

Germany and 'the West'

GERMANY AND 'THE WEST'
The History of a Modern Concept



Edited by
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PREFACE



This preface is written at the height of the Crimean crisis. Russia's annexation of Crimea challenges not only Ukraine's revolutionary government but also the European Union and the United States of America. In some respects, the constellation is reminiscent of pre-1989 frontlines and it is no wonder that many commentators draw analogies between the present situation and the Cold War. The omnipresence of Cold War semantics is hard to ignore: particularly fitting, of course, for a country that etymologically translates as 'borderland' (*Ukrajina*), the Crimean conflict is framed in terms of 'East' versus 'West'. Historians, however, may be reminded of a context that goes further back in time. After all, between 1853 and 1856, Crimea had already been at the centre of international power politics. When attacking the Ottoman Empire, Russia faced a coalition of France, Britain and Sardinia who, while harbouring their own ambitions, all supported the 'sick man of Europe'. Commentators in Europe and beyond interpreted the conflict in terms of both a geopolitical and a cultural East–West divide: an opposition between autocracy and freedom, backwardness and progress. This was also true for the German public at the time. While the German lands, notably Prussia and Austria-Hungary, remained neutral, their ideological position was fiercely contested. Should the German lands side with the 'Western powers' or were they supposed to pursue a 'middle path' between 'East' and 'West'? What was Germany's place on mental maps of Europe (and the world) in the mid-nineteenth century? Whilst East–West semantics were used more prominently than ever before, these questions evoked very different answers. Germany's relationship to 'the West' was deeply contested and would remain so for decades to come.

Obviously, this is not the case any more. Germany is an integral part of the Western alliance. The Federal Republic's close alignment with 'the

West' has been a key component of its founding consensus. The semantics of East and West not only framed the history of divided Germany but still exert power over the ways in which politics is conceived and national identity is constructed. An ideologized East–West terminology, however, gained purchase well before 1949. Contrary to what is commonly believed, it also emerged before 1914 when a global conflict was framed in terms of a culture war between Germany and 'the West'. As the example of the Crimean War suggests, the German concept of the West has a much longer history. Its socio-political usage can be traced back to the post-Napoleonic era. Against this background we believe that an exploration of the shifting meanings, political usages and transnational circulations of 'the West' can shed light on German history not merely of the twentieth but also of the nineteenth century.

This volume is the fruit of a long engagement with the history of Germany and 'the West' which started with a workshop at the German Historical Institute London (GHIL) in July 2009, co-organized by the GHIL and the University of St Andrews. Some of the papers given at that workshop are published in this volume, complemented by others which have been exclusively written for it (bibliographical references have been updated to September 2013). Without the patient, friendly and engaging cooperation of all the contributors over the years, this volume would have never seen the light of the day. Our sincerest thanks go to them.

The German Historical Institute London and the University of St Andrews supported the project both financially and intellectually. It has profited enormously from the valuable comments and ideas of Professor Andreas Gestrich (GHIL) and Dr Bernhard Struck (St Andrews), and we are grateful to both of them. Particular thanks go to our copy editor, Jon Ashby (Winchester), to Elisabeth Heistingering (Institut für Zeitgeschichte) for preparing the index, as well as to the anonymous referees at Berghahn Books.

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Introduction

GERMANY AND ‘THE WEST’

The Vagaries of a Modern Relationship



Riccardo Bavaj and Martina Steber

‘The West’ is a central concept in German public discourse.¹ Typically the term refers to a political and cultural space constituted by parliamentary democracy, the rule of law, human rights, capitalism and mass consumerism. While its geographical scope is often only vaguely defined, ‘the West’ is usually understood as a political grouping led by the United States, militarily organized through NATO and institutionalized in a multitude of governmental and non-governmental organizations; as such, it is most certainly conceived as including Germany. As a cultural or civilizational entity, ‘the West’, though sometimes defined in terms of a common (Judeo-Christian or Latin) heritage, has even more amorphous boundaries, but to many commentators it is beyond question that Germany has culturally been part of ‘the West’ all along. However, despite these mental mappings, it has also been argued that Germany has stood somehow apart; that, for many decades, it has had a rather troubled relationship with ‘the West’, travelling on a *Sonderweg* (special path) that diverged from the ‘Western’ trajectory. According to this argument it was only during the second half of the twentieth century that Germans joined ‘the West’ – and some sooner than others.

This volume does not seek to settle the question about Germany’s ‘actual’ relationship to the West. Its principal aim is to historicize this question. When have Germans – politicians, scholars, writers and

intellectuals – talked about ‘the West’? What have they meant by it? Why have they referred to it in the first place? It is the intricate history of German discourses on ‘the West’ that is the subject of this book.

Master Narratives and Germany’s ‘Arrival in the West’

Today, rhetorical registers upholding ‘the West’ are far from unchallenged. In academic discourse, particularly, deployment of ‘the West’ as an analytical category has lost much of its intellectual plausibility (as has the concept of a German *Sonderweg*). In the wider public sphere, however, ‘the West’ is still a prominent point of reference. It is only now, moreover, that a German scholar-cum-intellectual has published a *History of the West*.² While the English-speaking book market has been liberally supplied with histories of the West for more than a century, Heinrich August Winkler has been the first to write one for a German audience. A multi-thousand-page trilogy, with a fourth volume in the making, this work is a performative act hard to ignore. It makes a statement no German is supposed to miss when browsing in the bookshop: Germans should care about the West because they belong to it. This theme was already the thrust of his bestseller *Germany’s Long Road West*, which was published ten years after German reunification and quickly gained the status of a master narrative for the Berlin Republic. After centuries of fateful deviation from the Western norm, climaxing in Nazism’s ‘revolt against the political ideas of the West’, Germans were to be congratulated on finally arriving in the Western haven.³

Winkler follows in a tradition of previous German Westernizers. His master narrative is itself part of the history of Germany’s relationship with ‘the West’. He has become for the ‘Berlin Republic’ what political scientists such as Karl Dietrich Bracher, Kurt Sontheimer and Alexander Schwan represented in the ‘Bonn Republic’.⁴ His scholarship and intellectual commitment reflect the legacy of a whole tradition of ‘Western’ missionaries: Ernst Fraenkel, Richard Löwenthal and Ralf Dahrendorf, to name but a few.⁵ In contemporary Germany, Winkler has been backed up by further enthusiastic Westernizers. Udo Di Fabio, for instance, a legal scholar and former judge of Germany’s Constitutional Court, has issued a fervent plea for a reappropriation of such ‘Western values’ as individual freedom, practical reason, civic virtue and the Weberian work ethic, reflecting at length upon ‘Western culture’, a ‘Western value system’ and the West’s ‘cultural self-endangerment’.⁶

The latter aspect is nothing new, as ‘Westerners’ have worried about the cultural cohesion and inner strength of their ‘civilization’, or

