

## GERMANY AND THE CULTURAL HISTORY OF POST-WORLD-WAR-II EUROPE

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**Abstract:** Polychronis Enepekides (1917-2014), an Austrian historian of Greek origin, contends that Second World War worldview and its aesthetics in regard to international understanding and forgiving reconciliations in the aftermath faced a tremendous recession. Female suffrage, a series of profound changes and reforms in the constitutions and legal systems, and a spirit of civic universalism declared a New World order imbued with American principles in post-war Western Europe. Nevertheless, society retained its role of reasserting *pre-existing class divisions*. A conservative and even conformist attitude in daily activities during the 1950s reflected gender within societal norms. The family was prioritised over other aspirations of liberation and sexual freedom, even though the latter was performed in or away from marital status relationships. The world and civic order imposed by national, social institutions and communities, such as education and the churches or other religious communities, defined new social and interpersonal behavioural norms in the long reconstruction process and resorted to a new normality.

Western Europe was defined as a class society even after 1945. The middle class was prevalent amidst the Cold War, and *economy, political life, and the resources of the state were all aligned in ways that served the interests of the middle class, which itself was expanding and changing as a consequence of processes of economic and social modernisation* (Conway 2020, 202).

Enepekides highlights the aesthetics in terms of public address: modernism, gender, class and mass culture, post-modern diplomacy, state order and post-war narrative in Western democracy. In this common ground, one can observe his

constant concern with the interface that belies the international links shared between modern and post-modern world (both Asian and European) in terms of geopolitical alliances and transnational cultural interconnections.

**Keywords:** Weimar Republic, The Third Reich, Second World War, cultural history, Europe, Polychronis Enepekides

## INTRODUCTION

The Cultural History of Post-World War II German-speaking world is invariably bound to the War History and the concomitant aesthetics accompanying the series of events. The end of the Holy Roman Empire (1800-1806), the so-called First Reich, was marked by the Napoleonic Wars (of the years between 1803 and 1815) that reached a hallmark point at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. The declaration of German Confederation (1815-1871) enacted unification, designated Austria and Prussia as dominant member states over which they maintained the inherent right to rule German lands, and ended up in favour of Prussia after the Seven Weeks' War of 1866. It is evident that it led to the creation of North German Confederation under Prussian leadership in 1867 and the establishment of Austria-Hungary under the Habsburg dynasty.

The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 was followed by the establishment of the Second German Empire (The Second Reich) in 1871 under Prussian leadership. The Weimar Republic (1919-1933) in Germany marked the interwar period, which was identified as an interim period of democracy.

The Third Reich, which nowadays is commonly known as Nazi occupation, has laid the foundations of a thirty-year-long post-war period that was indelibly chromatised by a two-sided perception of war atrocities not only in terms of geopolitics but also in terms of culture and institutional changes. The vertical discrimination between 'good' and 'evil' has not always been the case for a 'conscious' interpretation of the recent past, even though it fed the

‘post-war emergencies’ on subjects related to societal reformation and industrial reconstruction.

## MAIN SUBJECT

Now the West Berliners know once again that they do not stand alone in the struggle for freedom. The West has not forgotten us. (1962 report)

A key element in terms of politics was neutrality, which nowadays stands predominantly as a Cold War aesthetics or a permanent trend of a ‘just war’ tradition. In the twentieth and early twenty-first century, neutrality was led by non-belligerent politics in war and an ongoing non-yielding in world affairs in peace. During the sixties, it was also a hallmark of the repercussions of World Wars in Central European domains. Geopolitical reasons deliberately coloured the situation, acting in the nineteenth century as *a tool of diplomacy and statecraft*.

