

# American-European Relations in U. S. World History Textbooks, 1921-2001

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***Abstract:** This article studies U.S. views of the historical relationship between the U.S. and Europe as conceived during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is examined through U.S. World history textbooks dating from 1921 to 2001. The textbooks view relations within a general teleological narrative of progress through democracy and technology. Generally, the textbooks stress the significance of the English heritage to American society. From the American Revolution onwards, however, the U.S. stands as an example to Europe. Beginning with the two world wars, it also intervenes directly in Europe in order to save democracy. In the Cold War, the U.S. finally acknowledges the leading role it has been assigned in the world. Through its democratic ideals, the U.S. historically has a special relationship with Great Britain and, by the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Western Europe in general. An American identity is established both in conjunction with Western Europe, by emphasizing their common democratic tradition, and in opposition to it, by stressing how the Americans have developed this tradition better than the Europeans, creating a more egalitarian and libertarian society. There is a need for Europe to become more like the U.S., and a Europe that does not follow the American lead is viewed with suspicion.*

***Keywords:** The United States—Europe—textbooks—democracy—identity—narrative*

There has been some debate on the development of the relationship between the United States of America and its European allies after the end of the Cold War, especially in connection with the Iraq war of 2003. The

American invasion of Iraq drew criticism from many Europeans for being irresponsible, whilst many Americans labeled Europeans, the French in particular, as ungrateful and cowardly. Some scholars even spoke of a new “anti-Europeanism” in the USA, corresponding to the more well-established concept of “anti-Americanism”.<sup>1</sup>

In my view, such images and attitudes are not inconsequential. Even assuming that states and nations are governed by their interests, these interests are not given by nature but must be constructed and defined by some agents. Identity is essential; before we know who we are, we cannot know what our interests are. We can interpret the world around us in different ways, depending on our perceptions of ourselves and others and, not least, our historical culture. Arguably, U.S. foreign policy has been strongly influenced by specific enemy images. I work from a constructivist perspective stressing the importance of factors such as identity, ideology and historical consciousness of international relations.<sup>2</sup>

American attitudes to Europe might be better understood in a historical context. This includes “anti-Europeanism”, if there is such a thing; for even though it may have its main causes in contemporary politics, it makes use of metaphors and conceptions that have a history. The question therefore is, how have Americans conceived of their relationship with Europe? To some extent this also involves images of Europe more generally, but as I have written on this elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> I will here particularly focus on the American view of its relations to Europe and European countries. Of course, images of Europe and its place in the world will influence how American-European relations are conceived, and consequently they, too, will be discussed here to some extent. But the main focus is not on American images of Europe in general but on the roles America and Europe are thought to have played in relation to each other—not in relation to others—and to their dealings with each other.

- 1 Timothy Garton Ash, “The New Anti-Europeanism in America”, in Tod Lindberg (ed.), *Beyond Paradise and Power: Europe, America and the Future of a Troubled Relationship*, New York: Routledge, 2005.
- 2 Erik Ringmar, *Identity, Interest and Action: A Cultural Explanation of Sweden's Intervention in the Thirty Years War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996; David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, Manchester: Manchester University Press 1998; Richard Crockatt, *America Embattled: September 11, Anti-Americanism, and the Global Order*, London: Routledge 2003, pp. 8-38; Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008.
- 3 Martin Alm, “Europe in American World History Textbooks,” forthcoming in *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*.

There is a considerable body of scholarly work on European images of America but far less on American images of Europe. There are some studies on American relations with specific European countries, often focusing on diplomatic, military and commercial relations,<sup>4</sup> but there are few studies that take a more comprehensive view of American images of Europe. In a short 1960 essay, Daniel Boorstin sketches such an image and maintains that it was structured by the idea of Europe as the antithesis of the United States; Europe was marked by poverty, repression and decadence, whereas the USA was affluent, free and vigorous. After the First World War, Americans set out to transform Europe in their own image.<sup>5</sup> In a larger study from 1963, Cushing Strout investigates American attitudes to Europe from the American Revolution to the postwar era and arrives at findings similar to Boorstin's: the USA and Europe have consistently been positioned as each other's opposites, with Europe as an ancient site of the past and the USA as the youthful promised land of the future.<sup>6</sup> In a later study, John Lamberton Harper explores the ideas of Europe in three politically influential 20th-century Americans and finds a fundamental ambivalence which, according to him, is representative of the USA at large. Franklin D. Roosevelt wanted to dismantle European imperialism and world dominance without the USA being forced to assume a leading international role; George F. Kennan wanted a strong Europe that would render American internationalism unnecessary; and Dean Acheson vacillated between trying to control Europe and making it stand on its own legs.<sup>7</sup>

There are some other studies which touch upon American attitudes to Europe in general. They find that Americans tended to associate Europe with inequality, war and secret diplomacy and tried, until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, to keep aloof from them politically. By 1900, there was a rapprochement between the USA and Great Britain, emphasizing commonalities of culture and political tradition, "Anglo-Saxonism". Suspicion of the British "class

4 John Lewis Gaddis, *Russia, the Soviet Union and the United States: An Interpretative History*, New York: Wiley, 1978; Hans Gatzke, *Germany and the United States: A "Special Relationship?"*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980; David Dimbleby & David Reynolds, *An Ocean Apart: The Relationship Between Britain and America in the Twentieth Century*, New York, Vintage Books, 1988.

5 Daniel J. Boorstin, "America and the Image of Europe", in *America and the Image of Europe: Reflections on American Thought*, New York: Meridian Books, 1960, pp. 19-39.

