

CIVILIZING THE ENEMY

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*German Reconstruction and  
the Invention of the West*

Patrick Thaddeus Jackson

FOR HOLLY, MY TRUE COMPANION

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*T*HE USA DOES NOT KNOW EUROPE. . . . Therefore the USA is inclined not to interest itself in European affairs. And to the contrary, this is completely wrong. If European culture—which has suffered heavily for the past thirty years—completely dies out, this will also be of immense importance for the USA. The danger is great. Asia stands at the Elbe. Only an economically and spiritually healthy western Europe under the leadership of England and France—a western Europe to which the part of Germany not occupied by Russia belongs as a substantial component—can stop the further spiritual and forceful advance of Asia. Help me to disseminate the conviction throughout the USA that the rescue of Europe can only be accomplished with the help of the USA, and that the rescue of Europe is also essential for the USA.

—Konrad Adenauer to William Sollman, 16 March 1946

## *Preface*

*A*N OP-ED PIECE BY HENRY KISSINGER on tensions within NATO appeared in several American newspapers on 10 February 2003. In it, Kissinger criticized France and Germany for opposing United States–led efforts to disarm Iraq by force, arguing that the likely result of such opposition will be to “confirm the fundamentalist view of the West’s psychological collapse” and wreak lasting damage on “the Western alliance.” The language is striking, both for its casual assumption that the United States and the countries of Western Europe belong to a community anchored by a common culture (and that they have been attacked by “fundamentalists” on this basis) and for its injured tone at what is understood to be a betrayal of that community by the Europeans. “Alliances do not function because heads of state consult their lawyers,” Kissinger declares; “they thrive precisely when they involve moral and emotional commitments beyond legal documents.” And “the West,” for Kissinger, encapsulates commitments of this sort.

How did notions of community like this become so firmly entrenched in international politics that commentators could deploy them quite unself-consciously? The existence and rhetorical currency of a notion like ‘Western Civilization’ is far from obvious, considering that the twinned principles of sovereignty and anarchy continue to structure world politics to a significant degree. Despite globalization, sovereign states, acknowledging no higher authority than themselves, continue to claim a monopoly on the legitimate use of force and to reserve to themselves the right to make final decisions about the distribution of resources and the overall shape of global authority. The supposed existence of a community like Western Civilization flies in the face of this traditional notion, and also contradicts the neoliberal assertion that the globalized world is now a world of firms and consumers. The world envisioned by the language of ‘Western Civilization’ is different from both the world of sovereign states in anarchy and the world of global markets, and the persistence of this language in the face of the manifest institutional realities of these two worlds remains puzzling.

Thinking about the issue historically raises a second puzzle, since the language of ‘Western Civilization’ has only been current in political debates for about a century. This raises problems for the assertions by scholars that the West is an ancient cultural community: if the community is so ancient, why has it only been noticed recently? Further problems are raised by the fact that those using the notion do not seem to agree on the *content* of the community to which they refer; the precise geographical boundaries of the West, along with the normative foundations of the community, seem to vary from speaker to speaker. A particularly striking example of the ambiguous boundaries of the West can be seen in the case of Germany, which was a dire enemy of the United States and much of Western Europe in the first part of the twentieth century but emerged as a staunch Western ally after the Second World War. The language of ‘Western Civilization,’ although powerful, is also historically and strategically pliable.

In this book I undertake an exploration of this strange rhetoric, and in particular its implication in the construction of the “postwar settlement” following the Second World War. I concentrate on the reconstruction of Germany for both historical and more contemporary reasons. For one thing, existing accounts of the postwar settlement in both international relations (IR) and diplomatic history do not take public rhetoric seriously. They therefore fail to explain why German reconstruction occurred, why it took place in the way that it did, and why it placed the new West German state on something of an equal footing with its former enemies in a relatively short amount of time. I argue that the *rhetorical* construction of the postwar world and Germany’s role in it plays a *causal* role in producing and sustaining the reconstruction of Germany. As I shall demonstrate, the rhetorical commonplace of ‘Western Civilization’ is central to this construction. ‘Western Civilization’ functions in both the German and the American contexts as a discursive resource for delegitimizing policy options opposed to Germany’s incorporation into American-led military and economic institutions. Hence, the *occidentalism* of these postwar reconstruction policies is a critical element of their successful implementation.

