studies.⁶⁸ A whole range of these national histories have now been published by the South African Democracy Education Trust.⁶⁹ However, some of these studies are purely empirical, while others seem to be somewhat celebratory and uncritical. Despite the weaknesses I point out in this paper, Thörn's work has obviously helped to raise the solidarity debate over narrow case studies and personal memories.

Theory and the Nordic Model

It does Thörn credit that he attempts to apply general theory in his analysis of the history of solidarity, however, in some instances, Thörn's use of theory does not seem entirely plausible. In his main conclusion, he himself draws attention to the highly limited value of POS theory (the theory of political opportunity structures). He is completely right in that - it represents sterile, top-down, politological systems theory - but why does he then subsequently use it to substantiate his main points?⁷⁰ In their latest version from 2015 (Thörn is using earlier versions), co-creators of the theory, Porta and Diani, themselves attempt to revise their theory - in vain.⁷¹ Thörn tries to explain how the Nordic AAMs could succeed in persuading the governments to tighten their rhetoric and policy towards the South African regime. According to the theory (and to Thörn), it is the relative openness or closure of a political system, the role of alignments between different elites and the movement's possibilities for elite alignments, which are the crucial factors for results. So, based on this, Thörn underpins his "unique Nordic model". Because "the Nordic political system" is more open to influence, and the alignments between economic and political elites are less tight than elsewhere, and also because, at the same time, Nordic solidarity movements had better allies in the political elite, close to state power, and therefore it was apparently easier for "the Nordic solidarity movement" to get influence on state policy than it was, for instance, for the AAM in Britain.

However, Thörn uses an unconvincing theory in a contradictory manner and he does not prove the validity of the claims underlying his theses. I am convinced that it would be a grateful task to mobilise evidence that leading Swedish industrialists (like Wallenberg and the SAAB group) had pretty good lines of communication to Swedish governments, just as Møller-Mærsk and the semi-state energy companies had to the Danish. Also contradicting Thörn's thesis: in England, many VIPs were close to both the establishment and the British AAM (like, for instance, Trevor Huddleston, Peter Hain and Barbara Castle Baroness of Blackburn) - and even under Labour governments, it made no real difference in foreign policy. In his chapter-article, Thörn does not mention Holland at all,⁷² even if the country was often counted as one of "the Nordic Five" at the same time that it had similarities with England, due to its colonial ties to South Africa. It had a strong AAM, and even if the government was not very sympathetic, it made many of the same choices as the Scandinavian countries. Perhaps, it does not quite fit into Thörn's analysis? Outside Scandinavia, Thörn has mostly done studies on

⁶⁴ For instance, Cedric de Coning, Thomas Mandrup, Liselotte Odgaard (eds.), *The Brics and Coexistence – An Alternative Vision of World Order*, Routledge, 2014.

⁶⁵ For instance, Elling N. Tjønneland and Pundy Pillay, *A joint review of Norwegian - South African development cooperation 1995-2001*, CMI Report, 2003/1.

⁶⁶ For instance, Darryl C. Thomas, *The Theory and Practice of Third World solidarity*, Westport, Connecticut, Praeger, 2001.

⁶⁷ For example, A. Cooley and J. Ron, "The NGO Scramble: Organizational Insecurity and the Political Economy of Transnational Action", *International Security*, 27/1, 2002, pp. 5-39.

⁶⁸ For instance, this, dealing with the AAM in Italy: Arianna Lissoni and Antonio Pezzano (eds.), *The ANC between Home and Exile. Reflections on the Anti-Apartheid Struggle in Italy and Southern Africa*, Università degli studi di Napoli, 2015.

⁶⁹ Essop Pahad et al., *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity and Support*, Part 1-2, SADET, 2008.

⁷⁰ H. Thörn, "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle", p. 35.

⁷¹ Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, Oxford, Blackwells, 2010; Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements*, Oxford University Press, 2015.

⁷² The Netherlands are mentioned once in connection with slave trade.

the UN and in England, so he can only see, “...two important nodes on the Northern hemisphere; London ... and New York”.⁷³ I wonder were Amsterdam, Berlin, Leipzig and Moscow went.

As I suggest in my SAHJ-article, I find it more credible that – in addition to the increasing broadness of popular opposition - contemporary differences in investment patterns, trade interests, and foreign policy strategic alignments played a major role for the differences in government attitudes. My suggestion is that Nordic state funded support did not play any vital role in the liberation of apartheid South Africa. Even if strong, domestic peoples’ movements developed; the governments’ main line of allowing relatively normal, economic/trade relations with the regime was only changed, when: a. the protests, boycotts and strikes inside South Africa had begun to threaten profitability of investments; b. the popular pressure for sanctions and boycott had forced even large companies to abandon their previous engagement in South Africa; c. the prospect of a South African market that included an expanded black middle class had become feasible; and d. when Gorbachev had come to power in the Soviet Union and the threat of Soviet domination of Southern Africa began to diminish, and the ANC was forced to rely on other allies. To substantiate that, a much larger study would be necessary, though. None of these explanations are prioritised or problematised in Thörn’s analysis.

Thörn’s unquestioning attitude manifests itself when he postulates: *”The Nordic countries constituted one of the significant international communities in the context of the international support to the liberations struggle”*.⁷⁴ That is all fine and sympathetic, except that for most of the time there really was no united “community”, and there was not much of a common foreign policy either, except for some resolutions of intent from meetings, when cabinet ministers came together for other reasons.

It does not promote precision when blending the anti-apartheid appropriations with the regular development aid / transitional aid the way Thörn does. Intentions and practices differed. At least in Denmark, it was a somewhat separate allocation system.⁷⁵ As I have tried to make plausible in my SAHJ-article; the first was, in part, an effort directed towards satisfying domestic opposition, while the latter has to a large extent been varieties of export-subsidisation.⁷⁶

Thörn’s and others’ notion that many of the political leaders, who played a key role in the decisions behind the official Nordic policies, *“...often had a personal commitment to the liberation struggle”*, does not seem terribly convincing to me in the light of how late real sanctions came, how trade was growing continuously,⁷⁷ and how small the financial support actually was compared to the ordinary development aid to countries like Tanzania or India.⁷⁸ Thörn highlights the Swedish politicians, but it has also been claimed, for instance, that the social democratic Danish Foreign Minister, K.B. Andersen, was on friendly terms with the MPLA-leader, Agostinho Neto, even if Neto was a declared Marxist-Leninist. However, despite appearance, I doubt that it is personal sympathies that rule international politics.

Thörn’s concept *“Political globalization from below”*, referring to the emergence of a global civil society during late 20th century - a process constituted by the increasing number of NGO’s and transnational networks, organising across borders - is unfortunately a little too idealistic, the way it is used in his chapter. Compared to the level of activity as such, there was relatively limited cooperation between the national AAMs of different

⁷³ Håkan Thörn, “Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle”, p. 28.

⁷⁴ Håkan Thörn, “Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle”, p. 9.

⁷⁵ Internal discussions in the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs made the difference clear from the start:
Request from Political Department to the Technical Secretariat for Development Assistance, 8 December 1964.
Response from TS, 15 December 1964. MFA 6.U.566.

⁷⁶ H.E. Stolten, “Nordic Solidarity with South Africa – a Danish Perspective”, p. 111. On post-apartheid aid, see *Sydafrika Markedsprofil*, Udenrigsministeriet, København, 1995; *Danida Market Development Partnerships (DMDP) / business instrument*, Danida, 2016; *Evaluation of the Investment Fund for Developing Countries (IFU) 2004-2017*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2019.

⁷⁷ According to Statistics Denmark, import from South Africa raised from 1.252 million DKK in 1981 to 1.685 in 1985, while exports raised from 479 million to 613.

