

# Introduction

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The term “re-education” is full of ambiguity. Firmly established in the post-war historiography of transatlantic relations between the US and Germany, it has been variously used to describe immediate punitive measures of the occupation forces as well as long-term soft power public diplomacy-efforts. It was coined by US social scientists and policy advisors and it was soon taken up by historians and political scientists alike; thus, the term is both, *descriptive and normative*.<sup>1</sup> “Re-Education” is certainly less of a fixture in post-war transpacific relations between the US and Japan, where a terminology of “reform”, “democratization” or “modernization” was more readily employed for similar concerns, strategies, and programs. Whereas the dominant idea concerning Germany suggested a “return” to the democratic norms and practices first implemented during the Weimar Republic, for the Japanese context the plan implied more of an original “transformation” modelled on the Western, i.e., US example. Notwithstanding such semantic and rhetorical differences, this special issue seeks to draw on *re-education as a critical term* which allows for an examination of important social, cultural, economic, and political aspects of US-American policies in Germany and Japan after World War II and their effects in a subnational, transnational, and comparative perspective. Revisiting the post-war transatlantic and transpacific US engagement, this issue complements and reorients existing scholarship that for the most part has focused on national scenarios in isolation – to this

1 The need for the post-war re-education of Germans has prominently been suggested by Richard Brickner in his 1943-study *Is Germany Incurable?* Brickner’s examination of German society through the lens of social psychology diagnoses a somewhat disturbing pattern of paranoia in the German mind (R. M. Brickner, *Is Germany Incurable?*, New York 1943). Ruth Benedict’s anthropological study *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) has long been considered as a kind of companion piece and a somewhat controversial and essentializing study of Japanese cultural traits and national character (R. Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*, New York 1946).

day, very few comparative studies exist.<sup>2</sup> Hence, the title of the special issue announces a “revisiting” of re-education, both in its historical use as a descriptive/normative label and as a critical tool. In a joint effort, this volume brings together scholars from Japanese and American Studies, from history and postcolonial studies, from cultural studies and sociology with the goal of pursuing questions of structural analogies and regional differences in a comparative mode/design. The subtitle of this issue “conflicting agendas and cross-cultural agency” bespeaks our shared observation that post-war policies and local responses to them draw out paradoxes and contradictions on minor and major issues with lasting effects on culture and politics.

“Re-education” commonly describes American strategies (and those of their allies) that were developed for a denazification of Germany and the democratization of Germany and Japan after World War II. The means for this re-education were diverse and spread through all central functional areas of society. Of course, it played a particular role in the educational sector. Re-education is a broad term, which incorporates aspects of correcting/re-doing both “up-bringing” (*Erziehung*) and “education” (*Bildung*).<sup>3</sup> The term is originally borrowed from the educational sciences and psychiatry and therefore transports the notion of “a re-learning of forgotten learning content” (“ein Wiedererlernen vergessener Lerninhalte”) as well as “the correction of mental patterns of behavior” (“die Korrektur mentaler Verhaltensmuster”).<sup>4</sup> In the historical moment, it is also bound up with quite some skepticism towards its effectiveness: *Is Germany Incurable?* Richard Brickner wondered about the pathologies of “the Germans”.<sup>5</sup> Thus, this use of the term is based on the understanding that the defeated nations (Germany and Japan) are to be redefined: from enemies to patients in need of therapy or, if you will, “psychosocial engineering”. Inherent in the term is a profound asymmetry of power. The term “re-education” may be considered as highly charged for various reasons, but it is useful as a heuristic device, nonetheless. In the present context, it serves to capture phenomena beyond the narrower confines of the educational sector (in which it was originally mainly deployed) and to probe its usefulness for the analysis of scenarios in the political, economic, jurisdictional, and larger cultural sphere. Conceptual framing certainly determines analytical findings and path-dependent interpretation. Rather than “Zero Hour”, “cold war” or “cold war beginnings”, or even “occupation”, this volume focuses on re-education as a discursive framework for revisiting post-war developments in different occupational zones.

2 Notable exceptions are B. Rosenzweig, *Erziehung zur Demokratie? Amerikanische Besatzungs- und Schulreformpolitik in Deutschland und Japan* (Beiträge zur Kolonial- und Überseegegeschichte 69), Stuttgart 1998 and Sebastian Conrad's study of post-war historiography (S. Conrad, *Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Nation: Geschichtsschreibung in Westdeutschland und Japan 1945–1960*, Göttingen 1999).

