

From the Clash of Civilization to the Renaissance of the World

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The Western civilization came to its modernity in the Renaissance, which in the end, made the West human beings' leader. The clash of civilization between China and the West after 1800s is firstly and mainly the clash of modernization and traditionalism. There is no way for China to make progress but to learn the Western way, and so did China try the catholic revolution, the industrial revolution, constitutional reform, republic revolution, democratic movement, democratic revolution, socialism revolution and market reform. At last, China is coming to be a modernized state, and the Chinese civilization is coming to its renaissance. The Western renaissance has been gone for a long time, and the Western civilization needs its new renaissance. It is not time for the clash of civilization, but the new era for the renaissance of the world, if only human beings can learn the lessons of history and avoid wars.

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Introduction

In Chinese, civilization means to civilize people by what is good for them. In Joseph Nye's words, civilization is the soft power to attract others, or we can image lovers' loving each other. On April 1st 2014, Xi Jinping delivered an address at the Collège d'Europe in Bruges, he said:

While China is an important symbol of Eastern civilization, Europe is the cradle of Western civilization. There is a good example of Chinese people being fond of tea and Belgians having a soft spot for beer; the subtlety and pensiveness of tea and the hearty passion of beer stand in contrast as two different ways for savoring life and understanding the world. But in fact, tea and beer are not mutually discordant; with beer from a flowing tap, one can drink to heart's content with a close friend; one can also sip endless cups of tea to savor life, the universe, and everything. China embraces "harmony with diversity" while the European Union underscores "integrated pluralism". China and the EU should join efforts to promote full blossoming of the flowers of civilizations.

In his opening address to the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations on 15 May 2019, President Xi Jinping once again stresses the need for different civilizations to "adhere to mutual respect", and recognizing

each civilization is rooted on its own soil embodying the exceptional wisdom and spiritual quest of a nation and its people which rightfully has its value in human history. An individual may be discerned merely by the color of the skin or the language spoken while a civilization is defined by its vibrant brilliance, but there is certainly no such thing as relative superiority. Those who supposing their own race and civilization being more superior to others and even taking to

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reshaping or replacing other civilizations are thoughtless in perception and disastrous in demeanor! If human civilization only has one color and one mode, the world around us would be rather monotonous, as it would most certainly be very dull! We ought to uphold equality, mutual respect whilst disowning arrogance and bias, strengthening the recognition of our own civilization and the diversity of other civilizations whilst promoting interaction and dialogue between different civilizations for harmonious coexistence.

On this basis, he concluded that “the clash between civilizations is no inborn trait, we merely need to have an appreciating eye for the beauty of all civilizations”. However, the Chinese ideals did not attract people in the West much. In the old Europe, a man can kill another man in a duel for a beautiful woman, and states fight wars for the colonies.

The Clash of Modernity and Tradition

China and the West not only experienced military, political, and economic conflicts in the contemporary era, but also the clash of civilization, or more precisely, the conflict between Eastern and Western civilizations taking the form of full-scale military, political, economic, and cultural clash. Harvard University scholars Professor John King Fairbank and his Chinese student Ssu-yu Teng paid special attentions to the most neglected yet most fascinating aspect of contemporary Chinese history—how the Chinese gentry class responded to hegemonic expansion of the West, how to understand an unfamiliar culture, and how to sustain one’s own culture and its political and social institutions (Fairbank & Teng, 2019). By outlining the conceptual process of China’s attempt to understand the West and adapt to the West, they came to the view that Western influence did indeed drive the reshaping of China’s lifestyle and value systems (Fairbank & Teng, 2019). This is the well-known “impact-response” model in research studies of contemporary Sino-Western relations.

Impact-Response

The clashes between Eastern and Western civilizations in the contemporary era all eventually manifested as a process of “eastward spread of Western learning”; in other words, the East gradually assimilated the Western civilization. The fact that it was the Eastern civilization that learnt and assimilated from the Western civilization and not vice versa is, in essence, because the industrial civilization of the West was more advanced than the feudal oriental agrarian civilization. According to Marxism, the bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production and by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians’ intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst (Marx & Engels, 1998). When an advanced civilization impacts upon a backward civilization, the latter had little choice but to learn from the advanced civilization. Intrinsicly, it is not a question of the higher or lower degree of development of the social antagonisms that result from the natural laws of capitalist production. It is a question of these laws themselves, of these tendencies working with iron necessity towards inevitable results. The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed countries, the image of its own future. The less developed countries suffer not only from the development of capitalist production, but also from the incompleteness of that development. Alongside the modern evils, a whole series of inherited evils oppress us, arising from the passive survival of antiquated modes of production, with their inevitable train of social and political anachronisms. We suffer not only from the living, but from the dead. *Le mort saisit le vif!* Therefore, one can