⁷⁸ Official Danish support to the victims of apartheid in the countries of southern Africa through the apartheid appropriation increased from 50 million in 1984 to 87 million in 1989. On India and Tanzania, see Ole Therkildsen, *Waterring white elephants? Lessons from donor funded planning and implementation of rural water supplies in Tanzania*, Uppsala, 1988; Steen Folke og Jesper Heldgaard (red.), *Den rige mus og den fattige elefant. 45 års dansk bistand til Indien*, Hovedland, 2006.

countries, even if there were a number of common meetings and conferences, and Thörn does not attempt to document his claim in any detail in his account, not using NGO archives, activist memories or self-lived experiences.⁷⁹ Neither in the great Nordic solidarity history book series, nor in the later grassroots works is there any indication of an intensive cooperation between the AAMs of the Nordic countries. Thörn is also half wrong, or at least unclear, when he postulates: "*The rise of solidarity movements in the Nordic countries was largely a result of interactions taking place in global civil society*".⁸⁰ The AAMs, especially in the Scandinavian countries, were largely national movements mobilised on the basis of domestic, leftist traditions.

When Thörn attaches great importance, for the AAMs, to very recent globalisation trends, his thinking is different from that of a historian. Actually, very similar forms of globalisation and migration was just as apparent before WW1.⁸¹ In my SAHJ-article, I demonstrate that transnational solidarity reaches back to the American Revolution and before, even if actual trans-border, popular cooperation was rather limited all the way through history. But, if Thörn thinks that global social movements did first take off after WW2, it must be because he lacks knowledge on working class cooperation before WW1 and underweights the anti-colonial movement of the interwar period. Even in Thörn's 2006-book, there is not much about the anti-colonial movement; it is mostly a comparison of the Swedish case and the English case after 1960.⁸²

The Questionable Role of the Social Democrats

Thörn places much emphasis on the church and the reformist trade union movement and less on rebel left-wing movements after 1968. Thörn is absolutely right, when he writes: "*Particularly the reluctance among many Western labour Unions to support the ANC and its call for sanctions against South Africa must be related to Cold War divisions between Soviet Communism and Western Socialist Reformism*".⁸³ But that's it, then. Thörn does not go into depth with this limitation in social democratic solidarity. From his unstated, centrist viewpoint, Thörn declares: "*Socialist International (SI) was an organisation that played a key role in linking on the one hand mobilization in global and Nordic civil society, and on the other hand Nordic government support to the liberation movements*". I can only say that in Denmark, SI played a very insignificant role, if any, for the development of popular solidarity with South Africa. And there is an unexplained contradiction in Thörn's work here, since he himself discloses how weak and inconsistent SI's relations with Africa actually were.⁸⁴

When Thörn mentions that Swedish Prime Minister, Olof Palme's, support for the ANC intended to turn the organisation in a non-communist direction, it is not done in any depth and only by quoting Vladimir Shubin.⁸⁵ No doubt, Thörn is right that the Swedish politicians, Palme, Carlsson and Schori, plaid a relatively progressive role in SI. Unfortunately, he forgets to mention the Danish cabinet minister Kjeld Olesen (vice-chairman of the Danish Social Democracy), who was also a member of the high profile 1977 SI-mission to Africa. The influence of the Swedish Social Democracy in SI is praised in detail. The work of the Danish Social Democracy in SI is not mentioned at all, although sources are readily available.⁸⁶

The support (however constrained) from the socialist international is highlighted by Thörn, probably because the Nordic social democracies were prominent members, more influential than the size of their countries would indicate. However, the international relations of the Nordic, domestic communist parties, which were - especially in the Danish case - much more directly involved in the AAMs, and the support they helped trough

⁷⁹ In his 2009 JSAS-article, though, Thörn make use of activist interviews.

⁸⁰ Håkan Thörn, "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle", p. 23.

⁸¹ Michael Graff, *The Growth of the International Economy, 1820-2015*, 5. Edition, Routledge, 2013 pp. 79, 148, 162.

⁸² Håkan Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

⁸³ Håkan Thörn, "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle", p. 28.

⁸⁴ Håkan Thörn, "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle", p. 29, 31.

⁸⁵ Shubin used the name Bushin to be published in the West. I heard some of the same, when I talked to him in Moscow in 1989 and in 2002, and in Durban in 2004.

⁸⁶ For instance, Steen Christensen, *Mod undertrykkelse - for frihed: Socialdemokratiet og befrielsesbevægelse i Afrika, Latinamerika og Asien efter 1945*, København, Fremad/AB, 2001, p. 52. While no swede was ever president of SI, Alsing Andersen, a former Danish cabinet minister, had that position until his dead in 1962, after being in the leadership of the Labour and Socialist International already in the interwar period.

from socialist countries are forgotten.⁸⁷ Thörn makes a case out of the fact that the Swedish social democrats after 1976 (with little effect, though) tried to engage SI in the support for liberation struggles. But, at this point in time, the Portuguese colonies had already become independent. Could it be that it was to some extent about saving them from communism and establishing trade relations, which had been insignificant during colonialism?⁸⁸

Thörn records that social democratic ideology experienced difficulties entering Africa,⁸⁹ but he is unable to analyse, why reformism for a long time continued to be weak and revolutionary attitudes strong in poor African countries. It may have something to do with the fact that suppressed, poorly organised workers and peasants in countries, which have historically been exploited by the West, have over time experienced difficulties improving their living conditions through gradual reforms. Let's face it; neither the British Labour Party nor the French socialists, for instance, exhibited consequent resistance against colonialism.⁹⁰

Thörn's sections on boycott and sanctions are his best, even though they are also characterised by self-evident generalities. Like the Danish contributor to NAI's big, government-funded book series on the Nordic solidarity, Christopher Morgenstierne,⁹¹ Thörn emphasises the relatively modest boycotts of the 1960s, while he has less to say about the widespread, popular boycotts during the more important period of the 1980s, which were to a larger extend controlled by left-wing activists. Fortunately, they have to some degree been covered by NGO-literature.⁹² When Thörn, like much of the half-official literature, seems to place more emphasis on the early period of solidarity, it could possibly be explained by the fact that the ANC was not yet considered to be decisively socialist and therefore still a partner for the social democrats. After the ANC's support of the Warsaw Pact intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968, at the latest, it became clear to the social democrats that the influence battle was lost to the communists, at least temporarily.⁹³ Therefore, the period leading up to 1989/90 might seem less interesting for many non-radical historians. Overweighting the social democratic elements of the Nordic support serves a dual purpose (and is therefore in principle an expression of true, mutual solidarity, although I partly disagree with the content): It simultaneously supports what remains of the Swedish model and the ANC's postulated social democracy.⁹⁴

Some of Thörn's statements reveals an accommodating, but naïve, interpretation of South – North relations: “*When boycotts were launched in Europe in the early 1960s, it was a direct import from Southern Africa*”.⁹⁵ Well, it was part of a deliberate, left-wing concept of solidarity that key demands and strategies ought to come from the victimised peoples' own organisations in the South. The Nordic AAMs could then decide, which

⁸⁷ Among other things, journals and information materials printed in Leipzig and Neubrandenburg were brought to London and further by Danish party members.

⁸⁸ See Tor Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa: Solidarity and assistance 1970-1994*, Nordic Africa Institute, 1999, p. 441.

⁸⁹ Håkan Thörn, “Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle”, p. 22, p. 30, n. 30.

⁹⁰ Ho Chi Minh, for example, was disappointed with the French socialists and joined the French Communist Party after 1920. Comintern then sent him out to fight Japanese and western imperialism in China, and after 1941 in Vietnam. Also see Peter C. Speers, “Colonial Policy of the British Labour Party”, *Social Research*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 1948, pp. 304-326.

⁹¹ Christopher Munthe Morgenstierne, *Denmark and National Liberation in Southern Africa. A Flexible Response*, Uppsala, Nordic Africa Institute, 2003, pp. 19-21.

⁹² For instance, Vesla Vetlesen, *Frihet for Sør-Afrika: LO og kampen mot apartheid*, Oslo, Tiden Norsk Forlag, 1998; Hans Erik Stolten, “Om solidaritetshistorie”, in Larney, Nielsen, Mac Manus, Gunnarsen (red.), *Aktivister mod apartheid*, København, SAK, 2004; Norén, Karl-Gunnar, *Under ISAKs paraply*, Afrikagrupperna i Sverige, Stockholm, 2006; Mai Palmberg (red.), *När södra Afrikas frihet var vår – Afrikagrupperna 1968–1994*, Stockholm, 2007; Forthcoming book in Danish by Peter Tygesen on the anti-apartheid work done by Folkekirkens Nødhjælp / DanChurchAid.