'community', for more than a century. Samuel Huntington's hotly debated *Clash of Civilizations* (1996) and the 9/11 terrorist attacks (2001), however, have given the subject of the 'inner fitness' and cultural self-awareness of 'Westerners' a new urgency. Political differences over the Iraq Wars (2003–2011), moreover, have sparked discussions about a hiatus within the 'Atlantic Community', an unbridgeable gap between the European Continent and what some commentators have called 'the Anglosphere'. Two 'Wests', they argue, are one too many, and may indicate that none exists at all.⁷ Thus, while some commentators have been pointing to Germany's 'arrival in the West' with the establishment of the Berlin Republic,⁸ it has seemed to others as though the longed-for point of perspective has vanished – not merely in relative terms because Germany has reached it, but because of a decline of 'the West' itself. Did Germans arrive in 'the West' only as its 'twilight' fell?⁹

Indeed, the new German wave of embracing 'the West' has come at a time when 'the West's' existence appears in several ways precarious. It may, of course, be argued that militant Islamism is replacing Soviet communism to provide a new alterity robust enough to keep 'the West' alive (paradoxical as this may sound). Yet commentators emphasize 'the West's' inner dividedness, as expressed in the catchy phrase 'Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus',¹⁰ or they complain about the 'pusillanimity' of 'Westerners'. Beset by nagging self-doubts and losing old certainties to a relativism in values instilled by postmodern, postcolonial questioning of 'Western paradigms', 'Westerners' are deemed unfit for the political and economic challenges of the present day. As the U.S. stands to be economically outpaced by China, the British historian, political adviser and media star Niall Ferguson urges 'Westerners' to 'reboot' the programme of 'Western civilization'.¹¹ Like Winkler's *History of the West* but geared towards a transatlantic readership, Ferguson's book is an attempt to boost 'Western' confidence and self-assurance. Both works are part of an extensive literature committed to stabilizing 'Western identity' in a time when 'the West' has been challenged as a political actor, economic leader, cultural entity and (to quote Arnold Toynbee's famous dictum) 'intelligible unit of historical study'.¹² The 'Western Civilization' curricula that have been taught in U.S. universities for almost a century have long lost the moral power they once exuded in the heydays of the Cold War. The 'Western Civ' narrative was an integral part of the 'liberal consensus' that crystallized in the 1940s, providing U.S. citizens with a sense of who they were, and legitimizing the United States' position as the spearhead of 'Western progress'.¹³

Approaching the West Conceptually: A Historiographical Tour d'Horizon

The present edited volume, alas, has little 'Western' morale-boosting to offer. Instead of attempting to strengthen Germany's 'Western identity', this book makes the very process of 'Western' identity-shaping a subject of investigation. When, why and for whom did 'the West' offer a central point of reference in German history? How did Germans locate their nation on mental maps permeated by the presence of 'the West'? Did they seek to anchor Germany firmly in the realm of a 'Western value community', or did they try to shape German identities in opposition to an alien, if not inimical, 'West'? In what ways did references to 'the West' serve as a means of negotiating moral values, fighting for political agendas, mobilizing people, envisioning world orders and imagining national futures? Is 'the West' a concept of the twentieth century, as has often been assumed, or is there a need to trace it through a much longer period to explore the depth of its layers of meaning? These and other questions are at the heart of this book, which offers a first, pioneering attempt at historicizing the relationship between Germany and this elusive 'West'.

For a long time, historians who have dealt with Germany's relationship to 'the West' have worked largely from the notion of a 'Western' container space – circumscribed by timeless boundaries and unaffected by what has happened within it.¹⁴ The historicization of the *Sonderweg* thesis has done little to induce a historicization of its flip side, German concepts of what 'the West' might be;¹⁵ and the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, generally thin on spatial concepts, have nothing to offer in this regard either.¹⁶ There are, however, notable examples of research, on which this volume can draw.

First, the groundbreaking works of Heinz Gollwitzer and Dieter Groh, published some decades ago, offer invaluable information on German notions of the West.¹⁷ Secondly, numerous studies have shed light on the 'ideas of 1914' and the polemical opposition between 'German culture' and 'Western civilization' which characterized the First World War as a 'war of ideas'. This dichotomy, closely related to the emerging distinction between 'Western democracy' and a German *Volksstaat* or *Volks-gemeinschaft* ('people's state' or 'people's community'), fuelled notions of German exceptionalism and shaped a consciousness of the nation having its own positive *Sonderweg*.¹⁸ Thirdly, historians have analysed conservative notions of a 'Christian *Abendland*' and socialist visions of 'Europe' as a 'third force', prevalent in West Germany's political culture following the end of the Second World War. Directed against the 'Western' model of liberal democracy, both concepts were imbued with anti-'Western'

meanings but were in accordance with the West's stance against Bolshevism.¹⁹ Fourthly, Patrick Jackson has published a study on West Germany's incorporation into NATO, which investigates the legitimating use of what he calls the 'rhetorical commonplace' of 'Western civilization' during the political formation of the 'Atlantic Community'.²⁰ Lastly, the Tübingen-based 'Westernization' project, carried out in the 1990s, offers another vital stimulus to the analysis of West Germany's relationship with 'the West'. It examines intellectual transfers that helped ideas of a pluralist democracy and market economy take root in the political culture of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Specifically intended to account for West Germany's intellectual transformation between 1945 and 1970, the analytical tool of 'Westernization' assumes the emergence of an 'Atlantic value community' grounded in ideas of 'consensus liberalism' and 'consensus capitalism'.²¹

Some of the most vibrant fields of research focussing on 'the West', however, are those that go beyond the scope of German history. First of all, Russian history offers one of the richest hunting grounds for finding ways in which 'the West' has been imagined. Indeed, to trace its conceptual evolution, one must of necessity look to the east, for Russia emerged as the antonym that in many ways shaped the contrasting identity of what lay outside 'the West'.²² On the other side of the fence, French and British Russophobia was a major constituting factor in the crystallization of this concept.²³ Recently, the historiographical focus on nineteenth-century Russia and Western European Russophobia has been complemented by studies on conceptions of 'the West' in East Central Europe and the Soviet Union. For communist societies, 'the West' often stood both as 'the gold standard for advanced development' and as 'a hostile order soon to be, if not in many ways already, surpassed', in the words of Michael David-Fox.²⁴

A second fruitful field of research is centred on U.S. America. Almost concomitantly with the emerging historicization of representations of 'the West' in the 'Eastern Bloc', scholars have begun to examine the production and dissemination of notions of an 'Atlantic Community' that fed on ideas of 'Western civilization' and, in turn, influenced them. Such notions have been developed on both sides of the Atlantic. Since the First World War, the U.S. has been both a prominent subject and a main producer of conceptualizations of 'the West'. It was only with reluctance, however, that U.S. Americans abandoned the exceptionalist notion of their country as the self-sufficient 'city upon a hill', enjoying 'free security' because of the great Atlantic divide, and came to adopt anti-isolationist ideas of American embeddedness in the imagined community of an Atlantic 'West'. (American exceptionalism has, of course, remained part

of U.S. political culture.) Scholars have placed great emphasis on Cold War strategies of empowerment, domination and securitization pursued by transnational agencies such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom, which sought to create an intellectual Atlantic Community by spreading the gospel of an overtly anti-communist 'West'.²⁵

