

**THE WILD WEST VS. THE CIVILIZED WEST:
POPULAR CULTURAL READING OF
TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS**

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I INTRODUCTION: Inventing Transatlantic Rift

This paper is part of my larger study on scholarly discourse on the divided West. Beside “war on terror” the 9/11 terror attacks and the 2003 Iraq War have also spurred the image of a broken West.¹ Several scholars has argued about emerging and deepening transtatlantic rift. For example Francis Fukuyama have asked: “Does the concept of ‘the West’ still make sense in the first decade of the 21st century? Is the fracture line over globalization actually a division not between the West and the Rest but the United States and the Rest?”.² Robert Kagan has for his part expressed doubts as to whether the West will remain the West?”.³ Dominique Moisi has posed the question if we have moved from a world with two Europes and one West to a world with one Europe and two Wests? He been argues that for future historians, 9th of November, 1989 will mark the end of the old West.⁴ Arguably, that date constitutes the formative moment with dissonance rather than unity and communality coloring the relations between Europe and America.

Overall, the debate concerning the standing and essence of the West indicates with considerable clarity that there no longer exists a superior position from which to authoritatively to enforce a dominant and broadly accepted definition. What is left, instead, appears to be a plurality of contending conceptualizations, or to express it differently: Rather than being a ‘single-point’ concept with considerable resilience, the West has turned ‘multiperspectival’ without just one logic structuring the discourse. Part of the proliferation and blurring of essential borderlines entails that it has become increasingly recognized that the West does not mean the same thing in all times and places, and it has also become possible, with some legitimacy, to argue that the concept has had its day no longer denoting anything of substance.

¹ Calleo 2004.

² Fukuyama 2002.

³ Kagan 2004.

⁴ Moisi 2001, 2003.

The core claim in discussion on the broken West has been that America and Europe are drifting apart and that Europeanization of Europe and Americanization of America are creating fundamentally different kind of civilizations or entities that holds different values and different manners of acting in international arena. As Delanty and Rumbord write "Americanization and Europeanization are two quite different logics and while both are products of a more globalized world for first time tensions and differences are evident".⁵ And, thus the West should not be seen anymore as uniform player in international forum but Europe is distinct player from the United States. They represented also different models of modernity.

The shift from emphasis of the resilient West to the divided West has been taken quickly. Still in 1993 Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry saw the future of the West unchallenged when they wrote just immediately after the end of the Cold War that

"The West is not without diversity, fissures and frictions. The history of the West in the twentieth century provides ample warrant for anxiety. But despite this history, the Western political system is robust and resilient. Europe and Japan are strongly anchored in the system – and only a cataclysm could cast them adrift"⁶

According to many scholars a decade later this required cataclysm has already taken place. In contrary, there are as many those who defend the resilience nature of the West and among them are recently many of them who in the beginning shared Robert Kagan's criticism.⁷

My interests is not to find objective proofs – if that kind of proofs can really be found – for supporting or rejecting these claims but merely to study discourse of difference. In what ways are Euro-American split or unity rhetorically created and how it is defended? What are core arguments and core tools of producing difference or unity? Beside rhetoric of difference my interest is in deconstruction of concepts that previously were linking Europe and America.

⁵ Delanty & Rumbord 2005, 43.

⁶ Deudney & Ikenberry 1993/4, 23.

⁷ Garton Ash 2005; Lindberg 2005.

Among all others the notion of the West has been a shared identity coordinate that has been since 9/11 and the Iraq war put under critical debate and its position as a core marker of political space has become quite debatable. Being in doubt, it no longer provides the same certainty, inter-subjectively agreed communality and unquestionable anchorage as before.

The roots of discussion of difference between Europe and America are as old their relations. From very beginning of colonial settlement in North America these two have been contrasted: America has represented "embodiment of everything Europe was not". America is a land of migrants from Europe and migrants mentally and concretely left Europe behind them. Thus, America has been seen as rootless and unstable and Europe as harmonious and communal. European civilization has been juxtaposed against American barbarism – high culture against popular culture. From another angle America has represented a future, a new beginning, when Europe has remained locked into its past. Cold War years witnessed a new turn when United States was engaged to European affairs in new intensity and simultaneously with political hegemony was followed policy of Americanization of Europe. This contributed a counter reaction – strengthening anti-Americanism among European intellectuals since 1950s and 1960s and political maneuvers like Gaullist withdrawal from active NATO cooperation.⁸ Henry Kissinger contributed his answer to increasing European criticism towards America and expressions for particular European interests in his book *The Troubled Partnership* in 1965 that ideologically preceded Robert Kagan's conservative critic four decades later.

Still, beside certain tones of criticism in particularly in European side trans-Atlantic relations remained harmonious and vigorous during the Cold War era because shared security interests. Thus, it was just the end of the Cold War, disappearance of the Soviet threat that make possible to cut trans-Atlantic umbilical cord but really it was just the 9/11 and the Iraq War contributed to beginning of debate about shaking fundamentals of the troubled partnership. It

⁸ Pells 1997.

was Robert Kagan who set new premises to discussion of Euro-America difference in his famous article "Power and Weakness" (2002) and book *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*⁹. Kagan continued Kissinger's conservative critic that Europe as American post-War creation has turned its back to America. Kagan's core argument was that relation to the power and readiness to use it is fundamentally diverges between Europe and US. Further, difference in material resources and values is so remarkable that distance of Europe and US is like that of planets. For him Europe is dominating by Kantian world views and that Europe has locked itself to lure of postmodernism when rest of the world is guided by the logic of Realpolitik. The US instead represents Hobbesian logic and thus it accepts rudeness of the world and is ready for use power to maintain or bring order. Kagan juxtaposed Europe or EU and US as actors: when Europe presented as impotent and naïve the US represents virility and realism and thus it has responsibility as sole superpower top look after interests of the whole free world in the globe.