6 Cushing Strout, *The American Image of the Old World*, New York: Harper & Row, 1963.

7 John Lamberton Harper, *American Visions of Europe: Franklin D. Roosevelt, George F. Kennan, and Dean Acheson*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

system” lingered on, however. After the two world wars, the Americans attempted to remold Europe and create a new, liberal world order.<sup>8</sup> This also largely applies to the attitudes in American history textbooks in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>9</sup>

## Material

In order to access somewhat more basic American attitudes to Europe than those expressed in current political debate, I have studied a number of American textbooks in World History from 1921 to 2001. My starting point is that the images of the past presented in history textbooks influence people’s identities and, to some extent, also their relations to other peoples and states. Textbooks are both cause and effect. They are products of the cultural identities, values and specific power relations in a society, which determine what is to be written in them. At the same time, they are also a power in themselves, as they in their turn influence people and societies. They may be said to express the self-image of their society and to largely mirror knowledge and values that are taken for granted there. They both follow from and constitute part of a society’s historical culture, i.e., the ways wherein history is communicated in that society and the conditions—the instruments, contexts and norms—under which this takes place.<sup>10</sup> Thus, textbooks may be expected both to repeat existing images and ideas of Europe

- 8 Bradford Perkins, *The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1895-1914*, New York: Ateneum, 1968, pp. 6, 8, 79f; N. Gordon Levin, jr, *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics: America's Response to War and Revolution*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1968, pp. 2-4, 37-41; David Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance 1937-1941: A Study in Competitive Co-operation*, London: Europa Publications, 1981, pp. 23f; David Fromkin, *In the Time of the Americans: FDR, Truman, Eisenhower, Marshall, MacArthur—The Generation That Changed America's Role in the World*, Basingstoke: MacMillan 1995, pp. 19, 66-71, 74.
- 9 Ruth Miller Elson, “American Schoolbooks and ‘Culture’ in the Nineteenth Century”, *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol. 46: 3 (1959), pp. 420, 426, 434; Joseph Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation: Conflicts over American History Textbooks from the Civil War to the Present*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004, pp. 102-106, 134, 178f, 182f.
- 10 Keith Crawford, “Researching the Ideological and Political Role of the History Textbook—Issues and Methods”, in *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research*, vol. 1 (2000), p. 1; Klas-Göran Karlsson, “The Holocaust as a Problem of Historical Culture: Theoretical and Analytical Challenges”, in Klas-Göran Karlsson & Ulf Zander (eds.), *Echoes of the Holocaust: Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe*, Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2003, pp. 30-38; Niklas Ammert, “Om läroböcker och studiet av dem”, in Niklas Ammert (ed.), *Att spegla världen. Läromedelsstudier i teori och praktik*, Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2011, p. 32.

and of American-European relations and to affect these images and ideas. This makes them a relevant source material for a study such as this one. To assess the impact of textbooks on students more precisely is difficult; but at least they seem still to be very important to the teaching of history in American schools.<sup>11</sup>

In the USA, World History is a one-year course in high school, introduced in the wake of the American entrance into the First World War in 1917. The course long stressed Western history and became more global in character only in the 1970s. The course is usually optional, in contrast with the courses in American history.<sup>12</sup> There are few studies that have been based on World History textbooks. Still, in exploring U.S. images of the world over time, they are a more obvious choice than American history textbooks, where, according to Frances FitzGerald, references to the rest of the world and even to American foreign relations are sparse before the 1950s.<sup>13</sup>

Normally, textbooks are governed by a textbook tradition, which leads them to change relatively slowly. However, Janne Holmén has found Norwegian, Swedish, and Finnish textbooks from the cold war era to be fairly sensitive to political changes in society. This was true of social science textbooks more than of history textbooks, though, and of contemporary history more than of older history.<sup>14</sup>

A final note should be made on the conditions of the U.S. textbook market. About half of the American states apply state adoption, which means that a list of textbooks that schools may choose from is made on the state level. The other states leave this decision to the individual school districts.

11 Marvin Herschel Berman, *The Treatment of the Soviet Union and Communism in Selected World History Textbooks, 1920-1970*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1976, p. 24; Robert Lerner, Althea K. Nagai & Stanley Rothman, *Molding the Good Citizen: The Politics of High School History Texts*, Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1995, pp. 152f; Gilbert T. Sewall, "World History Textbooks: A Review", *A Report of the American Textbook Council*, New York, 2004, p. 17.

12 Gary B. Nash, Charlotte Crabtree & Ross E. Dunn, *History on Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past*, New York: Vintage Books, 2000, pp. 207-211; M. Berman, pp. 2, 65.

13 Frances FitzGerald, *America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century*, Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1979, pp. 128f.

14 Crawford, p. 1. Klas-Göran Karlsson, "Läroboken och makten—ett komplicerat förhållande", in Niklas Ammert (ed.), *Att spegla världen. Läromedelsstudier i teori och praktik*, Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2011, pp. 46, 49f; Sture Långström, *Författarröst och lärobokstradition. En historiedidaktisk studie*, Umeå: Umeå University, 1997, 210, 213; Janne Holmén, *Den politiska läroboken. Bilden av USA och Sovjetunionen i norska, svenska och finländska läroböcker under Kalla kriget*, Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2006, pp. 325, 328-330.

Textbook publishers have therefore had to adapt to states with differing agendas by analyzing the demands of the states, the tests given to the students and the expectations of teachers and school leaders. This makes them sensitive to political pressure.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, although it is not possible to find out which textbooks have been most widely used, it seems unlikely that there would be any dramatic differences between general textbooks at any given time. Textbooks aimed at the public educational system would scarcely depart much from mainstream views. I have also tried to use textbooks from well-established publishing houses, and for textbooks published before 1970, I have mostly relied on Marvin Berman's *The Treatment of the Soviet Union*, where he uses books reported to have had "fairly wide usage".<sup>16</sup> The chosen time-frame for this study, 1921 to 2001, is motivated by the introduction of the World History course following the First World War and by the Iraq War in 2003.