In a third relevant field, Anglo-American scholarship has turned to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain to trace the emergence of 'the West' as a prominent socio-political concept there. While the literary critic Christopher GoGwilt has shown that, between the 1880s and the 1920s, the concept of the West eclipsed the concept of Europe as the pivotal ideological term in the register of British imperialist rhetoric,²⁶ the geographer Alastair Bonnett argues that the idea of the West came to displace the idea of whiteness in academic and political discourse. Since it avoided untenable assumptions about racial homogeneity without precluding racist overtones, the notion 'Western' trumped the idea of 'white civilization'. Of course, as Bonnett concedes, the suggested correlation in rhetorical patterns between 'white decay' and 'the rise of the West' is far from clear-cut and requires further investigation. Yet his approach, relating 'the West' to other identities and accounting for rhetorical innovations as problem-solving devices, is promising: it helps to explain what people were doing when they employed the concept of the West and why they started using it so extensively in the first place.²⁷

Lastly, there is a growing literature on representations of the West beyond Europe and America. Often informed by theoretical and thematic concerns about postcolonialism and inspired by Edward Said's pioneering, if controversial, work *Orientalism* (1978), several studies have shed light on what 'Western civilization' was conceived to be amongst people in India, China, Japan and the Muslim world from the mid nineteenth century onward. A term with multiple meanings,²⁸ 'Occidentalism' has become the watchword of this blossoming field of research.²⁹ Research on Occidentalism counteracts the Eurocentric perspective of a 'world revolution of Westernization'³⁰ and focuses on processes of non-Western self-assertion.³¹ It shows the deployment of conceptions of the West to shape national identities in non-Western regions that have become increasingly incorporated into the 'communicative networks' of Europe and America.³² Too little is known, however, about the entanglement of European concepts of the West with the notions of 'Westernization' and 'the Occident' discussed in India, Japan, China and the Muslim world. The context of globalization, imperialism and non-Western self-assertion around the turn of the twentieth century most certainly furthered the evolution and circulation of powerful notions of Western civilization.³³ But the role of, say, Western European orientalist as mediators who disseminated these

notions at home yet remains to be explored – and a comparison is needed (especially) between British, French and German oriental experts.³⁴

In fact, historians are still in the dark about many facets of the discursive construction of the West – despite the fruitful discussions on ‘metageography’ and ‘mental maps’ informed by the ‘spatial turn’.³⁵ Considering the gaps in historical scholarship, this volume is no more than a first attempt to tackle Germany’s relationship with ‘the West’ during the course of modern history. Its general approach is to trace German notions of the West through an analysis of the communicative contexts, semantic fields and discursive networks in which the various deployments of the concept have been embedded.

Informed by the methodology of historical semantics, this volume examines ‘the West’ as a spatial category manifest in its discursive constructions. It focuses on the lexical manifestations of the West (*der Westen*, *westlich*, *westlerisch* and so on), including their relations to neighbouring concepts such as *Abendland* and *Okzident*. While both these ‘Occidental’ concepts reach back to antiquity, ‘the West’ is a modern concept. As the work of Reinhart Koselleck has shown, the vocabulary of German political languages acquired its modern meanings in the period between 1750 and 1850, a period he calls *Sattelzeit* (saddle period). Koselleck identifies four dimensions of conceptual change: democratization, temporalization, ideologization (*Ideologisierbarkeit*) and politicization. This analytical framework has been adopted and modified by younger conceptual historians such as Jörn Leonhard and Willibald Steinmetz, whose works provide valuable insights into the study of historical semantics.³⁶ Inspired by these insights, this volume is based on several assumptions about the transformation of the directional concept ‘the west’ into the socio-political concept ‘the West’.³⁷

First, historical actors started using the concept in a general, abstract sense, referring to a group of countries, a civilization or a way of life. Use of the concept helped to register, process and articulate historical experiences; it homogenized space, reduced complexity and created orientation. Second, people started using the concept in a dynamic sense, referring to the past, present and future of a more or less well-defined area, as distinct from other parts of the world. Against the background of an increasing acceleration of developments, they temporalized ‘the West’, rendered it a concept of the future (*Zukunftsbegriff*) and endowed it with diverse horizons of expectation: notions of progress and modernity. A geographical direction thus became temporalized space, as ‘the West’ was placed in the temporal continuum of philosophies of history, with distinct orders of temporality attached to it. ‘The West’, in other words, metamorphosed into ‘TimeSpace’,³⁸ the dynamic quality of which became most evident in

neologisms such as ‘Westernizers’ and ‘Westernization’. Third, historical actors started using the concept in a political sense, referring to notions of reason, liberty, democracy, constitutional government, the rule of law, the middle class, private property, individuality and so on. They employed the concept as an effective tool in political debates, used it to advance political agendas and fought over its ‘correct’ meaning. Political languages became spatialized, and previously universal concepts became enclosed in a space called ‘the West’ (which, however, might still have referred in a Hegelian fashion to a state of universal progress attainable in principle by every part of the world). A relational concept from its inception, ‘the West’ acquired a decisive polemical thrust and a clear ideological edge through the polarized opposition to distinct antonyms such as ‘Eastern barbarism’, ‘Oriental despotism’ or the ‘Asiatic mode of production’. These ‘asymmetrical counter-concepts’ became constitutive of ‘the West’.³⁹

A New World Order? The Birth of ‘the West’

The socio-political concept of the West is a child of the post-Napoleonic era. It found its way into German political languages against the background of a general spatialization of political thought and a reconfiguration of global mental maps that took place between 1780 and 1830.⁴⁰ It was especially in the period from the 1820s to the 1850s that the concept of the West crystallized, developing those layers of meaning that provided the semantic pool future generations would draw from. ‘The West’ was integrated into a spatial coordinate system, which, by and large, has remained stable until the present day. Not only was the German concept of the West not born in the twentieth century (as many scholars have tended to believe); its twentieth-century meanings were in no small measure defined by its origins in the preceding century: in particular, its association with notions of progress, liberty, civilization and modernity; a corresponding relationship between cultural traits and political values and institutions; and a geographical anchoring of normative assumptions in the past, present and future of, above all, France, the United States and Britain. The history of the German concept of the West, however, is anything but straightforward. Though fairly well established in German political discourse by the middle of the nineteenth century, it was more or less forgotten by its end. It was resurrected in 1914 to represent everything that was considered ‘un-German’, but was eventually reinstated and emphatically embraced by the politicians and political commentators of the FRG.

