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Qi Xin

A Brief History of Human Culture in the 20th Century



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Foreword

Chinese Civilization and World Trends

Over two thousand years, Chinese civilization, with Confucianism as its mainstream, has bred its unique deepness and splendor, and has manifested its unique extensiveness and profoundness through the diffusion and mutual-permeation of cultures and religions of all its ethnic groups as well as the cultural diversification. Originating in East Asia where the economy is based on agriculture, this profound, splendid, complex, and fertile civilization has in turn sustained the development of its political order and social culture over its long history. From ancient times to the early years of modern history, Chinese culture has developed into a long-standing and well-established civilization. In the nineteenth century when the Western culture came ashore, it had to face up to an altogether strange civilization.

In the nineteenth century, Chinese referred to the Western world as Tai Xi (Far West) and the Western people called China and its neighboring countries Far East, both of which expressed a sense of remoteness in terms of space and cultural disparity. The Western people, however, supported by the powerful material force gathered from the Industrial Revolution, were able to cover the distance and bring their own civilization to the East. In this process, the British knocked the door of China open by means of naval force and the Americans broke down the fences of Japan with their fleet. In this sense, the contact between the Eastern culture and the Western culture began with conflicts and clashes. Thereafter, exerting itself to catch up with the modern West in the pressing situation, the old East embarked on its trip to introduce capitalism and initiate modernization. In more than half a century, Chinese first strived to be stronger by copying the Western political and economic systems in the Westernization Movement¹ and, bearing the trauma caused by the invaders, accepted part of the Western culture. Then, with the aim of reform and survival, they accepted more and more Western culture in the following Reform

¹A movement with the aim to introduce techniques of capitalist production, initiated by comprador bureaucrats in the latter half of the nineteenth-century in order to preserve the rule of the Qing government.

Movement of 1898² and the Revolution led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen in 1911.³ At the same time, traditional Chinese culture faded away and became sidelined. In the 1860s, harboring the wish that the feudal system of China and the Western culture could go well together, the first generation that started the Westernization Movement absorbed the Western culture with the intention of protecting the old by adopting the new. But with the coming of the arrogant aggression of the Western culture from Europe and America in the early twentieth century, the argument and pursuit of total westernization emerged among the new generation of China. This change documented truly the spiritual journey of the Chinese people when they worked toward modernization. Among their spiritual experiences were sufferings under the oppression of the aggressors and the ensuing sense of urgency followed by irrationality and deviations.

It is the Western people who first completed the Industrial Revolution and achieved modernization in social changes triggered by it. Therefore, over one hundred years since the mid-nineteenth century, modernization and the Western culture were so inseparably mingled together that Euro-centralism emerged in the West and a misconception that equated modernization with westernization was also formed in the East. In the first one hundred years of the interaction between the Western culture and the Eastern culture, what came into view were the superiority of the former and the inferiority of the latter. In the second half of the twentieth century, however, modernization had spread into many areas of the world. With the nutritious ingredients of the Western culture, modernization had been assimilated into native cultures and rooted itself in various peoples and societies. So, it is safe to say that modernization had taken on an unprecedented diversity. The rise of the industrial countries in East Asia after the 1970s is just one of the eye-catching phenomena in this process. Their existence and development have helped to bring about the reflection upon the total westernization among the Chinese people and the Euro-centralism among the Western people: what the world has been cultivating and developing is an age of reason in cultural exchange in which the Eastern culture and the Western culture are no longer compared against each other for strengths and weaknesses so that they can enjoy an equal say in dialog.

Standing at the turn of centuries and looking back at the zigzag journey the Chinese civilization has traveled for more than 150 years, we cannot help feeling overwhelmed. However, when we look forward to the coming twenty-first century and associate Chinese culture with the whole world, various thoughts come to our mind: on one hand, the twentieth century witnessed flourishing science and technology and rich material resources; but on the other hand, it experienced an upset ecology in which the planet earth is left with innumerable scars. What's more, in that century the network of economy has connected all parts of the world, bringing different peoples that used to be separated in space increasingly closer together. But

²A movement mainly led by Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei, aiming at establishing a constitutional monarch system in China.

³The Chinese bourgeois democratic revolution led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen which overthrew the Qing dynasty.

during the same period, two world wars, together with many regional conflicts and the long-lasting Cold War, have resulted in endless suffering and pain. Among the contradictions stated above, the elements promoting advancement usually in turn curbed it. Everybody desires a better tomorrow, so peace and development naturally become the principal concern when he or she looks forward to the next century.

In *The Doctrine of the Mean*, one of ancient Confucian classics, there is an old saying that the nature of man can be fully developed only after giving nature a full development. Although this remark was made more than two thousand years ago, the wisdom and insight contained therein can still call forth meditation by the people seeking development through modernization in the twenty-first century. Since Francis Bacon advanced the idea that knowledge is power in the West, the spirit of science nurtured by the ancient Greek has been introduced consciously into the conquest of nature. This is a process of making the most of nature: the way man conquered nature in the steam age found its full expression in harnessing the power of wind, fire, and water, that is to say, in imitating nature; nowadays, the atom smasher in man's hands is capable of, in an artificial environment, unleashing out of some materials the power which scarcely displays itself in a natural environment. Such rate of advancement could hardly be measured by any scale. Over two hundred years, the myriad of materials accumulated in the process of fully developing nature has dramatically changed the life of mankind. However, as far as peace and development are concerned, full development of nature is only one side of the coin. The subject of peace is mankind; the ultimate purpose of development is also closely related to mankind. Namely, mankind is in essence the measure of ultimate values in society. Therefore, full development of nature should be combined with full development of the nature of man. Since the Industrial Revolution, material wealth has been growing with each passing day, whereas morality has been in decline day by day, which is just the consequence of the incongruity between developing nature fully and developing the nature of man fully. I believe that modernization begins with developing nature fully, but comes to perfection in identifying developing nature fully with developing the nature of man fully and in congruence between economy and ethics.

Compared with developing nature fully, developing the nature of man fully is a more significant issue, which cannot be avoided by any civilization. In terms of groups, the nature of man is the origin of relationships between man and man, nation and nation, people and people. Every kind of relationship corresponds to the interests of a certain group. Different groups could be brought into conflict due to different interests, and could also come together to, within some scope and to some degree, coordinate and cooperate on the basis of mutual interests. Over two thousand years, mankind has witnessed a history in which conflicts exceeded coordination. Since Confucius, the ideal held by Confucians to make peace for all coming generations has been preserved in the Chinese civilization and become an inspiring belief. To make peace for all coming generations is to give up divergence and embrace cooperation. Globalization, in today's world, has become an evident economic trend, and therefore, interests of peoples, nations and the whole world are usually interlocked or, as the Chinese saying goes: "Pull one hair and the whole

body is affected". In such a situation, when one thinks for himself, he has to think for others. I believe that the visions of ancient sages will call forth more conscience and self-consciousness, and thereby we can keep marching toward peace and development.

Human beings are able to remake nature, but they are also part of nature. In this sense, to fully develop the human nature involves the relationship between nature and man. In terms of nature remaking, nature is the antithesis of mankind. However, human life can escape nowhere but nature, for human beings are in nature, no matter live or dead. In this vein, it can be inferred that the concept of harmony between nature and man is inclusive. Material force under the control of human beings has become more and more abundant since the Industrial Revolution. However, it is nature that has paid the entire price in this process. Consequently, the relationship between nature and man has become increasingly tense and human beings turn out to be victims. Thus, more and more people recall the belief regarding the relationship between nature and man, an issue that the Chinese civilization is good at dealing with. The development in the twenty-first century should be a sustainable one so that we can resolve the confrontation between nature and man. While exploiting nature, human beings should take good care of nature and repay nature. By doing so, we are giving good treatment to our life and our offspring as well.

Since the end of the Cold War, the world has developed from a bipolar system to a multi-polar one and has become more pluralistic. Every kind of human civilization can find its position in this world. Over the one hundred years, China has made unremitting efforts and is now building a socialist country with its own characteristics. It will pass on its ancient civilization and open up a fresh outlook in the process of modernization. Meanwhile, this process also requires that we conduct dialog with all the other civilizations on an equal footing and we seek mutual complementarities and mutual benefits. Civilizations with their own characteristics are formed over the time in history, but their values and significances belong to all human beings. With the coming of the information age, the fences of many fields will be broken down so that information can be shared by mankind. Hence, when the new century is around the corner, we are justified to believe that different civilizations and cultures will communicate and converge with each other. This will help to get people closer not only in distance but also in heart. Tomorrow will be better.

A Brief History of Human Culture in the twentieth Century (the literary translation of which is *Contemplation on the Century*), written by Xin Qi, serves as a useful coordinate which we can refer to when examining the development of human cultures in the twentieth century. As a young author who has witnessed only 40 years of the twentieth century, he is courageous enough to study the subject, to present his argument, and to analyze details thoroughly in the book, focusing on the conflict between the Western culture and Eastern culture, on the process of industrialization and modernization aiming at fully developing nature, on the judgment on ethics and values of culture and arts aiming at fully developing the nature of humankind. What he has achieved is rare and commendable. From the

book, we can know that he harbors both the traditional Confucian ideas such as “love for all man and nature” and “harmony between man and nature” and possesses the reason of a modern intellectual. At the dawn of the new century, the publishing of the book, in which the twentieth century experienced by human beings is contemplated, will help us better grasp the future. This is the reason why I wrote this foreword.