Kagan's argument can interpret that according to him the US and Europe are identifying themselves as western in different manners and that difference has fundamentally increased since the end of the Cold War. To illustrate this difference in understanding what the West is Kagan refers to another narration of the West that of Wild West. Interestingly the notion of the West has a double meaning – in particular in America. On the one hand, it refers to western civilization, classical tradition shared by Europe and America and trans-Atlantic unity originated from post-Second World War years. But, on the other side, the notion is more often used in America to refer what is known as the American West or the Wild West. That is particularly American narration of its own past and its own values. Two Wests – civilized and wild – are interestingly appearing intermingles in Kagan description. He describes the US as sheriff of the Wild West whose help is not always asked but in the end people are grateful of his intervention

⁹ Kagan 2003, 2004.

"Americans are "cowboys," Europeans love to say. And there is truth in this. The United States does act as an international sheriff, self-appointed perhaps but widely welcomed nevertheless, trying to enforce some peace and justice in what Americans see as a lawless world where outlaws need to be deterred or destroyed, and often through the muzzle of a gun. Europe, by this old West analogy, is more like a saloonkeeper. Outlaws shoot sheriffs, not saloonkeepers. In fact, from the saloonkeeper's point of view, the sheriff trying to impose order by force can sometimes be more threatening than the outlaws who, at least for the time being, may just want a drink."¹⁰

Thus for him the Wild West serves as a role model for US and it represents true and original values of America. Europeans does not understand true essence of the Wild West thus they are just making fool of Americans but as Kagan puts mockery is expression of difference between Europe and America and inability of Europeans to understand true essence of Americans and indeed the global developments.

The myth of the Wild West obviously has discursive power to define the real America in contrast to the civilized Europe. In this paper I am aiming to juxtapose these two traditional notions of the West another cherishing classical origin of the West, modernization, westernization and Cold War alliance and another looking to the Wild West mythology and receiving its image within American popular culture. Has Kagan's analogy of division between two kinds of western tradition really found supporters? What the role of the Wild West in reshaping the troubled partnership in the 21st century? In this paper I am first juxtaposing to notions – civilized West and Wild West - and ask are they related or even contrary concepts. In the end, I am trying to map and analyze certain exercises of the Wild West imageries in recent political debates – expressions in official diplomatic scene as well as in the public debates – and thus testing validity of Kagan's description.

¹⁰ Kagan 2002.

II TWO WESTS: Civilized and Wild

Layered Narrative

I am regarding both Wests – that of civilized and that of Wild – as kind of narrations. They are narrations about civilization, about the past, about the moral values and about superiority. Contrary to civilization tradition I am not presupposing or proposing the existence of civilization with clashing frontiers like Huntington or more nuanced version of a world-system analysis in which “civilization” is not taken something fixed and pregiven as produce of intersocietal exchange and thus something flux.¹¹ Instead I am comprehending the West as civilizational identity narrative.¹² I am regarding the Wests as narrations creating and emphasising continuity over breake, pointing a true essence of society, mapping spatial borders of us and them and among all assuring our superiority. But even if narration itself underlined continuity that is not same thing that there exists that. For example depicting Ancient Greece as an intellectual home of the West – land of pure reason and source of democracy – has shown to be very much a product of modern imagination. In his book *Black Athena* Martin Bernal argues that just in the beginning of the 19th century was created image of Aryan Greece for distinguishing that from legacy of non-western Egypt.¹³ It is easy to find other similar kind of examples in which continuity within sole and exclusive European context has been invented. Narration of European economic superiority is another good example.¹⁴

The way of narrating the Wests has also varied and it merely offer a store house from where to gain required coordinates and explanations to support current order or current struggle for new order. The notion of the West is obviously more multidimensional than ordinarily assumed and it should be viewed as layered construction. Some aspects of the concept may change quite easily whereas others are quite sedimented and resilient but all are

¹¹ Jakckson 2006, 3- 12.

¹² O'Hagan 2002, 6.

¹³ Bernal 1991.

¹⁴ Hobson 2004.

contested and may consequently change over time. Changes are usually gradual and relative small testifying to minor shift in the conceptual constellations underlying concepts such as the West but also breaches and jumps are possible if the conceptual constellations loses its capacity to carry and define what the West is about. The talk of the end of West might point to such a tectonic shift but it may also pertain to that some conceptualization which have been in the margins all along contesting the dominant understanding have grown in strength, this then testifying to gradual shifts rather a collapse of the conceptual construction that has over time provided the West with some rather embedded meaning.

Approaching West as a layered concept hence allows one to distinguish between issues close to surface and core elements located deep down deepest layers. Challenging the first has no serious influences but is just part of normal renewing but challenging the fundamentals would shake the stability of whole coordinate. This would bring values and narration usually taken as self-evident under critical look. Current debate originated by Kagan can indeed read as rhetorical battle between Europe and America on who owns the West and thus has a power to narrate it into being? But it may be so that seeing split over the Atlantic is also too simplified and that is why different expressions of the West including the Wild West that is regarded as pure American narration should be studied critically.

Beside layered concept the West can be approached through idea of clusters as Lewis and Wigen.¹⁵ Then the western cluster is comprising different elements from different layers and mixed them in different manners. Different characterizations and narrations are used in different context and for different purposes but in together forming a particular cluster of the West. Therefore it is not possible to talk about the West in singular. The question in this paper is how American myth of the Wild West is entangled with broader western cluster in context of recent debate about Euro- America separation.

¹⁵ Lewis & Wigen 1997, 73.

