

### **Examiner's commentary**

The research question is concise, but it is clear and to the point. The definition of “neutrality” is set out in the introduction and this establishes how the candidate will approach the investigation. The historiographical context is also explained reflecting how historians have taken different approaches to this topic. The impact of war on a country can often be an interesting topic and offers scope to measure social, political and economic change and/or continuity. The candidate includes texts in the original Swedish that are then translated into English. This is one way to handle the use of non-English sources, but it is also appropriate to include only the translation and to add to the citation that this is your translation. Although, in this case, the candidate has not done so, in the bibliography, it is helpful in the assessing of the selection of sources if the candidate translates all non-English titles.

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## **Sweden's Involvement in WWII**

To what extent was Sweden a neutral country during WWII?

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## Introduction

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 1945, the Second World War came to an end. After six years of raging war running throughout Europe, as well as Asia and Africa, the Allied powers had finally defeated the Axis powers. The war had major consequences through out the world, most prominently on the central European nations, however a point often overlooked is the impact the war had on Asian nations such as Japan and moreover, the African colonies. Out of all the European nations only six managed to remain neutral through the war (Chepkemioi). As a Swede, one was always taught that Sweden was one of the six nations who remained neutral through the whole war. In 2014, Sweden celebrated its 200 years of peace celebration, commemorating the “new era of peace.” However, professor Peter Wallensteen of Uppsala University points out that, “the definition of peace is debatable” (The Local). With this he refers to the Nazi’s usage of Swedish railway systems to travel from Germany to invade the neighboring nation of Norway during the Second World War. He means that the Swedish neutrality during the Second World War can be questioned and interpreted in such way that it demonstrates weakness and brings shame upon Sweden. Moreover, recent studies argue that Sweden’s neutrality during the war can be looked upon in a way that most Swedes would never have thought of before. The Swedish journalist Arne Ruth reasons that, [REDACTED] Ultimately, this lead to the question, To what extent was Sweden a neutral country during WWII?

In order to answer the question the essay will focus on three main aspects. Firstly: trade and economy. Secondly: politics, both internal and global. Lastly: aid, both military and humanitarian. Furthermore, another key thing to remember before the essay begins is the definition of neutrality. This definition is of importance to the essay because the definition of neutrality has changed since the Second World War and it’s important to keep in mind that neutrality was something totally different back then. Notably, today according to the UN, neutrality is defined as:

The legal status arising from the abstention of a state from all participation in a war between other states, the maintenance of an attitude of impartiality toward the belligerents, and the recognition by the belligerents of this abstention and impartiality — is critically

important for the United Nations to gain and maintain the confidence and cooperation of all in order to operate independently and effectively, especially in situations that are politically charged. (UN)

Now it's important to notice that this definition is modern and do not represent the definitions of neutrality that were in place during the war. Rune Müller of Lund University writes in his article about neutrality during the war:

From the point of view of the neutral state, the purpose is to be as unaffected as possible of the ongoing conflict. From the perspective of the belligerents the purpose of provoking such a declaration is to ensure that the opposite side does not get any support from the neutral state either. To ensure that these purposes were fulfilled certain obligations and rights have developed over time (Müller 8).

In the case of Sweden during the war, the involvement is well known; Sweden supported both the Allies and the Nazis to some extent. Despite this Sweden still claims to have been neutral during the war. Müller explores one solution to this dilemma in his article The Law of Neutrality: "However, the Swedish neutrality is not officially recognized. Instead, Sweden is pursuing a neutrality policy, which is to be separated from permanent neutrality because there are vital differences between the two, as we shall see further on" (Müller 6). To put it differently, one can say that Sweden's view on neutrality is very diverse from the more popular view of neutrality. This is of importance to the essay because the essay will evaluate how neutral Sweden was according to both the rest of the world and according to them self.

## **Economics**

During the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Sweden was progressing from a massive rural and largely agricultural economy to a more urbanized, industrialized economical nation. The export of iron ore increased dramatically with the opening of the Kiruna Mine in 1898 (Casey). Iron was highly on demand on the global market, thus Sweden held a dominating position in the European iron trade (Rolf Karlbom). This is particularly true with the German/Swedish trading relationship during the Second World War. Rolf Karlbom of the University of Gothenburg wrote in an article that, "after Sweden was cut off in 1940 from the world beyond the Baltic, it was regularly 90 per cent

[Sweden's exports taken by Germany]" (Rolf Karlbom). Arguably, this is an obvious sign that Sweden was not neutral during the war.