Against the background of an emerging liberal–conservative divide in post-Napoleonic Europe and the gradual ascendancy of Russia and the

United States, European political thinkers increasingly distinguished between the constitutional states of 'the West' and the 'Eastern powers' of the Holy Alliance.⁴¹ The political reasoning about the current and future international order was the first of three significant discursive spaces in which 'the West' – as a new concept distinct from both the *Okzident* and the *Abendland* – entered political discourse.⁴² With 'the West' increasingly associated with 'revolution' and liberal constitutionalism, moreover, and with the U.S. being geographically located westward from European shores, it was no wonder that America became incorporated into European mental maps of 'the West'. Following Alexis de Tocqueville's prognosis of a global East–West conflict, the Hessian councillor Ludwig von Meseritz, writing in the *Jahrbücher der Geschichte und Staatskunst* in 1836, used the terms 'Eastern Empire' for Russia and 'Western Free State' for the U.S., the former representing 'aristocracy' and the latter 'democracy'.⁴³ This spatio-political terminology had become fairly common in the discourse on the new world order. The once directional concept 'the west' had been transformed into an abstract category that homogenized space and conveyed political values.

The idea of a 'West' consisting of the liberal states of Europe with the U.S. would not have gained credence, however, without a strong historical-philosophical idea supporting it. This emerged from the second discursive space in which the concept of the West was shaped – one concerned with a historical-philosophical model of progress. This discursive space was decisive for the temporalization of the concept. It became endowed with horizons of expectation and increasingly encapsulated notions of progress and promises of the future. The development of human history was seen as starting in the east and progressing to the west – an idea rooted in medieval Christian theology.⁴⁴

In the early nineteenth century, this notion lost its theological meaning and became embedded in a secular philosophy of history.⁴⁵ As its most important appropriator, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel merged it with the idea of progress: 'World history', he asserted, 'travels from east to west; for Europe is the absolute end of history, just as Asia is the beginning'. Hegel claimed that human history began in Asia but would end in 'the West'.⁴⁶ The 'East' figured as a counter-model to an enlightened 'West': in character it was static, without history, its people unaware of their individuality. It was fettered to patriarchal structures and ruled by theocratic regimes; its societies were governed by violence. Hegel's 'West', to be sure, meant contemporary Europe. For him, the U.S. was nothing but a European offshoot with no independent worth.⁴⁷

While Hegel's historical philosophy of the West was very influential – one may think of Karl Marx's theory of material progress, which disparaged

the 'Asiatic mode of production' and was no less Eurocentric⁴⁸ – not everybody thought that the westward march of history would stop at Europe. German authors of the 1820s who were disappointed with the political situation in Europe advocated an alternative model of development, if equally grounded in historical-philosophical notions of East–West progress. August Graf von Platen, Nikolaus Lenau and Adelbert von Chamisso, for example, all believed progress to have moved out of Europe to America, which had become part of 'the West' as a civilizational idea.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Hegel's concept of a Eurocentric 'West' and an oppositional 'East' was an explicit counter-model to the Romanticist understanding of the 'Orient' prevalent in some literary and orientalist circles at the time.⁵⁰ Some German Romanticists believed they could find in 'the East' what had (allegedly) been lost to 'the West': spirituality, transcendence, harmony and eternity. For them 'the Orient', and not 'the West', figured as an ideal place of longing.⁵¹ Douglas McGetchin shows in this volume, however, that a more complex view of the Orient was fostered by Romantic philologists who made Indian, Asian and Arabic texts accessible to the German public.

The third discursive space in which the concept of the West emerged consisted of debates about the place Europeans assigned to Russia on the mental map of Europe. Up until the early nineteenth century, Europe had been thought of as having a clear North–South divide, with Russia firmly in the North. From the 1820s, this conception changed: Russia came to be seen more as an 'Eastern' power.⁵² The notion of a backward Russia at the head of 'Eastern Europe' formed a counterfoil to 'Western Europe's' association with 'revolution' and reflected contemporary political experiences in the era of bourgeois revolution. Bernhard Struck's analysis of German travelogues, giving an account of travels to regions in what is today known as East Central Europe, confirms this view. From the 1820s onward, German travellers, greatly influenced by the 1830 revolutions, began to replace the traditional North–South mapping of Europe with a perceived East–West division, mirroring the division between authoritarian and liberal forms of government. With the Crimean War this process of moving Russia from the North to the East on western European mental maps was finalized. And in these new maps, 'the West' had more definite outlines – clearly shaped by asymmetrical counter-concepts such as 'Russia', 'Eastern Europe' and 'the East'.

From the late 1820s, the spatio-political categories that emerged from this process of remapping and recoding were taken up in Russian political discourse itself. Impassioned debates on Russia's identity were intimately linked to discussions about 'Westernization'. These started with Pëtr Chaadaev's *First Philosophical Letter* (1829/36), a reaction to the

authoritarian regime of Nicholas I after his crushing of the Decembrist uprising of 1825. They continued in the discourses of the 'Slavophiles', who coined the term 'Westernizers' (*zapadniki*) as a derogatory expression; and belief in an East–West dichotomy hardened among pan-Slavists like Nikolai Danilevskii, who propagated an aggressive Russian expansionism and constructed a clear-cut distinction between a Romano-Germanic Europe doomed to decline and a Slavic 'historico-cultural type' destined to prevail.⁵³ The pan-Slavist critique of 'Western' values was to be embraced with enthusiasm in early twentieth-century Germany and was to leave a far-reaching mark on how Germans conceived 'the West'. The degree to which German and Russian discourses on 'the West' were intertwined in the long nineteenth century is brought out by Denis Sdvižkov. In fact, German notions of the West cannot be understood without due consideration of German-Russian entanglements.

'The West' as it emerged in German political discourse between the 1820s and the 1850s was a multifaceted concept. It could relate (1) to an entity comprising Europe and the U.S.; (2) to European countries with a liberal constitution that stood in opposition to the Holy Alliance; (3) to the United States and France, as the countries representing 'revolution'; and (4) to the Romano-Germanic civilization. This ambiguity made it difficult for German commentators to situate the German lands on the newly emerging mental maps of Europe and the world. However, 'the West' usually derived its meanings from an oppositional positioning against 'the East' and an association with civility and progress. The concept underwent processes typical of the *Sattelzeit*: it acquired abstract meanings, which made it an attractive tool to reduce complexity; it was temporalized, as 'the West' transformed into a 'TimeSpace' embedded in philosophies of history; and it was politicized, as it was increasingly used to convey notions of freedom, democracy and individuality. These would become the key themes which in many ways would characterize the German concept of the West to this day. Its power to shape national and political identities has varied over time, but it was by no means confined to the twentieth century.

Liberal Ambivalence and Conservative Negations: Conceptions of 'East' and 'West' in the Mid Nineteenth Century

During the 1840s and 1850s, the discourse on a new world order and the remapping of Europe filtered into discussions on Germany's own political future. In the German lands, the mental mapping of the world was inextricably intertwined with a concept of international relations as

alignments informed by ideological considerations. Thinking about world politics in terms of freedom versus servility, enlightened reason versus irrationality and progress versus stagnation was especially prevalent among liberals who frequently expressed their thoughts in East–West terminology (which they applied to Europe as well as to the wider world).⁵⁴ Consequently, ‘the West’ acquired an essentially liberal colouring. However, the liberal embrace of ‘the West’ was not unequivocal. Adoption of the notion by the various strands of liberal thought at the time tended to mirror the wide range of liberal ideas about European politics in general and the German place within this arena in particular.

