

Geopolitical Implications of Sweden's Rare Earth Elements

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My research fellowship in Sweden spanned three months of intensive study. The primary objective of my project was to examine how Sweden could leverage the newly discovered Per Geijer rare-earth deposit to strengthen the European Union's strategic autonomy and reduce its dependency on China, which currently dominates the global rare earth element (REE) market. These minerals are essential for renewable energy technologies, defense equipment, and digital infrastructure, making them central to contemporary geopolitical competition.

I conducted an extensive analysis of the geopolitical landscape surrounding REEs using frameworks from resource nationalism theory and economic geography. My primary research involved a detailed literature review and qualitative analysis, largely conducted at libraries across Sweden, notably the National Library of Sweden in Stockholm, and complemented by dialogues with other international researchers interested in critical minerals and strategic autonomy. This independent approach to field research was both demanding and rewarding, pushing me to refine my analytical skills.

Research findings

Sweden's Per Geijer deposit, discovered in 2023 by the state-owned mining company LKAB, contains over one million tonnes of rare earth oxides, making it Europe's largest known REE resource. This deposit includes both light and heavy rare earth elements, which are vital for sectors ranging from green technologies to advanced defense systems. Given the EU's near-total reliance on Chinese rare earths, the Per Geijer deposit represents a significant opportunity to diversify and secure the EU's critical minerals supply chain.

The geopolitical implications of this deposit extend beyond economic benefits. Sweden, with its strong democratic institutions and a demonstrated history of sustainable mining, is uniquely positioned to avoid the "resource curse" and transform these resources into a "resource blessing."

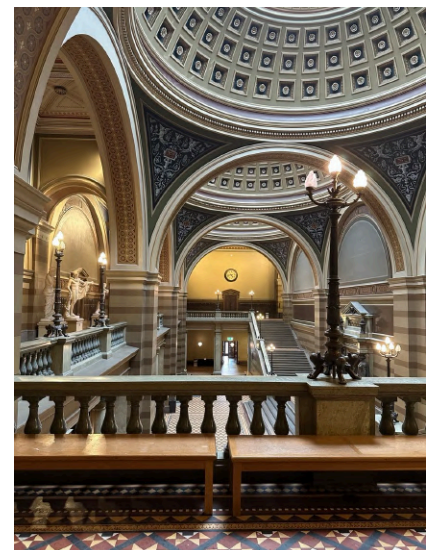
A well-managed and strategically developed deposit could enhance Nordic cooperation and solidify Sweden's geopolitical influence within the EU, offering a model for sustainable and resilient resource governance.

However, my analysis also highlighted challenges Sweden faces, particularly technical complexities in extraction, economic vulnerabilities to global price volatility, and potential geopolitical tensions with established global REE suppliers, notably China. Overcoming these challenges necessitates the implementation of coordinated policy measures, investment in technological innovations, and proactive diplomacy. Sweden possesses substantial expertise and credibility in these areas.

Other experiences

In addition to my academic pursuits, engaging in cultural exploration was a key component of my stay, contributing to my comprehensive understanding of Sweden and Europe. The visits to Uppsala and Stockholm were particularly memorable highlights of the trip.

In Uppsala, I had the opportunity to visit the impressive Uppsala Cathedral, renowned for its striking architecture and historical significance. My visit to the Botanical Garden further solidified my appreciation for Sweden's dedication to environmental sustainability. I also really enjoyed my visit to Uppsala University.





At the National Library of Sweden, I was particularly interested in the Codex Gigas, also known as the "Devil's Bible," which was brought to Sweden from Bohemia. This was particularly significant to me because I had previously studied in the Czech Republic, which showed me how cultures in Europe are connected.

Connecting with international scholars and other foundation grant recipients was extremely educational, as it provided opportunities for meaningful discussions on diverse academic perspectives and backgrounds.



I was lucky to experience Midsummer in Stockholm, and it was truly magical. People met in parks to sing folk songs, and I was excited by the flower crowns everyone wore. I was also impressed by the traditional Swedish foods like pickled herring and new potatoes. It was so interesting to experience such a joyful celebration of nature and community in the heart of the Swedish summer.

My research fellowship in Sweden, made possible by the Sverker Åström Foundation, was a transformative experience. This program not only expanded my knowledge of critical geopolitical factors related to rare earth elements, but it also greatly expanded my cultural and professional perspectives. Sweden's role in shaping the EU's strategic future is evident, and my

research indicates both opportunities and responsibilities in leveraging natural resources for sustainable growth.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Sverker Åström Foundation for facilitating this enriching period of intellectual and cultural exploration. This opportunity has had a significant impact on my professional development, particularly in terms of strengthening my capabilities as an independent researcher.