However, with this in mind it's important to acknowledge that the German/Swedish trading relationship have dated back long before the time of the war. Furthermore, it is vital to recognize that when Germany occupied the Scandinavian countries surrounding Sweden and other major countries in central Europe, the Swedish trading options were now very limited. Therefore, one can argue that Sweden was just trying to keep its industries productive and had no other buyer except for Germany. Even before the war broke out, Sweden and Germany had a strong trading relationship. Germany lacked raw resources such as iron and Sweden being a developing nation needed fuels such as coal, to continue the industrialization. The Germans provided Sweden with this in exchange for iron. According to Peter Hedberg and Elias Håkansson of Uppsala University "chemical products were one of the key goods imported from Germany to Sweden during the war. Beside metals and coal products it was the third greatest imported good during 1942" (Hedberg).

Moreover, other imports that Sweden needed derived from areas that the Germans now controlled. Overall, as a direct affect of the war, petrol, and other essential imports greatly decreased in Europe and thus leaving Sweden with little option, but to trade with Germany. Looking at this from UN's modern description of neutrality we can see that it clearly stats that neutrality is clearly depicted as, "the abstention of a state from all participation in a war between other states" (UN) and more importantly, "the maintenance of an attitude of impartiality toward the belligerents, and the recognition by the belligerents of this abstention and impartiality" (UN). In this case Sweden fails maintaining the attitude of impartiality toward the Germans. Arguably, Sweden was just trying to stay out of a direct conflict, but many viewed this as a supportive attitude towards the Germans.

In reality, Sweden quickly became heavily dependent on Germany for much essential recourse needed for the industrialization, which in turn led to the very pro German trade. Overall, coal was the single most important power source for most of the nations in Europe and this is especially true in the case of Sweden. Sweden would not have been able to keep its industries going without the coal that Germany offered. Germany was the greatest producers of coal in the whole of Europe, consequently forcing Sweden to trade with them (Hedberg). Under those circumstances its evident that Sweden was trying to be as unaffected as possible of the on-going conflict. As

Müller pointed out in The Law of Neutrality this is what any neutral state should try and achieve, thus Sweden can claim to have been neutral.

## Political

### Internal:

As the Second World War began in 1939 with the German invasion of Poland, Sweden's Prime Minister, Per Albin Hansson said in a speech broadcasted directly to the Swedish population that:

För oss svenskar gäller det nu att med lugn beslutsamhet endrökteligen samlas kring den stora uppgiften att hålla vårt land utanför kriget, att vårda och värna våra omistliga nationella värden och att på bästa sätt bemästra den onda tidens påfrestningar (Sveriges Radio).

For us Swedes, it is now time for peaceful determination to gather around the great task of keeping our country out of the war, caring for, and safeguarding our irreplaceable national values and as best as we can manage the stresses of evil times (My Translation).

Taking this into account one can say that Sweden's primary intentions, according to the Prime Minister, was to remain neutral through the war. Likewise, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October, six weeks later, the "Tre kungamötet" was held in Stockholm, The three kings from Denmark, Norway and Sweden got together, with the addition of the Finnish president. The four Scandinavian countries came to an agreement that they should remain neutral in the war that was to come, and assist each other as needed (Nilsson). Then again, the only nation who managed to keep its 'neutrality' was Sweden. According to F. Fulya, [REDACTED] (TEPE). Arguably, one can tell that Sweden always had intentions of interfering with the conflict. The most compelling evidence for this was, what came to be known as the Finlands kommittén.<sup>1</sup> The Finnish Committee was founded on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 1939 and aimed to military assist Finland during the Winter War. It is important to recognize that the comity was not bound with the

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<sup>1</sup> Finnish Committee

government and organized the so called, Frivilligkåren,<sup>2</sup> a group of willing ex-soldiers that travelled to Finland and fought against the USSR (Nilsson). As far as for political dilemmas, Sweden's government was not all happy with the decision to resist from conflict. However, these so called non-governmental organizations (NGO) such as Frivilligkåren, Svenska Norgehjälpen<sup>3</sup> and Finlands kommittén had a major but hidden support from the government. The Swedish government provided with not only the transportation of voluntaries to Finland but also with weapons and ammunition supplies (Nygren).