Beijing, China
December 1999

Wang Daohan

Preface to the English Version

The Chinese version of this small book was released in 2000, and was revised twice, in 2006 and again in 2009. At present, 20 years after I wrote this book, I am fortunate enough to be in the good graces of the world-famous Springer Publishing to publish and introduce to more readers its English edition. This is undoubtedly a great honor to a Chinese scholar.

This book touches on the cultural concepts that have dominated human development in the last century, covering changes in history, philosophy, science, religion, literature, and arts of the twentieth century. The writing is focused on the expansion of commercial capitalism, socialist revolutions, the two world wars, anti-colonization and national liberation movements, scientific and technological development, conflicts and integrations of Eastern and Western cultures, globalization, women's liberation movement, mass entertainment, and other major topics such as the information age and our digital society. Many of the trends that were predicted in the book have become a reality: vulgar mass entertainment has become a disaster, eroding rational thought; battles over energy resources have become the tipping point of international power conflicts; irrational process in science and technology is leading to the self-destruction of humanity; new imperialists use warfare in the name of "value promotion" and "anti-terrorism"; the clash of civilizations has been intensified by international powers that oppress small and weak peoples; climate change, diseases, and natural disasters are raging; financial capital has collaborated to form a hegemony in the information age; the economic gap between the rich and the poor has widened—and the list goes on. These judgments are born out of a Chinese scholar who is faced with the destiny of mankind and examines the complex situations of the twentieth century with a moral rationality that transcends instrumental rationality.

The world we live in today is undergoing tremendous changes. In the 19 years since the publication of this book on prophecies of the new century, the cultural concepts that have influenced humanity have also undergone dramatic transformation. The international order of liberalism and financial capitalism is encountering a major crisis. Traditional economic models have their growth limits. The natural environment, essential for human survival, is in jeopardy. The new

technological revolution is rapidly unfolding. Party politics and constitutional democracy are afflicted with many problems. Anti-globalization and populism are sweeping through the West. We human beings are at a new crossroads and we must choose our future. Changes to the world order will inevitably affect global politics, existing economic models and the structure of social organization. Our cultural value systems will also be adjusted and reconstructed accordingly. Is humanity repeating the mistake of the “war-revolution” cycle, or is China’s rise and participation in civilization reconstruction a new way of “civilization and coexistence”? Reminiscent of Hamlet, this question concerns everyone; no country, no civilization can stay aloof from the matter.

This English edition is based on the 2012 edition of the Chinese book. In addition to the original content, a number of predictive analyses on major historical events and trends written and published between 2000 and 2012 were integrated into Chap. 11. Thanks to the recommendation and help of Mr. Wu Hao, Dean of the Silk Road Research Institute of Beijing Foreign Studies University, this small book will reach out to more English readers. I would like to express my gratitude to all the friends who have given me great care and support. I welcome further enlightenment from readers.

Beijing, China
May 2019

Qi Xin

Introduction

As the twentieth century draws to a close, its influence on humanity has surpassed that of all the previous centuries in recorded history. Every one of us has experienced in our life the impact of the twentieth century from different aspects. As a great century worth-writing volumes about, it is an inspiring, hopeful, thought-provoking, and self-indulging age, which nonetheless has filled people with perplexity, despair, nostalgia, and boredom. Looking back at the past one hundred years, we find that myriads of ideas and their derivatives came out accompanied by growing material production and expanding conquest of nature. Consequently, human behavior has shaken off the traditional fetters of the past few centuries and developed along pluralistic lines. The interaction between the ideas and the behavior has brought forth a great variety of exotic exterior cultural phenomena as well as diverging and diversified interior cultural ideas in our lifestyle.

The Development Trend of Twentieth-Century Culture

In any case, the cultural development of the twentieth century displays a fundamental trend: the awakening of mankind initiated by great thinkers at the end of the previous century gave rise to the negation of God. Aided by the power of logic and philosophy, rationality pushed science to the forefront of human thought, and science in turn regarded nature as an object of conquest. Driven by the pursuit of commercial profit, the industrialization and modernization of mankind gave full play to the natural and social attributes of individuals, unleashing tremendous productivity and consumption power. It also created unprecedented material and spiritual wealth as well as a huge market and complicated international relations, changing the lifestyle and social formation of mankind. The nineteenth-century concept of colonialism and market had been replaced by the ideal of “nation state” in the early twentieth century. The war to carve up the world waged by major powers, the struggle against colonial rules and the national liberation movement constituted the main theme of the first half of the twentieth century. The suppression

of human nature and deprivation of the working class' rights by the industrialization ushered revolution to the stage of history. Various ideologies such as collectivism, equalitarianism, welfarism, and social democracy were intertwined with wars, revolutions, and natural evolution of the society.

As a major player in the twentieth century, commercial capitalism requires "efficiency". In contrast, socialism demands "equality". "Efficiency" is related to commercial profit while "equality" corresponds to social ethics. The ideological confrontation of capitalism and socialism as two different social systems sparked worldwide revolutions and wars, prompting the capitalist system to make self-adjustment by adopting socialist elements on a large scale. The refined culture, which had been flourishing for several hundred years since Renaissance, became secularized due to commercial consumption. With the improvement of communication media, the mass culture expanded to every corner of the world. Mental culture gradually lost its ground upon the encroachment of sensory culture. Classical, rational, and traditional cultural forms as mainstream culture were gone forever.

Under the powerful colonial expansion by the Western culture, the conflict between the Eastern and Western cultures used to display the dual themes of cultural enlightenment and cultural self-improvement. However, the Eastern culture has never succeeded in coming out of the shadow of the West's superior material force. The debate on "center" and "frontier" tends to become a theoretical basis for the restoration of national tradition. Although some states and nations have achieved independence through national democratic movement, they find it hard to position themselves properly under the influence of "post-colonialism". Consequently, their cultures also exhibit dual characteristics.

The influence of culture and art in their narrow sense upon the twentieth century cannot be separated from individuals. No one can be immune to the influence of such art forms as literature, painting, music, drama, sculpture, architecture, dancing, film, and television. This influence has promoted the fission of the society and the diversification of the lifestyle. However, it also has an underlying trend: the negation of the laws of reason and natural instinct as well as the traditional norm of mankind.

Financial capital has swept away the artificial hedges of nations, countries, and regions like a flood, bringing "modern" concept and lifestyle to every corner of the world. With the development of science and information technology, mankind has gradually been trapped in a networked social life. The real world increasingly partakes of virtual characteristics. The individual expression of mankind has to accommodate the networked world, multi-faceted media, and consumption choices, which compels people to divide their time and living space into smaller fragments. Unable to be their own masters any more, people have to drift with the tide of the information age. As more and more people become a node of the network, they have less philosophical and rational reflection upon their surroundings and the value of their existence. Their pursuit of sensory pleasure and consumption value is taking sway over their traditional faith.

The Myth of “Culture”

The term “culture” has long been a “myth”.

The pictogram of the Chinese character “文” in the oracle-bone inscriptions of the Shang (or Yin) Dynasty (sixteenth to eleventh century BC) is an image of a standing man with an embellished belly. Its original meaning in ancient China is “ornamentation”. The worship of nature and animals by our primitive ancestors inspired pristine ideas and beliefs. The totem of concrete material produced objects with abstract shapes and ornamentation. The early daub and tattoo lines on the body gradually shaped the “ornamentation” of the material and spiritual products processed by human beings. In other words, man gave “meaningful forms” to various subjective and objective matters. These “meaningful forms” embodied in spiritual and physical aspects have been passed on from generation to generation. Upon interaction between man and nature and between men themselves, they have given birth to multiple forms, systems, standards, geographic and ethnic features, exerting an ever-lasting influence on the human development and social structure.

To put it in popular parlance, “culture” is the self and subjective awareness which distinguishes mankind from the natural and animal world, and the tangible or intangible set of external and internal rules for various subjective and objective matters. It is similar to the commercial term “packaging”. Since culture is a set of rules for various matters, it is inevitably connected with every aspect of human life. Hence, there are political culture, religious culture, social culture, national culture, etc. “Culture” seems to be able to encompass everything.

As a matter of fact, “culture” can be divided into broad and narrow ones. What has been discussed above is basically the concept of culture in its broad sense. Culture in its narrow sense mainly refers to a full range of “meaningful forms” exhibiting the material and spiritual aspects of human civilization through literature, arts (including painting, music, dancing, architecture, sculpture, drama, etc.), or television, film, and multi-media. Culture in its broad sense, on the other hand, mainly refers to the interactive influence of human ideas and behaviors on nature and society as well as various trends determined by such interactive influence in the historical development of mankind.

Western Academia’s Definition of “Culture”

It is very difficult to come up with an accurate definition of “culture”. In 1952, American anthropologists A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn co-authored *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, in which they compiled a list containing 164 definitions of “culture” put forward by the academic circles during the 80 years from 1871 to 1951. Their definition of culture is that “the concept of culture is of special importance in social sciences and humanities because it is directly related to some particularities which reveal some social objects

or the entire historical process. Besides, the definition of culture is also directly related to whether it can meet the requirements of all social sciences and humanities, but first of all the requirement of history should be satisfied".⁴ As a concept in the course of history, culture cannot be discussed independently of historical events. By following the historical facts as the basic materials, this book will present arguments based on historical facts and use the arguments to illustrate the history. By combining culture with history, it will highlight major cultural concepts dominating the historical development of mankind throughout the twentieth century.

