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**Exchange Narrative – University of Tampere, Finland**

My experience while on exchange to the University of Tampere in Finland was a valuable one, both academically and personally. I was immersed in a new environment full of differing ideas and perspectives from all across Europe that sometimes just is not available in North America.

I chose the University of Tampere for several reasons. The faculty and programs came highly recommended by my professors at Carleton, as they believed the University had much to offer in terms of my interests and goals. It was indeed interesting to not only share the Canadian perspective on European issues, but also to be challenged on those views. However, in all cases my peers and the faculty were genuinely intrigued to have a non-European/Non-Russian contributor to class discussions as it exposed them to how other parts of the world view different issues looking in from the outside.

This leads to my second reason as to why I chose the University of Tampere. Whereas I could have studied in Western European institution, I chose to study in Finland because of its proximity to the Eastern regional instability and its susceptibility to the politics and actions of the major actors in the region. Eastern border security is a major issue, especially among the Baltic States which I had to pleasure of visiting. I gained valuable insights I otherwise would have missed by visiting those regions and informally talking to locals, who were more than happy to share their opinions and concerns. However, the most valuable aspect of my studies was not about regional instability and security issues, but that I was able to gain a ground level perspective of what Europeans from all corners of the EU thought about European integration, politics, and Europeanization. I was lucky enough to be present as Finland and the broader EU coped with the influx of refugees and migrants, having seen the political and social toll these challenges are having on the governments and people, including in Finland's case a surging right-wing political movement.

Studying there also exposed me to the Scandinavian lead field of peace studies and its unique method of finding meaning behind conflict and sustainable peace. This idea of studying security and conflict not in terms of violence, but in terms of peace building and conditionality was quite interesting. I was able to attend a conference at the European Commission office in Helsinki that encompassed this field into its larger itinerary of European and Russian security relations. While at this conference, I participated in discussions surround Europe's security and defence policy which also touched on its relationship with NATO, directly relating to my MRP topic.

Lastly, studying in Finland allowed me the opportunity to visit many countries I had only been able to read about prior to my exchange. This includes Latvia, Sweden, Estonia, and Russia. Visiting these places was incredible, but especially when visiting Latvia and Estonia. There, I was able to see the modernizing effects of joining the EU that are taking place in these post-Soviet states. I found I was surprised, as I found the Balkan States were still struggling to embrace and benefit in the same visible way.

Overall the experience was extremely positive and valuable. I learned a lot and hope to incorporate that into my MRP as I begin writing it.