Now from the perspective of the belligerents, in this case Germany and the Allied forces, Sweden is rejecting its declaration that would ensure that not any of the opposite sides should receive any support from the neutral state (Müller). Again, this shows how Sweden was not neutral during the war. However, looking from the point of view of the neutral state, which has the purpose to be as unaffected as possible of the ongoing conflict, Sweden is trying to stay out of the conflict, but at the same time supports its neighboring brother nations. The situation is complex because the Prim Minister had already declared neutrality but the people clearly wanted to aid the neighboring countries, in turn putting pressure on the government to do something. By government funding via the so called "NGO's" Sweden can still claim to be neutral, arguing that it was individual's who traveled to fight in the war without the government's consents.

**External:**

Globally, Sweden has been accused of participating in the war, by all means the Finnish Winter War in 1939 is a excellent example of when Sweden diverted from its neutrality. Sweden was bound to support Finland to a limited extent. The Finnish/Swedish political relationship has always been one of the strongest political relationships, since Finland was one of the four 'lands' of Sweden for almost 700 years from around the 1150's. During the independence from the Russian empire in 1917, the Finnish upper classes were Swedish speaking and culturally keener to Swedish culture then to the Russian culture that had oppressed them. Consequently, both Sweden and Finland kept close contact and the political relationship developed from there on. However, throughout the Second World War 'big brother Sweden' could not stop the Russian and German invasion of Finland due to the 'neutrality' that

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<sup>2</sup> Volunteer corps

<sup>3</sup> Swedish/Norwegian aid



Per Albin Hansson had declared in the beginning of the war. Yet, people pressured the government to take actions, as its know, Sweden did contribute to some extent to end the war. Ammunition, weapons and transport were given to the so-called volunteer-corps. This clearly shows that Sweden was not neutral during the war.

In 1940 Sweden's peace was disturbed once again, this time by the German operation "Weserübung." This was the German code name for the Nazi occupation of Norway and Denmark.

[REDACTED] (TEPE 186). The German aggression pressured Swedish government into making a deviation from the neutrality they claimed to hold. In other words, the Swedish government felt like it had no other option then to accept the German demands in order to keep its neutrality. Mikael Malmberg from the Swedish Research Council argues that the "demands were presented in such a way that a negative reply would be regarded as a hostile act" (Malmberg 140). In other words, Sweden felt like it had no option but to assist Germany with the transportation of German soldiers and ammunition to Norway for the occupation. Arguably, this is to say that Sweden kept neutral by not opposing the German demand and causing a conflict between the nations. As stated before, the purpose of the neutrality is to be as unaffected as possible of the ongoing conflict. Sweden justifies its actions helping the Nazis by protecting its people and therefore remained unaffected by the ongoing conflict. Under those circumstances, Sweden can be considered neutral because as The Law of Neutrality states this is what any neutral state should try and achieve (Müller).

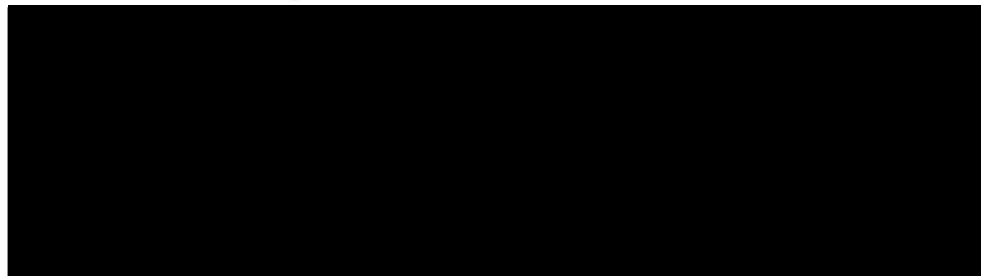
## **Aid**

### **Humanitarian:**

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1939, the Swedish Red Cross started a charity to assist [REDACTED] donations of SEK 2.2 millions; two ambulances and some hundred Swedish nurses and doctors who traveled to work in Finnish hospitals (Nilsson). Referring back to the UN's definition of neutrality, it's obvious that Sweden dose not follow the clear rule of "the abstention of all participation in a war between other states" (UN). Similarly to the aid sent to Finland, Sweden made sure to assist Norway with the Svenska Norgehjälpen that successfully sponsored Norway with about SEK 70 millions. As a matter of fact, Sweden conducted humanitarian aid