Culture has been accumulated and developed along with the historical evolution of mankind. The mental forms of culture gradually come into being and are constantly updated in the course of history. The abstract concept of culture stems from "pattern", "temperament", "intelligence and cultivation", "diverse social status", etc., in the ancient Greek philosophy. "Cultura" of the Roman period is derived from Latin word "colere", which refers to plantation and cultivation. It is also similar to the word "cultus", which means sacrifice. When it came to the Middle Ages, "culture" obviously partook of the sense of cultivation and religion.

During the Renaissance period, the emphasis was on the classic humanist culture and the denigration of theology. "Culture", which included knowledge enlightenment and moral content, replaced theological culture of religion with the secular classical culture. Samuel Pufendorf (1632–1694), a German historian in the seventeenth century, introduced the concept of "human dignity" into the definition of "culture", highlighting man's subject consciousness.⁵ In the eighteenth century, emerging intelligentsia regarded "culture" as cultivation, knowledge, and skills acquired in the process of self-improvement. Rousseau, Voltaire, and "the encyclopedic school" used the concept of "culture" to express a given spiritual and social custom. German classical philosophers at that time introduced "culture" into the spiritual domain and explored its essence from a philosophical and rational perspective.

The nineteenth century witnessed the full development of natural sciences. Cultural anthropologists with knowledge of biological evolution started to research the essence, structure, function, variation, and stages of "culture". In 1871, British historian and anthropologist Edward B. Taylor (1832–1917) offered a classical definition of "culture": "Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." He also touched upon the connotation of "broad culture", i.e., everything that the life of a nation has shown partakes of culture regardless of its level.⁶ So far, the definition of "culture" has a framework that is difficult to surpass. Although many culture scholars have vied with one another to redefine "culture", no one can beat Taylor by providing a new definition. However, "mankind is facing a new world which is eager for renovation. The yardstick to measure the values of

⁴Zhang Guangzhi, Zhang Guangyong, *History, the Culture of Culture—Western History in a Cultural Perspective*, Zhejiang People's Publishing House, 1990, p.1.

⁵Victor Hell, *L'idée De Culture*, Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1988, p. 29.

⁶Edward B. Taylor, *Primitive Culture*, 1871, p. 1.

this world has changed completely. Under such circumstances, mankind has endeavored to establish a new cultural pattern”.⁷ Indeed, in the twentieth century, mankind succeeded in creating a new cultural pattern. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary for us to define and further interpret “culture”.

The Concept of “Culture” as Defined in This Book

“Culture” elaborated in this book is basically “culture in its broad sense” directly related to historical events. It covers a series of material and spiritual creations in the twentieth century and their expression in ideological forms. Readers might wonder: “What is the difference between your all-inclusive definition of culture and civilization?” “Civilization” has its given connotations. Firstly, it refers to the cultural situation of the social structure of mankind. Secondly, it measures the cultural development level of a given period by referring to the social formation. Thirdly, it can differentiate the geographic region and pattern of culture. Fourthly, it can measure the degree of mankind’s material and technical power in dealing with the nature. “Culture”, on the other hand, reflects the interaction between ideology and behavior which has an impact on all spheres of human society and gives rise to a trend that sways various relations between man and nature and between man and man.

In examining ideology and behavior, “culture in its broad sense” should focus on the full range of activity models, behavior modes as well as all the material and spiritual creations within the social formation (including the economic system, political system, social organization, and cultural value system). Such cultural categories as literature, art, philosophy, and religion are all “sub-cultures” under “the culture in its broad sense” and subject to its regulation and constraint. Culture focuses more on the ideological form of the social formation. The social-cultural environment created by culture not only shapes the cultural nature of human but also is subject to the influence of human ideology and behavior. “Civilization” is a concept which defines the nature of material production and historical geography in the social formation while “culture” is a concept of spiritual production, ideology, and behavior in the social formation.

There is no denying the fact that culture partakes of geographic, historical, national, and class nature. Culture is unique and any society has its own mainstream culture. In terms of history, nation, and geography, culture is a form of social legacy and a set of rules that maintain the basic history and culture of the society through cultural molding and ideological identification. Culture can act upon society and individuals via every kind of material and spiritual carrier, transforming personal ideas into the ideology of the society, history, nation, class, group, and country. “By turning subjective spirit into objective spirit so as to create a social-cultural

⁷Louis Dollot, *Culture Individuelle et Culture de Masse*, Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 1987, p. 116.

environment, each of us lives in a society dominated by a leading culture of certain category, which will exert a huge influence on our life. The so-called socialization of human beings is a process of going through cultural cultivation and edification”.⁸

With the emergence of wars and acts of conquest, any group, class, country, or alliance of countries has its own “mainstream culture”, whose function is to make the conquered have a sense of belonging to the conqueror and keep the society stable and identified with the conqueror. This inevitably determines the cultural particularity and the “central” consciousness that gives rise to culture. As a result, the rich and colorful history of mankind has witnessed conflicts between and fusions of different cultures. Meanwhile, the generality of human culture is an objective existence. The human development in all the past centuries has a trend and the twentieth century is no exception. This book intends to unveil the development pattern and trend through the description of various cultures in the past one hundred years.

The Logic and Structure of This Book

This book reviews the cultural process of the twentieth century by focusing on the interactions between the cultural ideology and behavior. It presents and elaborates on four major features of the twentieth century which distinguish it from other centuries. The four features are as follows:

1. Philosophy resigns from its leading position and becomes an ordinary humanity discipline. Science and technology has become a guide for mankind to obtain knowledge, and subsequently, great changes have taken place in social structure.
2. Commerce, finance, and information dissemination have played a dominant role in the economic formation of mankind. The industrial society has gradually developed into the post-industrial society. Mankind is faced with two major difficulties: technological dilemma and value nihilism. These are the fundamental problems brought about by modernization as everything can be quantified, measured, and exchanged. Commercialism becomes the dominating force of this age.
3. Cultural and artistic ideology has transcended classicism, conventional notions, and the paradigm–modernism, developing into post-modernism with personality projection and anti-convention. In the late twentieth century, there appeared commercial and information culture which eliminated personality and ideal and negated aestheticism.
4. Imperialist powers constantly expanded their aggression for their respective colonial interests, world market share, distorted racism, and state idealism (fascism) while weak nations and countries were engaged in constant rebellion

⁸Chen Xianda, “Several Issues about Cultural Research”, *Theoretical Front in Higher Education*, October–November, 1995.

to shake off their colonial and semi-colonial status and pursue national independence. Therefore, the first half of the twentieth century was virtually filled with hot wars (two World Wars) while the first 40 years of the second half of the twentieth century was dominated by a large-scale cold war and regional wars resulting from the confrontation of antagonistic ideologies. Different regions, nations, countries, and classes were engaged in revolutions accompanied by wars that took place one after another in pursuit of independent sovereignty, fair distribution, and social equality. All of them have brought great harm to human civilization. However, they have also promoted rapid development and social progress in every field, ushering humanity into a future filled with greater uncertainty.

Chapter 1 gives an introduction of the theories raised by three great thinkers of considerable influence in the early twentieth-century culture: Karl Marx (1818–1883), Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844–1900) and Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), with illustration of their impact on the development of the twentieth century and description of the keynote of the early twentieth-century culture.

Chapter 2 sheds light on the advantages and disadvantages that industrialization triggered by the application of technology to the production process has brought to human life and culture. It introduces the analyses of the cultural phenomena and essence of the industrialized society by renowned culture scholars and social critics of the twentieth century. It discusses the cultural transformation amid the drastic changes in society. This chapter also examines the cultural essence of the capitalist economic system which has been a topic of concern and debate for several generations.

Chapter 3 analyzes the “sensual culture” (also known as “culture of senses”) of the commercial civilization which is entirely different from the culture of the previous century dominated by classicism. It gives an account of the cultural features of the post-modern society and the cultural integration driven by the dominant culture in the twentieth century.

Chapter 4 reviews the wars and revolution process lasting nearly 90 years of the twentieth century and their great impact on culture. It describes the performance of culture manipulated by the peculiar behaviors and ideologies in wars and revolutions. It presents a thorough analysis of the distorted cultural mode of fascism from the twentieth-century anti-fascist perspective.

Chapter 5 is fully devoted to the discussion of the impact of science and technology on culture. It illustrates the positive and negative impacts of science and technology as a double-edged sword on human culture in terms of political, economic, and military competitions consummated by the pure rationalism of the twentieth century. It also discusses issues concerning the integration between technology and human spiritual values.

Chapter 6 analyzes the inevitable conflicts between the Western and Eastern cultures with the expansion of colonialism in the early twentieth century. It introduces the cultural significance of the self-strengthening movement carried out in modern China. It describes the attitude of developing countries toward

“post-colonial culture” as they strive to realize modernization after achieving national liberation. It reveals the basic outline of “the world order of civilization” against the backdrop of conflicts and fusions of the Western and Eastern cultures.

Based on the characteristics of social mobility and migration in the twentieth century, Chap. 7 analyzes the reorganization of the traditional community and “the mixed cultural pattern” emerging from the commercial society. It offers an in-depth cultural interpretation of the twentieth-century women’s liberation thoughts. It also analyzes the impact of globalization trend on the culture of each nation.

Chapter 8 focuses on the relationship between the twentieth-century literature and art on the one hand and social changes on the other. It illustrates the changes of the twentieth-century “culture” in its narrow sense based on the principal features and development trends that different artistic disciplines have exhibited in the evolutionary changes so as to help readers apprehend the various cultural concepts of the twentieth century behind “their meaningful forms”.