My focus on discourse and public rhetoric garners a number of significant analytical advantages over existing approaches. Unlike accounts focusing on military security, I do not have to read the stability of the later Cold War backward into a very confusing and in many ways indeterminate historical period; instead of simply regarding the bipolar division of the world as inevitable, my account elucidates the causal mechanisms whereby this division was produced and naturalized. Unlike accounts focusing on economic interests, I need not reduce human social action to a more or less determinate response to material positionality; agency remains central to my account of events. And unlike many existing IR constructivist works dealing with culture

and identity, I refrain from reducing culture to unobservable beliefs inside of heads, or reducing identity to some kind of (social) environmental compulsion; I concentrate on intersubjective, observable articulations that shape possibilities rather than exhaustively determining them. The account that I offer explains postwar German reconstruction without having to adopt such questionable theoretical positions.

In this book, I focus on the public rhetorical contests over the boundaries of legitimate action both in the United States and in the western zones of occupied Germany. I closely examine the debates surrounding the passage and implementation of the two major pillars of postwar German reconstruction—the European Recovery Program (ERP, informally and publicly known as the Marshall Plan) and NATO—with an eye to questions about whether and to what extent a reconstructed German state should participate in these economic and military endeavors. Especially in a democracy, the availability of public rhetorical commonplaces that can be utilized so as to render a given policy acceptable is an indispensable part of the process of public policy-making, particularly for a set of policies as massive as postwar reconstruction. Enormous flows of resources and reconfigurations of political practice require justification, and absent the rhetorical deployments that I analyze, it is unlikely that the resulting policies and institutions would have taken the form that they ultimately did. My account highlights the room for maneuver exploited by various actors, as they took advantage of the inherently ambiguous character of public rhetoric in their efforts to assemble sets of publicly acceptable reasons for their preferred courses of action; the outcome of clashes between various public deployments explains the course of postwar German reconstruction.

Central to my account is the rhetorical commonplace of ‘Western Civilization,’ the notion that the United States, Canada, and Western Europe participate in a common cultural community with millennia-old roots in classical Greece. The irony that this notion was first voiced in the nineteenth century by conservative German academics was entirely lost on the American liberals who seized on the notion in the early postwar period as a way of delegitimizing the unilateralist proposals of their domestic opponents. Conservative German politicians also seized on the notion as a way of advocating *Westbindung* (which involved close, institutionalized cooperation with the United States, Britain, and France, even at the cost of a temporary acceptance of the division of the country in two) and delegitimizing the alternatives that were offered by their Social Democratic opponents. In effect, a coalition of liberal Americans and conservative Germans joined forces around a common commitment to preserve a civilizational community; this transnational alliance made postwar German reconstruction possible.

Aside from these historical considerations, there are also more contempo-



rary reasons for reconsidering postwar German reconstruction. The splits between the former allies that culminated in the Cold War were first rehearsed in occupied Germany, as an organized system overtly intended to promote four-power cooperation became the arena for a number of controversies. Germany became the flash point of the postwar world for the simple reason that it was the place where the victorious Allies first proclaimed their institutional solidarity, and hence the place where subsequent tensions and clashes between them were largely played out. There is no better lens for examining the postwar settlement than German reconstruction, as policies enacted in and around Germany set the tone for global relations between the various parties. The occidentalism of German reconstruction was replicated elsewhere, helping to stabilize what we only later came to think of as “the Cold War.” Thus an examination of the arena in which these debates were first fought out will enhance our understanding of what we might call the conceptual infrastructure of international politics over the last half century. Inquiring into the origins of the Cold War in this way reveals a startling conclusion: viewed in terms of public legitimation, the Cold War *already was* a “clash of civilizations.” This raises profound questions about what kind of order might succeed the Cold War.

The book proceeds in eight chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the recent return of “civilization” and “civilizations” to the conceptual lexicon of mainstream social scientists and argues that although this literature succeeds in putting civilization(s) back on the agenda, it commits a grave theoretical error in treating notions like “Western Civilization” as though they referred to concrete entities with dispositional essences. Instead, we should focus on the *language* of ‘Western Civilization,’ sidestepping any questions about what the West “really is.” In this way, we can begin to appreciate the kind of shaping effect that public debates about identity have on specific policy initiatives, such as those involved in postwar German reconstruction.