Civilized West

Even if the West is often presented as ancient and stable coordinate its history is however surprising short and the term itself was adapted just in the late 19th century to refer technological and social progressiveness.¹⁶ However, as Sophie Bessis reminds the idea of European superiority and of universality of European or western values originated already in the late 15th century and it was elementary associated with era of European explorers and colonization followed that. Thus, the West has at least a half millennium long ideological basis even if the word itself was adopted just over a century ago.¹⁷

Geographical coordinates of the West have varied during past decades. In the beginning of the 20th century undisputable core of the West was in the western Europe and America constitutes just one distant periphery. Following two world wars the constellations changed drastically. Western European countries lost symbol of their world rule, their colonies, and political leadership was shifted to America. Transatlantic relationships formed a core axis of the West and European side was subordinate to American side.¹⁸ This constellation is not more permanent than previous ones and it has been changing since European own coherence has been deepening. Increasing weight of Europe has contributed to opinions about equal two poles of the West. This differentiation has made possible also to juxtapose these poles and see them as opposites.¹⁹

The West is not only plural in its spatial extend but it is possible to recognize three fundamental narratives – civilization West, modern West and political West – of westernness and westernization. This kind of division would to offer a tool to open up layered structure of the West.²⁰ Division is obviously artificial when all layers are in practice closely interlinked but it is necessary to distinguish

¹⁶ Bonnet 2004, 5.

¹⁷ Bessis 2003.

¹⁸ Lewis & Wigen 1997, 47- 72.

¹⁹ Moisi 2003.

²⁰ See for example Ifversen 2006. Ifversen is in practice dividing the discourse on the West to five groupings but two of them can be naturally merged.

between different elements of the West. All three layers or narrations have also their own genealogy. The foundation of the civilization West is in simplified narrations that return the origin of the West to Ancient Greece and Rome and introduce over simplified continuity from Classic civilization to western Christianity and to present. This has constituted basic narration in western self-understanding to which has been possible to associate one's own national narratives. This is civilization narrative that excludes outside influences by emphasizing a pure origin of culture and how the legacy of Greek civilizations has been cherished and carried on for centuries. The West is presented as unique and pure civilization. The West is associated with certain cultural practices like art of reasoning and argumentation but also to democracy.

This civilization West has been challenged already by Arnold Toynbee and in particular Oswald Spengler in the interwar years. Spengler was writing about natural life span of civilizations and how the West is approaching its sunset.²¹ In the 1990s Huntingtonian idea about the clashing civilizations has brought new life civilization West but contrary to Spengler for Huntington civilizations are permanent and unchanging entities and thus constituting a clear point of reference in chaotic post- Cold War order.²²

Second layer or narration based on modernization. Beside Classic civilization and Christianity this narration leans on legacy of enlightenment, industrialization, capitalism and colonialism. This modern West is grounding western superiority in relations to all other cultures. Simultaneously it legitimize expansion of the West and civilization mission, dominance and subordination associated with expansion. In that way the narration of the modern West has linkage with globalization even if westernization and globalization are not same.

Burden of a colonial legacy has been also a target of several studies in recent years and it has been linked to notion of the West by

²¹ Bonnet 2004, 31- 34.

²² Huntington 1996.

scholars like Alastair Bonnett and Sophie Bessis. Bonnett has worked out how establishing of the notion of the West in the beginning of the 20th century was closely linked with racial ideas of superiority of whiteness or more precisely when whiteness as a core organizing principle was challenged the “white man” was replaced by more workable the notion of the West.²³ Bessis in her term links even more clearly the West with colonialism and racial supremacy. According to her, the idea of supremacy is always present in relation with the West and the rest and this western universalism is hegemonic discourse to which non-western side has to position him/herself.²⁴

Third layer and closest to surface is political narration of the West. Its roots can be dated back to global hegemony of colonial empires in the late 19th century but still it is more the Cold War creation and it based on experiences of juxtapose of Communist East and Capitalist West. Transatlantic bridge and the US leadership have constituted a core of the political West that is legitimized by the Second World War experiences and a need to prevent hostilities among (western) European powers. Thus, the European other was its own past that also legitimized necessity transatlantic relationship and American leadership. The political West is also constituted on institutional basis and in particular it has been symbolised by NATO. For many it has been embodiment of liberal theories and a proof of interdependence and a prime example of a mutual security community.²⁵ It has not been a target of serious criticism before the end-of-West discussion in the beginning of the 21st.

If we think about the notion of the West it is rather obvious that to exist it requires its logical opponent, the East. But if the West is contingent and changing entity the East is that even more. Geographically western imagination originally locates the East to the Middle East and it was then part of the orientalised East. The Orient has not however remained fixed entity but as part of western

²³ Bonnet 2004, 35.

²⁴ Bessis 2003, 17- 21.

²⁵ Cox 2005b, Deutsch 1957.

imagination it has shifted eastwards to India, Southeast Asia and China during following decades.²⁶ Parallel East has been constituted to Eastern Europe invented during the Enlightenment as a space between the Occident and the Orient. During the Cold War years it was this East that in form of Russia and eastern bloc dominates western imagination.²⁷ Nonetheless even if the Orient and the East has been moving targets certain characterization has remained there. Thus like in the case of West we should talk about the East in plural because it is possible to map variety of expressions in time and space but still there is in abstract and symbolic level a certain fixed characterizations that western imagination are associating with the East that are well expressed by Lewis and Wigen:

“The key components of the Western cluster comprise familiar list. European civilization is said to be characterized by a compulsion to control and manipulate nature; a tendency to regard the self as an autonomous agent in competition with others; a restless desire for growth and development; a keen appreciation of personal freedom; a hunger for material wealth; a practical, this-worldly orientation that seeks social betterment through technological means; and perhaps above all, a commitment to rational inquiry. The Eastern mind has been defined in opposite terms. Put simply, the essence of the East is seen as manifest in communitarian, aesthetic, and other-worldly values, extolling the submission of the individual to a timeless, mystical whole”²⁸

The East – West relations constitutes a core self/other discourse that defines what the West is all about and why it is hegemonic. However, the relationships are far from simple and it looks different if it is examined from perspective of different narrations of the West. The West can be depicted as inclusive identity for example emphasizing democracy or liberal economy as main epithets that based on acquired characteristics. The West as exclusive identity relies on for example views such inherent characteristics like geography or religion. The latter imagines the other as a permanent category while the former leaves the door open for the change of the other to one of our kind.²⁹

²⁶ Lewis & Wigen 1997.