Chapter 9 explains the features of “mass culture” and the effect of cultural market on the society along with digital issues brought about by the overwhelming information revolution, the wave of globalization and the extensive application of computers that occurred in the last decade of the twentieth century. It explores the culture concept of the new generation of youth who have accepted network and received computer education against the backdrop where cultural communication methods are under change and people are increasingly involved in the “virtual reality” while their relationship with nature is getting more and more distant. It raises the issue of whether the essence of mankind’s culture will further change in the information age.

Chapter 10 reveals the features of the twenty-first-century culture and its influence on the human development based on the cultural keynote at the end of the twentieth century. From the perspective of “futurology”, it analyzes the development trends of “the information age”, “the great circulation society”, “the telecommunications society” and “the ecological civilization system” in the human culture of the twenty-first century and feels the pulse of the twenty-first-century culture.

This book will endeavor to combine the theoretical exposition with the rich and colorful historical events to achieve the logical integrity of culture and history.

A Cursory Look at Historical Events of the Twentieth Century

Any cultural phenomenon, behavior or notion is specific and historical. If we let what we have learned, studied, and experienced in each period of the twentieth-century unfold slowly in our mind when we contemplate with closed eyes, it is really like a live drama of magnificent scale.

1900–1918 (The Collapse of the Old World System)

The year of 1900 witnessed the fighting between the British and the Boers in South Africa, between the Americans and the Filipinos, and between the Eight-Power Allied Forces and boxers in China. This year also saw the publication of *The Interpretations of Dreams* by Sigmund Freud, which reveals the sub-consciousness of human beings through psychoanalysis. The European monarchs found overnight two non-European countries—the USA and Japan—ranking among the strong powers after the carving up of the world by the imperialist powers in the previous century. The rise of the USA took place after it defeated Spain in the Philippines. Japan defeated the Russian navy in the Tsushima Strait and expanded its influence into northeast China in 1905, during which Albert Einstein advanced the “theory of relativity”. In the same year, a revolution broke out in Russia, shaking the foundation of Czarist Russia. Spurred by Karl Marx’s socialist revolutionary theories, the working class, which grew stronger through the rapid industrialization, resorted to radical revolutionary means to demand social reforms in European countries. All of the European monarchs dressed in army uniform attended the funeral of British King Edward VII in May 1910. Lord Isher, the British King’s counselor, made a speech commenting on the capital-dominated era: “Never before has history seen such dramatic changes: the old indexes upon which human life depends have been completely discarded.” Just as a European caricature illustrated, all the kings vied with one another to pawn their crowns off at the pawnshop and inquired industrial capitalists: “Is this still worth something?” In 1911, China’s autocratic monarchy, which had lasted several thousand years, finally collapsed. This year also witnessed the modern nationalist flames engulfing the Balkan Peninsula under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. During this period, the Panama Canal was open to traffic; Ford Automobile Company installed the first assembly line; the feminist movements were in full swing in Britain and the USA; the Beiyang government or Northern Warlord Government led by Yuan Shikai promulgated *Provisional Constitution*; Isadora Duncan performed modern dances in Greek apparel; the academic circles acclaimed the brand-new physical theory of quantum mechanics advanced by Bohr and Max Karl Ernst Ludwig Planck; Pablo Picasso created “Cubism” in his painting; German architect Frank Lloyd Wright exhibited his modern architectural style by designing the Tokyo Imperial Grand Hotel; and refrigerators became the household appliance for the first time. However, in June 1914, the gunshot in Sarajevo triggered a war among major powers that had been hostile to each other like tigers eyeing their preys. A dozen countries were involved in this war with the support of modern industry and technology; over ten million people were killed in a short span of four years. In 1917, a revolution broke out amid this war and the first socialist political power was established in Russia.

1919–1929 (Age of Chaos and the Realization of Ideals)

The Peace Treaty of Versailles was signed in Paris in 1919 based on the Fourteen Points peace program proposed by US President Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations became a club of strong powers to re-divide the world. China's opposition against the Paris Peace Conference triggered a national-wide patriotic anti-imperialist campaign. Hence, the New Culture Movement started and the communist ideology spread extensively in China. The Soviet Union, which was implementing a new economic policy at that time, was beleaguered by European countries. The USA distanced itself from European affairs. However, it got involved economically in Europe's industrial reconstruction through private investment and bank loans. In March 1920, British Governor-General of India received a short note to the effect that: "I can no longer respect or love a government that has made one mistake after another to defend its own crime." This resolute and yet polite remark represented a campaign that an Indian named Gandhi started against the British colonial rule without resorting to arms—a non-violent peaceful resistance. Various Western ideas fermented a national revolution in China in a bid to save the nation. By that time the Western industry and commerce entered into a golden period. New industries such as automobile, radio, film, and household appliances developed vigorously. The demand for private consumption rose sharply. In the new continent, the USA entered a wild and crazy "Jazz Age". With the decline of commodity prices in traditional agriculture, textile, mining, and lumbering industries, the economic structure of Western countries was damaged. However, the post-war speedy recovery in Europe, where each country competed with one another for national interests, was indeed impressive. Science appeared to be omnipotent in this period. All walks of life from both governmental and private sectors vied with each other in the application of scientific methods. Enterprises and governments recruited experts and funded various scientific research programs. The pan-scientific approach made the odd and the absurd become fashionable. German fascist party repackaged the long-rejected theory of the origin of races. When industrialization was of supreme importance and the combination of communications industry with capital caused a big hullabaloo, T. S. Eliot published *Waste Land*; James Joyce published *Ulysses*; and a new generation of radical artists started to foray into the uncharted strange arena in the sub-consciousness of mankind in response to the call of *Manifeste du Surrealisme* by Breton. All the artistic rules and logic of aestheticism were abandoned. The statement that "the dream will finally become united with reality"⁹ seemed to have foretold the Great Depression in the late 1920s. In 1929, people listened to Jazz music played on the phonograph, shaved with electric shavers, treated fever with penicillin, watched sound films on the weekends, listened on radio to the lecture by Dr. Goddard on the principle of liquid fuel rocket, and were generally concerned about the development of fascism founded by Benito Mussolini in Italy. It was on Thursday, October 24 of the same year that the Wall Street stock

⁹Andre Breton, *Manifeste du Surrealisme*, 1924.

market in New York collapsed. Thousands of retail investors, entrepreneurs, and bankers who wished to make money from the stock market to pay fashionable consumer goods and housing installments as well as those European governments which had no idea that the securities and bonds were not backed by capital lost their investments in a few days. American investors withdrew their capital from Europe only to worsen the financial difficulties of European countries. The pyramid of paper profit piled up with the money gained by short sale collapsed. The 1920s came to an end amid the Great Depression.

1930–1939 (An Age of Resignation, Radicalism and Appeasement Amid the Great Depression)

In 1930, scientists invented electron microscope and radio telescope, greatly improving mankind's ability to understand nature from micro- to macrolevels. The radio broadcast, which had just become popular, reported that throughout the world 6,000 banks closed down and 40 million workers were laid off. Starving urban residents were scavenging for food in the garbage cans. Being unable to afford harvesting and transporting costs, farmers could not help but let their crops rot in the field. In the same year amid the fighting among warlords in China, Mao Zedong developed the revolutionary theory in Jinggang Mountains—"A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire". In 1931, Britain stopped the Gold Standard System in which the sterling pound could be converted into gold. Forty countries followed suit one after another to set up tariff barriers. Consequently, international trade shrank by a large margin. However, the re-armament of Germany became an impetus for its economic recovery. *The Mother*, a novel written by Maksim Gorky, became world famous in 1932. During the Great Depression, philosophers, writers, and artists began to identify themselves with socialism. German playwright Bertolt Brecht and Mexican painter Diego Rivera devoted themselves to revolutionary activities. Grieved by the harsh terms of the Peace Treaty of Versailles, German citizens had no confidence in their representative government. What they needed was a strong man to lead and revitalize Germany. The Nazi Party rose up to meet the demand. The international relations after 1933 were full of abnormalities, surprises, and misjudgments. The Japanese republican government gave way to the young militarists, who took advantage of China's civil war to gradually expand its invasion into northeast and north China. With the support from the international fascist forces, Francisco Franco overthrew the democratic government in Spain. Germany expanded its aggression eastward by a large extent. Britain, France, and the Soviet Union carried out an appeasement policy toward Germany as they were busy with their own affairs. Adhering to the policy of isolationism, the USA refused to involve itself in international conflicts so as to introduce Roosevelt's New Deal to stage economic recovery. The League of Nations only intervened when smaller countries violated international conventions. It could do nothing to stop aggressions by

Germany, Italy, or Japan. The weak capitalist countries and the only socialist country looked with folded arms at the aggressive fascism in 1938. They not only had illusions about fascism but also expected other countries to take up the responsibility. Appeasement and will of aggression increased simultaneously. In 1939, the televised broadcast was aired alive for the first time in New York, covering the opening ceremony of the World Exposition with future as its theme. A British Member of Parliament predicted the future with a sense of political humor: “We have no opportunity to enjoy ourselves until Franco’s widow tells the dying Stalin: Hitler was assassinated at Mussolini’s funeral.” In September of the same year when combine harvester, ball-pen, photocopier, nylon garment, transparent plastic product were put to the market; theoretical physicists were experimenting bombarding the unstable element uranium with high-speed neutrons and the American people were enthralled by the film *Gone With the Wind*, the German mechanized troops blitzed Poland and the Soviet Union made use of this opportunity to occupy the eastern part of Poland and the Baltic countries. Mankind started another world war of even greater scale 20 years after the devastating World War I.

