

---

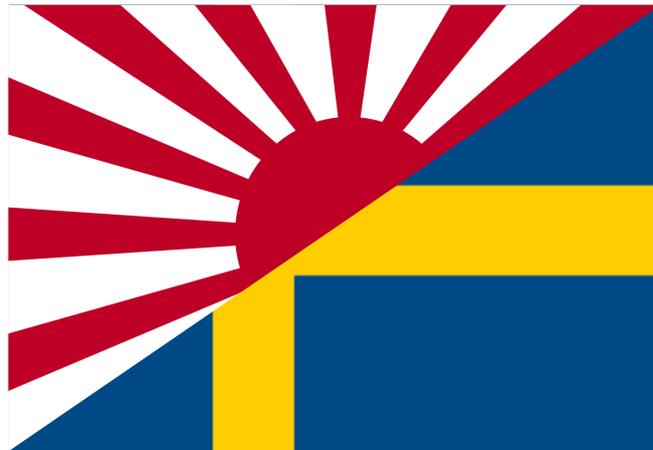
# Sweden, Japan, and the Long Second World War

## Project Plan

---

Pascal Lottaz & Ingemar Ottosson

With an Essay by Bert Edström



## Book Plan

Title: Sweden, Japan, and Long the Second World War  
Authors: Dr. Pascal Lottaz & Dr. Ingemar Ottosson  
Universities: Waseda University (Japan) & Lund University (Sweden)  
Publisher: TBD

## Authors

Dr. Pascal Lottaz  
Assistant Professor  
4-23-4-305 Arai, Nakano-ku  
165-0026 Tokyo, Japan  
+815035765500  
[pascal.lottaz@gmail.com](mailto:pascal.lottaz@gmail.com)



Dr. Ingemar Ottosson  
Professor  
Helgonabacken 12  
P.O. Box 201 Lund, Sweden  
+46 46 222 32 10  
[ingemar.ottosson@ace.lu.se](mailto:ingemar.ottosson@ace.lu.se)



Dr. Bert Edström  
Retired  
(Contributor of Chapter 7)

## Abstract

This book will investigate the relationship between the Kingdom of Sweden and the Empire of Japan during the “Long Second World War” (1931-1945). Using primary sources from archives in Sweden, Japan, and the United States, the project will investigate issues of diplomacy, foreign policy, and economics to reconstruct the history of the international relations between the two states. It will pay particular attention to Sweden’s neutrality policy which will also serve as the narrative framework to understand the actions of Stockholm toward Tokyo. The project builds on previous research of the authors, particularly Lottaz’s PhD thesis on “Neutral States and Wartime Japan” and Ottosson’s “Handel under Protest” (in Swedish). The resulting book will be written in English, and serve as the standard work for Swedish–Japanese relations in the 1930s and 1940s.

## Description

### *Literature Gap*

Existing research on Swedish–Japanese relations for the wartime period is scarce. Apart from a few limited studies on the involvement of Swedish politicians and diplomats in the surrender of Japan, there is no comprehensive account available. The most helpful resources to date are the two works of the authors of this project. Ingemar Ottosson’s analysis of Swedish–Japanese relations for the period from 1931–1939 and a chapter of Pascal Lottaz’s doctor dissertation about the following period until 1945. However, neither account fills the existing gap in the literature. While Ottosson’s account is available only in Swedish and ends with the break-out of the War in Europe, Lottaz’s work, due to its brevity, lacks the depth of an inclusive study of all aspects of Swedish–Japanese relations. Other scholars of Diplomatic History and International Relations have been preoccupied with the more dramatic question about Sweden’s role in the European Theater of WWII. Its conduct as a neutral state in Europe (caught in a precarious geostrategic position between the largest belligerents) has constantly overshadowed more subtle questions of diplomacy and statecraft toward the other theater of the war—unjustly so.