²⁷ Wolff 1994.

²⁸ Lewis & Wigen 1997, 73.

²⁹ Rumelilli 2004, 22- 47. Rumelilli is writing about the notion of Europe.

If we examine three narrations of the West – civilization West, modern West and political West – the East is playing a different role in each of them and also East – West relationship is comprehended different ways. When these narrations are often overlapping it is rather obvious the discourse on the West includes contradictory element but in certain limited context usually one narration is dominating. The civilization West is juxtaposed with the Orient to express uniqueness of the western civilization and thus it is orientalizing the East. The Orient is like mirror to the West and it represents opposite culture. Relationship can be described through binary oppositions: individualism – collectivity, rational – mystical or Christian - pagan. Relationship is inherent and thus exclusive but the Orient is not imagined as enemy or even threat as such. Orientalizing West is also geographically the most limited as been imagined around the old Atlantic Europe expanded westwards to Christian and Protestant America.

The modern West based partly on similar kind of opposition between developed and undeveloped but therefore legitimized western superiority but also introduced dynamic of relationship and open up possibility for mutual rapprochement. The East is target of modernizing or westernizing efforts and thus the ultimate goal is to transform the East as western kind. The characterizations of the West are not seen as inherent but learned and that by adopting certain forms of governance and economics all societies can follow the same development. The modern West is not only locked to western European or to Atlanticist West but also often includes developed countries like Japan elsewhere.

The political West of the Cold War depicted the most exclusive relationship to the East by securitizing the East it was seen primarily as enemy. The political West was some terms the widest reading of the West when it includes all allies of the US to its sphere but this interpretation lost its ground when the Cold War ended.

The end of the Cold War has drastically changed the balance of different narrations. The East as enemy has disappeared and even it

has been tried to re-imagine first by Huntington in the clash of civilization theory or in the 1990s when Japan was securitized in economic terms³⁰ or recently as part of war on terror in which Islamic militant extremists are securitized. Thus, the East as enemy does not have anymore a new unanimous reading. Orientalising tendencies in the West has been long already hidden behind political correctness but it is clear that in certain limits the burden of colonial past still influences in particular the former colonial powers but that relation holds more to social integration of large immigration population and thus the Orient in these cases are more or less imagined within the UK or France for example. Contrary the West is produced as exclusive culture more often as part of Occidentalistic rhetoric among those groupings based on their identity to demonisation of the West. Currently among all others the Occidentalism is most characteristic to the militant Islamic movements in the Middle East but also within Europe. Modernizing discourse has been strong since decolonization but it has been more often conceptualized North – South axis even the developed world is identified with West. It is possible to interpret the US rhetoric on Iraq and whole Middle East as part of westernizing discourse because in that superior western model of governance is introduced and aimed to spread to the East. However, in this rhetoric the old notion of the West is often replaced by the notion of the “free world”.

Myth of the Wild West

The myth of the Wild West may be one of the most well known popular cultural products in modern world despite its particular American origin. In practice all people in so-called western world recognized mythical characters of Wild West: cowboy, sheriff and Indians. Story has been told and repeated countless times in the dime novels, Wild West shows, cartoons, Hollywood movies and TV-series. Western symbolism is even wider spread in music industry, advertisements and fashion. Its political usage in symbolical level has been familiar in the United States since times of President

³⁰ Hummel 2000.

Theodor Roosevelt. It is not however surprise that the myth or narration of the Wild West was mostly created by “easterners”, those living on the civilized east coast of America. It is romanticized and mythologized story of the imagined past that is loosely connected to certain era of American westward expansion – an era between the end of Civil War and the close of western frontier 1890 - and that use certain legends and fragments of that era to reproduce an imagined land of the Wild West.

According to David Hamilton Murdoch the moment when the myth really took its shape and when it was introduced to whole American audience in different sphere of life was in 1880s and 1890s. Prominent myth-makers were then President Theodor Roosevelt, painter Frederic Remington, novelist Owen Wister and historian Frederic Jackson Turner who popularized usage of the myth of the Wild West in their own fields. Extremely popular the Wild West show of Bill Cody should be included into same list and he was the one who already successfully imported myth over the Atlantic to Europe. Turner’s frontier theory was probably ideologically the most influential. He introduced his theory first time in his paper at American Historical Association meeting in 1893. Following two decades he concentrated to popularize his idea about uniqueness of American border land and open frontier. According to his interpretation, the wild border land created a true America and in a way Americanized emigrants. According to him “the frontier had been the generator of democracy, an incubator of individualism and a nationalizing factor”. The frontier has also served as safety valve against disaffected labour in the East. Till 1920s and 1930 the frontier theory was accepted kind of dogma which was not needed to prove in any way but what used for building up American past and future. Even if the frontier idea can linked to longer period of American history starting from the first migrants it does not share all the same romanticized elements and symbolic imagery than that of the Wild West.³¹ Thus, these two are closely linked because an open frontier as source of American true soul and need for that

³¹ Murdoch 2001, 63- 80.

frontier is core idea of both but the Wild West included more popular cultural orientated narrations and myth making.