1940–1949 (An Age of Putting All Wisdom and Resources Into War Efforts)

In 1940, Germany, Italy, and Japan formed Axis Powers to promote the new world order in which the so-called superior races should be the ruler. In 1941, Britain was the only country in Europe that could put up resistance against German aggression. Having occupied north, east, and south China, Japan quickly invaded Southeast Asia. Two hundred German divisions launched an attack against the Soviet Union in June 1941. By the end of November, German tanks were within 40 kilometers of Moscow. On December 7, 1941, Japan launched a surprise attack against the American Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor and the USA could no longer remain indifferent to the war. In the summer of that year, Hitler told the visiting Japanese foreign minister Yosuke Matsuoka that once the USA declared war, there were three possibilities: arm itself, assist Britain, or open up a new battlefield. It turned out that the USA put itself on a war footing, utilizing hundreds of millions of dollars, 16 million troops, 300,000 planes, 85,000 tanks and ships with a total tonnage of 20 million and turning three possibilities into reality. The Soviet army started the strategic counterattack in Stalingrad in 1942. The Allied Forces successfully landed in Normandy in 1943. The defeat of the Axis Powers was only a matter of time. Writers and artists of the warring parties spared no efforts to mobilize the population and servicemen, stirring their emotion with every possible cultural means. Soviet musician Dmitri Shostakovich’s symphony made the enemy troops detect the invincible will of the Russian nation. French artists and poets took an active part in the underground resistance movement. Philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre published an existential work *Being and Nothingness*. Renowned film

director Epstein shot a film *Ivan the Terrible* to boost the morale of the Soviet troops. The progressive culture of China was fully dedicated to the national salvation movement. At the same time, science laboratories across the Atlantic Ocean were engaged in a war within the war. The development of applied science and technology in the twentieth century had never been so great. The explosion of the atomic bomb over Hiroshima by the US Air Force on August 6, 1945, marked the release of man-made scientific monster that could destroy mankind. The six-year war killed a total of 70 million people with the greatest casualties inflicted on East Asia and East Europe. The civilian death toll in over 60 countries exceeded that of the servicemen except Britain, the USA, and Canada. In China, more than 20 million people were killed and the property losses totaled US\$ 500 billion. The civilization's achievements that human beings had accumulated over centuries in Europe, Asia, and Africa were mostly destroyed by the war. After the war was over, allied powers became antagonistic again because of the ideological differences. When the first computer was invented and microwave ovens and recorders were used in ordinary household, Europe was divided into two camps. The national democratic movements in Asia and Africa surged like a rising wind. India became independent and the Chinese people stood up on their feet. However, the Cold War began and the new country Israel started to fight fiercely with the newly independent Arab countries. The United Nations, the outer shell of the "Yalta Regime" dominated by the USA and the Soviet Union, became a new arena for struggles among world powers.

1950–1959 (An Age of Disintegration, Reorganization and Revolution)

In the summer of 1950 when *The Bald Soprano*, written by existentialist playwright Eugene Ionesco, was performed in Paris, the Korean War broke out. The newly founded People's Republic of China bravely and resolutely sustained the war against the strongest power in the world. In 1951 McCarthyism, which cracked down on communism and suppressed the development of culture, prevailed in the USA. The panic-stricken mentality in the post-war years was depicted in *Waiting for Godot* by Irish "absurdist" literary master Samuel Beckett. Human melancholy and the sense of isolation in the modern society swayed the literary and artistic circles. After the death of Stalin in 1953, China and the USA signed the Korean Armistice Agreement. The cynical poems by young poets Crawl and Allen Ginsberg that rebelled against the social constraints drew people's attention to "the Beat Generation": long hair, black jacket, jeans, and motorbike constituted the symbols of the youth. Rock-n-roll music and sexy movie star—Marilyn Monroe became popular throughout the world. Chinese leader Mao Zedong pointed out that the transition to socialism must go through the stage of state capitalism. The year of 1954 witnessed the operation of nuclear power station, the successful invention of

anti-poliomyelitis vaccine, the service of the supersonic jet fighter, kidney transplant and artificial heart valve surgery in hospital, the defeat of France in Vietnam, and British withdrawal from Egypt's Suez Canal. Dr. Martin Luther King led black Americans in a fight against racial segregation in 1955 and initiated a movement to boycott the buses. Zhou Enlai projected the diplomatic style of New China with his personal charisma at the "Bandung Conference", laying the foundation for the international practice of "peaceful co-existence". The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union gave rise to the split of the socialist bloc in 1956. Soon afterward, the Hungarian Incident occurred. With the military intervention by the Soviet Union, the Eastern European countries could only enjoy limited sovereignty. The war between Egypt and Israel broke out over the control of the Sinai Peninsula. In 1957, when intrauterine device (IUD), oral contraceptive, and the intercontinental ballistic missile were invented, Europe established the European Common Market, the Soviet Union launched the first man-made satellite into the geostationary orbit and the rectification movement in which Chinese intelligentsia were called upon to air their views snowballed into a nation-wide "Anti-rightist Movement". In 1958, the maverick culture swept across the USA, pornographic magazines flooded the newspaper stands on the street, and with the economic recession non-violent civil rights movement initiated by the black people spread in the southern part of the USA. In order to catch up with the Western developed countries and "improve" the social system, China conducted the "great leap forward" movement in industrial and agricultural production. The ideological rift between China and the Soviet Union became wider. In the summer of that year, a civil war broke out in Lebanon and the USA sent troops to intervene. The British paratroops invaded Jordan and posed threat to Iraq. Mao Zedong resolutely started to "bombard Jinmen Island" to prevent the easing of tension and "peaceful competition" between the USA and the Soviet Union and to oppose the US plan to force Chiang Kai-shek to "rule in Taiwan". Charles de Gaulle returned to power during the "Algerian Crisis" and established the "Fifth Republic System" in France. The year of 1959 saw the emergence of the cinematic styling of French New Wave, the successful revolution in Cuba led by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara and the Cold War tension in the backyard of the USA.

1960–1972 (An Age Marked by Space Exploration, a Surge in Anti-colonialism and Full-Scale Cold War)

The 1960s saw the full-scale Cold War waged by the USA and the Soviet Union which competed in nuclear armament and the development of outer space technology. The former colonial countries before the World War II outside the two camps strove for national liberation through nationalism and socialist mass movement. The revolutionary thought swept across the world. "The Great Cultural Revolution" in China instilled militant thoughts in the leftist youth of the whole

world. A sense of decadency permeated the Western middle-class intelligentsia. “The New Leftist Movement” of the 1960s influenced the literature and art and opposed abstract expressionism. The “popular art” that emphasized the combination of arts and technology to create everyday life objects prevailed. “Under the pressure of the Cold War, the Western leftist ideology branched out into several movements: women went for feminism; the black people went for racial equality; environmentalists went for green peace; even the homosexual campaigned for gay rights”.¹⁰ The military, political, economic, and cultural confrontations against the backdrop of ideological antagonism cast a shadow over every corner of the world. Technological revolution brought such “gifts” as multiple-head nuclear weapons, color television sets, genetic engineering, lunar landing programs, space walk, etc., to further change the religious, moral, cultural, and thinking habits of mankind. “Nuclear deterrence” implied the very fission of “MAD” (the abbreviation of Mutually Assured Destruction) of human beings in other fields. Population explosion, information explosion, consumption explosion, sex explosion—everything commercial was in the process of fission while energy resources were depleted, morality sank, spiritual strength was lost, environment became increasingly polluted, and literature and art gradually lost inspiration. There was a tribal war in Congo in 1960; soon after, it became independent of Belgian rule and African countries began to realize the importance of unity. John F. Kennedy became the first Catholic president in the US history. In 1961, the Soviet spaceship sent astronaut Yuri Gagarin into the earth orbit. A wall was erected in Berlin to separate the East Camp from the West Camp. When *Tropic of Cancer* written by the American writer Henry Miller was approved at last for publication, Cuba wiped out the US mercenary troops at the Bay of Pigs. In 1962, a crisis emerged in the Caribbean Sea when the US opposed Soviet Union’s attempt to deploy missiles in Cuba. A military conflict took place along the Chinese and Indian border. The performance of *Who Is Afraid of Virginia Woolf* by American playwright Edward Albee threw light on the bewilderment of modern family. *Silent Spring* written by Rachel Carson, an American writer on environmental protection, described a disastrous prospect for industrialization and extreme technological practices. In 1963, the Civil Rights Movement—“March to Washington”—started in the USA, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, and the war escalated in southern Vietnam. In 1964, Ernest Hemingway published his *Moveable Feast* posthumously, the British rock band “Beatles” became popular all over the world, and “Gulf of Tonkin Incident” prompted the large-scale intervention by US armed forces in Vietnam. In the years to come, the world witnessed regional wars and ideological disputes. There were confrontations between the USA and the Soviet Union, between China and the USA and between China and the Soviet Union. Wars broke out on a frequent basis in the Middle East. Coups d’états took place one after another in Africa. Smaller nations and countries in Asia and Africa which used to receive aid from big powers launched “Non-Alignment Movement” for political

¹⁰Xin Qi, *Disputes among Gods—Religious Root of International Conflicts*, Sichuan People’s Publishing House, 1993, p. 144.

independence and the Third World stepped onto the world stage. The bipolar world of the post-war period was in a turbulent state. In 1968, when the “Rome Club” consisting of more than 100 experts from 58 countries discussed strategies for the future, they raised an incisive question: “Can human beings, who are the most creative and destructive creature on earth, learn to restrain themselves?”¹¹ In 1969, the USA took the lead in sending astronauts to the moon; Georges Jean Raymond Pompidou, who had a high regard for the avant-garde artistic style, was elected French president; astronomers discovered pulsars; passenger planes made by Boeing and Concord were put to commercial flights, and Japan manufactured portable computers. Fighting broke out on Zhenbao Island between China and the Soviet Union and almost triggered a nuclear war. China, which resumed its UN membership two years later, started secret contact with the USA, a country which China had been hostile to for the past 22 years. The collapse of the “Yalta System” started to take place quietly.

