

Sweden's Role as International Conflict Mediator and Its Foreign Policy

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Peace seems to be difficult to achieve in this our current time. Many conflicts have happened in a several years. Those conflicts such as between Israel-Palestine, Democratic Republic of Congo-Rwanda (M3), Tigray situation in Ethiopia, rising tension between North and South Korea, etc. The development of arms to secure one country interest or territorial integrity has also been a contributor the rise. Some countries have come to step in as mediators to cool down the tension, such as Türkiye, between Ethiopia and Somalia. But there is also another country that had actively played to cool down tension and mediate conflicting parties before its participation has become less and less active in this current time. The country is Sweden, before the country became a NATO member on March 7th 2024.

The Kingdom of Sweden, a country that situated in Northern Europe, or sometimes is called as Scandinavian country or Nordic country, has a long story and experience as international peacemaker or mediator between conflicting belligerent. In October 2016, the Swedish Foreign Ministry was being urged by two scholars, Peter Wallensteen and Isaac Svensson to put Sweden back in international arena as peacemaker. As once was known as world moral superpower, Stockholm has been lagging behind Oslo efforts to bring peace to the world. Norway has spent half a billion on peace-making processes. Regional competition in the Scandinavian region plays huge role in Swedish Foreign Policy. This is due to the fact that they do not want to be lagging behind her neighbours, particularly under the shadow of Norway and Denmark.

Many people have suggested that this particular trait of Sweden that often involves in peace-process is due to their historical background and socio-cultural aspect of the country itself. And also, their tendency towards peace and happiness made them a reasonable actor in international relations as mediator. Sweden was a neutral country prior joining NATO. Its neutrality was put into place after the end of Napoleonic Wars. Its foreign policy is based on democracy, human rights, and solidarity. Sweden has made peace-making activity as part of their foreign policy, together with conflict prevention as part of the kingdom foreign policy agenda. This foreign policy agenda was adopted back in 1999 through the document of Action Plan on Preventing Violent Conflict and they have pushed this agenda across the United Nations and the European Union, although there are many challenges that slow down the Swedish commitment.

In applying this particular part of their foreign policy, Sweden is consistently following its foreign policy agenda and has been involved in humanitarian and peace-making activities in several major conflicts since the Cold War era, since 1950s, such as the Vietnam War, Suez Crisis, and Western Saharan Conflict. In this our near time, Sweden involved in mediation and communication process between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) before the historical meeting between the US President Donald Trump and North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong-Un. This is due to the fact that Sweden has an embassy in Pyongyang and also represents American interest there. Sweden has a long of participation in international conflict mediation. This role does not make Sweden necessarily a good mediator in international conflict, but rather enhances them with experience. Another example of Swedish peace-making effort was during Iran-Iraq War. Sweden position is more

desirable by both countries as mediator than any other country, although other party tried to facilitate mediation. From the perspective of the Iranian regime at that time, because Sweden is a neutral country, in term of military alliance. Despite the fact it was quite difficult to mediate two conflicting states. Being mediator is a risky role.

References

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