3 See K.-E. Bungenstab, *Umerziehung zur Demokratie? Re-Education-Politik im Bildungswesen der US Zone 1945–1949*, Düsseldorf 1970, p. 19.

4 B. Braun, *Umerziehung in der amerikanischen Besatzungszone: Die Schul- und Bildungspolitik in Württemberg-Baden von 1945 bis 1949*, Münster 2004, p. 16.

5 Brickner, *Is Germany Incurable?*

## 1. Scenarios of Re-Education

The scenarios of re-education presented here can be described in a kind of typology – a typology that unpacks the ambiguities of re-education but that also attests to the disparities and semantic nuances in the usage of the term. This issue contains essays by Fabian Schäfer, Akino Oshiro, Katharina Gerund, Jana Aresin, and Michiko Takeuchi, who all (more or less explicitly) draw on a re-education framework to make their arguments concerning changes in post-war Japan and Germany. These changes concern discourses of rights and participation in the broadest sense. In each case, the peculiarities of re-education and its in-built tensions and paradoxes become evident.

## 2. Re-Education as Playful Pedagogy

Post-war re-education strategies were based on a pedagogical model of unlearning and re-learning that reforms and trains a collective, in fact an entire population, not only in tolerating a new political system and re-aligning itself with the ground rules of a liberal market democracy but also to readily participate in it. Participation, however, was not to be encouraged in the strictly political sphere only. Rather, a post-war new beginning suggested many small ways in which democracy and democratic practice could and needed to be inculcated. “Learn How to Discuss” (Lernen Sie diskutieren!) was one of the slogans of early re-education programs, and in the German context, Nina Verheyen has reconstructed the emergence of a new “Diskussionslust” in argumentative exchanges in West-German society.<sup>6</sup> The pleasures of participation often went along with entertainment. No one other than Billy Wilder, who worked for the American military’s “Information Control Division” in Europe, described this strategy in his so-called “Wilder Memorandum” from 16 August 1945, titled “Propaganda through Entertainment”, and he saw a privileged role here for film and other mass media:

*Now if there was an entertainment film with Rita Hayworth or Ingrid Bergman or Gary Cooper, in Technicolor if you wish, and with a love story – only with a special love story, cleverly devised to help us sell a few ideological items – such a film would provide us with a superior piece of propaganda: they would stand in long lines to buy and once they bought it, it would stick. Unfortunately, no such film exists yet. It must be made. I want to make it.<sup>7</sup>*

6 H. Roß (ed.), *Lernen Sie Diskutieren! Re-Education durch Film: Strategien der westlichen Alliierten nach 1945* (Beiträge Zur Filmgeschichte Band 3), Berlin 2005; N. Verheyen, *Diskussionslust: Eine Kulturgeschichte des ‘besseren Arguments’ in Westdeutschland* (Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft, 193), Göttingen 2010.

7 Billy Wilder in “The Wilder Memorandum”. See G. Gemünden, *A Foreign Affair: Billy Wilder’s American Films*, New York, 2008, p. 58.

Billy Wilder did indeed make that film, not with Rita Hayworth or Ingrid Bergman but with Marlene Dietrich as a “loose woman” with dubious political leanings:<sup>8</sup> *A Foreign Affair* (1947). Jennifer Faye has detailed the ways in which Hollywood became part of the “theater of occupation”<sup>9</sup> abroad. Film, television shows, radio programs and their specific genres – from comedy and melodrama to the quiz show, informed and entertained Japanese and German audiences. At the same time, these playful and seemingly non-authoritarian formats still allowed for their audiences to be quizzed, polled, and measured. *Fabian Schäfer’s* contribution shows how the line between propaganda and entertainment became as blurred as Billy Wilder imagined it to be as the mass media was assigned a crucial role in purging totalitarian patterns of old and in teaching values of liberal democracy in light of a new beginning. Acknowledging the foundational paradox of a collective training in liberalist values such as “freedom”, “individualism”, and “fair play”, forms of mediated playful participation became an appropriate channel for such an undertaking, the undertaking of ‘managing’ a free society. The latter included participatory broadcasting formats (e.g. street interviews and quiz shows) along with opinion surveys commissioned by the respective military government, conducted by newspaper companies or newly founded opinion research institutes in Japan and Germany. As Schäfer shows, the lasting effect of these measures extends to this day.