and should learn from others. And even when a society has got upon the right track for the discovery of the natural laws of its movement ... it can neither clear by bold leaps, nor remove by legal enactments, the obstacles offered by the successive phases of its normal development. But it can shorten and lessen the birth-pangs (Marx & Engels, 2009). Contemporary China bears witness to Marx's foresight, as the country stands in need of learning from the industrial and commercial civilization of the capitalist West.

The honor for the first person in China to systematically study and introduce Western industrial and commercial capitalist civilization must rightfully be granted to Yan Fu. In his "On the Urgency of World Change" (1986), he cogently pointed out that, "the foreign tribes of today, are no marauding nomads of times past",

what one can see and hear today, like that of their steam machines and advanced military weaponry, having surpassed everything that came before them, which one may liken to be intricacy of know-how and so forth that underlies all that prowess one can see, rather than what some would be supposed to be their preordainment; so where lies the essence for that prowess? Put simply, it is all about learned knowledge, which rejects falsehood and espouses the truth, and when it comes to social governance it is manifested as giving free reign to the individual to serve public welfare. These two aspects, are essentially the same as such similar propositions in China; but in view of the fact these seem to be practiced so smoothly in those countries and we tend to run into difficulties when we attempt to do the same, the difference would seem to lie in the degree of freedom or otherwise. (Lin, 1997, pp. 13-14)

Yan Fu recognized the fact the Western imperialists are unlike the northern nomadic tribes of the past. The steam engines and big guns they used to invade China were merely implements manifesting the advanced state of their civilization, and even the sophisticated Western mathematics and sciences were no more than tools and theoretical principles for making those gunboats and advanced weaponry, rather than preordainment for their civilization. What defines their civilization were academically seeking the truth and politically setting free the individual to work for public welfare. Quite clearly, Yan Fu became soberly aware of the fact the nomadic civilization typified by the northern tribes of the past was a more backward state of civilization than that of the agrarian civilization, yet the industrial and commercial civilization exemplified by the West has now become a more advanced civilization than China's agrarian civilization. Moreover, he was even effectively propounding the scientific outlook and democratic spirit to be the essence of modern Western civilization, and which ultimately was to do with freedom; this understanding is probably closest to how the Western civilization views itself. Hence, he advocated in "On National Salvation" that "the ways of national salvation cannot be without the likes of building railways and producing machineries; yet, building railways and producing machineries can only be effected by assimilation of Western knowledge"; "from this point onward, all affairs and all endeavors must conform to principles of science, and be judged accordingly thereof"; "i.e., in order to fully perceive the words of wisdom of great sages, one must also assimilate Western knowledge, only then, can one bring into relief in full appreciation of the wisdom of great sages" (Lin, 1997, p. 29). Yan Fu regarded it was essential to learn from Western industrialization, especially its science and technology before national salvation can succeed. He also cited the example that

Japan was not unlike deeply disdainful of the West, except when it came to Western knowledge, however detestable it may seem, the country swallowed the leek to seek out knowledge in the realization that without it there would be no way to gain strength and ensure national survival. (Lin, 1997, p. 34)

In the case of the Chinese civilization, it would also be necessary for it to learn from Western culture before it can reflect upon and grasp the essence of Chinese culture.

Marx's "iron necessity" about Western industrial civilization and Yan Fu's "without it there would be no way to gain strength and ensure national survival" are both stressing the need to learn from the advanced civilization in a conflict between an advanced civilization and a backward civilization. At that time, the West stood for advanced civilization, and China was epitomized as a backward civilization; therefore, "eastward spread of Western learning" was consistent with the course of historical development.