The most well know and widely spread narrations are without doubt those of western movies. The story often cherished individual courage and steady moral standing as tool for solving societal problems. Classical example is *Rio Bravo* (1959, directed by Howard Hawks) in which sheriff (John Wayne) only with help of oldie, drinker and youngster defend the town against bad guys. Another example could be *Bend of The River* (1952, dir. by Anthony Mann) in which cowboy acted by James Stewart aids emigrants to cross dangerous wilderness on the way towards West and in particular fight against grasping speculators whose traitorousness is threatening the survival of whole community. Stewart's background as former border bandits puts his liability under challenge but he manages to show strong moral standing to emigrant community and thus won a new beginning.

Even story of the Wild West may have as many variations as there are storytellers it is easy to outline a kind of ideal type including certain core elements which are repeated in different forms in most of narrations. As Will Wright points out the hero of the Wild West is a mythical cowboy who do not necessary have to represent this particular profession but he can be also a lonely ranger or a sheriff but the image of cowboy gave heroic shade for him. Cowboy emerges from a vast wilderness to rescue wagoners rolling towards west or more settled community and help them to build a new community. Those who threatens migrants and newcomers in the wild West can be Indians, savage unhumans, but more often they are corrupted easterners, grasping civil servants, cattle barons or just gangs that do not respect law and order. The story is about building a new society, a new society in America, and this new society rests on the theory of market individualism.

Wright develops the myth of cowboy further and saw it as a figure symbolizing core American values. He represents freedom and equality, but he also represents the idea that market freedom and equality can lead to a good society, a civil society. The cowboy,

then, also represents a commitment to honor and decency, a commitment to honesty and trust. He emerges from the wilderness to create market society, and his vision of civility is defined by an open frontier. This is the mythical frontier between wilderness and community, and it reflects a theoretical frontier between Nature and society, between the State of Nature and the social contract. It also endorses violence as a necessity of freedom, legitimate resistance to government, the need for an endless frontier, the need for wilderness purity, and white male superiority. However, when the frontier closes, however, this cowboy market visions begins to collapse. According to Wright Wild West imagery reflects individualism at the level of cultural entertainment, providing popular, painless understanding.³²

The western stories have offered a faraway, romantic and exotic land, place of adventure and thrills. But at the same time than it is recognized as particularly *American* story located to *American* past and defining *American* identity and values. President Ronald Reagan opened up the exhibition entitled "The American Cowboy" at 1983 by arguing that: "If we understand this part of our history, we will better understand how our people see themselves and the hopes they have for America".³³ The great western fan had point in his statement. However, even if the Wild West based on fragments and legends that can be located to certain era of American history and to certain location it is not the actual history of the West that dominates American self- understanding and neither Reagan's views but the myth of the Wild West created and flourished in popular culture.

As Aquila argues: "The pop culture West offers glimpses of America's self- identity, providing insights into American values, beliefs, and actions. It shows where Americans have been, where they are, and perhaps, where they are headed. Each generation has viewed the West differently, sometimes swinging wildly between romanticism and reality, or hope and despair. Through it all,

³² Wright 2001.

³³ Murdoch 2001, 1.

however, the pop culture West has survived, providing a unifying symbol for Americans divided by race, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, or region." The western story is prime example of morality play. The mythic West continues to demonstrate that Americans could succeed if they remained true to the spirit of the Old West that of retaining to self-reliance, independence, and sense of mission and adhere to the morality inherent.³⁴

The Wild West can be described a myth that reveals how Americans view themselves. Following David Hamilton Murdoch there are two alternative models of the myth available. American popular culture produced the image of the Wild West as part of modernization – urbanization, industrialization etc. – to tell a story about wilderness that was then a lost Eden. That is why many have seen lot of analogy between the Wild West and classic legend of King Arthur. It is seen to express need for great story among Americans. But the idea that America is a land without past and there is need for once own grand narrative is itself part of the western myth. In this reading the Wild West is like a primitive myth that serves "as a vehicle for transmitting to each generation what society believes is essential to the way it works, including its values. It does this symbolically through stories." In America a set of past experiences became a model for the present and future because Americans chose to see in them something crucial.

Another – and more plausible - way to use the myth originated from Claude Levi-Strauss. Myths as performing a specific function: they are a way dealing with the conflicts societies produces for their members. Thus stories of struggles and quests, gods and heroes act out the conflict symbolically. They are stories that explain away symbolic conflicts in society. They are most likely to arise as a means of dealing with a fundamental contradiction which compromises the core-values of the society.³⁵ Following to Aquila the Wild West can be mapped in to frontier "between civilization and wilderness, the past and progress, realism and nostalgia, and

³⁴ Aquila 1996, 13.

³⁵ Murdoch 2001, 12- 23.

ultimately between good and evil” and the myth of the Wild West serves community and a nation to solve these tensions.³⁶

In political rhetoric the Western myths has been put on the table when there has emerged tension between increasing demands for governmental help and resentment of government interference. Each time this dilemma has arisen the Western myth has been trotted out to defend the sanctity of individualism and self-reliance. The idea of the West has been involved in a special relationship with the American dream – that belief in the good society, in a special mission and in a destiny unique among nations. The Great West was America’s guarantee of her special destiny. Still there is no canonized interpretation of the Wild West mythology but in certain political struggles referring to western themes has been more characteristic to conservatives but at the same time western imagery has been a symbol of individuality and freedom from corrupted rules of conservative society.

A Fourth Layer?

