



Addressing the Strategic Implications of China's Expanding Global Influence



Country : Sweden

Committee : NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)

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Sweden is located in Northern Europe. It is situated on the Scandinavian Peninsula. Norway lies to its west, Finland to its east, and the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Bothnia to its south. Its capital is Stockholm. With an area of approximately 450,000 square kilometers, it is the fifth largest country in Europe. The western part is covered by the Scandinavian Mountains. These mountains are home to Kebnekaise Mountain, the highest point in the country. The central and eastern parts consist of flatter and lower terrain. There are many lakes, the largest of which are Lake Vänern, Lake Vättern, and Lake Mälaren. Approximately 65% of the country is covered by forests. Sweden has a generally cold continental climate. There are four distinct seasons. During the summer months, there is 24 hours of daylight, while during the winter months, there is 24 hours of night.

Since its establishment in 1946, NATO has been the cornerstone of transatlantic security and the most successful defense alliance of modern times. However, geopolitical developments in the 21st century have forced NATO to rethink its traditional security paradigm. One of the most significant of these developments is the rise of the People's Republic of China and the strategic implications this rise has had worldwide. The People's Republic of China is increasing its influence not only regionally but also globally. The People's Republic of China is reshaping the military, economic, and technological order. It has built artificial islands in the South China Sea and militarized the areas it has built. Taiwan first came under China's full control in the 17th century during the Qing dynasty. After the Chinese were defeated by Japan in 1895, they left the island under Japanese control. Then, after Japan lost World War II, China reclaimed the island in 1945. A cold war broke out between the nationalist government forces led by Chiang Kai-shek and the Communist Party led by Mao Zedong. The Communists won the civil war in 1949 and took control of Beijing.

Chiang Kai-shek and his politicians fled to Taiwan. Today, China uses this argument to claim that Taiwan is originally a Chinese province. However, Taiwanese point to the same history to claim that they have never been part of the modern Chinese state established after the 1911 revolution or the People's Republic of China founded by Mao in 1949. On the other hand, only 13 countries, along with the Vatican, currently recognize Taiwan as a sovereign country. China exerts significant diplomatic pressure on other countries not to recognize Taiwan or do anything that could be interpreted as recognition. Its power over infrastructure, ports, and energy networks in Asia, Africa, and Europe has increased. State-backed technology companies such as Huawei and ZTE aim for global supremacy in areas such as 5G technology, artificial intelligence, and quantum technologies. While these developments do not pose a direct threat to

NATO, they have prompted a new strategic shift. Indeed, the NATO Strategic Concept Document issued in 2022 defined China's activities as a “CHALLENGE” for the first time.

Sweden has maintained a policy of neutrality in its relations with China throughout history. However, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 completely changed Sweden's understanding of security. With Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Sweden decided to join NATO. Although it wanted to, Turkey did not want Sweden to join NATO at first due to certain events that were important to Turkey. However, military, political, and security agreements ensured that Turkey approved Sweden's accession to NATO. With Turkey's approval, Sweden became a member of NATO on March 2, 2024. Sweden's accession to NATO resulted from Sweden's desire to be under a security umbrella in response to global security threats led by Russia. With Sweden's membership in the organization, we can say that it will now follow NATO's security policies against China. Although Sweden has never perceived China as a security threat throughout its history, it is aware of the strategic, military, and economic risks China poses globally. However, the arrest of GUI MINHAI, a Swedish citizen, without any evidence presented has caused a diplomatic crisis between the two countries. Sweden argues that NATO's strategy towards China should be a two-pronged strategy. For this reason, Sweden argues that China should be considered as important as Russia in NATO's threat perception and that a significant portion of the organization's resources should be used against the Chinese threat. At the same time, Sweden argues that NATO should also develop its technological supremacy. In this regard, Sweden believes that the work of important technology companies in NATO member countries could increase NATO's defense capabilities. The main goal here is to limit China's market share in high-tech products. China's interest in the Arctic region in recent years is well known to most countries. China demonstrates this interest by defining itself as a “NORTHEAST ASIAN STATE.” Sweden is in a strategic position for NATO because of its geographical proximity to the Arctic region. Sweden advocates for the establishment of a “NATO Arctic Security Forum” for the Arctic region. Sweden believes that this forum could provide a significant advantage for NATO in terms of maritime security and surveillance. One of the issues Sweden advocates is the strengthening of NATO countries' relations with China's Indo-Pacific countries. In this context, new areas of cooperation have been established with Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. This cooperation has not only provided benefits in many areas but has also enhanced cyber and maritime security. Beyond these, Sweden has proposed and supported solutions within NATO, such as the NSRI, the Enhanced North Baltic Structure, and the NATO Indo-Pacific Dialogue Forum. As a result, although there is no military conflict between Sweden and China, competition is increasing within the scope of NATO and emerging security threats. Although it is impossible to predict the extent of this competition in the coming period, it can be estimated that crises of varying degrees may arise between the two states. NATO is of great importance to Sweden, and it is also quite important to NATO, both economically and strategically, as well as militarily. In this context, we can say that Sweden will be at the forefront of this struggle whenever China and NATO come face to face.