⁹³ One month after the intervention, an official statement appeared in *Mayibuye* under the name of Duma Nokwe, the movement's secretary general, stating that the Soviet invasion “... will protect and consolidate the achievements [of the revolution]”.

⁹⁴ In connection with the 2004-elections, the ANC officially declared itself a social democratic party.

⁹⁵ Håkan Thörn, “Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle”, p. 26. (The history of boycotts in the West, by the way, started even before Captain Charles Boycott was boycotted in 1880 and were used at many other occasions).

organisations they wanted to support. Most of them did not see it as their job to change the organisations, such as the social democrats (and the Soviet Communist Party for that matter) attempted. Thörn's conceptual world is definitely not negative or conflict-based, but rather positive-innocent and postulated non-ideological.⁹⁶ Another problem, which he does not take a position on, is organisational interests. Especially after the Fall of the Wall, NGOs have been embedded in government policies, foreign trade organs and commercial companies. Danish Danida's newer initiatives, for instance,⁹⁷ effectively bind NGOs, which seek funding, not only to Foreign Ministry standards, but to specific, private Danish export corporations.⁹⁸ Such tendencies can also be tracked to earlier periods, but no effort is made in this direction. Thörn harmonises history as he emphasises the accord between civil society and the state, and in much the same way, he does not adequately distinguish between the labour movement and the solidarity movement. At least in the case of Denmark, there was no "Scandinavian model" when it came to apartheid resistance. There was a hard struggle, exposing the governments' attempt to conceal the indirect, de facto support for apartheid (in the form of trade) behind a fig leaf of solidarity, which in part had the purpose of pacifying the NGOs.⁹⁹

International Trade Union Support with a Nordic Angle

Håkan Thörn, in his account of the Nordic support, rightly and honestly points out the ambivalent role of the Swedish trade union movement, but paradoxically, he does not have the same reservations about the western trade union international, ICFTU, and leaves out any criticism of CIA-infiltration and ICFTU's lack of support for SACTU and COSATU before 1990. One would expect to be able to determine the international labour movement as a natural, transnational source of support for the black workers of South Africa, but during the Cold War, many reformist, social democratic dominated organisations in the West were afraid of being abused for communist purposes. That fear sometimes weighed heavier than the solidarity with classmates in the South. There were obvious contradictions in the attitudes of the labour movement. A closer, critical look at the role of the western-dominated International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, ICFTU, the American federation, AFL-CIO and the British federation, TUC, exposes them in a role that at best can be described as dubious. It was only after that COSATU gained decisive momentum and strength that these labour bodies started realising that they could not ignore it. In one of the best accounts on the issue, Roger Southall has described the British TUC's historical links with the white trade unions, the disastrous involvement of ICFTU with the anti-socialist trade union FOFATUSA, the battles of the ICFTU against the ANC-allied SACTU-unions, the preference to co-operate with apartheid-like trade unions such as TUCSA/SATUC, and later their preferences for the so-called "independent unions", and to some extent for UWUSA, Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha-allied union, in attempted manipulations of the South African labour scene.¹⁰⁰ The so-called Nordic Five (in this connection Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands) eventually chose to fund COSATU directly,¹⁰¹ instead of going through ICFTU channels. It would have been interesting with some estimates on the extent to which the Nordic Five attempted to push their own political agenda upon the South African organisations.¹⁰² Southall, on his part, strangely enough, concludes that the overall result was a relatively, consistent even-

⁹⁶ In effect, Thörn's stile is a little like what is presently known as constructive journalism. An illustrating example of that concept is *Verdens bedste nyheder* (The World's Best News), financed mainly by the Danish Foreign Ministry and the private sector to propagate Danish development aid at home.

⁹⁷ Danida is Denmark's official development agency, an activity area under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

⁹⁸ *Danida Market Development Partnerships (DMDP) Business Instrument*, Danida, 2016; *Verden 2030*.

Danmarks udviklingspolitiske og humanitære strategi, Danida, 2017.

⁹⁹ Support for this supposition can be found in my SAHJ-article.

¹⁰⁰ R. Southall, *Imperialism or Solidarity. International Labour and South African Trade Unions*, Cape Town, UCT Press, 1995. The archives of the ICFTU has now been catalogued by the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam; see, for instance, folder 274-281, 85th meeting. Brussels, 24-25 May 1984.

¹⁰¹ In some representations, Canada is bundled together with the Nordic countries: D. Anglin, T. Shaw, C. Widstrand (eds.), *Canada, Scandinavia, and Southern Africa*, Nordic Africa Institute, 1978; O. Stokke et. al., *Western Middle Powers and Global Poverty: The Determinants of the Aid Policies of Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Sweden*, Uppsala, NAI, 1989.

¹⁰² Such a study cannot be accommodated within the scope of this article. The former international secretary of the Danish Social Democratic Party, Steen Christensen, is presently working on a monograph on the history of IUEF (International University Exchange Fund), including how it was infiltrated by right-wing forces.

handedness, which sought to foster unity. Newer narratives have transformed that picture slightly.¹⁰³ My own impressions from participating in the Danish Foreign Ministry's so-called Resource Base for the Transitional Aid to South Africa are mixed. Some Nordic labour unions involved in the transitional aid to South Africa would have liked to see more of the resulting job creation happen in their own countries. For example, one trade union would have liked the support being given in the form of small houses, pre-fabricated in Denmark. The Eastern Bloc's trade union international, WFTU, (also embracing some left-socialist unions in the West and South) manifested an outspoken solidarity, but that is not revealed by Thörn, and seldom by others. Incidentally, Thörn's 2006-book and 2014-chapter also fails to mention another genuinely transnational and rather important initiative with Nordic roots. Maritime Union Against Apartheid (MUAA) was formed in February 1984 by the Danish Seaman's Union, the Seaman's Union of Australia and two British unions, the National Union of Seamen and the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), in cooperation with the Shipping Research Bureau in Amsterdam. The unions represented both seafarers and dockworkers. One of the initiators was the Danish communist trade union leader, Henrik Berlau. MUAA's goal was to support the implementation of the United Nations resolutions on oil and arms embargoes against apartheid South Africa, which was done with great efficiency.¹⁰⁴

The Nordic Colonial Tradition

In view of the limited length of his article-chapter, Thörn uses a lot of space on a solid, general description of the history of the Scandinavian countries over the last one-thousand years. It is a good idea to prioritise the historical background in this way. The description, regrettably, has a few imperfections. It is only in our own minds that Scandinavia was historically characterised by "*the absence of a colonial tradition*". Denmark had colonial possessions in India, Africa and the Caribbean (some would argue that Norway and Iceland were Danish colonies for more than 400 years and that Faroe Islands and Greenland still are). We were among the major slave trading nations and around one third of the early Danish industrialisation was financed by the sale of slave-processed sugar.¹⁰⁵ The building of the most exclusive mansions of inner Copenhagen, including the present royal palace, Amalienborg, was financed by slave-profits. Nevertheless, it is not, "*fair to say that the Nordic involvement in the slave trade, and the opposition to it, marked a historical beginning for the Nordic countries relation to liberation struggles*". It is too far-fetched. On the other hand, the anti-slavery movement in England could be regarded as a proto-solidarity-movement, as Sapire does.¹⁰⁶

In some isolated instances, Thörn attempts at being kind to Denmark, but unfortunately, it is not correct, when he claims that "*Denmark was the first slave trading nation to abolish slavery*".¹⁰⁷ Only the African trade was stopped; slavery continued in the Danish West Indies until 1848, when the Danish governor effectuated abolition, pressured by an uprising, during which the leader, General Buddhoe, together with thousands of slaves took over the town of Frederiksted. It happened against the will of the Danish king, who until the following year was an absolute monarch. This was after that slavery was ended in England, Sweden, Latin America and several US states.