missions that effectively secured over 70,000 Finns 50,000 Norwegians and about 7,800 Danish Jews and about 30,000 Balts fleeing the advancing Red Army across the Baltic Sea in any boats they could find (Chen). Some historians argue that this 'help' could be seen as involvement in the conflict but others disagree, for it was not directly the government supporting, rather single individuals aided the needings. It's important to remember Sweden's position. Sweden had close historic ties and relationship with its neighboring countries, making it morally difficult not to assist its neighboring nations; moreover during the Tre kungamötet in 1939 they had agreed to assist each other. This promise in turn put Sweden in a difficult spot; Sweden helped its fellow Scandinavian nations to some extent but did everything very carefully so that the absence of neutrality would not get noticed.

At the same time, the Swedish government feared a German invasion, if the Germans would find out that Sweden had abandoned her neutrality Sweden would quickly get invaded. This is why the rise of NGO's was so essential for the refugees seeking asylum in Sweden allowing the government to channel funding through civil society. Carl Marklund professor in history and political science from the Overseas Development Institute confirms that,



Although these organizations claim to be NGO's Sweden accepted payments from the Allies to cover for all aid provided to the arriving refugees and much more such as, some 40 Swedish ships that sailed for the Red Cross during WWII (Granfoss). Moreover, "Swedish ships were used also for other Red Cross aid transports in the Mediterranean Sea, for example between Portugal and southern France" and "700.000 metric tons of food and medicine had been transported" (Granfoss). This could be seen as a violation of the Swedish neutrality, provided that the definition of neutrality would align with the UN's definition of neutrality: "Abstention of a state from all participation in a war between other states" (UN). In fact Sweden shows tremendous sympathy for its neighboring nations as well as for other European nations affected by the conflict. Thus Sweden took action and decided to interfere and help refugees and other victims of the war, clearly not committing to keep her neutrality. This

interference is in particular obvious in the case of Raoul Wallenberg who led one of the most successful rescue efforts during the Holocaust. Wallenberg was sent to Budapest with one mission, to prevent thousands of Hungarian Jews being sent to concentration camps. According to the Holocaust Encyclopedia,

With authorization from the Swedish government, Wallenberg began distributing certificates of protection issued by the Swedish legation to Jews in Budapest shortly after his arrival in the Hungarian capital. He used WRB and Swedish funds to establish hospitals, nurseries and a soup kitchen, and to designate more than 30 'safe' houses that together formed the core of the 'international ghetto' in Budapest. The international ghetto was reserved for Jews and their families holding certificates of protection from a neutral country (Holocaust Encyclopedia).

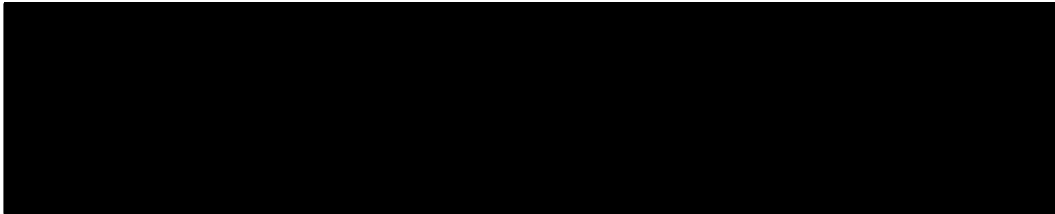
Wallenberg's actions that were in fact authorized by the Swedish government managed to save many peoples lives. However, indirectly this could be seen as a total diversion from the Swedish neutrality because the Swedish government took matters in their own hands and opposed the Axis's side. Although this may be true, Sweden still claims to have been neutral. This claim of neutrality derives from a point that is often overlooked, which is the Swedish definition of neutrality. According to Müller's article on neutrality, Sweden's "pursuing a neutrality policy ... is to be separated from permanent neutrality because there are vital differences between the two" (6).

According to this Swedish policy, by taking action to help refugees and war victims, Sweden was not showing permanent neutrality, but was still in line with the neutrality policy.