### **Background: Narrative Themes and Focus**

I have found that a consistent dominant theme in European history as presented by American World History textbooks during the whole period of study is the development of democracy, defined as government by the consent of the governed and as individual freedom of choice. The entire history of Europe is framed by this basic plot.<sup>17</sup> A second important theme in most

15 Ian Westbury, "Textbooks, Textbook Publishers, and the Quality of Schooling", in David L. Elliot & Arthur Woodward (eds.), *Textbooks and Schooling in the United States*, Chicago, 1990, pp. 2, 8, 13; James R. Squire & Richard T. Morgan, "The Elementary and High School Textbook Market Today," in Elliot & Woodward (eds.), pp. 115, 119f; Sewall, pp. 12f.

16 M. Berman, pp. 11f.

17 See e.g. Hutton Webster, *World History*, Boston: D. C. Heath & Co., 1921, pp. 82, 265, 272, 282, 290, 358-361, 410-412, 478, 623; Edwin G. Pahlow, *Man's Great Adventure: An Introduction to World History*, Boston: Ginn & Co., 1932, pp. 166, 494, 502, 558-561, 574f, 581, 593, 665, 692f, 828-830; Lester B. Rogers, Fay Adams & Walker Brown, *Story of Nations*, New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1940, pp. 106, 112f, 178, 319f, 323-325, 361-364, 389, 400f, 653f, 656, 697, 716, 726-728; Carl Becker, Sidney Painter & Yu-Shan Han, *The Past that Lives Today*, New York: Silver Burdett Co., 1952, pp. 4f, 56, 147, 222, 250-252, 348, 422, 464, 487, 500, 733f; A. Wesley Roehm, Morris R. Buske, Hutton Webster & Edgar B. Wesley, *The Record of Mankind*, Boston: D. C. Heath & Co., 1965, pp. 44, 48, 146, 180, 244, 257, 306-308, 480; Daniel Roselle, *Our Common Heritage: A World History*, Lexington: Ginn & Co., 1984, pp. 80, 269, 341, 344, 350-352, 398; William Travis Hanes III (ed.), *World History: Continuity & Change*, Austin: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1999, pp. 397, 451, 718, 844; Mounir A. Farah & Andrea Berens Karls, *World History: The Human Experience*, New York: Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, 2001, pp. 101-103, 119, 310, 419, 525, 530, 534, 542, 568, 648, 1022.

of the books is the evolution of modern science and technology, giving mankind increasing mastery over nature and furthering democracy by habituating people to free and rational thought.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the historical narrative largely assumes a teleological character, depicting democracy's triumph in its struggle with the forces of darkness. The heroes are mostly middle class, scientists and liberal reformers (Gladstone, Wilson); the villains are autocratic monarchs, entrenched aristocracies and orthodox religion, to some extent the extreme radicals, and, of late, also the totalitarian dictators (Louis XIV, Metternich, Hitler, Stalin).<sup>19</sup>

Until the 1970s, the focus of World History textbooks is clearly on Europe; other parts of the world mostly become of interest mainly in relation to Europe. It is Western civilization that is the driving force of progress in the world, and this civilization has its roots in Western Europe. Oftentimes the concept of "Europe" in practice stands for Western Europe, whilst Eastern Europe is left out.<sup>20</sup> This is not always the case, however. The difference between Western and Eastern Europe is explained by the religious and

- 18 See e.g. Pahlow, 1932, pp. 528f, 568-571, 587f, 617; Rogers et al., 1940, pp. 277, 403f; Walter Wallbank & Alastair M. Taylor, *Civilization: Past and Present*, Published for the United States Armed forces by Scott, foresman & Co., 1944, vol., I, pp. 368, 371, and vol. II, pp. 37-43, 48-57, 186-191; Becker et al., pp. 264, 328, 430f, 532; Emma Peters Smith, David Saville Muzzey & Minnie Lloyd, *World History: The Struggle for Civilization*, Boston: Ginn & Co., 1952, pp. 487-498; Nataniel Platt & Muriel J. Drummond, *Our World through the Ages*, Engelwood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1959, pp. 222-228, 516f; Hanes (ed.), pp. 402-409, 457; Farah & Karls, pp. 521, 626-628.
- 19 See e.g. Webster, pp. 176, 297, 364; Henry W. Elson, *Modern Times and the Living Past*, New York: American Book Co., 1928, pp. 247, 407, 433ff; James Harvey Robinson & Emma Peters Smith, *Our World today and Yesterday: A History of Modern Civilization*, Boston: Ginn & Co., 1932, pp. 205-208, 255f, 258, 273; Pahlow, 1932, pp. 625-630; R. O. Hughes, *The Making of Today's World*, Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1937, p. 371, 481; Smith et al., pp. 1, 129, 196, 245-248, 280; Becker et al., pp. 223-228, 264; William Habberton & Lawrence V. Roth, *Man's Achievements through the Ages*, New York: Laidlaw Brothers, 1956, pp. 222, 258, 326, 328f, 387; Platt & Drummond, pp. 135, 252, 264-266, 271, 288-290, 298; F. Kenneth Cox, Miriam Greenblatt & Stanley Seaberg, *Human Heritage: A World History*, Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1981, pp. 347; Sol Holt & John R. Connor, *Exploring World History: A Global Approach Ages*, New York: Globe Book Company, 1983, pp. 257, 262, 351f, 492, 568; Roselle, pp. 267, 318, 341, 368; Larry S. Krieger, Kenneth Neill & Steven L. Jantzen, *World History: Perspectives on the Past*, Lexington. Mass.: D. C. Heath & Co., 1992, p. 697; Elisabeth Gaynor Ellis & Anthony Esler, *World History: Connections to Today*, Upper Saddle river, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1999, p. 469; Hanes (ed.), pp. 390, 462f; Farah & Karls, pp. 302, 480, 493, 560.
- 20 Webster, pp. 540; Pahlow, 1932, pp. 398f, 741; Hughes, pp. 367, 369; Wallbank & Taylor, p. 32; Edwin G. Pahlow, *Man's Great Adventure: An Introduction to World History*, Boston: Ginn & Co., 1949, p. 525f; Becker et al., pp. v, 173, 318, 821f; Smith et al., p. vif, 283, Habberton & Roth, pp. 218; 549; Lester B. Rogers, Fay Adams & Walker Brown, *Story of Nations*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1960, p. 218; Holt & O'Connor, p. 549. Hanes (ed.), pp. 360, 418; Farah & Karls, pp. 292, 316.

cultural split between Rome and Byzantium, separating Russia and much of Eastern Europe from the Western sphere. Whether Russia is a part of Europe or not is unclear.<sup>21</sup>

In many cases, rather than speaking of Europe or Western Europe, the textbooks prefer speaking of the West, which includes not only Western Europe but Anglo-America, Australia and New Zealand as well. This is particularly common after the Second World War, although the concept of the West is present already in Hutton Webster's 1921 textbook, and Edwin Pahlow in 1932 speaks of "Euro-America" in the same sense.<sup>22</sup> The West is not primarily a geographic but a cultural concept, representing the values of democracy, individualism, rationality and technology—in short, of modernity, more or less as conceived by classic modernization theory.

When, starting in the 1970s, the overall focus of the World History textbooks changes to devote considerably more space to the historical societies and cultures of Asia, Africa and South America, European history is no longer identified with world history, which means that less prominence is given to "western" topics. Yet, in those parts of the textbooks that continue to deal with European history, the basic historical framing remains the same.

### **America and Europe**

As American history is a subject with its own, mandatory courses, the USA is mostly mentioned only peripherally in the World History books; when it is mentioned, it is due to its dealings and relations with other parts of the world or, occasionally, its being an integrated part of Western civilization and its evolution. In addition, some of the books are fond of comparing or contrasting other cultures in history with the American society of their own day. The USA figures above all in connection with English and British history, the American Revolution, the two world wars and the Cold War. Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it mostly stands aloof from the events of European history as presented in the textbooks.

21 Elson, p. 612; Pahlow, 1932, p. 588; Robinson & Smith, p. 213; Hughes, p. 519; Rogers et al., 1940, p. 88; Habberton & Roth, p. 367; Platt & Drummond, p. 276f; Roehm et al., p. 228; Cox, p. 296, 333, 336; Krieger, Neill & Jantzen, p. 448; Ellis & Esler, pp. 246, 248; Hanes (ed.), p. 239f; Farah & Karls, pp. 262f, 498.

22 Webster, pp. 89, 179; Pahlow, 1932, pp. v, and 1949, p. 13; Becker et al., pp. v, 5, 56f, 539, 803f; Smith et al., pp. vi, 2; Habberton & Roth, pp. 14, 69, 163, 577, 765; Rogers et al., 1960, pp. 71, 168, 209f; Roehm et al., pp. 38, 228; Cox et al., pp. 124, 180; Roselle, pp. 80, 342, 408; Hanes, pp. 77, 239f.



### **America's European Heritage: England and America**

It is made clear that the United States has its roots in European civilization, and particularly in English customs and traditions. By and large, the textbooks underline the cultural and constitutional connections between England and the USA. Not only the English language and many English customs but also the English traditions of common law, the jury system and representative government form parts of the American heritage. Magna Carta and the establishment of Parliament in 13th-century England are considered pivotal historical events, laying the foundations of modern democracy. There is more or less a direct line from them to the political system of the United States. Englishmen “shaped American history before America was discovered”.<sup>23</sup> “Our belief that men should be governed by an orderly system of law—by laws that cannot be changed or ignored at the whim of an official—owes much to liberty-loving Englishmen who had fought for these ideas, even as long ago as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.”<sup>24</sup>

The next decisive step in the creation of this Anglo-American political heritage was the English revolution and civil war in the 1600s, where the textbooks side unequivocally with Parliament against the Stuart kings. The Petition of Right from 1628 and the Bill of Rights from 1689 are viewed as important precursors of the first ten amendments to the American constitution.<sup>25</sup>

If there is strong sympathy for the British political tradition, there is also, especially in the older textbooks, a marked dislike of what is perceived as a more rigid class system and social distinctions in Britain: “In no other respect do the English differ so widely from us Americans as in the caste system, from which we are happily free in this country.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, the British political tradition is laudable, but the Americans have realized it better than the English themselves. If there is a discernible change of this theme over time, it is rather that this social criticism of Britain grows weaker in later textbooks, perhaps because of the closer relationship between the two countries, or perhaps in response to actual or perceived changes in British society.

23 Becker et al., pp. 250f (quote on p. 250); Webster, p. 342; Hughes, pp. 275-284; Wallbank & Taylor, vol. II, p. 226; Smith et al., p. 149; Habberton & Roth, pp. 205, 305; Platt & Drummond, p. 3; Rogers et al., 1960, p. 262; Ellis & Esler, p. 403; Farah & Karls, p. 103.