¹⁰³ For instance, B. Silén, *Uppdrag Solidaritet. Arbetarrörelsen och södra Afrika 1960-1994*, Stockholm, Nielsen & Norén förlag, 2007, pp. 130, 141. On the issue of trade union infiltration, see Z. Rahman and T. Langford, "International Solidarity or Renewed Trade Union Imperialism? The AFL-CIO and Garment Workers in Bangladesh" in *Journal of Labor and Society*, May 2014, which shows that while some northern capital owners could have an interest in producing (and thereby creating workplaces) in the South; northern trade unions could have an interest in preventing it.

¹⁰⁴ H. Berlau, "Maritime Unions Against Apartheid" in R. Hengeveld and J. Rodenburg (eds.), *Embargo: Apartheid's Oil Secrets Revealed*, Amsterdam University Press, 1995.

¹⁰⁵ Denmark was number seven to be accurate, although we were the first to stop the actual transport from Africa. We are here disregarding the Viking Age, of course, during which our domestic wealth to some extent was built by slaves captured in Eastern Europe. See H.C. Gulløv, Poul Olsen, Niels Brimnes, Per Hernæs, Mikkel Venborg Pedersen og Erik Gøbel (red.), *Danmark og kolonierne*, bind 1-5, Gads Forlag, 2017 (This 2000-page work was written on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Denmark's sales of Virgin Islands to the United States).

¹⁰⁶ Hilary Sapire, "Liberation Movements, Exile, and International Solidarity: An Introduction", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 2, 2009, pp. 271-286.

¹⁰⁷ Håkan Thörn, "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle", p. 6, 11.

It is also far-fetched to conclude that early Nordic settlement at Cape created roots for later solidarity. There were Danish contacts to Cape before 1652 (which Thörn fails to register),¹⁰⁸ but the Nordic settlers have generally been quite conservative. Thörn wishes to emphasise the early ties between South Africa and the Nordic countries, but his interpretation of the importance of the Boer War for identity formation in the Nordic countries is wildly exaggerated.

The Importance of the Nordic Churches

Christian organisations such as Folkekirkens Nødhjælp (DanChurchAid) and Kirkernes Raceprogram (WCC's Programme to Combat Racism) played a noteworthy role in Danish aid policy and developed an almost revolutionary rhetoric during the late 1980s. However Thörn's statement; "...it was to a large extent the churches that kept focus on solidarity with the South African liberation movement",¹⁰⁹ does not adequately describe Danish conditions. Even if organisations and names changed, there were continuous activities, which also in more quiet periods included communist unions, youth organisations, etc. Notwithstanding, Thörn deserves praise for drawing attention (in indirect, diplomatic terms, unfortunately) to how the Swedish church possibly weakened the struggle against apartheid by supporting the Inkatha movement.

Thörn has a whole section with a sensible presentation of the Nordic mission (much like in Sellström's and in Soiri & Peltola's books). This topic is not, as such, unrelated, since a large portion of ANC-supporters probably have always been more or less faithful church-goers (which, strangely enough, does not exclude that, for a period, many of them were also revolutionary socialists). However; although some missionaries had a liberal-humanist attitude towards slavery, and although certain church organisations later became involved in anti-apartheid solidarity; the longer, Nordic, historical lines in this field are largely irrelevant to AAM solidarity. Thörn's argument; "...the Mission needs special attention, since it is perhaps the most important historical factor for explaining the commitment to the liberation struggle in the Nordic countries", is an error of judgment. He is building on a statement by Tor Sellström: "...the fact that Denmark in contradistinction to Finland, Norway and Sweden, did not provide direct support to the liberation movements, could partly be explained by the fact that Denmark did not establish missionary presence in Southern Africa".¹¹⁰ This explanation is simply ridiculous given the fact that most church organisations condemned key liberation movement activities throughout the 1960s and longer. The missions did not generally play a progressive role. In the early days, mission often served as a first, unofficial snowplough, which paved the way for mercantilism, immigration and imperial colonisation in that order.¹¹¹ Furthermore, it is not correct that Denmark had no missionary activities at all in Southern Africa. Although focus was mostly on West Africa, Congo and Zambia; C. Thomsen, K.T. Wolter and several other Danes worked for Brødrevenigheden (The Moravian Mission) in Cape during the nineteenth century, for instance. Even if Unitas Fratrum / Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine originated in i Böhmen-Mähren, it had a headquarter in Danish Christiansfeld since 1773 (now on the UNESCO World Heritage List). Several mission activities took off from there.¹¹² There were more Norwegians abroad, though.¹¹³ Poverty was historically more prevalent in Sweden and Norway than in Denmark,¹¹⁴ which contributed to the church being able to exercise greater authority, and to the priests' greater yearning for traveling. The deployment of the mission link is a distortion of history that serves to substantiate a claim that

¹⁰⁸ Ove Gieddes Fortegnelse paa alt hvis paa den Indianske Reise forefalden er fra 1618 til 1622, Rigsarkivet, A katalog: Danske Kancelli B 169.

¹⁰⁹ Håkan Thörn, "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle", p. 28.

¹¹⁰ Håkan Thörn, "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle", p. 14. Thörn's note: communication 15 January 2010.

¹¹¹ See, for instance, a paper by Nathan Nunn, Department of Economics, Harvard University, from 2011, "Christians in Colonial Africa" (http://www.econ.yale.edu/~egcenter/Nunn_Paper.pdf).

¹¹² Olai Hartmann, *Skandinaver i Sydafrika: En Række Biografier og Skildringer*, Cape Town, 1900, p. 20; F.C. Høy, *Sendebud i Kristi Sted*, Christiansfeld, 1943, p. 79. However, between 1864 and 1920, southern Jutland was occupied by Germany.

¹¹³ The Danish king ruled Norway in a personal-union until after the Napoleonic wars, where Sweden won supremacy, which was close to leading to regular war just before Norway's independence in 1905, as revealed by the newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* in 2005.

¹¹⁴ The Danish king was also king of Norway until Sweden took over after 1814. After independence in 1905, a Danish prince was elected king of Norway.

Sweden has long had a significant connection to progressive circles in Southern Africa and should therefore have a natural place in the heart and mind of the new South Africa.

Likewise, a statement like the following is completely irrelevant: "...*a number of cultural links were established between Scandinavia and South Africa in the early 20th century. For example, Boer started to study Swedish folk dancing*".¹¹⁵ What is the connection to the struggle for liberty or to AAM-solidarity? It is non-existent.

For organisations and institutions with agendas much different from that of the freedom struggle, playing the Christian card has proven useful. The Africa Center for Strategic Studies, a U.S. Department of Defense institution, has been studying Sellström, and writes on its website: "*Nordic-African solidarity is rooted in the century-old Nordic missionary presence in southern Africa*".¹¹⁶ Now, as the flow of research money shifts from Peace and Conflict Research to Military Studies, even serious researchers have to follow suit and not all of their results are bad. Still, their employers are hardly interested in emphasising the importance of the left-revolutionary movements for the development of democracy.

Social Democratic Oriented History Fabrication

It is tempting for a social scientist to seek legitimacy for his subject and for his theses by drawing lines back in time. Unfortunately, such direct links are often difficult to sustain. At least, my experience as a historian says that the stance of both states and individuals are primarily determined by their immediate interests. When Thörn explains, "... as both Denmark and Norway had had an active and armed resistance movement during the Nazi occupation, the war experience at the same time provided an opportunity to legitimise support to the liberation struggle" (a perception that is also mentioned by Morgenstierne), there is not much to it, I think, since Denmark had a social democratic-led government, which collaborated willingly with the occupiers (while Norway had a Quisling government forced on them). On the other hand, it is obvious that certain, indirect lines can be drawn from the left wing of the WWII resistance movement to the traditions of the anti-apartheid movement. However, Thörn ventures beyond Morgenstierne's analysis: "In Denmark, references to the anti-Nazi resistance movement played an important role in the Social Democrat's appeals for support to the liberation movements". I have seen no evidence for that and it would in any case be totally unhistorical. The social democrats leading the coalition government were in close cooperation with the German occupation forces until long after Stalingrad. After request from the German Reichsbevollmächtigte in Denmark, Cécil von Renthe-Fink, they ordered the Danish police to detain the Danish communists (including their MPs) in 1941, and the remaining Spanish civil war veterans in 1942. Many ended up in German concentration camps. In the meantime, Denmark got wealthy by voluntarily supplying more than 10 percent of the fish, meat and dairy needed by Nazi Germany. Denmark allowed many army officers on granted leave, together with thousands of other volunteers, to participate in Waffen-SS divisions on the Eastern Front.¹¹⁷ It looked very much like they were winning, and Danish entrepreneurs wanted their part of Hitler's Ostram.¹¹⁸ Denmark were subsequently recognised as a western-allied country and a NATO-member mostly because USA needed control over Northern Greenland for their Thule Air Base and because the Danish straits control access to the Baltic Sea.¹¹⁹ If anything, one should probably compare the Danish 1942 social democratic condemnation of the occupation-time saboteurs as terrorists with their resentment towards the armed struggle of the ANC.¹²⁰ The social democratic party did not support full sanctions against South Africa before 1986, and they did not like the ANC-allied trade union movement SACTU at all. When delegations from Frelimo and MPLA visited Denmark during the 1980s, they most often contacted the Danish Communist Party, DKP (or sometimes WUS), and they then arranged for them talks with the social democrats. That changed after 1990.

¹¹⁵ Håkan Thörn, "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle", p.13 n.18.

¹¹⁶ <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/solidarity-peace-security-nordic-african-partnership> (approached May 2018).

¹¹⁷ See, for instance, Mogens R. Nissen, *Til fælles bedste - det danske landbrug under besættelsen*, Lindhardt og Ringhof, 2005; Claus Bundgård Christensen, Niels Bo Poulsen og Peter Scharff Smith, *Under hagekors og Dannebrog. Danskere i Waffen SS 1940-45*, Kbh., Aschehoug, 1998.

¹¹⁸ Denmark was a member of the Anti-Comintern Pact, and the (remaining) parliament set up a special east-space-committee of leading industrialists and squires to encourage Danish investments in the conquered territories.

¹¹⁹ See, for instance, John J. Teal Jr., "Greenland and the World Around", *Foreign Affairs*, October 1952. In 1946 and in 2019 American presidents vented the thought that USA could buy Greenland from Denmark.

¹²⁰ Prime Minister Buhl's anti-sabotage speech on September 2, 1942, Statsbiblioteket.

Again, Thörn's suggestions are too excessive when concluding that, "...*the acts of joint Nordic government support to the liberation movements that followed from the regular meetings between ministers of the Nordic countries, is an example of the fact that post-war political globalization also involved direct interaction between movements and intergovernmental organizations*".¹²¹ As far as I have been able to establish, there were no joint Nordic government meetings dedicated solely to solidarity and involving the AAM NGOs. I think that Thörn mainly refers to the meetings of the Nordic Council that discussed all sorts of issues under which the apartheid appropriations were a rather marginal subject, and even if there was some agreement, it is an overstatement to call it a common Nordic government support. Thörn's overemphasis of, "...*the increasing cooperation on foreign policy emerging between the Nordic countries*", represents a great exaggeration. Thörn's statement that, "...*the Nordic countries from the early 1960s onwards embarked on a project to construct a more active foreign policy, which in certain aspects should also represent a common Nordic foreign policy*", is largely a fabrication. Following the abandonment of the idea of a Nordic Defence Union around 1949,¹²² there has never since been any convincing attempt to establish a genuine, enduring, common Nordic foreign policy in areas of real importance. That is clearly visible when looking at the Scandinavian countries' very different attitudes towards EU membership. Since Denmark was the only Nordic country that was a member of the EEC / EU before 1990 (since 1973), Thörn is silent about this in his chapter, even though Denmark actually had a significant influence, both on the introduction of EU sanctions (the right-wing Danish government did not like to see other EU countries maintaining trade benefits that an alternative parliamentarian majority forced Denmark to exclude ourselves from), and later on the premature abolition of EU sanctions.¹²³ Thörn's chapter does not reveal that Denmark, in contrast to the other Nordic countries, also supported apartheid's victims through the European Economic Community. This aid amounted to 61 million ECU (for all EEC-countries together) until 1989 and mainly passed through SACC, SACBC and the Kagiso Trust.¹²⁴

More Nordic Differences

Thörn mixes the Nordic countries' somewhat different development patterns together and chains an invented, common foreign policy to the Nordic welfare state, whose occurrence he unambiguously ascribes to the social democracies. As I see it, modern welfare thinking has had many roots (for instance Bismarck's social conservatism, and Lloyd George's and Chamberlain's social measures) and welfare development was to a large degree pushed through by radical, left-wing organised pressure, as well as by the fear that the October Revolution would spread and capital owners lose their property rights all together.¹²⁵ And what's more, it was good for capitalism. The welfare state is simply the most stable and productive form of capitalism for those states which can afford it.¹²⁶ Thörn undocumented postulates that, "...*new social movements in the Nordic countries were heavily imprinted by the consensus culture of the Nordic welfare model*".¹²⁷ This may be partly true in the case of Sweden. The German author and thinker, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, who lived many years in Norway, wrote: "*It seems to me that the Swedish Social Democratic Party is no ordinary political party. It plays a hegemonic role, which means it determines the rules that everyone else must follow for political survival ... the Social Democrats had succeeded in taming the human animal where other quite*

¹²¹ Håkan Thörn, "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle", p. 10.

¹²² See Rasmus Mariager, *I tillid og varm sympati: Dansk-britiske forbindelser og USA under den tidlige kolde krig*, Museum Tusculanum Press, 2006, p. 246. Although the Scandinavian monetary union of 1873/76 was formally in force until 1972, it stopped functioning no later than 1924.

¹²³ Thörn briefly mentions the limited EEC-sanctions on p. 70 in his 2006-book, but without naming Denmark. Sellström mentions EC-sanctions in a footnote on p. 786 in his Vol. 2, but without naming Denmark.

¹²⁴ Christopher Bo Bramsen, *Sydafrika. Kamp eller dialog?*, Dansk Udenrigspolitisk Instituts Skrifter, nr. 15, Jurist- og Økonomforbundets Forlag, København, 1989. p. 320.

¹²⁵ Even if Lord Beveridge's social thoughts were used by Labour governments after 1945, they originated from 1909 onwards. He was actually a Liberal Party member and served under Winston Churchill.

¹²⁶ Productivity growth during late capitalism, necessary to sustain the system between cyclic crisis, requires motivation, creativity, purchasing power and political stability among the direct producers, I think. See also John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interests and Money*, London, 1936, Chapter 24; Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Belknap Press, 2014, p. 474.

¹²⁷ Håkan Thörn, "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle", p. 18.

different regimes, from theocracy to Bolshevism, had failed".¹²⁸ He observes that even the Germans must give up against the discipline of the Swedes.¹²⁹

In any case, I cannot recognise this consensus-thinking in the case of Denmark. As I show in my SAHJ-article, there was no harmony between the government and the largest, most dedicated AAM, LSA. Several other countries apart from the Nordic have had a developed welfare state during this period, without being especially friendly to their political solidarity NGOs, and besides, inequality in the Nordic countries has probably always been greater than estimated.¹³⁰ Thörn's attempt to locate the moral cause of the Nordic support in the nature of the social democratic welfare state, its redistribution policies and its justice thinking, is speculative and weakly supported. I see it as an attempt to make the states - especially the Swedish - the primary actor. Which seems strange in a chapter that is supposed to be about social movements.

Thörn's central claim: "*Relations between the solidarity movements and the state in the Nordic countries were close from the beginning to the end, and I argue that this close relationship between civil society and the state in the Nordic context is a crucial factor for explaining, and understanding the character of, Nordic support to the liberation struggle*",¹³¹ is simply wrong in the Danish case and unflattering for the AAM in the Swedish.¹³² Thörn exaggerates (like Morgenstierne and Sellström) the positive importance of the cooperative bodies. The official Danish anti-apartheid appropriations were administered by an allocation system, which involved a collaborative NGO/government body, the so-called Apartheid Committee. Its importance has often been exaggerated. These organs were always under full control of the governments; the most important AAMs were excluded from participating in them;¹³³ and they were to some extent used to satisfy the opinion, while at the same time, they created divisions between the anti-apartheid forces.¹³⁴ Selected, non-radical NGOs were thus allowed to allocate money (also to themselves) through the scheme. It probably softened their criticism of the deficient, unilateral sanctions.¹³⁵ The dedicated anti-apartheid movement in Denmark, LSA, was disliked by the authorities and did not get any government funding until 1994.¹³⁶

When Thörn suggests, "*Different from visits to most other Western countries though, was that the stops (of ANC exile leaders) in Nordic countries always involved meetings both with activist groups and with representatives of governments*",¹³⁷ he is much mistaken, at least in the case of Denmark. In the polarised

¹²⁸ Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Europe, Europe*, Pantheon, 1990, pp. 6, 8.

¹²⁹ It could be argued, though, that that political attitudes have changed somewhat since the early 1990s, where Sweden experienced an economic crisis, and the Swedish model began to crumble. Popular reluctance against increased immigration after 2000 have also weakened the position of the social democracy.

¹³⁰ A German newspaper recently placed Denmark in the top of the so-called oligarch index. Measured by the five richest peoples' share of BNP, Denmark was ranked sixth, Sweden even higher. See Daniel Eckert and Holger Zschäpitz, in *Welt am Sonntag* late in 2017. In a survey made by the large Danish trade union, 3F, in 2017 based on OECD facts, Denmark only came in as number ten in an investigation of social spending in relation to GDP.

¹³¹ Håkan Thörn, "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle", p. 18.

¹³² It could actually be argued that some parts of the Swedish anti-apartheid movement operated from a position best described as located midway between the oppositional movements in other western countries and the state/party-controlled organisations of the Eastern Bloc, supporting government aspirations.

¹³³ In Denmark 19 organisations were proposed, but only half of them were selected, among them, The Danish Youth Council (DUF), The Danish Programme to Combat Racism / Kirkernes Raceprogram, Folkekirkens Nødhjælp (DanChurchAid), Danish Refugee Council, and Danmarks Internationale Studenterkomite, DIS (later WUS/Interfund/Ibis).

¹³⁴ The former chairman of WUS, Knud Gorm Jensen, disclosed, in extensive notes sent to me in 2018, how communist sympathisers were side-lined in the organisation and how it was reorganised into Interfund, because certain branches developed undesirable ideological tendencies.

¹³⁵ DUF (Dansk Ungdoms Fællesråd) and DIS/WUS were compromised when connected to CIA-funding. See the memoirs of the Danish politician and chancellor of the University of Copenhagen, Morten Lange, *Et liv i rødt og grønt*, København, Gyldendal, 1996, p. 11. Also, Wayne Madsen, *The Almost Classified Guide to CIA Front Companies, Proprietaries & Contractor*, Lulu.com, 2017, p. 404. It is an intriguing question, by the way, how far left the CIA was willing to support to prevent genuine socialism.

¹³⁶ Even so, many of the above mentioned, larger NGOs were at the same time organisational members of the umbrella organisation LSA.

¹³⁷ Håkan Thörn, "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle", p. 25.

situation of the 1980s, the liberation movements of the South often regarded DKP, the Communist Party, as their closest allied. Parliamentarians from other parties frequently had to be persuaded to meet delegations.

It is Thörn's primary thesis that, "*...support to the liberation struggle was constructed through a close dialogue between state and civil society, taking place in an institutionalised setting*".¹³⁸ At least for Denmark, this is misleading. It was left-wing pressure that forced reluctant governments to set up a forum where some of the more conventional NGOs were then taken hostage and invited to distribute an, for the first many years, extremely limited funding. A set-up that helped ensure that trade with South Africa could continue unimpeded. The Danish governments - especially those under Poul Schlüter 1982-1993 - considered the United States a more important ally than Sweden, despite that USA supported South Africa's wars against its neighbours.¹³⁹ Thörn makes little effort to spot political differences between the different NGOs or parties but rather gathers them in one large consensus. In his attempt to theorise and generalise, using social movement theory, Thörn puts movements in artificial, apolitical boxes like SMOs (social movement organisations), which, "*...were all part of a transnational solidarity network*". I wish that was true, but unfortunately, such a network never manifested itself in the shape of a broad, permanent, international cooperation. What existed was mutual inspiration, information exchange and a rather limited coordination around certain great campaign events.¹⁴⁰

As a consequence of my above examination, I also have to disagree with Thörn's analysis, when he writes about Nordic popular movements in general: "*...this is an important reason for the relative weakness of new social movements in the Nordic countries in terms of popular participation (Thörn 2006). In order to mobilize substantial popular support, new movements need to construct sharp boundaries between on the one hand the movement/civil society, and on the other hand the state; and the inclusive strategy of the Nordic governments undermined the possibilities for doing so*".¹⁴¹ He is obviously describing the harmonised, Swedish situation, which, in my opinion, was marked by a somewhat higher degree of pretence and duplicity than the Danish.¹⁴² In Denmark there was, despite pacification attempts, a whole range of strong, popular and openly antagonistic movements in this period. For instance, the Vietnam movement, the peace movement, the student movement and the AAM. In a number of areas, they enforced political changes, in others they made it necessary for Danish cabinet ministers to lie to the public, and in most cases, they were in clear opposition to the government – and not of tactical reasons.¹⁴³ Regarding government support to the liberation movements, Thörn claims there was a "*...clear link between the presence and activities of the exile organisations and the support that they received from the Nordic countries*".¹⁴⁴ Well, the ANC and SACTU did not get any direct government support from Denmark for a long time and had no official presence until late. Nevertheless, popular support was as strong as in Sweden. The only case in which Thörn suggests disagreement between the ANC and the Swedish solidarity movement deals with how ANC was forced to accept Swedish trade with South Africa in return for the presence of a representation office in Sweden - and there he seems to blame the ANC.¹⁴⁵ Even though Thörn is right that exile South Africans played an important role in Nordic AAMs;¹⁴⁶ he exaggerates

¹³⁸ Håkan Thörn, "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle", p. 17.

¹³⁹ A more recent example, among many, of foreign policy disagreement is the Danish partaking in the American attack against Iraq in 2001. Sweden hold back and demanded UN approval.

¹⁴⁰ I was part of the leadership of the Danish AAM, LSA, for a while, and I was a member of the Communist Party's international secretariat. Between the communist parties (including the Swedish APK, but partly excluding the Swedish VPK), cooperation was a little more intense, but that is another story.

¹⁴¹ Håkan Thörn, "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle", p. 18.

¹⁴² Sweden proved to be more talented in simultaneously satisfying the left and big business, becoming friends with the Third World and getting in bed with NATO, while exporting weapons to conflict zones contrary to own statements.

¹⁴³ Karen Steller Bjerregaard, "*Et undertrykt folk har altid ret*". *Solidaritet med den 3. verden i 1960'ernes og 1970'ernes Danmark*, PhD-thesis, Institute for Culture and Identity, Roskilde University, 2010.

¹⁴⁴ Håkan Thörn, "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle", p. 29.

¹⁴⁵ Håkan Thörn, "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle", pp. 28, 29.

¹⁴⁶ In the Danish case, exiles like Pritz Dullay in Århus and John Hansen and Saeeda in Copenhagen played an important, but hardly decisive role. My impression after conversation with Pritz Dullay in December 2018. Also see his chapter on the Danish exile years in Prithiraj Ramkisun Dullay, *Salt Water Runs in my Veins: A Collection of Short Stories and Opinion Pieces*, Durban, Madiba Publishers, 2010.

it. It was less prominent than in Ireland, England or Holland, of natural reasons - and he overlooks the problems that occurred between ANC representatives and national AAMs.

Thörn indirectly defends that the Swedish government's concrete support was kept more or less a secret to the public, because disclosure would have raised political opposition from the right wing, as it apparently did in Denmark: "... *the decision to make the support public, and the critique it provoked, might thus have contributed to the Danish government's decision not to give direct support to the liberation struggle*".¹⁴⁷ There is little that supports this theory. The domestic critique of the support to victims of the struggles in Southern Africa was a minor problem. It was more about small state loyalty to western allies. Actually, it was a tactical government decision in Denmark to go public with an equivocal message, so that the left accepted the support as being a political statement and the right wingers at the same time accepted the support as being purely humanitarian.¹⁴⁸ Even if the Danish state did not officially support the movements' armed struggle directly, Danish support did flow to the liberation movements through certain intermediaries (even if Danish trade supported apartheid more).¹⁴⁹ In this connection, it would seem as if Norway had a higher credibility by the American authorities than Denmark. They were considered a more reliable ally and was allowed more manoeuvring space; I think, partly because, genuine revolutionary tendencies were always weaker there and Norwegian anxiety towards the Soviets higher due to their common border, but also because they spent more money buying American weapons.¹⁵⁰

Thörn highlights the Swedish restrictions on new investments in South Africa from 1979 without going into details on their severe limitations and how easy they were to bypass. The reason that even right-liberal Swedish governments were sceptical towards apartheid from the late 1970s could be due to the fact that Sweden had an already increasing trade with the frontline states, substituting the former colonial powers, while the Danish trade with South Africa was proportionally larger. This is not investigated in any depth. Furthermore, globalised activities of Nordic companies settled in South Africa are not necessarily reflected in Nordic statistics. It is emphasised by Thörn that trade with Southern Africa was limited at the time, but there are no thoughts on possible expectations for postapartheid scenarios. Danish economic ties with Poland and the Baltics was also very limited before 1990, but today they are significant in several sectors such as pig-farming and banking.¹⁵¹ The Nordic countries' registered trade with Africa has always been a small part of their total trade, but since it has periodically been an important part of politico-economic activity in some African countries, it has provided opportunities for political influence. If trade was so insignificant, why then was it so difficult to bring it to a close?

In my 2019 SAHJ-article, I dealt with the duplicity of the Nordic transitional aid after apartheid. That topic is not processed by Thörn, who has no thoughts in his chapter on how past solidarity has later been used to forward national and private economic interests. In the Swedish case, the dual nature of Africa politics is still present. For instance, it has at times been difficult to distinguish between solidarity and the safeguarding of Swedish and western oil interests when it comes to Swedish diplomacy around Sudan and Ethiopia, as the case involving Africa Oil, Lundin Oil and Carl Bildt demonstrates.¹⁵² Despite a postulated tightening of arms export

¹⁴⁷ Håkan Thörn, "Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle", p. 20.

¹⁴⁸ Christopher Munthe Morgenstierne, *Denmark and National Liberation in Southern Africa. A Flexible Response*, p. 33.

¹⁴⁹ Unpublished manuscript-notes received from then WUS chairman Knud Gorm Jensen. Some Danish government money was actually allocated to the liberation movements, for instance for MPLA's field ambulances and training, routed through NGOs like WUS.

¹⁵⁰ Thorsten B. Olesen (ed.), *The Cold War and the Nordic Countries: Historiography at a Crossroads*, University Press of Southern Denmark, 2004, see Helge Pharo's chapter on Norway.

¹⁵¹ Between 1990 and 1998, Denmark gave 10,8 billion DKK in government aid to Eastern Europe according to the State Auditing Office. On top of that business invested heavily. The bulk of the financial sector in the Baltic countries is now owned by Nordic banks, mostly by Nordea, Swedbank, SEB, Danske Bank and DnB. In this context, the globalisation concept of "the new middle ages" could actually work. In some ways, the cross-border activities of the largest Nordic banks can be compared to those of the feudal lords residing in the Danish and Swedish Rigsråd (like Privy Councils or Curia).

¹⁵² See "Carl Bildt, svenska UD och Africa Oil i Etiopen blir Moderaternas oljekris", Oikonomia, 20 mars, 2012 (<http://www.oikonomia.info/?p=8519>).

legislation, satellite photos has revealed that warships, recently built in Sweden and harboured in Somalia, have been used in the Yemen-conflict as late as 2019, even if Sweden profiles itself as a peace broker in that conflict.¹⁵³

In his section on “*Joint Nordic Action*”, Thörn once again attempts to harmonise activities in all Scandinavian countries, while indicating a Swedish leadership. Thörn has some strange examples of cooperation, which actually seems counterproductive: “*Nordic Ministers carried weight in national politics. For example, when a Swedish Communist MP in 1974 asked Foreign Minister Krister Wickman about official recognition of the Republic of Guinea Bissau, Wickman responded that Sweden must consult with other Nordic countries*”.¹⁵⁴ As I understand this, Thörn’s testimony of Nordic cooperation is that a Swedish minister used the Nordic Council as an excuse to delay a recognition of the new revolutionary African states. Minister of Nordic Affairs has always been the least prestigious cabinet post of all, far beneath even the Family Minister and Church Minister, and has often been a minor department, subject to another ministry. The far more important Nordic Foreign Ministers most often only met, exclusively, one time every second year, and when the right-wing Danish Foreign Minister Poul Hartling in 1971 initiated a discussion on “...whether support to the liberation movements was against international law...”, it was in all probability an attempt to delay the development of the Swedish direct support, since Denmark did not want to go that way. The Nordic ministers Joint Program of Action from 1978 with its vague “*discouragement of new investments*” was in fact a means of evading an effective sanctions policy and a testimony of mutual disagreement, and the more potent joint statements of 1985 and ‘87 came at a late point in resistance history.

Thörn is obviously a forgiving person, and the fact that Denmark and Norway fully accepted and cooperated with fascist Portugal as a fellow NATO member, while it was bombing in its African colonies, is not criticised in his chapter.

Thörn’s diplomatic part-conclusion, “...considering certain contradictions between this aid and other aspects Nordic governments foreign policy in relation to Southern Africa, the most important factor behind the official support was the direct and indirect pressure social movements in civil society”,¹⁵⁵ is significant and absolutely true, but unfortunately that is not what his chapter is about, as I read it.

Thörn’s Sources

Most of the literature used by Thörn is worryingly uncritical. A work, for example, like A.K. Bangura’s *Sweden vs Apartheid: Putting Morality Ahead of Profit* is good example of a book, where history of solidarity and aid is used to promote the goodwill of a donor country. It is tremendously uncritical towards Sweden, discovers none of the hidden agendas, but expresses polite gratefulness to the Swedish tax payers, who have paid for the research.¹⁵⁶ Thörn does not refer to any Danish language literature whatsoever, even if he is fully capable of reading it, and the only literature that refers exclusively to Danish conditions are the semi-official work of Morgenstierne (written under Swedish auspices, published by NAI) and the small, bland contribution that Steen Christensen wrote to Lennart Wohlgemuth’s promotion book on historical relations with Africa in general, also published by NAI.¹⁵⁷ Thörn’s literary basis is the theoretical, the recognised, and the half-official. He has almost no references to NGO grassroots literature - not even to the Swedish AAMs’ own historical

¹⁵³ Louise Gårdemyr, ”Den svenska dubbelmoralen i Jemen – vapenexportör och fredsmäklare”, OmVärlden, 14 augusti 2019. According to the Swedish oversight authority, Inspektionen för strategiska produkter, selling weapons to dictatorships in war zones may still be okay. Sweden, for instance, in 2011, sold military equipment for 2,3 billion DKK to Saudi Arabia. They have also sold cannons used by India against Pakistan. In some cases, substantial bribes were involved in these arms deals.

¹⁵⁴ Håkan Thörn, “Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle”, p. 31.

¹⁵⁵ Håkan Thörn, “Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle”, p. 35.

¹⁵⁶ Abdul Karim Bangura, *Sweden vs Apartheid: Putting Morality Ahead of Profit*, Contemporary Perspectives on Developing Societies, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004.

¹⁵⁷ Steen Christensen, “Denmark and Africa - Past and Present relations”, in Lennart Wohlgemuth (ed.), *The Nordic Countries and Africa - Old and New Relations*, Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet. 2002.

writings.¹⁵⁸ Thörn's chapter is a summary of the authorised Swedish history writing with referrals to other Nordic countries' endorsed writings.

As most historical, academic literature is and almost must be, Thörn's is filled with idealistic assumptions, not directly substantiated by evidence, such as this: "...if we consider symbolic acts and identity construction as important as self-interest in national political agendas...". Or this: "...it is fair to say that their actions later in life, as government members or parliamentarians, was a result of an indirect influence from civil society". I won't blame him for that. A more critical approach, however, would have been appropriate. Social scientists at universities should not act as if they were civil servants.

The writing of the history of the Nordic support to South Africa shows that it is not enough for a historian to let more or less trusted sources (human or non-human) tell their own stories. It is necessary to problematise them critically,¹⁵⁹ because the official sources are filled with secrecy and manipulation, the media of the day were biased, and the grassroots sources are rare and unsystematic. It should be as apparent as possible from the context what is considered as proven and what is deduction, but it is utopia to imagine an absolute distinction. A historian should relate loyally to his sources in the sense that he does not write directly against convincingly verified facts. He should be loyal to the writers he refers to in the sense that he does not dilute their views. That does not mean that he is obliged to agree with them or only work in continuation of them. Thörn sometimes seems to forget that. Tor Sellström's carefully selected and edited *Swedish Voices* is not particularly helpful here, either, unilaterally focused on Sweden's merits as it is.¹⁶⁰ Sources most often only respond to what they are asked.

Conclusions

Let me summarise my impressions, following my reading of Håkan Thörn's chapter/article:

1. Thörn harmonises the behaviour of the Nordic countries despite major differences, gathering them behind Sweden.
2. Thörn attaches too great importance to the social democratic parties, the governments and the established press, while he undervalues the scale and importance of radical, popular mobilisation.
3. Thörn uses the expression, "...from below and from above", recurrently, but he is too credulous towards academic and political authorities, and his account is mainly written from above. He seldom sees things from a genuine grassroots level.
4. Thörn underestimates the disagreements between the governments and the strongest, most dedicated of the activist-based AAMs.
5. Being rather too fond of globalisation theories, Thörn exaggerates the role of transnational phenomena, while underestimating the national base of the NGOs. Although he emphasises the role of the diaspora activists, he is rather inattentive when it comes to contradictions among the AAM's or among the liberation movements.
6. It is inaccurate to emphasise the Nordic support as unequivocally exceptional. In the first years, the support was very limited, and the freedom movements received support from many other sources. The chapter bypasses this angle.
7. The Nordic countries' trade with South Africa continued to support the apartheid regime, until it was clear to all that its days were spoken. The role of trade benefiting the apartheid regime, also politically, is underplayed in Thörn's work.
8. The Nordic countries, being small states with relatively open economies and limited colonial engagement, had an interest in supporting governments in the waiting in the third world to influence their new alignments, Thörn does little to highlight this.

¹⁵⁸ These works could have been used, for instance: Rune Forsbeck, "Gör ni då inte åtskillnad...?" *Kyrkorna och södra Afrika 1960–1994*, Stockholm, Nielsen & Norén förlag, 2007; Anja Björk, *Den stillsamma vreden. Praktisk Solidaritet och södra Afrika 1969-1994*, Stockholm, Nielsen & Norén förlag, 2007; Bernt Jonsson, *På väg mot befrielsen*, Stockholm, Nielsen & Norén förlag, 2007.

¹⁵⁹ See for instance, Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury (eds.), *Handbook of Action Research, Participatory Inquiry and Practice*, Sage Publications, 2005, p. 2.

¹⁶⁰ Tor Sellström (ed.), *Liberation in Southern Africa - Regional and Swedish Voices: Interviews from Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, the Frontline and Sweden*, Uppsala, Nordic Africa Institute, 1999.

9. The successive Danish governments did not want to support freedom movements that were communist-influenced and dependent on the Soviet Union, like the ANC. Sweden to some extent supported them to turn them away from the Eastern Bloc, but succeeded only when socialism as an alternative model of society had become impossible. Thörn's interest in this issue is limited.

10. We are dealing with a historical time-period here, marked by strong left-socialist tendencies, also in the western world. The cooperation between potentially revolutionary movements in northern countries and potentially revolutionary movements in southern countries were sought contained, diverted and curbed through conditional support and limited involvement. Thörn, like most present-day social scientists, is blind to that aspect.

All in all, Thörn's work is in itself a confirmation of a point, I made in my recent SAHJ-article, namely that policy-making academic coverage has overexposed Swedish solidarity with South Africa compared to that of the other Nordic countries. The title of Thörn's article should probably have been: *Solidarity from a Swedish Perspective*. The part of the under-heading, *National Self-Interest*, is misleading, since Thörn actually whitewashes the Nordic governments.

It seems to me that “everybody knows” that the Swedish support was the best of all, and that this has been sustained as an eternal truth. Accordingly, many find it, in reality, only natural that Sweden's role should be emphasised as particularly fine, even if evidence is thin. Denmark came before Sweden with regard to imposing sanctions that meant something, the Danish NGO's was much more outspoken, and the official Danish support was known to the public, while the Swedish was kept partially secret. Denmark also supported through the EEC, Sweden not. It is true that Olof Palme and many other outstanding Swedish politicians condemned apartheid, but so did Per Hækkerup, KB Andersen and Anker Jørgensen in Denmark. It just took a really long time, before it had any decisive consequences.

Why is there such a reluctance to discuss, for instance, the Swedish bias during the project, The Nordic Documentation on the Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa Project (www.liberationafrica.se), which maps 30 AAM archives with 27 secondary archives on the Swedish side, while Denmark is only credited for 3 archives, even if the project received information on several others?

Many of the above general criticisms could also apply to Tor Sellström's works on solidarity, since he to an even higher degree monopolises the story of the Nordic aid to the advance of Sweden,¹⁶¹ but addressing his work would of course be an even more undesirable task, since it has been so much more canonised. I hope to return to that topic at a later date, though.

It seems to me that it is an inherent tendency in some Swedish writers' foreign policy analyses that the areas previously dominated in colonial terms – Finland, Norway and the Baltics for instance - are treated in length with a caring brotherliness, whereas Denmark, which Sweden was, until the 1500s, occasionally subjected to and later struggled with for hundreds of years, is often treated with concise, distant cold.

An overwhelming majority of visitors coming to Southern Africa nowadays would probably say that they always agreed with the anti-apartheid struggle. One has to wonder, why it took so long for South Africa and the region to become free of colonialism when the whole world seems to have been supporting the struggle all the time. The fact is that what we today call the international community, including the Nordic countries, did not give Lutuli, Tambo and Tutu the whole range of boycott, isolation and militant support they wanted, until victory was almost certain. It was mostly later, when the ANC-dominated government needed to secure continued support and investment, when the West wanted to gain unlimited access to the growing South African middle-class market, and when the alternative of socialism did not exist any longer, that everybody could agree in making South Africa the darling of the world for the next two decades.¹⁶²

Maybe, I display a somewhat static or sentimental world-view, but as I see it, the main tasks of international social movements remain unchanged: to create empathy, to make people identify with others, to question the

¹⁶¹ For instance, in Tor Sellström, “Sweden and the Nordic countries: Official solidarity and assistance from the West”, Part 1, Chapter 6, in Essop Pahad et al., *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity*, SADET, 2008, where the words “and the Nordic countries” could advantageously have been stretched from the title.

¹⁶² See, for instance, Dr Wilhelm Snyman's mention of Günther Komnick's, *Parliament of South Africa. State Visits 1994-1995*, Cape Town, 2018.

legitimacy of an established order under which people suffer. Or, as some Germans have put it: “*Solidarität ist die Zärtlichkeit der Völker*“.¹⁶³ In the case of South Africa, there seems to be a mounting need for some kind of continuation of the solidarity movement and for a continued engagement from internationalist, intellectual activists in order to uphold the pressure for a fulfilment of the ideals of the liberation struggle. A continuation of alternative writings coming from abroad could, for that matter, be viewed as a still needed, continued solidarity with all those people in Southern Africa, who fought for justice, but did not fully get it. Thörn’s work is not seriously pointing in that direction.

¹⁶³ (“*Solidarity is the tenderness of the peoples*”), from “Die Zukunft der Solidaritätsbewegung: Tema, Internationale Solidarität“, *Blätter Des Iz3w*, 201, 1994, pp. 23-46. (Originally from Ernesto Che Guevara: (“Solidaridad es la ternura de los pueblos”).