1972–1979 (An Age of Global Issues and Rapid Technological Development)

In 1972, the United Nations called on the international community to make joint efforts to save the natural environment; the Stockholm Conference on the World Environment discussed the human survival in the industrialized age; the international terrorism made its debut at the Munich Olympic Games held in Germany; US President Nixon’s visit to China gave rise to the formation of “check and balance among three powers (the Soviet Union, the USA, and China)”. Soon the situation in Indo-China Peninsula, Africa, and the Middle East changed for the better. In 1973, the USA ended its 12-year intervention in Vietnam. The same year witnessed the breakout of the fourth Middle East War and the increasing influence of the OPEC—Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. The oil-producing Arabian countries reduced their oil export to the Western industrialized countries to oppose Israel and promote their international standing, thus deepening the energy crisis. Scientific progresses were made in multiple fields: the use of solar energy was popularized; invented medicine eliminated such deadly diseases as infantile paralysis and smallpox; organ transplant and biotechnology extended the life span of human beings; laser, computer, man-made satellite, and space technology held forth a vista of boundless bright future. The technology in the 1970s fascinated and overwhelmed writers and artists. The integration of culture and technology unfolded itself across the world. Futuristic artist Robert Rauschenberg created a new art school which combined several art forms with electronic technology to enable all sense organs to enjoy it simultaneously. Composer Karlheinz Stockhausen composed pieces of electronic music with a synthesizer and a digital computer. The art

¹¹The Club of Rome, *The First Global Revolution*, Taiwan China Times Publishing Co., 1992.

of painting was almost under the sway of the conceptual school and photographic realism. Painters following humanistic traditions could no longer become the mainstream after the mid-1970s. In 1974 inflation swept across the Western countries; the anti-apartheid campaign in South-West Africa was in full swing; Deng Xiaoping expounded Mao Zedong's "Three-World Theory" at the United Nations General Assembly. In 1975, the spacecraft of the Soviet Union docked with that of the USA in the outer space; the 29-year-long Vietnam War ended and Vietnam realized the north-south reunification at last. In 1976, the founders of the People's Republic of China—Zhou Enlai, Zhu De, and Mao Zedong—passed away one after another. The downfall of "the Gang of Four" brought an end to the Great Cultural Revolution in China. In the year of 1978 when the first baby conceived by artificial insemination was born, which marked human beings' ability to control their own lives, wars were raging in Lebanon, Salvador, Ethiopia, Chad, Uganda, and Cambodia, where people were plunged into an abyss of misery. In 1979, China and the USA established official diplomatic relations and China began implementing the policies of opening up and reform and peaceful reunification; the Pahlavi Dynasty collapsed in Iran and the Shiite Muslim leader B. Imam Khomeini returned to Iran in triumph, setting off a radical religious and ideological movement in the Middle East; Pope John Paul II returned to his home country for the first time by visiting Poland, a country of the East Camp; the great achievement of the feminist movement was the election of Mrs. Thatcher as the first female British Prime Minister. By the end of the 1970s, the hedge of the Cold War was dilapidated. Under the shadow of regional conflicts, humanity was facing more global challenges such as population explosion, environmental pollution, food shortage, resources depletion, refugee flow, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, terrorism and the spread of AIDS epidemic. Environmentalists held that the reckless behaviors of human beings changed the world's climate and environment, which would trigger extremely serious and unredeemable disasters and even endanger the very existence of human beings.

1980–1991 (An Age of Computer Technology and Economic Internationalization, and the End of the Cold War)

This period witnessed the rapid development of science and technology. The theoretical concepts of the past became reality thanks to the commercial technological development. The use of robots realized automation throughout the manufacturing process. Man-made satellites became the relay station of trans-continental telecommunications. Everything could be transmitted in the universe via digitalized signals. Human communications underwent fundamental changes. Human beings began to deem oceans and seas as vast expanses for resources exploration and utilization rather than only as shipping routes. Fish trawlers sailed on the oceans. Oil drilling platforms were erected to explore oil in the deep seas.

Numerous inventions were applied to space, electronic, chemical, mechanical, and biological projects. Computers made their way into ordinary households. Human life as well as cultural and artistic activities was increasingly subject to modernized environment and material civilization created by mankind. The avant-garde school was enthusiastic about graffiti at metro stations, violence and pornography, primitive signs and musings about universe and outer space. The folk artists that took advantage of the new European aesthetic school of “extended art” were awarded laurels after their works were exhibited in the museums.

During this period, countries in the Middle East fought with each other for religious reasons and civil wars never ceased to rage. The economic takeoff and the student movement in the Republic of Korea and Southeast Asian countries brought about the transformation of social structure in four Asian dragons (South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan). Guided by economic reforms and West-oriented “democracy”, East European countries gradually freed themselves from the “limited sovereignty” imposed by the Soviet Union. The westernization ideas in China’s reform spread to the cultural fields, affecting the political stability and giving rise to the Tiananmen Incident. Fortunately, the economic modernization process was not interrupted in China. After 1989, drastic changes took place in East Europe. West and East Germany became united. The Soviet Union was disintegrated. The traditional national, religious, and boundary conflicts that used to be overshadowed by the ideological confrontation of the Yalta system took place on a frequent basis. The USA as the only superpower reshuffled the balance of power in the world and started to contain China. Western economy “turned right” on a comprehensive scale in the 1980s. The enterprises that used to be state-run in the 1970s gradually became privatized. All strata of society participated in the investment in the stock market, creating a society-based and international financial system. Welfare and insurance industry became another private commercial means instead of government burden. The internationalization of computer-integrated business digital network thoroughly changed the operation mode of the international finance and trade systems. In an era when technology displayed benefits and splendor, human beings were faced with even graver issues: rampant international terrorism, contamination caused by accidents in nuclear power stations, unrestrained regional wars, military intervention by hegemonic powers, increasing impoverishment in Africa, nuclear weapon proliferation, and hostility and disputes between different regions due to trade competition and protectionism. In an age of dramatic contrast, young people began to lose interest in politics, enthused over commercial profit and consumption, and indulged themselves in popular music, star concerts and hi-tech fantasies in TV and films. The complexity of international relations, the increased social mobility, and the “grand distribution” of various ideas, commodities, materials, and personnel heralded the advent of a new age.

1992–1999 (The Digital age and the Electronic Networking of International Relations)

The end of the Cold War not only marked the adjustment of the world order, but also represented the power reshuffle among countries, markets, and societies. The USA, Russia, China, Japan, and the European Union represented the new “multi-polar” pattern of the world. Mutual confrontation was replaced by mutual constraint. Economic competition became the major form of the international relations. Upon the advent of global economic age, the power enjoyed by each country’s central government was gradually eroded. This development broke the tradition that the state should enjoy the full sovereignty since the signing of the 17th century Bavaria Treaty (in 1648). All the resources and impacts shared by finance, media, pollution, and mass culture were transnational. The international regulations formulated through negotiations also transcended national and cultural boundaries. With the signing of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty by the USA and Russia and the agreement by the two countries in 1997 to infinitely extend the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) signed in 1968 and the coming into force in 1997 of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction was greatly reduced. However, regional conflicts broke out one after another. India and Pakistan had possession of nuclear weapons and frequently fought each other in the Kashmir region. The ethnic and religious disputes within the Russian territory escalated into urban terrorist warfare. In April 1999, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization led by the USA brazenly launched a massive air strike against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, indicating that hegemony had developed into “new interventionism”. Since the ethnic and religious issues in the Balkan region have a long history, they can by no means be settled by armed intervention. The handling of the Kosovo crisis with armed forces by the Western countries ushered in such new forms of armed intervention as “humanitarian intervention” and “human rights above sovereignty” to control the world. This went against the trend of economic globalization and the integration of regional economy.

In a time when international trade played a leading role and the economic integration gathered momentum, various international organizations wielded more clout. Western countries formulated rules favorable to themselves through their economic advantages and interfered more with the developing countries in various forms. Economy and trade played an extremely important role in international relations. The most significant driving force behind their significant role was the computer and communication revolutions. People used to pay more attention to its huge impact on technology and ignore its influence on politics, culture, and society. Since the cost of communication technology was reduced, computer found its way into ordinary households, thus breaking the government monopoly of information. Distance was no longer an obstacle to interpersonal communications. People’s concept of community underwent considerable change. Fax machine, satellite communication, and the Internet all played a role in transnational communications.