The most enthusiastic supporters of ‘the West’ were situated on the liberal Left. The poet Ferdinand Freiligrath, for example, emphatically embraced the notion of a free ‘West’,⁵⁵ as did his like-minded contemporary, the Young Hegelian Arnold Ruge.⁵⁶ As Benjamin Schröder shows in this volume, however, *Vormärz* liberals in the Prussian Rhineland barely availed themselves of the concept of the West as a significant tool in political debates, even if, between the revolutions of 1830 and 1848–1849, they did temporalize the newly emerging East–West divide in terms of a backward ‘East’ and a ‘civilized West’. The inner-Prussian antagonism between eastern and western provinces lent further credence to this framework. That they rarely donned the vestments of avowed Westerners reflected their ambiguous self-positioning in Europe’s ‘centre’, between a French ‘West’ and a Russian ‘East’. It was, above all, their Russophobia that allowed them to escape their perplexing dilemma: namely, to feel attached to the ‘civilized peoples of Europe’ and the ‘liberal ideas’ of France, but to belong to a state – Prussia – which they felt was politically backward. To circumvent this dilemma, the Rhenish liberals favoured talk about a German ‘middle position’ between ‘East’ and ‘West’.

This dilemma of Rhenish *Vormärz* liberals emanated from a general ambivalence German liberals felt towards the concept of the West as it had evolved from the 1820s. On the one hand, these liberals were longing for the blessings of ‘the West’: civil liberties, constitutionalism, parliamentarianism and the rule of law. On the other, due to the increasing dominance of nationalism in liberal thought, it became ever more difficult to imagine Germany as part of a ‘West’ so closely identified with France and America. Moreover, these two countries were viewed rather differently among the various groups of liberals, whose appraisals ranged from affirmation to outright rejection. Hence, their positioning vis-à-vis ‘the West’ became a marker of difference between liberals themselves.

The range of attitudes in German liberalism becomes clear when the political thought of Rudolf von Gneist is considered. Unlike the Rhenish

Vormärz liberals, this Prussian legal scholar, who belonged with the mainstream German liberals of the post-1851 period, did not use the concept of the West at all. As Frank Lorenz Müller demonstrates, Gneist was a typical advocate of moderate national liberalism. He condemned the French and American Revolutions and championed a form of government purportedly achieved in post-1688 England. It was the combination of Francophobia and Anglophilia, accompanied by a lack of interest in the United States, that prevented him from deploying the concept of the West – a concept that was, after all, closely related to revolutionary change.

For many liberals, however, the Crimean War reaffirmed the notion of an East–West divide along the lines of freedom versus despotism. While in the 1840s the opposition between a civilized ‘West’ and a barbaric ‘East’ had gained common currency and had been further promoted by the 1848/49 revolution, the years of the Crimean War saw the climax of political East–West semantics in the nineteenth century.⁵⁷ In the case of Gustav Diezel, a leading national-liberal thinker on international relations, the Crimean War even prompted a recoding of the mental map. Previously convinced that a united Germany could only be realized ‘in a battle against East and West’,⁵⁸ Diezel now argued that Germany was part of a ‘West’ – a ‘Romano-Germanic West’ – that was fighting against the ‘Slavic East’.⁵⁹ In reaction to Russia’s advance to the west and the overriding concern it caused, Germany’s location had shifted on national-liberal mental maps. The writings of the liberal orientalist Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer, who warned against a Russian threat to ‘the West’, provide another example, which shows that, once again, an antagonistic stance towards Russia helped assuage the general ambivalence felt towards ‘the West’.⁶⁰ However, this ambivalence did not disappear: anti-French feeling remained a defining element in liberal thought for decades to come.⁶¹

While liberal reasoning about Germany and ‘the West’ was marked by ambiguities, conservatives did not face the problem of reconciling conflicting poles on their mental maps. Friedrich Schlegel, writing in the early 1820s, rejected the idea of East–West progress in human history and discredited the often apocalyptic prophecies of future American or Slavic world orders. Instead he reaffirmed the vitality and singularity of Christian Europe.⁶² Equally negative towards the liberal association of political ideology and East–West mapping then current was the Prussian Conservative Christian Adolf Friedrich Widmann. In 1854, at the height of the Crimean War, he made the very process of conceptual transformation, and particularly the politicization of geographical categories, an object of his criticism.⁶³

To ignore or repudiate the new terminology altogether was one possible reaction for German conservatives faced with the remapping of Europe. Another option was to appropriate it, but in a critical way. Such was Joseph Edmund Jörg's strategy. Analysing the global situation at the time of the Crimean War, this leading Catholic publicist eloquently advanced a Catholic Conservative notion of the West. He championed Christian Europe – Catholic of course – which he pitted against Protestant America and Orthodox Russia, an individualistic 'West' and a barbarian 'East'.⁶⁴ The German powers, meanwhile, had been put into a 'quandary' by the divisions of the Crimean War: they could ally themselves neither with 'the West' nor with 'the East'. So they were bound to pursue their own way, collectively forming a 'truly conservative German third power in the centre' (*deutscher Dritter in der Mitte*) – strong, united and embedded in a Catholic-dominated Central Europe.⁶⁵ Jörg was part of a prominent, if multifaceted strand of thought which posited a German middle position between 'East' and 'West' and which, decades later, would rise to particular prominence.⁶⁶

The Marginalization of 'the West' in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century

During the second half of the nineteenth century, following the end of the Crimean War, German conservatives no longer shared in the global outlook and critical appropriation of the ideological East-versus-West idea once prevalent. Typically they were caught up in nation-centred patterns of perception, as Thomas Rohkrämer shows for key exponents of German cultural criticism. Like Jörg, they argued for a strong, united German state but, unlike him, they wished it to be based on a common Germanic identity – not on the tradition of the Catholic Church. This emphasis on Germandom gained special momentum with the spread of racial lines of thought from the mid nineteenth century onwards. To be sure, this racial logic was primarily employed to bring out alleged essential differences between a 'Slavic East' and a 'Romano-Germanic West'; but it also undermined the notion of 'Western' commonalities and gave pseudoscientific evidence to the German-French antagonism. The stress on racial factors in international relations, including those within the western part of Europe, increased the doubts Germans felt about their place vis-à-vis 'the West', doubts that had beset liberal circles from the 1830s. With the racialization of the German-French antagonism, these doubts seemed to be resolved: French liberal models could not apply to Germany. This line of argument would eventually prove effective

enough to call the whole idea of a progressive liberal unity of 'the West' into question. Moreover, the pan-ideologies of the nineteenth century that were rooted in ethnic convictions – pan-Germanism, pan-Romanism, pan-Anglo-Saxonism – presented compelling alternatives to the concept of the West.