Chapter 2 introduces my alternative, a *transactional social constructionism* that concentrates on public rhetoric as an adequate cause of outcomes. I draw on Weber and Wittgenstein as a way of developing the general position and utilize recent work on national identity and social movements to isolate three key causal mechanisms at work in legitimation contests: *specifying*, in which one party tries to redefine a previously introduced rhetorical commonplace; *breaking*, in which one party attempts to disrupt their opponent’s position by highlighting inconsistencies in the opposing position; and *joining*, in which one party tries to undermine their opponent’s position by linking a central commonplace of the opponent’s position to an arrangement pointing in a different policy direction. I argue that the outcome of a legitimation contest is largely a function of how these mechanisms combine in particular public debates.

Chapter 3 begins the empirical analysis of postwar German reconstruction with a sketch of the “rhetorical topography” of the debates in question. I identify the central rhetorical commonplaces in play and show that the opposing sides in the struggles over public policy were largely constituted by different arrangements of similar commonplaces, such as ‘the preservation of liberty’ and ‘anticommunism.’ I illustrate the presence and key role of occidentalist appeals to ‘Western Civilization’ in both the American and the German debates, showing how this commonplace was a central component of legitimation strategies pursued on both sides of the Atlantic. In chapter 4, I engage in genealogical process-tracing in order to show two things: where this commonplace came from (ironically, ‘Western Civilization’ in its present form came from nineteenth-century debates in the German academy) and how it made its way into the public realm so that it could be deployed by politicians in the early postwar period (the “Western Civ” course that became a prominent part of undergraduate education in the early part of the twentieth century, and the prominence of public intellectuals such as Oswald Spengler, are central pieces of this story). It is the widespread dissemination of the commonplace that makes possible the arguments about defending and acting on behalf of Western Civilization that figure prominently in the postwar debates.

Having thus established the presence and prominence of ‘Western Civilization’ in the postwar debates, I then engage in a three-chapter account of how the commonplace was deployed in particular rhetorical clashes. Chapter 5 begins with the postwar planning debates in the United States in 1944 and proceeds through the early discussions in the western zones of occupation about the formation of new political parties and clashes in the four-power administrative structure established to run the country; it continues up through Secretary of State James F. Byrnes’s famous speech at Stuttgart in September 1946. ‘Western Civilization’ plays some role in all of these debates but does not really emerge as a dominant theme until the subsequent period and the debates surrounding the ERP and the inclusion of Germany in it; this turning point is the focus of chapter 6. Chapter 7 shows how the justification of the ERP in occidentalist terms, and the use of occidentalist language to deal with German territorial issues such as the Saar problem, laid the rhetorical groundwork for the subsequent formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, as well as legitimating eventual German participation in the organization as an armed member.

Throughout the empirical narrative, I pay close attention to the historically plausible alternative courses of action present in the policy debates: the so-called isolationist option of defending the continental United States without stationing troops in or giving immense economic aid to Western Europe, the “neutralist” option for Germany pursued by Kurt Schumacher’s opposition Social Democratic Party, and the various plans to continue wartime coopera-

tion between the United States and the Soviet Union in some form. All of these alternatives, advocates of which were actual participants in these debates, were importantly delegitimated by the use of occidentalist language by those committed to a transatlantic alliance of 'Western' democracies. Considering these alternatives allows me both to demonstrate the causal importance of occidentalist language and to avoid the trap of reading historical outcomes backward into a period of great ambiguity and contestation.

By reminding ourselves of the historical contingency of the Cold War, and of the historical contingency of concepts like 'Western Civilization' that were institutionally enacted as part of it, we may be able to correct one of the central intellectual mistakes of our times: the temptation to take the social world for granted, as though it were immutable. There is no inevitability to the role that 'Western Civilization' played in postwar German reconstruction, and no necessary reason why we should use it now or in the future in evaluating transatlantic relations. Whether or not we wish to base policy on this occidentalist basis is a normative and political question, and is not answerable through mere empirical study. However, empirical study can, and should, serve to remind us that any decision about deploying occidentalist rhetoric cannot be justified on historical grounds alone: just because people once spoke of the United States and Western Europe as belonging to "the West" is not itself a reason that we should continue to do so.

Accordingly, chapter 8 turns to the present day and explores several possible futures for 'Western Civilization,' illustrating both the continuities and the differences involved in the contemporary rearrangement of the conceptual infrastructure forged in the wake of the Second World War. Ultimately, whether 'Western Civilization' endures is contingent on the forms of agency that we exercise, and whether our actions tend to reproduce 'the West' or proceed in a rather different direction.