### **Military:**

Sweden's Prime Minister Per Albin Hansson declared that Sweden would stay out of the war, as they had done during the First World War. However this was not the case, because Sweden was involved in the war, by contributing with military aid to its Scandinavian neighboring nations. The military aid that was provided to Finland during the Winter-war was not merely based on humanitarian aid, but also on military support. Therefore Sweden can not claim to have been neutral during the war, evidence point out that; in February of 1940 approximately 9000 Swedish soldiers

arrived in Finland as part of the Swedish Volunteer Corps. Yngve Nygren, a mature sergeant of the Swedish Volunteer Corps, wrote in his personal journal,



The act of the Swedish Volunteer Corps, who were provided with not only transportation to Finland but also with supplies such as weapons and ammunition from the Swedish state, is a highly controversial topic amongst modern historians because some argue that the Volunteer Corps were totally independent from the Swedish government and others say they got support. This is crucial because if the government was involved that would mean Sweden was not neutral during the war. In fact, the Swedish government was anxious that the Volunteer Corps would end up dragging Sweden into the war. So in order to remain “neutral” they let the regular officers resign from the Swedish army during their trip to Finland. That is to say, the soldiers sent to Finland were not officially the government’s responsibility and thus Sweden as a state can claim to have remained neutral during this war too.

However, this is not true with the so-called Norwegian police troops. Out of 50,000 Norwegian refugees that came to Sweden, about 15,000 men were trained at a number of ‘secret’ camps in Sweden. Arne Granfoss claims that, “they were educated to become policemen. But, actually it was military education” (Granfoss). Moreover Arne states, “The Norwegian police forces who participated in the [liberation of Finnmark] operation were very well equipped. In the most active period there were a total of 2,500 men” (Granfoss). This support was extremely secretive, not much was documented and ‘official.’ Consequently, it is evident that Sweden was involved secretly in the war, thus they can’t claim to be neutral. Moreover, according to Kaianders Sempler, “A number of ‘health farms’ were opened where the Norwegians were trained with the consent of the Swedish authorities” and “In reality it was not the matter of policemen but pure military training, this in flagrant violation of Sweden’s formal status as a neutral state” (Sempler, 9). With this secret training of the so-called ‘Norwegian police’ it’s clear that Sweden denied both the legal status of neutrality and their own neutrality policy.

## **Conclusion**

As assessed in this essay, it's evident that Sweden was never completely neutral during the Second World War. Sweden's main intentions from the start of the war were to stay out of any direct conflict and not to be affected by the ongoing war. It is important to recognize that Sweden did not have an attitude of impartiality toward any side. To some extent one can argue that Sweden had no choice but to act in favor of one side in order to not be occupied or oppressed. For instance, Sweden was heavily involved with iron trade to Germany. Moreover, allowing German soldiers, war material, ammunition and provision to be transported by train through Sweden, which were used for the invasion and occupation of Norway. Sweden agreed to collaborate with Germany both in order to protect its own interest, as well as to stay out of the ongoing conflict. On the other hand Sweden also assisted the Allies, The Swedish government provided NGO's such as The Volunteer Corps and Norwegian police weapons and ammunition supplies to fight the Nazis and support the Allies.

In short it's still highly debated if Sweden was neutral during the Second World War. It's now said that Sweden was never a completely neutral nation during the war. As one author puts it: "Swedes have begun to look at their past from a new perspective. The morality of neutrality is being seriously questioned" (Wiklund). Historians such as Müller make it clear that the neutrality can be interpreted in many different ways. It's also important to acknowledge that Sweden never participated in any official conflict but failed to have an attitude of impartiality towards both the Allies and the Nazis. In the end Sweden was considering to join the Allies because Sweden felt like it was left with no other alternative and did not want to be forced into being a 'puppet' for Germany. A hopeless war with Germany would be unavoidable if the Nazis demands were refused and this justifies most of Sweden's impartial actions towards the benefit of the Germans.

The present policy of Swedish neutrality, just like the old is not laid down in the constitution or required by any international agreement. Instead, Sweden has chosen to pursue this policy in order to avoid involvement in wars. This is just what happened during the Second World War. Sweden managed to stay out of conflict and thus claims to have been neutral. However, looking at this from the different angles that are discussed in this essay, although not in any conflict, Sweden was not neutral during the Second World War.