A powerful exception, however, was to be found in German perceptions of pan-Slavism, which merged with racial concepts of the East. Mark Hewitson calls attention to the anti-Russian consensus in Wilhelmine Germany which transported well-known stereotypes about 'the East' into the twentieth century and invested them with racial thought. The 'Slavic East' appeared as an inferior civilization and functioned as the absolute 'Other' against which German identity was constructed.⁶⁷ The racial categorization applied to 'the Slavs' was also applied to another group from 'the East' – Jewish immigrants who had left Russia to settle in Germany. In this case both anti-Semitic and anti-Eastern stereotypes combined in a toxic mixture. Above all, the *Ostjuden* presented a challenge to the Jewish communities already established in Germany, among whom a discourse about 'the West' and 'the East' developed, which Stefan Vogt introduces here.⁶⁸

The racialization of how the East was perceived was one reason why it remained a defining element in Imperial Germany's mental mapping.⁶⁹ Thus the concept of the West was continually used in contexts relating to Russia during the German *Kaiserreich*,⁷⁰ and significantly so during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905.⁷¹ But in the wider discursive context, the concept of the West did not reemerge in full use until 1914. It had largely lost its temporal qualities and was bereft of the horizons of expectation previously ascribed to it. For most Germans, 'the West' was neither a spectre nor a beacon of promise; it had ceased to be a concept of the future, good or bad.

In addition to an increasing racialization of political thought, new bonds of loyalty to the ascendant nation state undermined civilizational concepts such as 'the West'. The European state system changed profoundly in the 1860s, and even more so with the unification of Germany in the next decade. While the idea of a European order based on a multilateral contract system had guided international politics between the Congress of Vienna and the Crimean War, the period from 1870 to the end of the Second World War was characterized by autonomous nation states each pursuing their individual power politics, not letting their sovereignty be curtailed by multilateral commitments.⁷² Discussion about international relations increasingly centred on the power politics of nation states, their alliances and ententes, and it largely abstained from reflections on supranational commonalities. The focus in

Bismarckian Germany was on *Realpolitik* – allegedly non-ideological power politics (though in fact the concept was itself ideological).⁷³ This continued in Wilhelmine Germany, with its ambitions on the world stage. Discussions on international relations became driven not by civilizational ideas but by economic deliberations, as in the *Weltreichslehre* around the turn of the century,⁷⁴ or alternatively by pan-ethnic notions of a battle between Germanic, Romanic and Slavic ‘races’.⁷⁵ Liberal thinkers, who, from the 1820s through to the 1850s had espoused the concept of the West, now invested their hopes in the nation state, which they saw as the true progressive force. Progress would be rooted in the strength of the nation, and needed measuring according to national parameters. The Hegelian idea that progress in history would advance from east to west lost credence.

Elsewhere, of course, civilizational ideas were common currency. Established imperial powers such as Britain had long been advancing the moral necessity of civilizing missions.⁷⁶ What was more, a specifically ‘Western civilization’ became a powerful concept in Britain and the United States around the turn of the century.⁷⁷ While the racialization of political thought undermined conceptions of the West in Germany, the language of ‘Western civilization’ was reconcilable with racist and social Darwinist assumptions in the established colonial empires. Not least because the language of ‘Western civilization’ now provided Germany’s main colonialist competitors with their major rhetorical device, the concept of the West lost its appeal in the Wilhelmine era: Germans who were eager to find their own, particular role in the world political game could not simply copy their competitors’ ideological underpinning of colonialism. This remained a problem throughout the period of German colonialism, as embarking on a ‘German cultural mission’ did not have a power of persuasion comparable to the concept of spreading ‘Western civilization’.⁷⁸ As far as it is possible to judge on the basis of current research, even in the colonies ‘German culture’ does not appear to have been commonly used as a means to distinguish the German civilizing mission from those of colonial competitors.⁷⁹ Indeed, the binary opposition of ‘culture’ and ‘civilization’, associated respectively with ‘Germanness’ and ‘the West’ and coming to great prominence during the First World War, was only rudimentarily developed from the turn of the century onwards.⁸⁰

To sum up: from the 1860s the concept of the West was marginalized in the political language of Germans. It had largely lost its future-oriented meanings and barely provided an effective rhetorical tool for framing ideological views and advancing political agendas. Its sweeping rise in 1914 was not to be expected.

Germany against 'the West': The First World War and the Intellectual Roots of a War of Words

During the First World War, 'the West' reappeared as a powerful concept in German political discourse. It became a weapon deployed to mobilize people, a rallying cry that wielded affective power and was used to forge a united body politic. While it had been endowed with a relatively wide range of meanings in the nineteenth century, between 1914 and 1918 its frame of reference was narrowed down and its content largely stripped of ambiguities. The enemy Allies, Britain, France and the U.S., were 'the West' and it was around them that the geographical and power-political contours of the concept were redefined. Values such as individual freedom, constitutional government and the rule of law formed the ideological core of this 'West' and were typically subsumed as 'the ideas of 1789'.⁸¹ Most prominently, Thomas Mann propagated the 'ideas of 1914' in his *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* (*Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*), written between 1915 and 1918 and particularly directed against France. While the *Reflections* were primarily concerned with aesthetic traditions and conceptions, they were also a devastating denunciation of democracy, which was presented as an eminently 'Western' and thus 'un-German' institution.⁸² Characteristically, Mann merged the civilization-versus-culture antithesis with his semantics of 'the West': 'civilization' was all 'West', 'culture' all German and there was no reconciliation possible, for the antithesis was exclusive. This binary logic was easily transferable to a concept like 'the West', which – a relational concept from its inception – had been shaped more by its antonyms than by anything else. While previously the most prominent antonym of 'the West' had been the Russian 'East', 'Germany' now became an equally prominent antonym, as most Germans seemed determined to resist any 'Westernization' (*Verwestlichung*). The concept of the West was repoliticized and retemporalized only to create a distance from the horizons of expectation inscribed in it and to throw German visions of the future into sharp relief.

The amalgamation of the semantics of 'civilization versus culture' with those of 'the West' was decisive in the formation of conflicting political conceptions that satisfied Germans' need for clarity, coherence and an unambiguous ideological edge in the war of words waged from 1914. Following the breakdown of Russian tsardom and the U.S. entry into the war, these political conceptions were made more specific through another semantic amalgamation, that of 'democracy' and 'the West'. As Marcus Llanque explains, 'Western democracy' became both the Allied shibboleth and, for Germans, the 'un-German Other'. This polarization was furthered, moreover, by the restriction of public debate in wartime.⁸³

On an unprecedented scale, the concept of the West was deployed to homogenize space, to reduce complexity and to polemicize in political battle.

Despite the absence of a pronounced concept of the West in political discourse at the turn of the century, Germany's new self-image as 'the West's' counterpart was fuelled by various intellectual sources: perception of Russia as conveyed through the writings of Dostoevskii; the reception of Nietzsche; geopolitical thought situating Germany in the centre of Europe; imperial politics; and civilizational ideas about 'cultural areas' (*Kulturreise*). Together these paved the way for the notion of a Germany opposed to 'the West'.

Most important in the formation of this stance were German-Russian entanglements in the discursive construction of national identities. Thomas Mann's *Reflections* drew strongly on Dostoevskii's anti-Western writings, which provided rich insights into the conceptual cosmos of pan-Slavism.⁸⁴ It was, above all, Arthur Moeller van den Bruck who had introduced Dostoevskii's works to Germans from 1906 onward, in the wake of the Russo-Japanese War and the 1905 Revolution.⁸⁵ Conservative intellectuals, sceptical about liberalism and the values of the Enlightenment, believed they could find mysticism, spirituality and authenticity in Russia. To Moeller van den Bruck, who in 1916 demanded the 'abandonment of the West', Dostoevskii was the transmitter of new values radicalizing his critique of modernity.⁸⁶ The positive reception of Dostoevskii's works in Germany furthered a certain recoding of German notions of the East, which became more multifaceted after the turn of the century.⁸⁷ It is true that German soldiers of the First World War envisioned 'the East' as an 'apocalyptic space' – a 'godforsaken slime-desert', as a German lieutenant put it.⁸⁸ But it was not solely the appreciation of Russian culture that rendered German concepts of the East more complex than before. Equally relevant were visions of a 'holy German East' and Germany's actual territorial conquests in the East, as confirmed by the treaty of Brest-Litovsk.⁸⁹ That 'the West' rather than 'the East' was to become Germany's 'Other' in the First World War also reflected the growing complexity of attitudes towards 'the East'.

A second source impelling Germans to form a distinct concept of the West had particular importance for Thomas Mann and the intellectual Right as well. This was the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche.⁹⁰ Nietzsche was one of the very few commentators in late nineteenth-century Germany who had actualized the conceptual tradition of an ideological East–West antithesis. In his 1889 book *Twilight of the Idols or How to Philosophize with a Hammer* (*Götzen-Dämmerung oder Wie man mit dem Hammer philosophiert*) he framed his anti-liberal critique of 'modernity' in terms of a critique of 'the West': 'The whole of the West has lost those

instincts, from which institutions grow, from which future grows'. It was not 'the West' but the Russian 'East' that would provide the intellectual sources for the future.⁹¹

Thirdly, notions of German exceptionalism flourished during the First World War. The geopolitical situation of the *Kaiserreich* lent credence to the idea of a Germany situated between 'East' and 'West' – both in European terms and, with the U.S. entry into the war, in global terms as well. The semantics of international relations that had been established by the mid nineteenth century and had reached their climax in the Crimean War suddenly seemed to make sense again. The revival of this sense of geopolitical position was a vital intellectual source for the perception of Germany as a counter-model to 'the West' that developed during the First World War. The connection between geographical position and political stance was no more obvious than in the *Mitteleuropa* conceptions that stretched back to the mid nineteenth century and had then been invested with 'East–West' terminology.⁹²

Fourthly, the new antagonistic language of 'Germany versus the West', encapsulated in the 'ideas of 1914', provided Germany with an effective rhetorical tool to legitimize its imperial politics. German nationalists could now promote the idea of a German cultural mission that was fundamentally different from the 'civilizational' model of the established imperial powers.⁹³ As Mark Hewitson demonstrates in this volume, these claims of a virtuous German resistance to 'the West' were also fuelled by notions of 'American civilization', whose materialism and consumerism were supposedly threatening German 'culture' and indeed the 'culture' of Europe as a whole.

Fifth and lastly, belief in a 'German–Western antagonism' received support from new theories of *Kulturkreise*. Around the turn of the century, the rising disciplines of ethnography and geography advanced the idea of transnational spaces of coexisting civilizations. Scholars identified cultural patterns of simultaneity rather than of temporality, and this ran counter to the belief in one universal civilization attainable (in principle) in every part of the world. Theories of *Kulturkreise*, which were compatible with ethnic, biological and racial thought, provided a means of bringing spatial and cultural categories together, and made reasoning about different kinds of culture or civilization appear sensible. This could be applied both to 'the East' and to 'the West'. Establishing difference between large-scale spaces in a globalizing world, theories of 'cultural areas' contributed to what Jürgen Osterhammel has called a 'coarsening of global perceptions' (*Vergröberung der Weltwahrnehmung*).⁹⁴

These five intellectual sources and discursive spaces together gave defining outlines to the idea of the West for the German public during the

First World War. That ‘the West’ rose to such prominence, however, did not mean that neighbouring concepts such as the ‘Occident’ (*Abendland* / *Okzident*) became irrelevant. One of the most prominent examples of the latter concept’s continuing use is to be found in Max Weber’s theory of Occidental rationalization, advanced in his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Contrary to the impression one gains from Talcott Parsons’ English translation of 1930, Weber’s central concept was the ‘Occident’ (*Okzident*), not ‘the West’.⁹⁵ As a frame of reference, ‘the West’ had become too narrowly focused on political values to be of any use for Weber’s wide-ranging examination of Occidental phenomena such as religion, science, law, accounting, capitalism, bureaucracy and so on. More importantly still, the term ‘the Occident’ allowed Weber to include in his investigation countries that had styled themselves as ‘anti-Western’ powers. Towards the end of the war, moreover, Weber was one of the very few commentators to repudiate the notion of a German-‘Western’ antagonism as the key to making sense of the First World War. Instead, he conceived of the war as a conflict of modern societies: he did not see it as a clash of ‘culture’ and ‘civilization’.⁹⁶

Conceptual Reconfigurations: ‘The West’ in Interwar Germany and among German Émigrés

After the lost war and the Treaty of Versailles the antagonistic meanings of the concept ‘the West’ continued to reverberate in the German public sphere. Given the intense debates on democracy in Germany’s new-founded republic, it is no wonder that the constitutional dimensions of the concept were the dominant ones. ‘The West’ was discussed with respect to types of government and forms of popular representation. The fact that parliamentary democracy continued to be associated with the Allied forces of the West worked against attempts to spread pluralist conceptions of democracy and to stabilize the Weimar Republic. It was easy to denounce Weimar democracy as ‘Western democracy’ – the democracy of the victors of the First World War. Many Germans were driven by the search for a distinctly German type of government, and exceptionalist notions beyond ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ models continued to flourish.⁹⁷ Often, these notions were part of grander designs. Ideas of *Abendland*, *Mitteleuropa* or *Reich* each entailed different visions of a German (and European) identity, but were all endowed with a polemical thrust against ‘the West’.⁹⁸