### 3. Re-Education as Propaganda

Historically, re-education has often been considered a cynical euphemism for the coercive and assimilationist work of a repressive state or an occupational regime. In the specific post-war contexts, “re-education” was also the beginning of a new form or agenda of political education.<sup>10</sup> Notwithstanding such well-intentioned educational agendas, the very concept remained stigmatized when referring to official programs. *Akino Oshiro’s* contribution presents a critical appraisal of the US occupation on the island of Okinawa and its re-educational engagement. Okinawa, already in a minoritized, post-colonial relationship to mainland Japan before the war, became the site of a neo-colonial US occupational policy after World War II. The latter included a fundamental transformation of the island’s economic structures that disrupted rural communities’ way of life and implemented a new economy at the centre of which stood the military base. Transitioning from “farm to base”, the local population was recruited for the service sector of the US military apparatus as many islanders lost their indigenous land through dispossession. This development was not couched in terms of loss and alienation or even occupation by US officials, quite the contrary, it was conveyed in a language of ‘lessons’ in progress, upward mobility, and modernization – and thus was related to the notion of a “civilizing

8 For an in-depth analysis, see W. Sollors, *The Temptation of Despair: Tales of the 1940s*, Cambridge, MA 2014, pp. 247–277.

9 J. Fay, *Theaters of Occupation: Hollywood and the Reeducation of Postwar Germany*, Minneapolis 2008.

10 See, for instance, W. Gagel, *Geschichte der politischen Bildung in Deutschland, 1945–1989/90*, Wiesbaden 2005.

mission” in colonial discourse. This rhetoric of benevolent re-education hardly veiled the agenda pursued by the occupation forces in the name of their role and the management of the cold war in the global arena. To this day, protests against the US military presence on the island of Okinawa persist and bring to light this history of militarization (of Japan on Okinawa) in the name of post-war demilitarization and democratization (of Japan on the mainland), yet another paradox of re-education efforts as observed from a local vantage point. Such sectoral dissonance points to the euphemism in the use of the term “re-education” and merits the suspicion of ideological manipulation that in any use of and reference to the term arouses. From a comparative angle, scholarship has only begun to shed light on what it means to “live with the US military empire” at its peripheral outposts, one of them being the island of Okinawa.<sup>11</sup>

#### 4. Re-Education as Reflexive Education

Race figures prominently in re-education regimes and accounts for many of the double standards that pop up in a comparison of the Japanese and the German theatre of occupation. Still, racial discourses not only define so-called foreign relations in the post-war, such as those between American soldiers and Japanese civilians, they also play a role in the intra-institutional negotiations within the US military – at a time when racial segregation in the US became increasingly controversial. While Akino Oshiro’s paper points to the underlying neo-colonial attitudes toward native Okinawans in the post-war era in the Pacific, *Katharina Gerund’s* essay examines yet another paradox of re-education: the discrepancy between an occupying power preaching equality and freedom while practicing segregation and discrimination based on race in its own ranks. In some respects, Oshiro and Gerund discuss two sides of the same re-education-coin, so to speak. The re-education-paradigm orchestrated overseas prompts a specific kind of self-reflection within the institution of the US military – a reflection on its dominant racial regime condoning racial inequality, on whiteness and white privilege. Albeit in limited and circumscribed ways, such reflection, according to Gerund, can be discerned as a kind of “self-conscious re-education”: statements and communications of the military personnel and leadership reveal that consciousness raising abroad also had repercussions on the home front. It has become a canonical argument to link the African American participation in post-war occupation to the emergence of the civil rights movement, among whose activists many were veterans of World War II.<sup>12</sup> As a prequel to the narrative that unfolds in the 1960s and 70s, Gerund’s essay chronicles the growing discomfort and uneasiness that

11 See M. Höhn/S. Moon, *Over There: Living with the US Military Empire from World War II to the Present*, Durham 2010.

12 This has been argued, for instance, by Maria Höhn and Martin Klimke in their seminal study *A Breath of Freedom: M. Höhn/M. Klimke, A Breath of Freedom: The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs, and Germany*, New York 2010.

bespeaks an awareness of the kind of structural racism within US institutions during the attempts to export freedom, American style, that is still being scrutinized today.