How then relate the Wild West with the Civilized West? Are these two contrary and exclusive narrations or can they be intermingled? Even if their etymological similarity is perhaps more accident than purposeful or by using the same labeling, the West, is not openly and consciously referred to another tradition, I would argue, that this two narrations are related and entangled. That explains also why for example Kagan brought the Wild West to his criticism.

Both notions are invention of the late 19th century and the early 20th century. They are narrations of modernization to map civilization lines and also about superiority and including missionary aims of spreading civilization eastwards or westwards. In one fundamental sense these two are contrary. Discourse on the Civilized West - be it exclusive or inclusive - based on superiority of the core and the frontier is peripheral scene of action and often not so interesting place at all. In the Wild West mythology it is the frontier itself that constituted a sacred land, a source of virtue and

³⁶ Aquila 1996.

true soul. The frontier is a core and essential element in narrative emphasizing change and a new beginning when in contrary European West talks about continuity and stability.

The Wild West also turns its back to the East that is representing by Europeanized East coast and Europe itself. Or, at least certain elements of it. It is a take off from their values and their traditions. Modernization and progress are also core terms of the Civilized West when the Wild West is more anti-modern seeking true lost values from pre-modern past. On the other hand, it includes also bunch of optimistic belief of change and it recognize possibility for new beginning.

Both concepts are depicting division between us and them but their dichotomies are different. Civilized West based on dichotomies like civilized – barbarian, modern – backward, democracy – totalitarian, morality – decadence and so on. While the American West emphasized dichotomies like corrupted – honesty, mature – young, compulsion – freedom, collectivism – individualism, tamed – wilderness and cowardice – courage in which West locates on later side. In some sense its counterpart is the civilized West even if not all descriptions would have been accepted by other side. And, indeed if Kagan's argument is presented in popularized form Europe is caricatured as suave and posh and America as rugged and folksy, it fits excellently with divisions the myth of Wild West is depicting. Personal caricatures of Europe and America, or division of social classes, imply different understanding of required tools of securing world order. Kagan's argument about receding America and Europe can thus easily be anchored to the myth of the Wild West but has this narration used in current political discourse.

But the Wild West discourse does not depict exclusive borderline through its dominant binary oppositions but they merely defines direction of development that is possible to all. The myth of Wild West is narration of new beginning but it does not depict anti-Europe or is exclusive in relation to European tradition. Thus, I would argue that these two are not necessary contrary but merely the Wild West can be presented as fourth layer of the great western

tradition. The one that emphasizes a new beginning and represents a take off, but not total rejection of European tradition. Its relationship with European West is counter productive; it needs civilized West as its opposite but entering into wilderness of the frontier offers for civilized "easterners" option for rebirth. Again Kagan's argumentation followed this same logic by offering for Europe possibility for salvation if entering with the US in the new frontiers of civilization in the Middle East.

III CASE STUDY: *Visual representations of Wild West*

Caricatures and Comics

My presupposition has been that the Wild West imagery has been in used in the recent political debates and that these exercises are linked to discussion about differences between Europe and America. Are there empirical evidence for support this argument? And further, how in practice, the Wild West theme is used? What kind of otherness it is depicting? My brief studies indeed were successful. The Wild West imagery is used by various participants of debate and these various expressions include different interpretations and valuations of this imagery. What makes interpretation challenging is that material consist overwhelmingly visual representations. It includes political cartoons, caricatures, cover pictures but it is also engaged to western cloths and sceneries.

This paper departs from constructivist tradition of IR and interprets visual representation as narrations. Style of parody and irony is however even more open to various possible readings than text based documents but at the same time visual representations offer possibility to express something that is not possible in written form or to express that is more aggravated. I depart from conclusion that there is not single and exhausted interpretation but merely visual material is open for different readings but from this fluidity visual representations are source of alternative tensions and juxtaposing. I am reading my material in broad sense in context of securitization. As narration these images also draw border between us and them implicitly or explicitly. Binary opposition are tools of making fool and parody. However, the Other, the target of parody, can be depicted in

various form through exclusion or inclusion. In its extreme question is about “radical Other” that is kind of anti-self. But also “constitutive other” those who part of us are also source of mockery.³⁷

The classical story of the Wild West can be interpreted as securitizing narrative. In each story different threat is securitized – Indians, bad guys, cattle barons, corrupted lawmen, easterners or so on – and there is always community - a town, migrant community, family or something equivalent – under threat of outsider’s invasion that could concretely or morally destroy the community. That story would be possible and a threat successfully defended it requires the open frontier as framework of action. But what kind of story the Wild West can support in current political context? Is it still securitizing narrative and if so what is securitized? What is the community under threat?

Kagan is using his analogy to the Wild West to securitize Europe(ans) (saloonkeepers) and community that is threatened is US (sheriff). Saloonkeeper is serving drinks also to outlaws (Muslim militants, rogue states etc.) and is not supporting sheriff aims for recovering peace and order even if help is needed. Saloonkeeper is coward of the story while sheriff is natural hero. Broader question is however does this analogy hit the target – does it correspond with understanding of American and European roles among Americans. And, is the myth of the Wild West commonly used for legitimizing the US policy and in particular its relation with Europe? The answer is seemingly no. Even if there is available material in which western imagery is used as source of self-image, far more often western imagery has been used as a source political criticism. Within the latter group clear division between anti-Bush and anti-American criticism can be recognized.

