

## **REPORT**

on Sverker Åström Foundation scholarship

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Sverker Åström Foundation scholarship was my first experience of such a long research stay abroad and I got impressive experience of how academic and daily life in Sweden is organized. First time when I opened the Foundation webpage I was deeply impressed by the personality of Ambassador Sverker Åström, his professional achievements as well as personal attractiveness and how much he has done for Swedish foreign policy in general and Russian-Swedish relations in particular, not only as a diplomat but a man who really loved his motherland and at the same time appreciated our country much.

Being extremely interested in European security and particularly in Swedish contemporary foreign and security policy I decided that Sverker Åström Foundation scholarship could be a great chance for me to carry out deeper research in this area exactly in the country of my interest. Apart from academic benefits I expected my Sverker Åström Scholarship experience as a unique opportunity to establish mutual collaborations and networks among faculties and students in Nizhny Novgorod and Sweden.

On the other hand the Scholarship was expected and finally appeared to be able to provide an interdisciplinary source of expertise in European Studies.

After the approval of my application by the Foundation I applied for Swedish D-visa with the great help of Disa Håstad who made unprecedentedly huge work to organize my accommodation in Sweden and contact my supervisors at Uppsala University – Professors Erik Noreen and Peter Wallensteen.

Immediately after my arrival to Uppsala I met Prof. Noreen from Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, with whom we

had a very fruitful talk concerning my research plan and agreed that the topic of Swedish security policy in the Baltic region would be of special interest both for the Department and for me as a guest researcher.

The next day I went to a wonderful city of Stockholm, visited S:t Johannes kyrkogård with the grave of Sverker Åström and then had a very interesting meeting with Ambassador Örjan Berner – we discussed the most burning issues of contemporary world and European politics, Russian and Swedish foreign policy so I got very useful information on how to logically structure and plan my research.



Later that evening I visited Disa Håstad at her Kocksgatan apartment and that was my great pleasure to say Thank you to a woman who made so much for my arrival and stay in Sweden. Disa appeared to be a very intelligent, clever and smart person with outstanding life experience so for next three months she made everything for us, scholarship holders, and that was really incredible! We agreed also that we should meet altogether with Disa in order to celebrate Easter, which in 2014 appeared to be on the same day for all Christians. Looking ahead, I must say that the Easter celebration with Disa and other scholars was really unforgettable – we combined Swedish and Russian traditions of celebrating this great event:

cooked a number of traditional Easter dishes, painted eggs, went to the church at midnight and travelled around Stockholm for next couple of days.

In a word, that was a very good start for me and for next three months I tried to do my best to write a thoughtful and well-based paper on Swedish security policy in the Baltic. Apart from collecting necessary data and analyzing documentary sources I attended a number of events organized by Uppsala University, Department of Peace and Conflict Research as well as Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies - namely, a symposium “WTO and Russia; What Can We Expect? Economic, Legal and Political Implications”, a conference “Translation in Russian Contexts: Transcultural, Translingual and Transdisciplinary Points of Departure”. I also got acquainted with a diverse seminar programme with researchers and practitioners who have given talks on a wide range of issues - from Perestroika-2 to Transitional and Restorative Justice in the Baltic States as well as Current Events in Ukraine: Euromaidan and its Aftermath.

Thanks to Disa Håstad and Peter Wallensteen I also managed to make a number of extremely useful and interesting interviews: with Sven Hirdman, a former Swedish ambassador to Russia, with Catarina Engberg, Security policy expert at the Swedish Ministry of Defense, with Allan Widman, the Swedish Liberal Party's spokesman on defense in the Riksdag.



As a final result of my Sverker Åström Foundation scholarship, I managed to prepare a paper named “Contemporary Swedish security policy: Nordic context”. There I tried to present different views of the threats posed to Swedish security as well as diverging stances on further development of the state’s defense and security policy within the context of the recent heated debates among the Swedish political elite.

I also paid particular attention to the current direction of the Stockholm’s security policy that represents a non-alignment strategy in combination with close collaboration within the frameworks of NATO and is highly unlikely to be changed after the forthcoming parliamentary elections which can be regarded to as the result of a coalition compromise. I pointed out that one of the key pillars of Swedish security policy in the Nordic region remains to be the Nordic cooperation of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Among the prospects for Swedish security policy I named political rapprochement between Sweden and Finland and stated that conflict prevention and the establishment of the civilian CSDP operations will be top-priority issues for the new Swedish government in its relationships with the EU. From my point of view Sweden is also expected to give a new lease of life to its UN membership either in political terms with ambitions to become the UN Security Council non-permanent member for 2017-2018 and in military ones related to stronger participation in peacekeeping.

To sum it up, I’m certainly convinced that the scientific outputs of my Sverker Åström Foundation scholarship will notably raise the interest in Swedish and North European studies in Nizhny Novgorod region and among my home University students particularly. I am really happy that I had such an outstanding opportunity and very grateful to the Foundation and Disa Håstad for unforgettable 3 months in marvellous Sweden.