

Adam von Trott Scholarship Report 2014-15

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MPhil in International Relations

I would like to begin this report by expressing my gratefulness for the tremendous support that the Adam von Trott Scholarship represents. It allowed me to take full advantage of the wide range of opportunities that this exceptional university offers. I am most delighted not only to be the fortunate receiver of a scholarship, but also to be part of what I think is, in its broader concern and activities, an exceptional institution for Anglo-German friendship.

The first year of the MPhil in International Relations consisted of a year-long core module, a course in research design and methods as well as additional methods options. The core module covered both the theory and history of international relations. The method of study was extensive self-directed reading, essay-writing and seminar discussions. I enjoyed this way of working and thought the seminars to be interesting and stimulating. Every block (5x4 weeks) had a different focus and a new lecturer. This confronted me with various approaches to the field and provided a good overview of the diversity of research within the department. The IR programme is very front-loaded and all methods courses take place during the first year of study. The course *Research Design and Methods* (RDM) extended over two terms and gave an introduction into the methods of social inquiry and the steps associated with planning a research project. It was complemented by an introductory course in *Statistical Methods for the Social Sciences* in Michaelmas Term. I chose to proceed with *Intermediate Social Statistics* (quantitative stream) and to audit *Formal Analysis* (formal stream). Furthermore, I completed a seminar on *Elite Interviewing* as this is part of the methodological approach in my thesis. An important component was the development of a *Research Design Proposal* (RDP). This 4000-word proposal is a detailed outline of a potential thesis project. I had a good working relation with my supervisor, Prof. Walter Mattli, Professor for International Political Economy at St John's College. My proposal was titled "Evolution and choice in bilateral institutional architecture: Evidence from Sino-German relations".

I also took the opportunity to engage in several extracurricular activities throughout the academic year and during the summer, some of which I want to briefly mention here. In Michaelmas Term 2014 I joined *St Antony's International Review*, a peer-reviewed international affairs journal based at St Antony's College, Oxford. I am co-editing the next edition's themed section on "Negotiation in Contemporary Global Politics". This has been a very rewarding activity so far – from the conception of the topic to administrating the peer-review process. I also joined Mansfield College's rowing team and competed in the Christ Church Regatta. My interest in Chinese politics, civilisation and language brought me to China during the summer break. For two months I studied Mandarin at Fudan University in Shanghai. My studies helped me to make significant progress and to successfully complete Fudan University's Advanced Mandarin course. I was truly immersed in everyday life and had the opportunity to stay with a Chinese family for several days. My weekend travels brought me to other cities such as Beijing, Hangzhou and Nanjing.