The Congress of Vienna (1815), following the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), marked a starting point of a hundred years through the commencement of First World War (1914), in which neutrality acted as *a vibrant and essential part of the international system that was presided over by the European Great Powers*. (Abbenhuis 2014, 12). Polychronis Enepekides employs the Congress System recurrently in a form that aims to deliver his purpose for a historical, geopolitical, and cultural imprint of Modern Greek World in Diaspora, as well as the dissemination of Germanophone post-modern spirit to contemporary Athenian Greek media (that is, articles in Athenian Greek newspapers and the Greek television, as well as radio broadcasting) during the sixties.

Polychronis Enepekides lived in a period of time foreshadowed by Cold War being underway, First World War which preceded, and Second World War that was still leaving a strong impact in the wake. I therefore review Enepekides’ writings both in the Greek press and

his book publications via a five-fold theoretical scheme, which maps the post-war decades in Central Europe. Amidst the Cold War, they were identified as mass culture, class, gender, new modernism, and post-war democracy.

According to Martin Conway:

For those who had experienced only the fascist and authoritarian regimes of the recent past, democracy was initially less a matter of conviction than a new form of conformism, imposed by military defeat and foreign conquest. (Conway 2020, 200).

After the Second World War, the film industry called for its instrumentalisation as a form of *re-education* (Carrie Smith-Prei 2013, 143). In this context, the configuration of *national visual memory* within the global news market (via *Fox Toenende Wochenschau*) was forged under the Allied Powers' report monitoring, production control, and surveillance broadcasting.

The post-war visual culture was determined by a hallmark event that marked Cold War in terms of military and political significance. In the art sector, the Berlin Wall, erected in 1961, received global recognition for its ability to raise the German people's national consciousness, even on a long-term rigorous process of unfaithfulness and deceit (that is, the years the Wall's placement remained). The German principles formed a uniform set of post-Enlightenment artistic ideas that could hinder the divide in substance, and convert the symbolism of the Wall into a dual German national representation to the global geopolitical and cultural arena.

Nevertheless, the perspective can be seen as romantic, given that, according to Lenin's view of the Soviet World, the official soviet art is defined as *part of the general Party work* (Groys 2003, 58) serving the *great Central Plan* in its unity. Moreover, the perception was dominant ever after Stalin's death in 1953 and was endorsed by the unofficial art scene, which operated in parallel to the official cultural production, aiming at engagement with *Western and Russian modernist traditions* (Groys 2003, 55).

Enepekides features *the East Side of the Berlin Wall as the one “of shame”* (Enepekides 1970, 33), *placing a rivalry towards opposing powers*, the Soviet Allies. In a media report from 1961, the Soviet Allies were identified as *aggressive and responsible for all consequences*. Aligned with Enepekides’ narrative in another report, also recorded in 1961, the Berlin Wall is declared as *‘the most shameful building of the Ulbricht regime, a barrier which inhumanely blocks its disenfranchised citizens the way to the better Germany*. Another report of the same year assertively argues that *freedom and human dignity end in the streets of East Berlin*. Within these assumptions, the means of mass media brought the ceiled proof-of-evidence to the fore how Enepekides leveraged and then disseminated his knowledge to the Greek readership in Greece.

The political newsreel reported to the US in 1962 declared West Germany as the *free West* and the *free part of Germany*. The American Allies were depicted bonded to *Western* political ideas that West Germany should conform to via a subcutaneous thread of geopolitical identification on *its content and personalities*.

The Soviet Allies in East Germany, characterised as dictators and the rulers of the zone, stressed the occupational status of Eastern German territory. In order to eliminate the division’s separative character, the media *Fox Toenende Wochenschau* in 1961 configured a *we* that was built upon the principle of societal non-inclusiveness, thereby forming a vertical discrimination between the *self* and the *alien*.

The showcase of leading personalities reflecting *Western values* demonstrates the profound interrelation between Western politicians such as Konrad Adenauer and J.F. Kennedy. Enepekides’ references to the presidency of Adenauer as a communicative feature of his writing speech designates the persona-centred aesthetics of his Age in terms of domestic and transnational politics (Enepekides 1970, 32). The historian maps post-war West Germany bearing strong anchors to his political persona. His catchword, *the country of Adenauer*, as a recurrent light motif embedded in the

narrative, paid tribute to his politics and buttressed his service to the official state order.

Adenauer was highly engaged in immediate post-war aesthetics that prioritised the nonexclusive attribution to Hitler and the NSDAP elite of a narrowly conceived accountability for the tremendous turnout to Nazi occupation. The view was placed against the one alluding to the Nuremberg Tribunals that fiercely asserted the targeting of Nazi perpetrators. In politics leading the consensus, the moral decay of the Weimar Republic hatched the darkness of the immediate Nazi past so that only the moral order represented by the Christian faith could reform the state ahead into the future. Enepekides was aligned with the non-conviction policy towards the Nazi past and the identification of Nazi perpetrators, away from any unconditional statement of accusation.

Nevertheless, the latter stands with West Germany's official worldview, which deliberately bolstered a purging to the atrocities and perpetrators who were deemed accountable for their commitment to stand against the virulent Soviet Union's presence in terms of an Eastern occupation within the German domain. In this frame, CDU promoted a certain 'reconception' of the immediate Nazi past partially as a post-war counterweight to reinstate national order via a moderate conservative power model. Enepekides favoured a linear historical narrative eager to encompass all phases of German history, either belligerent or in peace, even though he stood for a vertical opposition between 'good' and 'evil' that permeated across West and East Germany. The soviet occupation zone of Germany (1945-1949), later identified as East Germany (1949-1990), underscored an opposition where Soviets accused Nazis of war atrocities.

The Nazis' conviction over the Nuremberg Tribunals (as aforementioned, the Weimar decay acting as an alibi), the role of the Red Army and targeting the Soviets found an era that followed the Third Reich dimmed in regard to its origins. In this simplistic account of National Socialism, all Germans were victims of Hitler's atrocities and war crimes, unduly burdened by the Weimar past that

triggered darkness with aspects of an amoral materialistic splendour. Adenauer adopted the Western US-pivoted cultural demands to embed them into a post-war West German state policy where art and politics could occupy different positions concerning the past, both of which bolstered Adenauer's agenda. CDU and the *Weimar avant-garde* acted as the non-uniform post-war antidote to the Nazi past.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, the rise of military and economic prevalence of the US reflects the Second World War remnants in terms of cultural past and geopolitics. The divided Germany as a dichotomised nation was an ideological and geopolitical arena of oppositional powers in the Cold War. The National Socialist perpetrators aimed to define the post-war narrative. The Western canon commanded a culturally and socio-politically mediated memorialisation of victims and critical philosophical negotiations in terms of a due judgment of the Holocaust. In other words, it complied with a canonisation process serving the Western market norms.

Unlikely, Enepekides' perception of post-war culture was determined in terms of an ever-dominant still-war aesthetics or at least a Nazi-chromatised belligerent world panorama.

Nevertheless, the term *modern* within the Nazi imperial frame of retrospection seems entirely irrelevant or at least controversial.

Enepekides highlights the visual elucidating a Nazi understanding as a culturally even dark precedent to the post-war crisis that shook the grounds of Germany in terms of cultural representation. His perception fostered the consciousness vital to a uniform acceptance of the past. The assumptions could lead to the reinstatement of German splendour in the global arena and the concession that God and 'evilness' are invariably among, or within us.

Film studies were one of the central components of the analysis, as was art history, memory preservation, its showcase, and the aesthetic process of memorialisation. By broadening Nazi architecture’s visual perspective from different moments in time and place, scholarly viewpoint, and Enepekides’ concession to that one, prioritises an integrated Nazi past.

In his narrative, Second World War aesthetics has a prevalent role being delivered via the principles of awareness and empathy, and a high regard for the supreme German state order that governed his mindset to assert an unconditional, unanimous understanding and global recognition of an all-encompassing German-speaking unified European World.

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