

English Abstract

The "West" is a widely used concept in everyday talk, the news media, and even academic texts. People often talk about "Western society", "Western culture" or "Western people", but they rarely explain exactly what they mean with these terms. Just as Edward Said in his book "Orientalism" observed how the Europeans have felt at ease naming things and people "Oriental", there are situations, events, and encounters during which it seems important or natural to call objects, people, and ideas "Western". The "West" is particularly evoked and actualized when an object of attention is compared with, or contrasted to, something that is experienced as "non-Western".

In this book the West is discussed as a concept, narrative, ideological construction, world view, and imagined community in a variety of historical contexts. The authors of the book analyze ideas such as science, Enlightenment, and democracy, and how they have been narrated as Western phenomena. Some of the authors describe the rhetoric of a common "enemy" seen as threatening the whole of Western society and culture: the Soviet Union during Finland's Continuation War, the Chinese and Japanese "Yellow Peril", or Islam and Social Democracy as Anders Behring Breivik has construed them. The writers also explore the idea of "westernisation", the demise of Western civilisation, and East Asian attitudes to the West.

The objective of the book is to contextualize, problematize, and critically examine this fuzzy idea and concept; to show how the West is a constructed and reproduced discourse used to organize and articulate an imagined world; and how at the same time it is also a real, though fluctuating, geopolitical entity.