### *Why Swedish–Japanese Relations Matter*

In the wake of recent trends to understand the Global History of the Second World War, the account of Sweden’s role in the Eastern Theater of the war is over-due. The book will not only shed light on an unknown part of Swedish national history, but its focus on foreign policy will reveal the motivations, rationale, and the functions of one of the war’s foremost neutral states in a part of the world where its own existence was not at stake. Neither Sweden’s security nor economic wellbeing was ever threatened in Asia, but Sweden nevertheless did not retreat from the area when war ensued. By answering why that was the case, the book will add to the existing literature on the WWII record of the neutrals. The book will showcase the unknown facts about neutral involvement in an armed conflict that is rarely framed in this manner—a bloody war of attrition that took 15 years and culminated in the “Pacific Theater.”

### *Timeframe*

The book breaks with the traditional Euro-centric definition of WWII as the moment between Nazi Germany’s invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, and the surrender of the *Reich* on May 8, 1945. Instead, the authors define “wartime period” as the fourteen years of armed conflict, as experienced in Asia, and caused by Japan’s violent and expansive nationalism, first in China and then toward Southeast Asia and in the Pacific (1931–1945).

### *Sources*

To create a coherent and comprehensive account, the book will focus on Sweden’s diplomacy, its foreign policy, its national political debate, and the economic development of relations with Japan. The most important primary sources for this work are the diplomatic correspondence between the Swedish legation in Tokyo and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Stockholm, the white papers (and similar documents) of the Swedish Government, transcripts of parliamentary debates, and finally, the information gathered in the “Magic Documents” by

US intelligence services. Secondary literature in Swedish, English, Japanese, and German will be used to complement the narrative where appropriate.

### *Framework*

Since Sweden's long-standing policy of neutrality was the only reason why the country was able to abstain from joining the war while still remaining in diplomatic and economic contact with Japan, Swedish neutrality will serve as the analytical framework for the historical narrative. The book will not try to answer whether or not Sweden was "truly neutral," but it will make use of the fact that the country successfully remained outside the battlefield to understand what neutrality policy enabled Sweden to do in (and with) the Japanese Empire. The motivations for these actions will be as important as the tools through which they were achieved.

## **Expected Output**

The resulting book manuscript is expected to feature the below parameters. The authors will aim at publishing, preferably in an open-access format that will allow for the free and unrestricted access to its content under Creative Commons licensing.

### *Word Count*

Introduction	= 15,000
7 chapters x 10,000	= 70,000
Epilogue	= 5,000
-----	
Total	= 90,000

The word count includes footnotes and bibliographic entries. In addition, there will be between 8–10 pages of photographic materials in the middle of the book.

## **Target Audience**

"Sweden, Japan, and the Second World War" will be a title of interest to WWII historians, Japanologists, diplomatic historians, and students of International Relations. It will be highly relevant to experts in Neutrality Studies and Nordic Studies. It is also aimed at the Swedish and Japanese publics who will find an interest in new aspects of their national histories.

## Chapter Overview (Tentative)

The following are the chapters as they have been planned at the outset of the project. Chapter titles and content might change, subject to research insights.

### **1) Introduction**

The introduction offers a narrative access point for the theme of the book to “poke” the interest of the reader to understand why and how Sweden could maintain meaningful diplomatic relations with the Empire of Japan until the end of its 15 years of warfare in 1945. The chapter explains the practical importance of Sweden’s neutrality (a main theme of the book) to keep its international relations alive at a time when other states were at war. In the second half, the chapter introduces early Swedish–Japanese relations since the two nations signed an (unequal) treaty of commerce and friendship in 1868.

### **2) Trade under Protest: A War in all but Name (1931-1937)**

The second chapter focuses on Sweden’s reaction to Japan’s first foray into warfare with the Mukden incident in 1931 and the subsequent establishment of Manchukuo, its Manchurian satellite state. Swedish diplomacy at the League of Nations in Geneva was forcefully condemning Japan, even leading a group of small states who demanded League sanctions and intervention for the sake of the principles of the covenant. Naturally, this soured Swedish–Japanese relations but contrasts with very active trade relations that did not stop. The chapter explores different Swedish and Japanese opinions on affairs in Manchukuo and explains the importance of Soybeans and the cultural image of Japan, Manchuria, and China in Sweden. Finally, the chapter explains the impact of international events (the collapse of the League system) on Swedish attitudes toward Japan.