Western themes are widely associated with George Bush Jr’s own image-building. Brief search would support the interpretation that this image-building is associated merely with non-verbal signs and

³⁷ Hansen 2007.

beside famous "dead or alive" expressions Bush seemingly does not refer or seek support from western mythology in similar manner like Reagan.³⁸ Western elements are visible in Bush's public image explicitly in his home Texas ranch and in a style of wearing western shirts and Stetson. Building up his own ranch can be interpreted as kind of political image building based on tradition set by Theodor Roosevelt in the early 20th century and continued by Lyndon Johnson in 1960s.³⁹ The ranch linked them to mythic Wild West – its heroes and values - and brought them closer to common people. Wearing the western wears holds same symbolism of referring to image of hard-working honest man.

This western image has only indirect linkage to international politics and Euro- American relations. Nonetheless, visits of international guests, including European leaders, to Bush's ranch has often offered imbalance relationship to American public even if most probable primary motivation has been to offer less formal setting for discussions. Taking off ties and more relaxing codes quite often does not fit to European leaders when Bush can easily switch from Washington look to his Texas ranch look.⁴⁰ Thus, the ranch has introduced alternative scene where civilized European manners does not anymore hold but which is solely American in its essence. It is sophisticated but bosh Europe that is juxtaposed against not so sophisticated but real America.

It is far more easy to find refers and usage of western themes in criticism of Bush and his regime. The western theme obviously offers one alternative to parody and making fool of Bush or America in general. Still there are recognizable variations in signs and symbols used in visual representations. Coherent motivation to all is to give face to impudent diplomacy of Bush for which Time magazine

³⁸ Murdoch 2001, 111- 115.

³⁹ Ibid., 66- 70, 107- 108.

⁴⁰ See example The Bush Ranch at Cowboy & Indian web- page <http://www.cowboysindians.com/articles/archives/1202/bush.html>

gave felicitous labeling: “cowboy diplomacy”.⁴¹ Bush foreign policy – its overall goals but in particular its tools and tone – are seen representing popular cultural tones foreign to real diplomacy. However, there is obvious difference among European, in particular Germans, and American criticism. For latter the target is particularly Bush and his regime when for the first target of criticism is the whole America and its hegemony.

All my examples of European usage of western themes can be traced to Germany. It consist mainly caricatures that tries to express in one picture dominant interpretation on American policy. Three examples are cover pictures of *Der Spiegel* in which western theme is used in visual representation of criticism for American policy but not in actual text. In first example Bush stands on the globe wearing western wear and enormous cowboy boots and he brandishes enormous guns. Text in the cover is “der kleine Sheriff”. My reading of caricature is that it tries to make fool of American struggle for world hegemony. References to Wild West imagery offers analogue between popular culture and international politics: they declared that that the world in not a Wild West town to which one Sheriff could return peace and order and that particular job is too demanding for Bush (17/2001). I another cover picture cowboy boots painted with American flag are negligently on the globe and in particular Europe that is recognizable in picture. You cannot see the whole cowboy but setting so familiar that you can only show his boots. Text in cover is “USA Die Herren der Welt” (36/1997). Third cover picture depicts again as in western wear and preparing for traditional western combat but he is like dwarf in comparison to his antagonist from whom is only shown his feet (10/2004). These three are however not exceptions but there series of other cover pictures criticizing America by using other more powerful visual symbolism. Rather many of recent covers associated to American hegemonic policy has hints religious or precisely Christian symbolism.

⁴¹ Mike Allen & Romesh Ratnesar: The End of Cowboy Diplomacy, Time, 17 July 2006.

In all three Bush and his policy but more generally USA are presented as burden for Europe. By using the Wild West imagery it is expressed and disapproved the US readiness to use violence and straight forward action for achieving hegemony. The Wild West is embodiment of something that is non-civilized and non-European. That is something that Europe is not sharing with US and thus presenting Bush in the Wild West scenery is orientalisising America – making it as anti-self. It may even argue that through Wild West imagery the US is even securitized and instead of presented as “friendly other” it has received features of “radical other”. The Bush and US is presented as a serious threat to the world peace and to the European future. Therefore, I believe that visual representation offers tools for more radical and felicitous othering the US than textual representations.

American usages of western theme as source of criticism and parody is more nuanced and its critic milder than European critic. Still, Bush’s foreign policy is labelled as “cowboy diplomacy” in Time magazine illustrated by front cover where cowboy has far too big cowboy hat. Criticism is targeted to Bush: “The biggest illusion of the Bush Doctrine was the idea that U.S. could carry out a strategy as ambitious as reshaping the Middle East and changing unfriendly regimes without a degree of international legitimacy and cooperation to back it up.”⁴² This kind of theme is familiar broadly to American criticism. References to the Wild West imagery are twofold. Narration of a lonely sheriff or a cowboy rescuing society that do not dare to rise against bad guys and who in the beginning suspects sheriff’s motivation and ability to secure community is the core of popular cultural western fiction. And, this is seen by many as model for Bush’s policy and his biggest mistake. On the other side, Bush is also presented as too impotent to fill boots of a true cowboy. That he has taken too ambitious role for him. This message does not challenge the value and eligibility of western tradition as such but argues that Bush is not a real cowboy. Beside above mentioned article there are several cartoons available in which Bush presented

⁴² Mike Allen & Romesh Ratnesar: The End of Cowboy Diplomacy, Time, 17 July 2006.

as a false sheriff or as huckster selling medicine elixir, namely democracy, but like true medicine shows offering only false promises.⁴³

This kind of criticism does not as such necessarily deny the myth of the Wild West – that is still perhaps so deeply anchored to American identity – but points that its values and in particular methods are not universally applicable and that foreign policy may not be right sphere adapting these models. If there is division made that is between civilized and I would argue Europeanised elite in America and un-civilised backwoods, namely Texans, and their attitudes. Thus division between Europe and America if it is drawn it is depicted within America. In comparison to European discourse there are no hints to US struggle for world hegemony but only abortive effort to settle Middle East and no overall criticism for the US role in the global politics. But importantly the Wild West theme is not used for contrasting US and Europe but making divisions within America. The narrative of the Wild West does not have unanimous fixation to American identity and Kagan's analogy offers merely just easy tool for parody than broadly shared legitimization of trans-Atlantic relations and American foreign policy.