24 Becker et al., p. 250.

25 Habberton & Roth, p. 300; Rogers et al., 1960, p. 274; Roehm et al., p. 240; Ellis & Esler, p. 434.

26 Elson, p. 357.

### **America's Significance to Europe**

#### *The American Revolution: An Example to Europe and the World*

By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Europe and America change places in the march towards freedom and democracy. The Americans now take the lead. Great Britain was the most democratic country in the Old World, according to the textbooks, but its American colonies were nonetheless ahead of it. In the colonies, there was no hereditary nobility, no great differences of wealth, and no established church. A larger proportion of the population than in Britain had a say in the governing of society.<sup>27</sup> In many ways the American rebels identified with and fought within an English tradition defending the rights of the common man. "It was only because they felt they were not granted the rights of Englishmen that they revolted and set up their own government."<sup>28</sup>

But there were some important differences between the colonies and the mother country. Several textbooks, even newer ones, advance Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis of the democratizing and nationalizing influence of the western frontier. Here, in the struggle to survive in an untamed environment, a culture based on individual freedom and democracy took shape. Thus, there was a more radical desire for freedom in the colonies than in England itself. Their unique experiences helped transform the colonists from Englishmen or Europeans to Americans. By the late 1700s, the colonies were ready to stand on their own legs.<sup>29</sup> Even if this does not necessarily contradict the importance of the English heritage, there is a certain tension between the two alleged roots of American democracy in the textbooks.

A substantial part of the blame for the revolution is, however, assigned to King George III, "this would-be despot", whose measures to tax the colonies and control their trade to the advantage of the mother country are characterized as "foolish", "selfish" and "oppressive". The revolution, it is asserted, also saved British parliamentarism by thwarting the king's attempts at recovering the powers of his office. It was a struggle between

27 Pahlow, 1932, pp. 582f; Krieger, Neill & Jantzen, p. 367; Ellis & Esler, p. 470; Hanes, p. 464; Farah & Karls, pp. 546-548.

28 Rogers et al., 1940, p. 348 (quote); Pahlow, 1932, p. 582; Hughes, p. 428; Krieger, Neill & Jantzen, p. 475; Ellis & Esler, p. 403.

29 Pahlow, 1932, p. 584; Wallbank & Taylor, vol. II, p. 100, 102; Becker et al., p. 515; Habberton & Roth, pp. 450, 460; Roehm et al., pp. 200, 247; Cox et al., p. 511; Holt & O'Connor, p. 275; Hanes (ed.), p. 464; Farah & Karls, p. 662.

a “reactionary” and a “progressive” part of the English-speaking world.<sup>30</sup> The American Revolution is called a great leap forward in the development of democracy and a model to the rest of the world. It inspired the French revolutionaries a few years later and the liberation of the Spanish colonies in America in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the historical master narrative of the textbooks, it was more or less a logical next step in the advent of a modern and democratic society. It demonstrated to Europeans, and eventually also to other colonists around the world, that Enlightenment ideas could be put into practice:<sup>31</sup> “This war, from an American viewpoint, gave us freedom and independence. Equally important, from a world viewpoint, it gave the cause of constitutional government a powerful boost.”<sup>32</sup> Albeit the Revolution marks America’s separation from Europe, it transforms the USA into a role model for the Old World, assigning it a spiritual mission in relation to Europe.

#### *Relative isolation from Europe: 1783-1917*

Still, the USA is free of direct European entanglements after the Revolution. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, few encounters between Europe and America are related, although the War of 1812, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Spanish-American War are mentioned by some. American society was further democratized, and the Civil War secured this democracy, contrary to the hopes of the European aristocracy. The Monroe Doctrine and the war with Spain are explained by those who mention them by a wish to protect the Americas from European intrusions.<sup>33</sup> It is maintained, by the older books in particular, that the young new nation gave birth to artists, writers and scientists fully up to European standards. Where European writers, artists, composers, scientists and scholars are mentioned, there is often also ample

30 Webster, p. 337; Pahlow, 1932, p. 584, and 1949, p. 418; Hughes, p. 428; Wallbank & Taylor, vol. II, pp. 98, 101f; Smith et al., pp. 266, 291-293; Habberton & Roth, pp. 307-309; Platt & Drummond, pp. 308, 312-316; Cox et al., p. 361; Holt & O’Connor, p. 276; Ellis & Esler, p. 469; Hanes (ed.), p. 363; Farah & Karls, p. 547.

31 Webster, p. 340; Hughes, pp. 433, 436; Wallbank & Taylor, vol. II, p. 103; Roehm et al., p. 249; Cox, p. 515; Holt & O’Connor, p. 277; Roselle, p. 364; Krieger, Neill & Jantzen, p. 479; Hanes (ed.), p. 469; Farah & Karls, p. 555.

32 Habberton & Roth, p. 309.

33 Robinson & Smith, p. 325, 480; Wallbank & Taylor, p. 228; Becker et al., pp. 467-469, 472f, 515, 519-521, 572; Smith et al., pp. 479-481; Habberton & Roth, pp. 450-453, 457, 460-463; Farah & Karls, pp. 662, 722. Regarding the Spanish-American war, however, Krieger, Neill & Jantzen, p. 587, also mention American business interests on Cuba.

space devoted to their American counterparts, whose qualities are pointed out as well. In some cases, European praise of American accomplishments is referred to: "Think of this when you are tempted to speak of America as young, and help her to be her age."<sup>34</sup> Perhaps it is the traditional European condescension towards American culture that is countered when the cultural maturity of the American nation is established. The tendency amongst American "plutocrats" of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to try to imitate and emulate European high culture is deplored and somewhat ridiculed as indicating a want of independence and a failure to realize the true worth of America's own culture.<sup>35</sup> In the newer books, the need to defend American culture seems less apparent, perhaps due to greater self-confidence in this field.