### **3) New Parameters: Total War in China (1937–1939)**

With the “official” outbreak of the Second Sino–Japanese War in 1937, Swedish–Japanese relations changed again. Condemnation made way for acquiescence and the focus on a purely economic relationship. At the same time, Japanese cultural diplomacy tried to convince a suspicious Swedish public of the benevolence of Japan’s enterprise in the East to “civilize” the rest of East Asia under its “just” leadership. Trade relations became more difficult; however, due to boycotts and the deterioration of global trade routes amidst European tensions and the build-up towards a war. The chapter also introduces Widar Bagge, Swedish Minister to Japan, 1937–1945, a pivotal figure in the wartime diplomacy.

### **4) Staying Relevant: Total War in Europe (1939–1941)**

By the time WWII broke out in Europe, Swedish–Japanese relations had come full circle, from “trade under protest” to “protesting to trade.” While both countries struggled to find a position towards the new European War, Stockholm tried to increase its interactions with the Empire and follow a strategy of growing Asian markets through Japan as an access point. Diplomatically, however, Japan started losing interest in Sweden because of its increasingly isolated position in a German-dominated Europe. The chapter focuses on the impact of international events as well as the efforts of the Swedish

Foreign Office and Widar Bagge, in particular, to keep diplomatic and economic relations alive.

### **5) *Suddenly, fully Engaged: Total War in the Pacific (1941–1943)***

Pearl Harbour had understandably the largest impact on Swedish–Japanese relations. Sweden maintained its neutrality in the ensuing war (War in the Pacific) and immediately became the second largest provider of “Goof Office” services to Japan and the Allies alike. This impacted the work of Swedish diplomats in Tokyo, Washington, London, and other belligerent capitals heavily. The chapter explores what this meant for the work of Widar Bagge and his (growing) team of diplomats. It ventures into the intricacies of organizing evacuation ships under the auspices of the Red Cross, the duties to represent Allied interests toward Tokyo, and the network that was built among Sweden, Switzerland, and Spain who became the three main access points for all belligerents to maintain a minimum of diplomatic exchange while Japanese and Allied soldiers were engaged in all-out warfare. At the same time, economic interests still played a role, and the chapter explains why and how some trade routes were still maintained.

### **6) *Relevant Again: The Tide Turns Against the Empire (1943–1945)***

The tide of the war started to turn against the Empire in early 1943, which changed the diplomatic rationale with which Tokyo had been treating Stockholm so far. Not only were its neutral partners more important again for trade, but Tokyo discovered the value of a neutral outpost in Europe for spying purposes. Meanwhile, Allied raids on Japanese outposts and even the mainland made the work of Swedish diplomats increasingly dangerous (not at least because the Japanese Military Police started to treat every non-Japanese on the mainland as a potential spy). In the summer of 1944, the diplomatic corps was evacuated to a mountain resort (Karuzawa) from where Widar Bagge’s work became tedious and increasingly desperate. International events in Europe, the Philippines, and finally in Okinawa and the mainland have led to the complete collapse of Japan’s foreign policy, which the chapter explains and contrasts with the debates in Stockholm and the pressure from the Allied side on Sweden to cease interactions with the Empire—which Stockholm resisted.

### **7) *Helping to End the War: The Bagge Maneuver***

This contribution by Bert Edström is a detailed account of the so-called “Bagge Maneuver,” which was the most realistic—albeit unsuccessful—attempt of the Japanese Government to end the war not through a complete capitulation but through a negotiated surrender. Widar Bagge and the position of Sweden as a “friendly” constitutional monarchy in Europe that had the ear of the UK and the US was vital to the plan. New archival material suggests that the failure of the “maneuver” had to do with the political situation in Japan and the US but also with crucial mistakes made by Swedish diplomacy.

### **8) *Epilogue***

Conclusion of the book with a brief summary and final thoughts on Sweden’s role in the 15 years of Japanese warfare in mainland Asia and the Pacific.