The myth of the Wild West can be comprehended something that only Americans can appreciate and internalize because it is part of their identity narrative and it is one of cornerstones of unique Americanness and it symbolizes beginning of America as kind of anti-Europe. If that interpretation prevails every expressions and exercises of the Wild West imagery in the current political discourse are statements about difference between Europe and America and for uniqueness of America. Contrary European exercises of the Wild Western imagery can be then interpreted as rather extreme or strong statements about difference in values because the Wild West is something that Europe and America is not sharing. If reading only European exercises that could have been the case but when there is also a third category, Americans who used to parody Bush and his policy without making statement about Euro- American difference, it

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can be argued that division is not clear and the Wild West is not most cogent argument to build up exclusive division over the Atlantic. Perhaps because of its popular cultural fixation it is for too fluid and diverse.

Towards War On Culture

Is it possible to argue something new and fresh on the basis of use of the Wild West imagery about the trans-Atlantic shift? Does it support dominant scholarly debate about the troubled partnership? Or, is it just inconsequential exercise of certain broadly known popular cultural narrations.

I would like to return once again to Kagan. He argues that Europeans makes parody of Americans by labeling them as cowboys but according to Kagan that is really case – Americans are like cowboys and this proves difference between Europe and America. This statement refers more general constitutive position of the self/other relationship. The self is not just internal product but result of dialogue or reaction to what is seen to be outsider. Also, the notion of the West is influenced by reactions of non-western world – that of outsider. History of westernisers (for example in Russia, Turkey or Japan) is long but their discourse includes presupposition that the West is open community to which is possible to join by adapting certain criteria.⁴⁴ Another extreme reaction to *outside-in* relation with the West and rest is what Buruma and Margalit call as Occidentalism that is opposite to Orientalism, intellectual dimension of colonization.⁴⁵ Occidentalism produced the West as uniform and homogenous other or even enemy that legitimize resistance and political actors supporting it. In that discourse the West is constituted from outside as exclusive unit and open challenge is presented. Therefore the West can be constituted exclusively also from outside and this continuously repeated expressions of the West as archenemy may have surprising influence on western discourse about themselves in particular in times the notion of the West has lost its constant interpretation within the West like in these days.

⁴⁴ Bonnett 2004, 11- 13.

⁴⁵ Buruma & Margalit 2005.

Danish cartoon episode in 2006 is good example of this kind dialogue or double securitisation. In Danish case it all started from visual securitisations of the Islam by cartoons caricaturing Prophet Muhammed. The Islam was presented as the radical other of Denmark (or Europe or West) and it was presented as a threat by making mockery about religious symbols. Reactions to this were harsh and were consciously agitated by extreme groupings. Occidentalistic rhetoric, presenting the West as uniform evil, prevailed and spread over Muslim society within and outside Europe. The result of double securitising was dominance of harsh and exclusive rhetoric underlying clash of civilizations in the western media. Thus, it is even argued that the power of defining the West (or particularly Danish society) split to the outsider as result of conflict.⁴⁶

Is it possible to sketch out similar kind of constellation between Europe and America? Do the other's opinions and reaction would require counter- reactions? Critic and parody of what is seen as core of own national narration may strengthen this element and exclusionary tendencies in general. The Wild West imagery is this kind of phenomena that is seen belonging to national identity cluster in America but in Europe interpreted as belonging solely to popular culture and representing a false history and thus false model for real policy. But process has not followed same lined than for example Danish cartoon conflict that supported exclusive civilization identities in both sides. There is no strong counter-reaction and defense of the Wild West in American political debate – Kagan stands mainly alone – and American criticism also seek its analogies from the Wild West. Harsh criticism and challenge of one of core American narrations has thus not led each one's entrenching behind exclusive barricades and defense of the Wild West. Instead, the usage of the Wild West as source of parody is shared on the both sides of the Atlantic. It may be so that national symbolism of the Wild West has been declining and it is not seen symbol of unique American way. In practice, even positive usage of the Wild West imagery has changed more pop- culture orientated. The Wild West

⁴⁶ Hansen 2007; Joenniemi

offers a store house for style and identity that politicians as well as other pop stars can use when build up their public personal image.

On the other hand, the harsh criticism has not gone without notice and reactions. Anti-American visual representations in German media have been noticed in the US. One interesting example is interne blog called Davids Medienkritikonline that declared to be "politically incorrect observations on reporting in the German media".⁴⁷ One of the new tensions in the troubled partnership that emerged after the 9/11 has been growing literature in the US about European anti-Americanism. An excellent example is Russell A. Berman's *Anti-Americanism in Europe. A cultural problem* (2004). He argues that "European anti-Americanism is the primary cultural and ideological substance for the otherwise only bureaucratic process of European unification." He more or less depicts Europe as kind of Anti-America. What is interesting that one of main targets of his criticism is Germany. Andrei Markovits accompanies Berman in his book *Uncouth Nation; Why Europe dislikes America* (2007). He stressed that "the aversion to America is becoming greater, louder, more determined" and see even parallels between anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism. Someone has reacted to German parodies of America. Thus, it can be even argued that in certain level there are signs of "cultural war" between America and Europe and, in particularly Germany, but the Wild West is acting only partial role in that new front on which confrontation are time to time more striking than in Kagan's book.

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⁴⁷ <http://medienkritik.typepad.com/blog/>

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