As a result, the traditional historical and natural ties of state, nationality, religion, and culture became loose. This strong globalization momentum inevitably produced negative impact. The transnational consensus and common interests that used to be constantly emphasized in turn exacerbated the political and social divide in a country. Another negative impact of new technology was the new segregation in the society, separating commoners from the elite. Having received higher education and being rich enough to control the network and dissemination of knowledge, the elite had full access to transnational resources and became a social stratum with possession of information superior to commoners. The success of “clone technology” fully unlocked all the secrets of life and posed challenge to every concept on which cultural stability relies. With the development of digitalization, informatization, artificial intelligence, and the free flow of capital, wealth was created and redistributed through financial games, breaking the traditional class system and empowering the commoners and organizations on an unprecedented scale. The “global village” thus began to emerge. Individuals or organizations can have access to public websites on the Internet no matter what their nationality is. There is no need to apply for the establishment of an official organization. There is no core in the website. There are only groups of different individuals who team up randomly for diverse purposes. International commercial activities, citizen groups, cultural and artistic schools, religious organizations and even criminal gangs vie with one another in using the Internet as a new means of integration. It turns out that the government bodies constrained by the traditional mode find it difficult to achieve new integration through logistics means. The role and influence of non-government organizations (NGOs) are ever increasing. The US NGO “Communications Promotion Association” provides low-cost services to tens of millions of network members of approximately 50,000 NGOs in 133 countries around the world. The drastic reduction of international communication cost not only facilitates the rapid networking of every sector and cross-disciplinary integration but also rapidly shapes the development of international events under the scrutiny of global media. Being the master of their own destiny, humans have also added to it more variables.

Issues for Contemplation with Readers

What has been discussed above from the perspective of “broad culture” is a quick review of human life in the past one hundred years. The twentieth century is like a huge locomotive which evolved from steam-powered engine to internal combustion engine to nuclear-powered engine. It zipped through the land where human beings have lived and multiplied over scores of centuries. The gigantic wheels of technology, industry, and commerce ran over the cultural grassland of history and left deep ruts behind them. All of us who are associated with the twentieth century should contemplate: What is the essential difference between the twentieth century and other centuries? What is the difference between the first half of the twentieth century and its second half? What is the concept and connotation of “culture” in the

twentieth century? What impact did the technology of the twentieth century have on culture? It goes without saying that technology has benefited human beings. However, it has also brought harm to people in the second half of the twentieth century. Social sciences gradually found out what uncontrolled technology meant to humanity. The human capability to conquer nature far more exceeds its ability to exercise self-control. The discovery of “atomic energy”, the information revolution and biological engineering brought about unprecedented impact and a future of uncertainties.

Commerce, large-scale industrial production, and computer simulation technology have exerted tremendous influence on culture, making human’s refined culture and individual creativity on the whole a thing of the past. The market economy and the free flow of capital put everyone on an equal footing. The “demonstrative effect of nobility and elite culture” has disappeared in no time. The “beacon effect” of “refined culture” is losing its luster. What on earth is the significance of the twentieth-century “culture” definition? What kind of changes has it undergone compared with the nineteenth-century culture? What perspective should we adopt to scrutinize culture? Will the social principles upon which the Western civilization and culture relies still be valid in the twenty-first century? Modern way of life is based on conquest of nature, faster distribution, higher efficiency, and the application of practical skills. Will commodities, focusing on consumption and satisfaction of natural desires, provide smooth access to belief and tranquility for human thoughts? Being tired of his role as a “tool” and “materialism first” in the social relationship of universal commercialization, man has started to expect spiritual sublimation and freedom from the shackle of “desire”.

The USA, which boasts of advanced research in modernization theory and cultural anthropology, still regards the Western civilization as the center of human development. However, it also turns its attention to the impact of China’s development and the Eastern civilization on the future world. Throughout the twentieth century, China pursued national independence, culture enlightenment and reflection and took every possible measure to realize industrialization and modernization. In China, nearly seventy years of the twentieth century was filled with wars and turbulence, leaving it no time to systematically sort out and inherit its national culture. Its great contributions to human culture have not yet been fully displayed. The reform and opening up policy introduced the “efficiency” theory of the Western commercial culture, posing another challenge to China’s traditional culture. There is no denying that the main body of the twentieth century is capitalism, which has evolved naturally from primitive accumulation to the developed stage and brought about changes to the twentieth century, reaching its peak without encountering any strong challenges. It deconstructed and reconstructed the cultural elements of the past few centuries, inducing great changes in social structure. The living environment of human beings has been damaged even more seriously than before.

From the perspective of social and human attitude, the twentieth century has gradually been demeaning individualism and humanism from philosophy to science, from industrial society to post-industrial society to information and network-based society. Man has become an accessory to a big machine and a knot

in the network of connections (“Bureaucratic Politics”¹² as Max Weber put it). From the perspective of state and national relationship, the twentieth century is a century of wars. It witnessed two world wars in the first half and the ensuing Cold War and regional conflicts in the following 40 years. With wars came colonialism and anti-colonial movements. Wars went hand in hand with revolutions. From the perspective of cultural evolution, the twentieth century has developed from modernism to post-modernism. From the ideological perspective, the twentieth century is a period of non-deification. From the artistic perspective, the twentieth century preached “divinity” at first and then promoted “personality”. Culture has undergone democratization, popularization, and commercialization. Culture is not merely to enhance and sublimate the human spirit and living quality. It is used in many ways for its consumption and commercial value.

When it comes to the collision between the Eastern and Western cultures, the issues of Marxism and nationalism deserve some discussion. Promoted by the emergence of modern countries, the inception of capitalism is also a process for the development of “nationalism”, which pursues national strength and “efficiency” for a strong position in international relations. The nationalism in China gave rise to domestic revolutions. However, the greatest resource of the Chinese people is their history. China with its 5,000 years of culture and civilization is just like the oldest person in the world. The Chinese people have their own spiritual authority—the values passed on by the Chinese culture over several thousand years. Capitalism indisputably played the leading role in the twentieth century. However, capitalism was like a speeding automobile which met with strong resistance such as socialist ideology in the Western society and vehement opposition of non-Western cultures. As a result, its defects were revealed and the contradictions of its internal ideologies became prominent. In the hope of reexamining the spiritual pillars upon which human beings had relied over the past few centuries, capitalism started to absorb the strong points of other social systems and even began to notice the impact of the Eastern cultural heritage on modern civilizations.

Where on earth does China’s culture stand in the world? As a large country, China is by no means a very strong one (by the modernization standard of the West). However, China is rising with a strong momentum and will sooner or later join “the power club” as one of the world powers. What is crucial for China at present is to achieve steady development and exert its influence in the international system. It should tap into its cultural resources to interact with the Western culture and civilization on an equal footing. It should negotiate fair international rules with those rule-formulating countries. While seeking its own development, China should safeguard and maintain world peace, establish a just and fair new world order and make its share of contribution to the world peace and human progress. The rejuvenation of the Chinese culture is intended neither to save the world nor to “impose its values on others”. It is to put a crowning touch to diverse world cultures. We are now at a stage mingled with “dialog, exchange, and confrontation” with the

¹²Reinhard Bendix, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait*, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1962.

Western culture and civilization. The priority for the Chinese people is to realize modernization. But in realizing the social transformation of modernization, we must consolidate the basis of our own cultural values. China's traditional culture will adapt itself in the long run to the global economic development and historical changes. The Chinese civilization and culture will always possess its own characteristics. In the process of globalization, it will not thoroughly change the basic nature of its cultural value system.

Mankind's Choices in the New Century

How are we and our next generation going to face the new century?

Judging from the logic in the introduction of this book, it seems that the end of the twentieth century is witnessing an even greater change in the human society. The "industrial and commercial society" developed on the basis of nation states using oil as energy within the framework of commerce and finance is gradually moving in the direction of an "informatized society" that is beyond the national, country, or regional boundaries and will be based on international cooperative organizations, using nuclear technology for energy and computer software design within the framework of information and telecommunications network. *The twentieth century has undergone social revolutions, world wars, colonial liberation movements and the rise and fall of the Cold War. The changes at the end of the twentieth century are even more drastic than ever before. While the current world presents us with a vista of bright prospects for the human development, it is also confronted with even more prominent global issues. In particular, the destruction of the natural environment is very likely to trigger the outbreak of various potential problems in the form of large-scale social, natural and ecological disasters, threatening human development and existence and delaying or reversing the evolution of human civilization. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen cooperation to solve the global issues, stop war, eradicate poverty, develop together, guide circulation, regulate finance, provide universal education, establish a scientific outlook compatible with human morality, set up a value system in long-lasting harmony with nature, construct information communication networks which treat different cultures on an equal basis and establish a just and fair new world order, etc. This is an important choice that mankind has to make in the new century.*

Do you agree with me on these points? Perhaps you may draw your own conclusions after reading the other chapters in this book.