*The First World War: America Intervenes Directly in Europe*

The First World War means that the USA becomes directly involved in European affairs. The American entrance into the war in 1917 is explained by German violations of American neutrality through its submarine warfare, the Zimmermann Telegram, and an American perception of autocratic Germany as a grave threat to democracy in Europe. Some mention the impact of allied war propaganda as well. President Wilson's statement about making "the world safe for democracy" is quoted nearly everywhere. Although the thesis, advanced in the interwar years, that influential arms manufacturers and other businessmen manipulated the USA into the war is mentioned by a few, none puts much credit to it. American motives were mainly unselfish.<sup>36</sup>

American troops decided the outcome of the war, and President Wilson tried, through his idea of the League of Nations, to establish a more equitable world order, based on collective security to maintain peace, to replace European-style secret diplomacy and balance-of-power policies. Most books treat Wilson as a visionary, a "world-minded" man capable of looking farther than narrow national interests. His popularity with the war-weary masses of Europe is pointed out. The rejection of the League of Nations and the Versailles Treaty by the U.S. Senate is lamented as a

34 Pahlow, 1932, p. 628. See also e.g. Wallbank & Taylor, vol. II, pp. 490f, 507; Becker et al., p. 465.

35 Pahlow, 1932, p. 628, 706; Wallbank & Taylor, vol. II, pp. 140f.

36 Elson, p. 676; Pahlow, 1932, pp. 780f, and 1949, pp. 678f; Robinson & Smith, pp. 538-541; Hughes, pp. 728f; Rogers et al., 1940, p. 682, and 1960, p. 714; Wallbank & Taylor, pp. 306-308; Becker et al., p. 703f; Smith et al., pp. 533f; Habberton & Roth, pp. 565-568; Platt & Drummond, pp. 542f; Roehm et al., p. 443; Holt & O'Connor, pp. 461f; Roselle, pp. 508f; Krieger, Neill & Jantzen, pp. 632, 634; Ellis & Esler, pp. 708, 710; Hanes (ed.), pp. 610-612; Farah & Karls, p. 751.

manifestation of short-sightedness and parochialism. The textbooks do not support the American isolationism of the interwar era. Even before the Second World War, they tend to dissociate themselves from the idea that the U.S. should stay out of European affairs altogether. After the Second World War, isolationism stands out even more as a mistake.<sup>37</sup>

*The Interwar Years: America's Unfortunate Retreat*

As said above, it is generally deplored in the books that the USA withdrew from binding international agreements and engagements after the First World War. The issue of the Allied war debts to the USA is treated so as to acknowledge some merit in both the American and the Franco-British standpoints: America was not wrong in its insistence that the debts be paid, but it might well have dealt with its debtors in a more generous fashion.<sup>38</sup>

With the emergence of totalitarian dictatorships in Europe, the affinity of the Western democracies—the USA, Great Britain, and France—becomes a more important feature. Textbooks written before the Second World War do, however, not regard Italian Fascism or Soviet Communism as totally devoid of value, though they tend to see them as inferior to Western democracy. During and after the war, the attitude towards totalitarian ideologies and societies grows more negative.<sup>39</sup> German Nazism and Soviet Communism are partly explained by the autocratic and statist traditions of the two countries, making totalitarianism to a certain extent a continuation of an older European society with which Britain and, above all, the USA represent a break.<sup>40</sup> Again, the USA is the champion of democracy, and American isolationism

37 Elson, p. 685f, 690-692; Pahlow, 1932, pp. 781f, 791-793; Robinson & Smith, pp. 557f; Hughes, pp. 736-738; Rogers et al., 1940, p. 687, and 1960, pp. 715-717, 721; Wallbank & Taylor, p. 325; Smith et al., pp. 507, 538-540, 543-547; Habberton & Roth, pp. 571-574, 581, 593f; Platt & Drummond, pp. 545-548; Roehm et al., p. 447; Cox et al., pp. 597-599; Roselle, p. 511f; Hanes (ed.), pp. 612-615, 619; Farah & Karls, pp. 761, 763.

38 Pahlow, 1932, pp. 802-804, and 1949, p. 675; Wallbank & Taylor, p. 337; Smith et al., p. 576; Habberton & Roth, pp. 612f; Roehm et al., pp. 460f.

39 Elson, p. 604; Pahlow, 1932, p. 817f, 820f, and 1949, pp. 665, 671-673; Hughes, pp. 776, 795; Rogers et al., 1940, pp. 508f, 726-728, and 1960, pp. 541-547; Wallbank & Taylor, vol. II, pp. 346-348, 354-361; Becker et al., pp. 742-746; Smith et al., pp. 596-600; Habberton & Roth, pp. 569, 616-621; Platt & Drummond, pp. 555-600; Roehm et al., pp. 483-494; Holt & O'Connor, pp. 481-483, 488, 498f; Roselle, pp. 519-528; Krieger, Neill & Jantzen, pp. 650-657, 691-697; Ellis & Esler, pp. 729-732, 775-780; Hanes (ed.), pp. 628f, 645f; Farah & Karls, pp. 782f, 789-791.