A decidedly anti-‘Western’ stance was particularly pronounced in the New Right circles of Weimar’s so-called ‘young conservatives’, amongst

whom 'thinking in terms of compass points' (*Denken in Himmelsrichtungen*) was a common feature.⁹⁹ Anti-Westernism, however, was not as widespread among the Weimar Right as one might think. Though usually a prominent reference point in scholarly discussion of German ideas of the West, Oswald Spengler, for instance, preferred spatially contained concepts such as 'Occident' and 'Western Europe' over the more open concept 'the West'. This differentiation is lost in the English translation of his two-volume work *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918/22), which, first published in 1926/28, employs the expression 'the West' for the German term *Abendland*. 'The West', however, did not appeal to Spengler as an overarching concept, because it had come to carry universal meanings and visions of 'modernity'.¹⁰⁰ The marginalization of 'the West' among sections of the Weimar Right becomes equally obvious when one considers the National Socialist use of the concept, as Philipp Gassert does in this volume. From the mid 1920s the National Socialists abandoned the idea of an 'anti-Western' mission for Germany. Their worldview was primarily social Darwinist and racist; and notions of a homogenous 'West' were barely compatible with this.¹⁰¹

For liberals of the Weimar Republic 'the West' proved as difficult and ambivalent a concept as it had been for their predecessors in the nineteenth century. As Austin Harrington shows, these liberals embraced 'the West' insofar as it expressed a commitment to republicanism and the Enlightenment, but were opposed to the Western political hegemony of France, Britain and the U.S. with their demands on Germany: instead of the Wilsonian project, they favoured a 'European' solution. The complexity of the liberal appropriations of 'the West', in a situation somewhat reminiscent of their nineteenth-century predicament, throws into sharp relief how exceptional a time the years of the First World War were – politically as well as semantically. While the frame of reference of 'the West' had been narrowed down in wartime Germany, the conceptual horizon widened again soon afterwards.

To social democrats, however, 'the West' was a category of only marginal relevance. Stefan Berger argues that 'the West' remained largely absent from their political language from the nineteenth century until the end of the Second World War. Following Marx, the social democrats were bound to believe that the most progressive societies were situated in the West, and they closely observed political developments in America, France and, especially, Britain. But their ideological preconceptions – with the possible exception of the 'Young Right'¹⁰² – were generally guided by non-spatial, or spatially open, concepts such as 'class struggle', 'bourgeois democracy', 'proletarian revolution' and the like. Their socio-political language was the universal language of internationalism.

Only gradually, as the need to distance themselves from Bolshevik dictatorship and ‘Asiatic despotism’ became more pressing, did they begin to take a positive stance towards a ‘West’ deemed capable of social reform and progressive change. Often, as Stefan Berger and Anselm Doe-ring-Manteuffel both highlight in their respective chapters, it was exile in Britain and the U.S. that provided the decisive experiences paving the way to a new German view of ‘the West’. Socialist *rémigrés* like Fritz Heine, Erich Ollenhauer and Richard Löwenthal came sooner or later to the conclusion that Germany’s future was inside ‘the West’. Their notions of the West, however, were anything but static – the term was a cipher for various horizons of expectation. The post-war project of ‘Westernization’ was thus guided by a constructed template that was the product of multi-layered transfers and processes of adaptation.¹⁰³

Going ‘West’: Divided Germany and Cold War Languages

Before ‘arriving’ in ‘the West’, however, many left-wing intellectuals, including Löwenthal, advanced projects of a socialist Europe acting as a ‘third force’ between American capitalism and Soviet communism. The writers and intellectuals who gathered around the journals *Der Ruf*, *Frankfurter Hefte* and *Ost und West* are good examples of these proponents of a European ‘third way’. As Dominik Geppert shows in this volume, they also assigned Germany a special place as mediator between ‘East’ and ‘West’.¹⁰⁴ When the binary logic of the Cold War crystallized, however, and found embodiment in the separation of Germany into a communist East and a liberal West, the emerging rhetorical register of the Cold War began to take root in German political culture. Contemporaries were aware of the need for a new political language after the semantic ‘pollution’ through National Socialism.¹⁰⁵ Concomitantly, they soon began investigating the historical roots of the climaxing East–West antagonism. Classic studies by Heinz Gollwitzer and Dieter Groh provide the most prominent examples of this trend, which prevailed through the 1950s and early 1960s.¹⁰⁶ Often, these studies could be read as a ‘due reminder’ that Germany’s place had originally been inside ‘the West’, before the ‘seminal catastrophe’ of the First World War triggered a transformation.

The concept of the West was critical to the discursive negotiation of the FRG’s self-understanding. From early on, *Westbindung*, integration with ‘the West’, constituted its core political rationale. The U.S., in particular, became West Germany’s lodestar – a process decisively fostered by the Western superpower itself.¹⁰⁷ Yet, despite the clear alignment of Adenauer’s foreign policy with the U.S. as beacon of ‘the West’, West

German society's intellectual appropriation of 'Western democracy' was a protracted process. Conservatives, who had hitherto kept themselves at a critical distance from liberal democracy, or had categorically rejected it, appropriated the concept of the West via their reception of Alexis de Tocqueville's works on American democracy in the 1830s. Searching for a contemporary 'West', they entered into dialogue with this nineteenth-century advocate of an older 'West'. This discourse, which Martina Steber introduces, extended from the 1950s to the 1970s and shows the multifaceted new engagement of conservative politicians and intellectuals with democracy. They took a convoluted path from mere acceptance to a confident defence of democratic institutions. In conservative discourse in the late 1940s and the 1950s, the concept of the West had been shaped not only by opposition to 'the East' (still laden with hostile stereotypes) but also in distinction to the more popular notion of a Romano-Germanic Christian *Abendland*.¹⁰⁸ When this *Abendland* image lost its power of persuasion at the end of the 1950s, the concept of the West took its place, and an essentially liberal understanding of democracy became entrenched in West German conservatism. From then on, the great majority of the West German public regarded itself unequivocally as part of 'the West'.

One of the most influential liberal thinkers helping anchor West German political culture in a community of Western values was the academic *rémigré* and former socialist Ernst Fraenkel. Riccardo Bavaj argues that Fraenkel used the concept of 'Western democracy' as a rhetorical tool of persuasion to counter anti-Westernism and to spread his theory of neo-pluralism. Like Ernst Troeltsch in the early Weimar period, he tried to convince the German public of the historical fallacy of contrasting the 'German state' with 'Western democracy'. Without a doubt, the 'Westernization' of the FRG was a complex process. Conceived as a liberalization of politics and society oriented towards 'Western models',¹⁰⁹ it was characterized both by the appropriation of American, British and French ideas and by a resort to German traditions of political thought and practice. The concept of the West, by nature a transnational category, opened up manifold opportunities of combining political conceptions drawn from a variety of sources. The space within which 'the West' could be interpreted, however, was confined by the conceptual framework of the Cold War and by the reverberations of discursive patterns that had been formed through German history. 'Democracy', which had been a particularly contested concept in the interwar period,¹¹⁰ was increasingly envisioned in terms of 'Western democracy' as the intellectual Cold War narrowed down significant discursive spaces. Both terms, 'democracy' and 'the West', were deprived of some of the layers of meaning that had