

Group 4 IST Blog

(A continuation of our student blogs from the international study tour...)

During our trip in Stockholm, Sweden, the UT Dallas Executive MBA students had the opportunity to visit the Swedish Defence University (SEDU) where the students study subjects such as political science, national defence, and security. In addition to these studies, the Advanced Officer Course takes place at this campus, whereas the Basic Officer Course is held at Karlberg Military Academy. This military academy is a part of SEDU and is the world's oldest military academy to remain at its original location since its inauguration in 1792 from what used to be Karlberg Palace (built in 1630). Dean Kjell Engelbrekt was very generous in lending a couple hours of his time to discuss his university, the history and current status of Sweden's government and military, NATO, and the history between Sweden and Turkey.

Dr. Engelbrekt, Ph.D (Department of Political Science, Stockholm University) is Professor at the Swedish Defence University. He is a lifetime member of the Royal Swedish Academy of War Sciences, the Swedish Foreign Affairs Association and a Senior Non-Resident Fellow at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

He explained that Sweden has experienced approximately five centuries of independence and almost two centuries without war, which is difficult to even fathom. In addition, Sweden has one century as a full-fledged democracy and has a constitutional monarchy in place that serves mostly as a unifying representative and symbol of the country.

Dr. Engelbrekt discussed the transition the Swedish military made in the post-World War II era in 1945, which consisted of downsizing and pivoting to a more defence-oriented stance. Since the end of the cold war era the size of the military in Sweden has been declining. The military recently went from a conscription-based recruitment to a more professional defence organization approach. However, since the Russian simulated nuclear attack in 2013 and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Sweden is working on rebuilding their military presence in preparation for worsening conditions in the region.

This conversation then led to current era and Sweden's status on joining NATO. Sweden applied for NATO membership in May 2022, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The application for Sweden to join NATO is currently being blocked by Turkey and Hungary, due to allegations that Sweden is harboring terrorists, which has been continuously refuted by Swedish government officials. There is a growing frustration in Sweden since fellow Nordic country Finland has been granted membership into NATO and they applied the same time as Sweden. To help further address these anti-terrorism concerns, Sweden, Finland, and Turkey signed a ten-point trilateral memorandum in June 2022 that once fulfilled Turkey would cease the veto of Sweden's application into NATO. Turkey and Hungary still have not ratified Sweden's bid to join NATO and there are hopes this will happen in July 2023.

We want to thank Dr. Kjell Engelbrekt and SEDU for hosting the UTD EMBA students and also for the interesting, stimulating, and relevant conversation.