40 Elson, p. 710; Robinson & Smith, p. 619; Rogers et al., 1940, pp. 445, 457, and 1960, pp. 460, 476; Wallbank & Taylor, vol. II, pp. 365; Platt & Drummond, p. 568; Roehm et al., p. 483; Holt & O'Connor, pp. 351; Ellis & Esler, pp. 723f; Farah & Karls, p. 783.

denies the realities of the modern era; America can no longer ignore the rest of the world. With the stress on the common democracy of the USA, Great Britain and France, America is no longer separate from Western Europe, but they form a democratic West, both before and after the war. Not surprisingly, this is seen most clearly, though not exclusively, in books published during and after the war.<sup>41</sup>

### *The Second World War: America Intervenes Again*

It is made clear that from the outset of the war the great majority of Americans sympathized with the Allies against Germany. Gradually, public opinion in America also came to realize that it had to interfere in the war so as not to become isolated in a hostile totalitarian world. Several books quote Franklin D. Roosevelt's words on the USA as the "arsenal of democracy". The Atlantic Charter from 1940 is presented extensively and compared to Wilson's Fourteen Points. As in the First World War, America went to war in order to defend democracy.<sup>42</sup> More than World War I, World War II is perceived as a struggle for the very civilization of the West, where the Nazis challenged the foundations of modern democratic Western society.<sup>43</sup>

### *The Cold War*

After the Second World War, Americans finally assumed the responsibility of a leading role in the world, following the decline of European power in the world. American internationalism is justified by the necessity of countering the threat from the Soviet Union and communism. The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan are mentioned as important divides in America's relationship with Europe and the world. American sponsorship of the United Nations is emphasized, and American support for European integration is also explained by its significance for the security of the USA and of the democratic world. Textbooks from the days of the Cold War stress its character of a conflict between values, with the United States and

41 Robinson & Smith, p. 325; Rogers et al., 1940, p. 687; Wallbank & Taylor, vol. II, p. 456; Becker et al., p. 801; Smith et al., p. 507; Habberton & Roth, p. 594; Platt & Drummond, p. 542; Holt & O'Connor, p. 333; Ellis & Esler, p. 606; Hanes (ed.), p. 619.

42 Wallbank & Taylor, vol. II, pp. 454-458; Pahlow, 1949, pp. 678f, 697f; Becker et al., pp. 779f; Smith et al., pp. 645f; Habberton & Roth, pp. 682f, 694; Platt & Drummond, pp. 615, 633; Rogers et al., 1960, pp. 736-739; Roehm et al., pp. 537f; Roselle, pp. 550-552.

43 Wallbank & Taylor, vol. II, pp. 436, 472; Becker et al., p. 803. Smith et al., p. 627; Habberton & Roth, p. 636.

the Western European nations standing for freedom and democracy and the Soviet bloc standing for totalitarianism. It is seen as a continuation of the fight for democracy and against totalitarianism. American moderation in its support of colonized peoples' struggles for independence is explained by the need to support America's allies in the Cold War. In cases where West European states have pursued policies divergent from or even opposed to the American ones, this is viewed with suspicion. The end of the Cold War means a great victory for democracy and hence for American values.<sup>44</sup>

### **Concluding Remarks**

The books published after the end of the Cold War that I have looked at are not certain about the new direction of the world but express hopes for the eventual global victory of democracy and human rights.<sup>45</sup> This development is essentially what the textbooks examined here have believed in ever since 1921. As mentioned above, the common thread running through basically all the books is a narrative of the evolution of democracy, beginning in medieval England (with an important forerunner in ancient Athens) and culminating in the United States, with the American constitution of 1789 and further democratic developments in this country. The goal of history is understood to be the triumph of democracy and the Enlightenment ideals over the older feudal order, in Europe and in the rest of the world. Although the USA takes relatively little part in world history before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from the time it comes into existence it provides the world with an example to be inspired by. It stands apart from monarchical and undemocratic Europe but is yet a part of Western civilization, by virtue of its Anglo-Saxon heritage and its mostly European-descended population.

Although our pattern of culture is largely derived from Europe, in many details it is quite different from the original product. Millions of people with varying national cultures, from Ireland, the Scandinavian countries, England, Germany, France, and many others, have been poured into the American melting pot. [...] The end-product was European in essence, but because different blends of European culture were included and because

44 Pahlow, 1949, pp. 779f; Becker et al., pp. 6, 801, 832; Smith et al., pp. 706f, 712f; Habberton & Roth, p. 763; Platt & Drummond, p. 653, 659, 687; Rogers et al., 1960, p. 762, 768; Cox et al., p. 609; Holt & O'Connor, pp. 549-551, 560-563, 568; Roselle, pp. 565-569, 574; Krieger, Neill & Jantzen, pp. 741-747, 859f; Ellis & Esler, pp. 852, 855; Hanes (ed.), pp. 718-721, 726f; Farah & Karls, pp. 865, 868-871, 881.

