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## **FOREIGN POLICY OF MIDDLE POWERS: SWEDEN'S CASE**

**Introduction.** Middle powers serve as newsworthy example in the sphere of modern international relations research. Case of a state with average indicators in terms of power and capabilities but owing the ability to pursue an active foreign policy and influence the formation of the international agenda, increasing the interest of the world community in important and relevant issues, is more than needed to be analyzed. The case of Sweden in this dimension is significant as this, in many aspects, middle and not superior country has been able to run a highly influential and appreciated foreign policy. Sweden plays a role in the international arena that far exceeds its political, military, and economic parameters. Therefore, Sweden's example as a middle power state is the very experience of effectively constructing model of the foreign policy process organization, which can be effective for building the foreign policy of other states, including Ukraine.

**Review of recent publications.** Middle powers attract considerable attention of researchers, as well as Sweden in particular. Among the authors it is worth noting B. Kunz, C. Opitz, T. Etzold [5], N. Eklund [3] that focused on the security dimension of Sweden's foreign policy. E. Carlson [2], O. Elgström, M. Sundström [4] noted the country's efforts to ensure human rights and gender issues. As for R. Standish and L. Miles, they singled out Sweden's Euro-Atlantic cooperation as one of the important areas of political activity. Organizational bases of Swedish foreign

policy, as well as the factors influencing foreign policy have been considered by W. Bjereld, F. Bunander, K. Walbek, Y.I. Lavrov, B. Sundelius and others.

**Objectives of the paper.** The paper will aim at discovering the foreign-political activity of middle powers, their peculiarities, and special behavioral patterns in the field of international relations on the basis of Sweden's case study.

**Results of the research.** Sweden defines its foreign policy as active and constructive, aimed at broad cooperation at the bilateral, regional, and multilateral levels, in particular through cooperation with the countries of Northern Europe, the EU, the OSCE, the UN and through partnership with NATO [1].

Sweden provides an active policy to initiate issues on the international agenda in the field of peace, security, and human rights. Other important components of foreign policy include active participation in conflict resolution in other parts of the world, the social democratic tradition of international mediation, criticism of major states' interference in the internal affairs of other countries, adherence to internationalism and multilateralism, as well as the existence of soft power instruments [2].

The Swedish doctrine of "non-alignment in peacetime for the sake of neutrality during the war", as it officially stated, is the ideological basis for Sweden's foreign policy and is supported by a large part of the country's population. It is important to mention that neutrality was a voluntary choice of Sweden which is claimed by many scholars as a sign that there will be no will to abandon this policy. It is true that, despite all crucial changes in the Swedish foreign policy (especially in the past two decades), Sweden has not yet explicitly renounced neutrality [7]. Despite the decline in the popularity of the left parties, the neutrality policies seemed the only possible way, according to most Swedes. The current stage clearly demonstrates how the practice of neutrality established in the past determines the current political course [1]. However, neutrality in Sweden has become a state idea that is clearly associated with the Swedish identity.

Neutrality for Sweden is not an obstacle to the realization of national security. Sweden actively cooperates in the field of security with northern European countries, such as Finland, NATO and within the security structures of the European Union. A country will not be left out if another EU member state faces a catastrophe or attack. Sweden also emphasizes its readiness to contribute to the maintenance of stability and security in Northern Europe [5]. The Arctic vector of foreign policy occupies a prominent place due to Sweden's significant interest in the region, not only in purely economic issues, but also in security. The Kingdom of Sweden has shown considerable diplomatic activity in addressing the problems of the Arctic region during multilateral and bilateral discussions on Arctic issues [3].

Another important priority of Sweden's international effort is to combat discrimination against women, increase their access to resources and participate in the decision-making process [4]. Today, feminist foreign policy is an integral part of the Swedish Foreign Ministry's work around the world. Stockholm is actively working to increase the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution, in particular through the creation of a women mediators network. As for the geographical vectors of Sweden's foreign policy, European integration is a natural

and key priority as a country is located in Europe, and membership in the European Union is a tool of realizing this priority.

**Conclusion.** Sweden's foreign policy over the past twenty years has convincingly shown that the Kingdom's strategic efforts and consolidation of diplomatic steps in the system of international relations have developed an effective mechanism for strengthening the reputation of a peace-loving state capable of performing humanitarian functions.

The foreign policy carried out by the Kingdom of Sweden is aimed at strengthening the influence in the region of Northern Europe, cooperation within the European Union, the development of transatlantic ties, development assistance to countries, security policy, free trade, Arctic environmental protection and climate change, disarmament, and the gender aspects. Neutrality has formed the basis for a sovereign foreign policy strategy, ensuring further growth of the authority of the Swedish state in the world.

For Ukraine, the Swedish foreign policy can serve as a positive example of active and diverse activities in the international arena, which primarily focuses on solving international problems, expanding, and deepening international cooperation, adherence to fundamental norms of international law, respect for human rights and democratic values.

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