Eastern Civilization's Remaking

The historical developments in contemporary China had in effect taken the course of the above-mentioned theoretical path. The Westernization Movement was about learning from the West to develop capitalist industry and commerce; first by developing the military industry and the civilian industry was also subsequently developed; a scheme of government holdings in private enterprises was initially adopted with national capitalism later assuming a central role. Also happening alongside with that, and as one of the main accomplishments of the Westernization Movement, was the widespread introduction of Western science and technology and language education with the establishment of various Western-style institutions of higher learning, like the Peking School of Combined Learning, Shanghai Foreign Language School, Foochow Arsenal Naval College, The North Fleet Naval Academy, Shanghai Engineering School, Beiyang Telegraph School, and so on dedicated to the dissemination of Western science and technology disciplines and language education, and they facilitated the government program of sending young students to overseas studies. The Westernization Movement had indeed played an important role in "eastward spread of Western learning", and it can even be thought of as breathing new life into the Chinese civilization. Yet, the Westernization Movement had no part in building an economic basis for rebirth of the Chinese civilization; quite the contrary eventuated after China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, and the result was the rebirth of the Chinese civilization coming to a tragic premature end.

China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 compelled people in the country to the realization that a unreformed political system would be abhorrent to reforming the Chinese economy, much less for developing Chinese science and technology. For this reason, in the ensuing periods after the war, the efforts by the Chinese people in salvation and national survival turned to the question of political leadership. The Reform Movement of 1898 led by Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao attempted to emulate the constitutional monarchy of Japan and Britain, while the Republic Revolution of 1911 led by Dr. Sun Yat-Sen aimed to learn from the US brand of democracy. With reform of the Chinese civilization now changing from "implements" to the level of "institutions", it is undoubtedly a tremendous progress. But unfortunately, the attempt at constitutional monarchy failed after merely 100 days; and though the Republic Revolution did managed to overthrow the autocratic monarchy, but it did not succeed in establishing a truly democratic republican political system, instead, it descended into turmoil with warlords carving up the country. Quite clearly, the Chinese people did not really enjoy true democracy in the subsequent periods to the New Culture Movement of 1919; neither did Chinese science and technology make any notable progress. In his *Introduction to the Chinese Culture*, Qian Mu (1994) concluded: "For the Chinese society, all changes would follow their natural course after introduction of Western sciences", but unfortunately, with "everything in China's socio-political life of the day being overly corrupt",

the only way out for China henceforth would necessitate certain political solutions, and ensuring an orderly social environment. There must be clean politics, a just society, and stable living conditions for the people; then perhaps a civilization with Western sciences will not be objectionable. (pp. 254-255)

This is undoubtedly a very insightful view. China has founded the new nation only after the grueling period of the New Democratic Revolution, and establishment of the socialist system after a socialist revolution meant that the socio-political basis is consolidated for subsequent progress in industry, commerce, national defense, science and technology; and only then would there be the likelihood of resurgence for the Chinese civilization.

The difficult history of the Chinese people seeking national revival in the advent of the contemporary era should have given us a new perspective on the course of progress and development for human civilizations. For people of colonial and semi-colonial countries, it is not so much the economic basis can affect the ideological and socio-political effigies of society, to the contrary, the converse effects of the ideological and socio-political effigies on the economic base tend to be more important. Supposing the advanced cultural ideology was not disseminated to resolve the issue of independence and national self-determination, then attaining national prosperity would be all but wholly impossible, much less the idea of applying science and education for national rejuvenation. Even in the case of the US, it also firstly went through the process of revolutionary mobilization and the War of Independence to found the United States of America before it subsequently commanding its leading position in the second industrial and high-tech revolution to eventually assume the role as the main protagonist of Western civilization. In the present day, China still needs to accord top priority to political reconstruction, as the country needs to accelerate social development focusing on improvement of people's livelihood. A politically stable, socially harmonious China would most likely gain competitive advantages in the new science and technology industry revolution, and thus realization of the China dream of great national revival can be assured.

Certainly, the colonial and semi-colonial countries to embark upon political and social revolution before achieving rapid economic development with scientific and cultural progress is in no way implying a repudiation of historical dialectical materialism. "Social structure and the nation state always arise from some form of life activities of individuals",

people are progenitors of their own ideas, thinking and so on; except the people referred to here are real and active individuals who are under constrain by their own productivity and certain development of the corresponding relevant contact, even with the most distant forms of contact. (Marx & Engels, 2009, pp. 524-525)