Contents

1	Thinkers Standing on the Threshold of the Century	1
1.1	Karl Marx: Champion of “Revolution”	1
1.1.1	The Economic Theorist’s Reflection on Society and Culture, and His Two Major Findings	2
1.1.2	When to Initiate Human Liberation and Social Revolution	4
1.1.3	The Theoretical System that Changed the Face of the Twentieth Century	6
1.2	Friedrich Nietzsche: Advocate of Nihilism	8
1.2.1	“This World is the Will to Power”	9
1.2.2	“God is Dead” and “The Need to Reevaluate All Things of Value”	10
1.2.3	“Only Superman Can Save Our History”	11
1.2.4	Nietzsche’s Far-Reaching Impact on the Twentieth Century	12
1.3	Sigmund Freud: Analyzer of Human Nature	14
1.3.1	Conflict and Tribulation are the Natural Result of Human Biological Nature	16
1.3.2	“Oedipus Complex” and Human Creativity	17
1.3.3	Freud’s Influence on the Twentieth Century	18
1.4	Cultural Mainstream of the Early Twentieth Century	20
1.4.1	The Omnipotence of Science	20
1.4.2	Supremacy of the Nation	21
1.4.3	The Shift of Class Power and the Disintegration of Life	22

- 2 Human Joys and Sorrows in the Process of Industrialization 25**
 - 2.1 Cultural Characteristics of the Industrialized Society 25
 - 2.1.1 Material Advancement: Symbol of Industrialization
in the Twentieth Century 25
 - 2.1.2 The Inhuman “Technology Dominated Society” 27
 - 2.1.3 Cultural Dilemma in the Industrial Society 30
 - 2.2 Social Pathologists’ Keen Perception 32
 - 2.2.1 The Twentieth Century and the “One-Dimensional
Man” 32
 - 2.2.2 Analysis of Capitalism from Weber and Sombart’s
Approach 36
 - 2.2.3 Fundamental Contradictions in the Capitalist
Culture 38
 - 2.3 Massive Social Transformation and the Dissolution
of Economy and Culture 41
 - 2.3.1 The Prevalence and Decline of Capitalist
Economic System 41
 - 2.3.2 “Great Turbulence” of Human Society
in Late Twentieth Century 43
 - 2.3.3 The Answer to the Cultural Riddle of Social
Transformation in Industrial Civilization 44
- 3 The Sensual Culture in Commercialized Civilization 47**
 - 3.1 The End of Classicalism 47
 - 3.1.1 Common Human Belief in the Twentieth
Century 47
 - 3.1.2 Multiple Alienations of Modern People 48
 - 3.2 The Sensual Culture in Commercialized Civilization 50
 - 3.3 The Cultural World of the Postmodern Society 53
 - 3.3.1 Postmodernism that Eliminates the Distinction
Between Elite Culture and Popular Culture
with Commercial Consumption 53
 - 3.3.2 Two Main Features of Postmodernism: Plagiarism
and Schizophrenia 54
 - 3.3.3 How Does the Culture Industry Produce a Sense
of Aesthetics? 55
 - 3.3.4 The Cultural Integration Driven by Cultural
Hegemony 56
- 4 Rallying Call of the Twentieth Century—War, Revolution
and the Downfall of Fascism 59**
 - 4.1 Cultural Implications of Twentieth Century Warfare 59
 - 4.2 Revolution and Cultural Fission 67

4.2.1	Cultural Implications of Revolution	67
4.2.2	Cultural Analysis of Russian Revolutions	71
4.2.3	Chinese Revolutions from a Cultural Perspective	73
4.3	Distorted Concepts and Cultural Violence	76
4.3.1	Benito Mussolini and the “Roman Spirit”	76
4.3.2	Cultural Concepts of German Fascism	78
4.3.3	Cultural Concepts of Japanese Militarism	82
5	The Impact of Science and Technology on Culture	89
5.1	Achievements of Technological Revolution and the Lack of “Instrumental Rationality”	90
5.1.1	Cultural Significance of the Physics Revolution	91
5.1.2	Expansion of Mankind’s Reach as a Result of Developments in Astronomy	93
5.1.3	Deep into the Atomic Physics of the Sub-atomic World	95
5.1.4	Exploration of the Biology of the Nature of Life’s Essence	96
5.1.5	Examination of the World Under Our Feet—Challenges Posed by Geology	97
5.1.6	Significance of Energy Technology	97
5.1.7	Significance of Aviation and Aerospace Technology	99
5.1.8	Significance of Electronic and Computer Technology	100
5.2	Outward Conquest and Inward Emptiness	103
5.2.1	Total Alienation in the Networked Society	103
5.2.2	Comprehensive Evolution of Values System	106
5.2.3	Disintegration of the Priori Moral System	109
5.3	Is Science Capable of Saving Mankind’s Spirit?	112
5.3.1	Science Forsakes “Nature” in Its True Sense	113
5.3.2	Science Eliminates the Link Between the Natural World and Values/Spirituality	115
5.3.3	Could the Re-understanding of “Time” Awaken the “Conscience” of Science?	118
5.3.4	The Process of Science Dominating Our Thoughts has not Come to an End and the Pursuit of Truth is as Difficult as the Pursuit of Nature	119
6	Clashes Between Eastern Culture and Western Culture	123
6.1	The Evolution of the World Situation and Its Cultural Significance	123

- 6.1.1 Evolution of the World Situation—A History 123
- 6.1.2 The Conflict Between Eastern and Western Cultures and China’s “Self-strengthening” Movement 126
- 6.2 Predicament of Post-colonial Cultures 131
 - 6.2.1 What are Post-colonial Cultures? 131
 - 6.2.2 The Influence of Post-colonial Cultures on China 133
 - 6.2.3 Continuous Westernization and Anti-westernization Movements in China’s Intellectual Circles Throughout the Twentieth Century 134
- 6.3 Basic Structures of the “World Order” After Collision and Integration 137
- 7 Social Mobility, Women’s Liberation and Globalization 141**
 - 7.1 Disintegration of the Traditional Community and Cultural Interaction Among Immigrants 141
 - 7.2 Trends in Women’s Liberation 144
 - 7.2.1 The Fight for Suffrage and Gender Equality 144
 - 7.2.2 Deeper Thoughts and Goals 145
 - 7.2.3 Challenge to Traditional Feminism: Postmodern Feminism 148
 - 7.3 Cultural Implications of Globalization 149
 - 7.3.1 Awareness of Globalization 149
 - 7.3.2 Development of the Globalization Theory 150
 - 7.3.3 Cultural Logic of Globalization 152
- 8 From “Modernism” to “Post-modernism”—Fission of Literature, Arts and Society 155**
 - 8.1 From “Modernism” to “Post-modernism” 155
 - 8.2 Twentieth Century Literature 160
 - 8.3 Twentieth Century Painting and Sculpture 167
 - 8.4 Twentieth Century Music and Architecture 173
 - 8.5 Twentieth Century Film and TV 178
 - 8.5.1 The Cultural Significance of Film Art 178
 - 8.5.2 Cultural Analysis of Film Art in Different Historical Periods 179
 - 8.5.3 Social Significance of TV Culture 184
- 9 Harbinger of the Digital Era 187**
 - 9.1 Batch Production of Cultural Products for the Masses 187
 - 9.1.1 Mass Culture Determined by the “Commerce-Circulation-Profit” Cycle 187
 - 9.1.2 Mass Culture and Life’s Vicissitudes in the Twentieth Century 190

- 9.1.3 Basic Features of Mass Culture Products—“Those Which Seem to have Left Impressions in Our Memory” 192
- 9.2 The World of Virtual Reality 194
 - 9.2.1 An Alternative “Reality” Created by Robots 194
 - 9.2.2 Cultural Analysis of Virtual Reality 196
 - 9.2.3 “Virtual Reality”— The Power to Transcend Time and Space 198
- 9.3 A New Generation Controlled by Networks and Computers . . . 201
 - 9.3.1 Digital Technology Will “Clone” a New Era 201
 - 9.3.2 The New Generation’s Domination of the Early Twenty-First Century 203
 - 9.3.3 Does the Information Civilization Need “Re-enlightenment”? 205
- 10 Today’s Afterglow and Tomorrow’s Aurora 209**
 - 10.1 The Dawn of the Information Era and Its Culture 209
 - 10.1.1 Problems Caused by the Global Information Infrastructure 209
 - 10.1.2 Will the “Telecom Society” Replace the “Commercial Society” as the Next Model of Civilization? 212
 - 10.1.3 Characteristics of the Information Era Determined by the “Telecom Society” 214
 - 10.2 Establishment of the “Eco-civilization” 216
 - 10.2.1 Eco-civilization—Powerful Spiritual Drive for Humanity in the Future Centuries 216
 - 10.2.2 The Green Movement—Avant-Garde Thoughts of the Twenty-First Century 218
 - 10.2.3 Cultural Thoughts on Ecological Civilization 222
 - 10.3 Harbinger of the Twenty-First Century Culture 224
 - 10.3.1 The Subversion of Mainstream Values in the Twentieth Century 224
 - 10.3.2 Philosophical Reflection on Twentieth Century Culture 228
 - 10.3.3 Oriental Wisdom and the Dawn of a New Century 230
- 11 Prophetic Contemplation on the Eve of a New Century 235**
 - 11.1 International Strategic Situations in the Context of Globalization 235
 - 11.1.1 End of the Cold War and Dawn of the Era of Globalization 235
 - 11.1.2 Clashes and Fusion of Various Modes of Civilizations 236

- 11.1.3 Economic Globalization and Its Aftershocks 236
- 11.1.4 Strategic Theories Prepared by the West 237
- 11.1.5 National Strategies in the Context
of Globalization 238
- 11.1.6 Theoretical Contentions and Trial of Strength
in Practice 239
- 11.1.7 Conspicuous Confrontations Between
Civilizations 240
- 11.1.8 Sino–U.S. Relations in the Current International
Political Dynamics 241
- 11.1.9 China’s Resolve to Safeguard Fundamental
National Interests in a Sino–U.S. Confrontation
Scenario 241
- 11.1.10 A Rational Observation of the Sino–U.S.
Relations at the Crossroad 242
- 11.2 The Iraq War—Revelations and Impact on Situations
Across the Taiwan Strait 243
- 11.3 The Dust-Laden Truth—Discourse Power of the
Underprivileged in International Conflicts 258
 - 11.3.1 Germany’s Persian Gulf Strategy and Its Historical
Rivalries with the U.S 258
 - 11.3.2 The US Finance Empire Built by Military-Industrial
Interest Groups 260
 - 11.3.3 Germany Versus the U.S.—A Historical In-depth
Analysis 262
 - 11.3.4 A Review of Germany’s Southbound
“Three-B Railway” to the Gulf 264
 - 11.3.5 Is the EU Equal to the NATO? 266
 - 11.3.6 What is the Strategic Potential of Baghdad? 268
- Bibliography 271**