45 Ellis & Esler, p. 860; Hanes (ed.), pp. 844f; Farah & Karls, p. 1022.

they were shifted to an environment foreign to Europe, the new strain was far from being a replica of the European pattern. It had become American.<sup>46</sup>

Europe is both same and other in relation to the USA. With the gradual spread of democracy after the French Revolution, the world wars and finally the end of the Cold War, Europe grows more and more 'same' and less and less 'other' vis-à-vis the USA. The West as a cultural and ideological concept in the textbooks is a negation of what Europe was in the past, before the 20<sup>th</sup> century or, in the case of Eastern Europe, before 1990. Being so close to Europe in many respects, America has shown the Old World the road it should take. Britain is also still its closest companion on this path:

The United States and Britain are two very important democratic countries in the world today. The governments of most other nations are based on the government of one or the other. If we know how the British and United States governments work, therefore, we can understand the governments of almost all free nations.<sup>47</sup>

It would be wrong, therefore, to state that an American identity is established simply by positing Europe as America's 'other.' Rather, American identity is constructed in conjunction with a Western identity, based primarily on British political and cultural conditions. The French Revolution is also applauded as a younger sibling of the American one and as the force starting the spread of democratic trends over continental Europe. Some textbooks underline the commonality of American and French revolutionary ideals and the bonds between the USA and France through these shared ideals.<sup>48</sup> At the same time, however, the stress which several books place on the influence of the frontier on American history and society is a means of distinguishing the American from the European. American culture and society is held to have been more egalitarian and libertarian than European civilization. It is also the country which first puts the Enlightenment ideas into practice and shows that they are workable. There is some tension here between sameness and otherness in relation to Europe.

American interventions in Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, beginning with the First World War and continuing with the Second World War and the Cold

46 Wallbank & Taylor, vol. II, p. 221.

47 Holt & O'Connor, p. 323.

48 Rogers et al., 1940, pp. 369f, and 1960, pp. 332, 361; Becker et al., p. 464; Habberton & Roth, p. 334; Roehm et al., p. 249; Roselle, p. 364; Hanes (ed.), p. 469.



War, also attest to U.S. commitment to democracy. The two world wars prompted the USA to defend democracy in Western Europe against its foes, thereby precipitating the development towards democracy in the other parts of Europe, where it had not yet taken hold. Thanks to the American contributions, democratic government has expanded forcefully in the 1900s.

Thus, the role of the USA has been first to implement and consummate European democratic ideals and then to help them to spread over Europe and the rest of the world. The Americans have inherited their valuable democratic political tradition from the English, but, they assert, it is the Americans who have administered this tradition best, by achieving a greater measure of social equality than Great Britain. This difference is less emphasized after the Second World War, though. American efforts have also been crucial to the defence of democracy against the threats posed by European autocracy and totalitarianism. At least in part, Europe must be transformed after the American image so as to become free and prosperous.

The USA is not necessarily superior to Europe on all accounts. Several textbooks admire European social welfare legislation and consider it worthy of American emulation. The Scandinavian “middle way” between pure capitalism and socialism by means of a welfare state gets good press. The USA is seen as lagging behind in this area, albeit Roosevelt’s New Deal is a major step in the right direction. From the 1930s to the 1980s, some government regulation of the economy is regarded as beneficial, though none of the textbooks express any preference for socialism but rather are critical of Marxism.<sup>49</sup> Still, from the 1980s, there appears to take place a certain change towards a more ambivalent or reserved attitude towards the European welfare state, whose viability in the new globalized world may be in doubt.<sup>50</sup>

A comparison of the image of the American role in relation to Europe in 1921 with the image in 2001 reveals relatively little change. Of course, the growing attention given to the world outside Europe in the last third of the period studied is a significant change, but so far as American-European relations go, most elements remain the same, as well as the assessment of them. The English heritage is of great importance, the American Revolu-

49 Elson, p. 577, 604; Wallbank & Taylor, vol. II, p. 382f; Pahlow, 1949, p. 541; Becker et al., p. 551, 575; Smith et al., p. 366; Habberton & Roth, p. 632; Rogers et al., 1960, pp. 493-497; Platt & Drummond, p. 492; Roehm et al., pp. 364f; Roselle, p. 575.

50 Roselle, p. 575; Krieger, Neill & Jantzen, p. 751; Ellis & Esler, p. 850; Hanes, pp. 845-847.

tion is a model to the world, and American participation in the world wars and the Cold War is a blessing to Europe and the world. Textbooks have fairly consistently favoured internationalism over isolationism, at least in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yet, there are some changes taking place between 1921 and 2001, but they are not clear-cut. If anything, American self-confidence seems to grow over time, as the totalitarian regimes in Europe fall and the Western European welfare state encounters increasing difficulties toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By the end of the period, there appears to be less need to defend American culture against European pretensions. It may be that the lessening of the social critique of Great Britain has something to do with a stronger emphasis on the commonalities of the West, especially in the Cold War era. As Europe becomes less ‘other,’ the Western identity becomes more salient.

The view of Europe as part of a “free West” but still struggling with a heritage of authoritarianism, statism and totalitarianism may be a foundation of some of the American criticism of ‘Old Europe’ in the debate following September 11, 2001, for condoning dictatorships and for encroaching on the free market by means of government regulation and bureaucracy. It has been pointed out that in this debate the USA has moved from its historical position urging a world order based on collective security to defending the independence of the nation-state, whilst Europe has moved in the other direction. But there is also a degree of continuity with an already prevailing interpretation of Europe’s past. Some American critics have even warned that the strife between the USA and Europe poses a threat to the survival of Western civilization. As in the past, this split between the United States and Europe is due to the latter’s penchant for undemocratic ways.<sup>51</sup> As was said in the beginning of this article, it has been commonplace amongst those defending the policies of the Bush administration to brand oppositional Western Europeans as ungrateful, which does not seem strange in view of the positive picture drawn of American interventions in Europe in the textbooks examined here. There is still suspicion in the United States of a Europe which does not follow the American lead.

51 Russell E. Berman, *Anti-Americanism in Europe: A Cultural Phenomenon*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2004, pp. 10f, 48-51, 78f, 84f; James Ceaser, “The Philosophical Origins of Anti-Americanism in Europe”, in Paul Hollander (ed.), *Understanding Anti-Americanism: Its Origins and Impact at Home and Abroad*, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004, p. 62.