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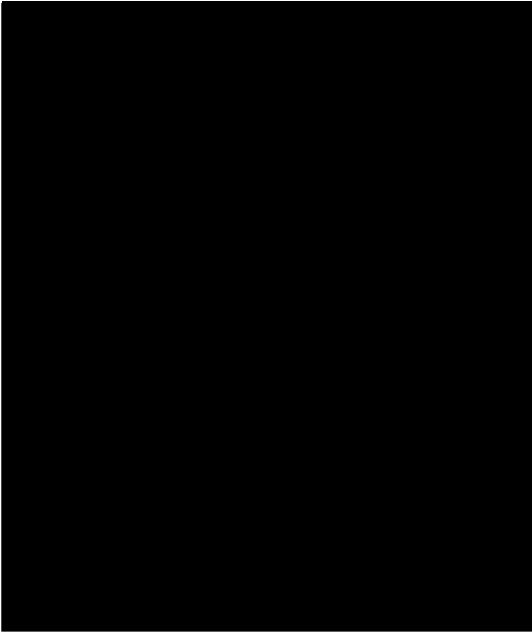
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## Appendix 1



Nygren, Yngve. *Personal Memoirs and Personal Papers*. Access granted July 2018.



# EE/RPPF

For use from May/November 2018

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International Baccalaureate®  
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Candidate personal code: \_\_\_\_\_

## Extended essay - Reflections on planning and progress form

**Candidate:** This form is to be completed by the candidate during the course and completion of their EE. This document records reflections on your planning and progress, and the nature of your discussions with your supervisor. You must undertake three formal reflection sessions with your supervisor: The first formal reflection session should focus on your initial ideas and how you plan to undertake your research; the interim reflection session is once a significant amount of your research has been completed, and the final session will be in the form of a viva voce once you have completed and handed in your EE. This document acts as a record in supporting the authenticity of your work. The three reflections combined must amount to no more than 500 words.

**The completion of this form is a mandatory requirement of the EE for first assessment May 2018. It must be submitted together with the completed EE for assessment under Criterion E.**

**Supervisor:** You must have three reflection sessions with each candidate, one early on in the process, an interim meeting and then the final viva voce. Other check-in sessions are permitted but do not need to be recorded on this sheet. After each reflection session candidates must record their reflections and as the supervisor you must sign and date this form.

### First reflection session

Candidate comments:

I have finished my first meeting with my EE supervisor. During my meeting we discussed my research question. "To what extent was Sweden a neutral country in WWII?" I choose this question because I grew up getting taught in school that Sweden was one of the neutral states during WWII. However, I also know that Sweden was involved during the war. Sweden was participating in different ways although we stated that we were neutral. Today I present the question and it was accepted. Moreover, we discussed how to find resources to build up my works cited page. As a dyslectic student from Sweden I have access to all Swedish library audio books. I will look for books available that will contribute to my EE. Likewise, I will try to find primary sources in order to establish a good basic knowledge on the topic. My grandmother told me her father was in the Swedish army during the time so I will look at some stuff from him. Simultaneously, I am to start developing a research plan. I have decided that the research will be broken down into three main areas: Trade, Aid (both military and humanitarian support), as well as politics.

Date:

Supervisor initials:

## Interim reflection

Candidate comments:

I have now received back my first draft. My supervisor is happy with the majority of my EE. However, in my introduction she says I need to stop using pronouns such as: I, I've, my, etc. Furthermore, she told me to work on my in text citations more. Thus, I have decided to not only re-right my introduction but also use a website she recommended me: "owl.purdue.edu" This site will help me with all my in text citations. Otherwise, my EE is on track. I have not had any major issues. I found a personal notebook from my grandmothers-father, that I used as a primary source. Apparently he participated in the Winter-wars and wrote about the Swedish involvement.

Date: August 30, 2018

Supervisor initials

## Final reflection - Viva voce

Candidate comments:

I have now finished my EE and my viva voce. I'm proud to say that I did my best and I think that this EE was a wonderful experience. Writing the EE has taught me many essential academic skills. For instance, I now know how to plan a big work such as the EE and execute that plan. Moreover, my EE topic has taught me much about neutrality, diplomacy and different policies. For me the most challenging part of the EE must have been, realizing that many people did not like what Sweden did during the war. I think that me being Swedish might have had an impact on my writing. Being Swedish and writing about this topic was both an advantage and a disadvantage. For instance, when I was re-reading my EE over and over again I found parts where I had been biased and tried to defend Sweden. On the other hand, I was really excited and passionate about my EE and I would have loved to go deeper into analysis and write more.

Date: November 1, 2018

Supervisor initials: