

Occidentalism

[Economics](#), [Globalization](#)



Occidentalism The term Occidentalism is used in one of two main ways: a) Stereotyped and sometimes dehumanizing views on the Western world, including Europe and the English-speaking world; and b) Ideologies or visions of the West developed in either the West or non-West. The former definition stresses negative constructions of the West and is often focused on the Islamic world. The latter approach has a broader range and includes both positive and negative representations. The term was used in the latter sense by James G. Carrier in his book *Occidentalism: Images of the West* (1995), and subsequently by Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit in their book *Occidentalism: the West in the Eyes of its Enemies* (2004). The term is an inversion of Orientalism, Edward Said's label for stereotyped Western views of the East. A number of earlier books had also used the term, sometimes with different meanings, such as Chen Xiaomei's *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* (New York: Oxford, 1995). Eastern views of the West In China "Traditions Regarding Western Countries" became a regular part of dynastic histories from the fifth-century CE (Bonnett, 2004). With the spread of European trade and imperialism during the 18th and 19th centuries the modern concept of an East/West distinction came to be more clearly articulated. Stereotyped portrayals of Westerners appear in many works of Indian, Chinese and Japanese artists during this period.[citation needed] At the same time Western influence in politics, culture, economics and science came to be constructed through an imaginative geography of West and East. In the late 19th century many Western cultural themes and images began appearing in Asian art and culture, especially in Japan. English words and phrases are prominent in

Japanese advertising and popular culture, and many Japanese comics and cartoons are written around characters, settings, themes, and mythological figures derived from various Western cultural traditions. Another way Occidentalism has been manifested is through the attempt to forge 'non-Western' identities and cultures. Notions of 'spiritual Asia' are an example, since they depend upon constructions of the 'materialist West'. These images can be read as forms of resistance but they also demonstrate the power of Western models. Debates on Occidentalism Buruma and Margalit argue that this nationalist and nativist resistance to the " West" actually replicates responses to forces of modernisation that have their roots in Western culture itself, among both utopian radicals and nationalist conservatives who saw capitalism, liberalism and secularism as destructive forces. They argue that while early responses to the West represent a genuine encounter between alien cultures, many of the later manifestations of Occidentalism betray the influence on Eastern intellectuals of Western ideas, such as the supremacy of the Nation-State, the Romantic rejection of rationality and the alleged spiritual impoverishment of the citizens of liberal democracies. They trace this to German Romanticism and to the debates between the " Westernisers" and " Slavophiles" in 19th century Russia, asserting that similar arguments appear under differing guises in Maoism, Islamism, wartime Japanese nationalism and other movements. However, Alastair Bonnett rejects this analysis as Eurocentric and makes a case for Occidentalism emerging from the interconnection of non-Western and Western intellectual traditions. In a departure from Buruma and Margalit's focus upon the non-Western deployment of Western ideas, Bonnett argues in

The Idea of the West (2004) that both Occidentalism and the West can be understood as non-Western inventions. Images of the West are employed and deployed, he says, sometimes with very positive connotations, to develop distinct, non-Western, traditions of modernity. Bonnett's approach stresses the importance of visions of the occident in developing pan-national and ethnic identities around the world. Further reading Bonnett, Alastair, *The Idea of the West: Culture, Politics and History*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. ISBN 1403900345, ISBN 1403900353. Buruma, I. and Margalit, A., *Occidentalism: A Short History of Anti-Westernism*, Atlantic Books, London, 2004. ISBN 1594200084. Carrier, James G. *Occidentalism: Images of the West*, Oxford, Calrendon Press, 1995. ISBN 0-19-827978-7, ISBN 0-19-827979-5. Chen, Xiaomei, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China*, second ed., rev. and expanded. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002. ISBN 0847698750.