Before we accept or reject 'the West' as a principle upon which to base political and social relations, we should *linger* over what is assumed in Kissinger's argument, and take time to reflect on the practical and ethical consequences of an occidentalist stance. This book hopes to contribute to that reflection.

## *Acknowledgments*

RHETORICAL COMMONPLACES are always produced out of other, earlier commonplaces; they may not have completely specifiable beginnings, but there are key moments at which elements come together to produce a new configuration. Something similar happens when an individual human being is born and raised; each of us is always in some way a product of our parents and our upbringing. My parents Michael and Mary-Jo Jackson played critical roles in generating the specific configuration that is me, and in encouraging me along the path that eventually led to my writing of this book. For this I will always remain grateful.

One of the threads of my argument in this book involves the importance of ideas that students pick up during their college educations; the process of discovery and self-crafting that enables students to come into contact with novel notions and carry them into the wider world is importantly facilitated by talented and committed professors who seek to craft spaces within which students can really *learn*. I was fortunate to have several such persons playing an important role during my undergraduate years at the James Madison College of Michigan State University: my primary adviser Michael Schechter, Linda Racioppi, Richard Zinman, Norm Graham, Folke Lindahl, and Eric Petrie. I am indebted to all of them for many years of advice, support, and conversation. Outside of JMC, I learned more about the use of textual evidence and about the craft of argument from courses taught by John Coogan (Department of History) and Sheila Teahan (Department of Literature) than from any other courses.

My graduate education in the Department of Political Science at Columbia University was, as graduate education tends to be, less open-ended and exploratory; professional socialization, while not the overwhelming or exclusive point of the exercise, is certainly foregrounded. Ira Katznelson, whose seminar on “the lineages of American political science” I took during my first semester at Columbia, remained my most important adviser and mentor as I

wound my way through the program. Ira encouraged my interest in historical processes of social construction and concretely illustrated that a historically sensitive social science was both possible and productive. Along the way, I also benefited from conversations with Jack Snyder, John Ruggie, Charles Tilly, Hendrik Spruyt, Anders Stephanson, Peter Johnson, and Volker Berghahn.

Almost more important than the professors with whom one works in graduate school are one's fellow students; much of the actual learning takes place in conversations over drinks or dinner, or (in the case of Columbia) while riding the subway to someplace in lower Manhattan. My most important interlocutors at graduate school were the members of the informal "relational constructionist group": Sherrill Stroschein, Daniel Nexon, Stacie Goddard, Allyson Ford, and Alex Cooley. Traces of discussions with them undoubtedly show up throughout the book. Mark Blyth, several years ahead of me in the program, was an important early source of peer support and helped to convince me that I wasn't crazy to tackle 'the West' as a dissertation topic. Plus, he knew where all the good bars in the city were—a real help for a first-year Ph.D. student and newcomer to New York.

While at Columbia I was fortunate enough to be able to teach in the Contemporary Civilization program for two years as a preceptor (from the Latin for "you're not a professor so we don't have to pay you as much"); that experience, and especially the weekly preceptor meetings during which we would compare notes and discuss pedagogical strategies, made an invaluable contribution to my development as a teacher. I thank David Johnston for the opportunity, and my fellow preceptors for many stimulating debates and discussions.

One of the most important institutions in academia is the professional conference, as this provides an opportunity to obtain critical feedback on one's work and to make connections to scholars at other institutions. Conferences are also essential for graduate students looking to have their wacky ideas taken seriously, as positions that might be a hard sell in one's home department often fly better in the broader environment of a conference. It's also nice to get out and be related to simply as a fellow scholar, something that is perennially difficult when interacting with faculty members in whose courses one once sat as a student. The first professional conference I attended was the International Studies Association-Northeast conference in 1996; at that meeting, Yale Ferguson and Bob Denmark made me feel extremely welcome in the profession, and their support has remained important to me over the years. At the 1997 ISA-NE conference I met Naeem Inayatullah, whose relentless commitment to not letting me get too comfortable with my analytical tools has decisively improved my scholarship for the better. At the 1998 main ISA conference I got to know Alex Wendt and Iver Neumann, both of whom have remained extremely important interlocutors and collaborators in the ongoing effort to

keep social-theoretical considerations at or near the center of mainstream debates in the field.

