

Ideals and Interests in Swedish Foreign Policy

Explaining the South African Gripen Deal

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Abstract

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This dissertation explores ideals and interests (and their interrelation) in foreign policy. An in-depth case study of this issue examines Sweden's 1999 JAS-39 Gripen fighter aircraft deal with South Africa.

Theoretically, the dissertation responds to the long-standing debate in foreign policy analysis about whether ideals or interests drive foreign policy. Speaking directly to research that has aimed to bridge the ideals-interests divide, this study sets out a framework of analysis that encompasses both ideals and interests, as well as the relevant contextual forces that impact on foreign policy behaviour. The analysis shows that, due to the multitude of richly interrelated elements connected to arms trade, there cannot be a neat and parsimonious distinction between agents and structures or domestic and international settings. Reflected here are real-world practices and strategic relations between those forces that influence foreign policy behaviour regarding Sweden's Gripen exports.

Empirically, the dissertation provides an in-depth account of what the policymaking elite in Sweden was thinking and doing regarding the export of the Gripen to South Africa in the aftermath of the Cold War. The dissertation contends that the Gripen deal with South Africa is an interesting case study for two reasons: It involves long-standing, deeply (if not passionately) held ideals in Swedish foreign policy behaviour towards a country in the so-called Global South as well as compelling interest-driven calculations regarding the political economy of arms trade. These ideals- and interest-driven aspects stand side-by-side in this case study, explaining how Sweden's foreign policy behaviour reflected and dealt with these issues in its decision to sell advanced fighter aircraft to South Africa.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, Ideals, Interests, Arms Trade, Gripen, Sweden, South Africa