## 5. Re-Education as Gender Education

Two contributions highlight aspects of gender in post-war re-education scenarios, and both contest the dominant view that the new Japanese constitution written under the influence of US occupation for the first time granted Japanese women equal rights and universal suffrage, period. Both articles suggest that the story is far more complicated than that. *Jana Aresin's* essay discusses women's magazines across the political spectrum with regard to discussions of the nexus between democracy and specific gender roles and notes that most of post-war women's magazines in the United States and Japan share one characteristic: the recognition of a need to discuss and redefine the role of women in a democratic society – yet on whose terms? The contradiction that Aresin uncovers resides in the somewhat paradoxical assumption that Japanese women had to be empowered through outside, namely US, interference to become politically responsible citizens, yet their emancipation and democratization was firmly limited by the championing of a renewed pre-feminist domestic ideal defining women's lives in Japan and the US. The housewife-model became a hegemonic type (and led to the coinage of a new word in Japanese to describe it: *sengyō shufu*). Women's magazine culture disseminated it while also pointing to its limited attractiveness and relevance for women's lives.

While Aresin examines women's magazine culture in a transpacific perspective, *Michiko Takeuchi* engages with women's transnational networks contesting both the assumption that somehow Americans brought women's rights to Japan (forms of political empowerment had been there all along) and the observation that Japanese middle-class women became unwittingly complicit with the agents of the US empire in striving to assert themselves as democratic citizens. Instead, Takeuchi's argument prominently showcases the class divisions among Japanese women (with decades of activism among them) and their sense of superiority towards their US counterparts. Takeuchi argues that the former only pretended to comply with the reforms that came on the heels of occupation in order to humour American women's missionary zeal and self-declared "civilizing force".

## 6. All Is Well that Ends Well?

Revisiting re-education implies spelling out the different forms and functions re-education can have and did have in the post-war moment – and beyond. Certainly, all of the types identified here rather schematically in fact often appear in hybrid forms: play includes propaganda (perhaps in more subtly hidden ways), propagandistic efforts, however, can be re-appropriated by local actors (for purposes of protest, American style), re-education abroad can lead to re-education at home, and social and political changes can also be falsely attributed to re-education efforts against the backdrop of the post-

war US tendency to produce success stories. Each of the contributions in this volume discusses instances of “conflicting agendas” and “cross-cultural agency” in a time which saw the emergence of a new post-war order. This special issue prominently discusses contradictions arising with the post-war implementation of new norms in Japan and Germany by way of planned re-education, the re-emergence of mass media under the arc of democratization (and, paradoxically, military governance), and the rhetoric around the meaning of freedom, liberation, and emancipation resonating within civil society at large. The “management” of democratic citizens, the re-militarization of an island in the name of peace, the attempts at exporting equality while holding on to white privilege, the struggle around (some) women’s rights and patriarchal gender norms – these are some of the tensions that this volume discusses and that any analysis of re-education and its cross-cultural agendas and actors has to bring to the fore in order to critically revise the dominant narrative of the post-war period that has focused on cold-war beginnings which almost immediately ushered in a politics of containment along with a geopolitical re-alignment that included the quick transformation of former enemies into potential allies through successful pedagogy. Of course, it has to be conceded that re-education efforts have shaped the post-war societies but, quite to the contrary of such generalizing success stories, they were and still are at the core of ongoing controversies.

The final contribution to this volume, “a conversation about two occupations”, brings together two of the most renowned scholars on the subject, *Mire Koikari* and *Susan Carruthers*, whose work has shaped the field of cold war historiography and occupation studies in crucial ways. In a vivid exchange, they reflect on questions of terminology, shifting positionalities, the role of difference (including gender) and mass media, on questions of the archive and instances of ‘archive fever’ along with formats in which to teach occupation and re-education in the classroom. Both indicate next steps to be taken in the scholarship on re-education and occupation employing interdisciplinary and transnational research designs.

In sum, the contributions in this volume are bound together by their focus on institutions and actors in early cold war transpacific and transatlantic constellations: military institutions and their agents, a civilian labour force and its local, yet displaced workers, a national civil society along with transnational networks of activists, mass media entertainment and academic researchers investigating public opinion in different cultural contexts. The essays flesh out effects of and responses to re-education, reform, and “democratization” that point to the shortcomings of US efforts and of American democracy itself, to what is lost and gained in translation and transfer, and to the legacies of crucial post-war transformations today.

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