Conferencing has also enabled me to create and sustain important conversations with a number of other scholars, who commented on various pieces of the project as I presented it in different formats. At the risk of accidentally forgetting someone, let me publicly single out Daniel Green, Jennifer Sterling-Folker, Peter Mandaville, Benjamin Herborth, Thomas Berger, Steve Rosow, Martha Finnemore, Yosef Lapid, Colin Wight, Jacinta O'Hagan, Mark Salter, Mustapha Kemal Pasha, Peter Katzenstein, Colin Elman, Jutta Weldes, Mlada Bukovansky, Friedrich Kratochwil, Jim Mittelman, David Blaney, Patricia Goff, Kevin Dunn, Fred Chernoff, Andrew Oros, Peter Howard, Nick Onuf, Hayward Alker, and—perhaps most significantly—Janice Bially Mattern, whose broad agreement with the contours of my transactional constructionist position enables the kind of detailed discussion of specific nuances that is sometimes difficult to have with other scholars. I am deeply grateful that I can get into arguments with Janice about *precisely* how the power of language operates at the most basic analytical level, and look forward to doing so for years to come.

I have also had wonderful opportunities to present working drafts of sections of this book in a number of places: the Columbia University Forum on the Core, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Johns Hopkins University, Michigan State University, the Council on Comparative Studies at American University, the ISA workshops “Identity and IR” and “Civilization(s) in World Politics,” and the Northeast Circle at ISA-Northeast. I would like to thank all of the participants in those occasions for their helpful and critical feedback. Bud Duvall also invited me to present a chapter in the Minnesota International Relations Colloquium; his comments, along with those of Ron Krebs and the other participants in the colloquium, were among the most incisive that I received, and helped me to sharpen the argument considerably.

Students in several of my courses have heard earlier versions of parts of the argument of this book and have often served as the first audience for a half-formed idea—and as some of my most perceptive critics. I would particularly like to thank the students in my “Culture and Identity in World Politics” seminar at New York University (1998–2000), those in my “Borders and Orders” (2002) and “The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations” (2001–5) courses at American University, and participants in the study-abroad program in Kraków, Poland, during the summer of 2004, with its associated seminar “The Eastern Boundaries of Western Civilization.”

Scholarly work does not get accomplished without various kinds of support, ranging from financial to organizational to logistical. For providing a hospitable working environment at American University, I would like to

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It was a chance meeting with Ido Oren at a conference in 2004 that led, more or less directly, to Jim Reische at the University of Michigan Press becoming aware of the book manuscript and sending it out for review; I thank Ido for bringing the book to Jim's attention and Jim, Amy Fuller, and Kevin Rennells for guiding me through the process of getting it published. I should also thank Alex Wendt and one anonymous reviewer for their comments on the manuscript at that stage.

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Kiran Pervez, Jesse Crane-Seeber, and Sherrill Stroschein gave the penultimate manuscript a close read and managed to catch a number of ambiguities and awkward moments that had stubbornly persisted through multiple redrafts and versions. The blame for any such moments that remain in the text after their close attention should be laid on my head alone.

Dan Nexon and I have been discussing the theoretical and conceptual issues surrounding a transactional social constructionist approach to world politics for so many years now that I am sometimes unclear which of us came up with a particular point first. In a sense, it doesn't really matter; although the basic philosophical commitment may be virtually the same, what we do with those points in our individual empirical work is rather different. But I would be seriously remiss in not acknowledging a debt of gratitude to Dan for our ongoing theoretical explorations, which have informed this book in so many ways that I couldn't even begin to list them all.

The credits of Hollywood films have recently begun to list "production babies" near the end; in that spirit, I want to acknowledge my two production

babies—Quinn and Chloe—whose arrival made things more interesting in a variety of ways. Exogenous shocks—even those that aren't really exogenous because they were planned—can alter a network profoundly, and I have no idea what this book would have looked like or what kind of scholar I'd be had they not come into the world when they did.

My wife Holly has been my truest companion for years, unfailingly supporting and advising my endeavors even when they took me away from her side to dusty archives and chaotic offices. She has helped me to tease out the implications of my philosophical positions for a variety of spheres of life and has kept me from disappearing into the great black abyss of academia during those times when I most needed to be reminded of the world outside of work. She has been and remains my best friend and staunchest confidant—my partner in the truest sense of the word. I cannot imagine having written this book without her at my side, and cannot imagine dedicating it to anyone else.