People therefore cannot rely solely on the propagation of progressive ideas and create progress for civilization merely by launching political and social revolution; at the end of the day, it would be necessary to build up solid material foundations through economic development in order to consolidate the political, cultural and social structures. During the times of socialist reconstruction, China used to sustained prolonged periods of politically charged social movements under the overriding doctrine of class struggle, which later even developed into the decade-long "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution"; this in turn caused severe disruptions to the national economy and the material and cultural aspects of people's life. Just this year, beguiled by Western countries, certain developing countries that have embarked upon democratization movements have ended up in political turmoil, while some of the over-the-top welfare policies of developed countries have also damaged their social vitality. Therefore, in the long term view of human civilization progress, the theoretical underpinnings for the historical dialectical materialism principle of productivity determining the relations of production with the economic basis determining the ideological and socio-political structures can be shown to be strictly consistent. Political and social developments must both be amenable to mobilizing people's

individual initiative, proactive drive, and creativity, as they must also be beneficial to productivity improvement, for otherwise they would simply be mirages or sand castles in a washing tide.

Eastern Civilization's Revival

It is because of the relative decline of the Western civilization happening side-by-side with the revival of Eastern civilizations that rekindled global attention on the talking point of “clash of civilizations”. “Clash of civilizations” was an argument first put forward by the late Professor Samuel Huntington of Harvard University at a time when the West was deep immersed in reveling after the drastic changes in the former Soviet Union and fall of the Eastern Bloc. At the time, Western society was generally of the view that the whole world soon submit under Western civilization. But Professor Huntington poured cold water on that, “It would be absurd” he cited the Canadian statesman Lester Pearson’s words, “to imagine that these new political societies coming to birth in the East will be replicas of those with which we in the West are familiar. The revival of these ancient civilizations will take new forms” (Huntington, 1996, p. 39).

The clash of civilizations shakes the world by overstating the resurgence and vitality of non-Western societies, and especially by the warning to the West that as the relative power of other civilizations increases, the appeal of Western culture fades and non-Western peoples have increasing confidence in and commitment to their indigenous cultures, the West’s—particularly America’s—efforts to promote a universal Western culture and its declining ability to do so (Huntington, 1996). Martin Jacques’ (2009) book *When China Rule the World: The Rise of the Middle Kingdom and the End of the Western World* followed the tune and spoke much louder. For Huntington (1996),

The collapse of communism exacerbated this discordance by reinforcing in the West the view that its ideology of democratic liberalism had triumphed globally and hence was universally valid. The West, and especially the United States, which has always been a missionary nation, believe that the non-Western peoples should commit themselves to the Western values of democracy, free markets, limited government, human rights, individualism, the rule of law, and should embody these values in their institutions. Minorities in other civilizations embrace and promote these values, but the dominant attitudes toward them in non-Western cultures range from widespread skepticism to intense opposition. What is universalism to the West is imperialism to the rest. (pp. 183-184)

In Huntington’s (1996) view, “In the post-Cold War world, the most important distinctions among peoples are not ideological, political, or economic. They are cultural” (p. 21); “In this new world, local politics is the politics of ethnicity; global politics is the politics of civilizations. The rivalry of the superpowers is replaced by the clash of civilizations” (p. 28). Although in 1990s, most people outside the West, including many scholars and some officials in China, did believe the Western universalism, Huntington believed that the world was changing towards cultural conflicts between civilizations.

“Clash of civilizations” is claimed by Huntington to be the best “paradigm” for observing and analyzing issues of international relations in the “post-Cold War world”. He rejected the arguments as exemplified by Francis Fukuyama’s “end of history”; “the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government” (p. 31). He was equally critical of East and West, South and North, Center and Periphery, and other such “two-world” arguments by positing that “The world is too complex to be usefully envisioned for most purposes as simply divided economically between North and South or culturally between East and West” (p. 33). He also criticized the “realist” theory that “states are the primary, indeed, the only important actors in world affairs, the relation among states is one of anarchy, and hence to insure their survival and security, states invariably attempt to

maximize their power” (p. 33); he held the view that “in the post-Cold War world, states increasingly define their interests in civilizational terms. They cooperate with and ally themselves with states with similar or common culture and are more often in conflict with countries of different culture” (p. 34). In addition, he deemed that, for the views of the likes of Zbigniew Brzezinski’s “Out of Control” and Moynihan’s “Great Chaos”, although “like the states paradigm, the chaos paradigm is closer to reality”, but nevertheless, “an image of universal and undifferentiated anarchy provides few clues for understanding the world” (p. 35). Huntington did not completely repudiate the other theoretical models, only that he regarded “clash of civilizations” to be more effective as a theoretical paradigm.

Now that 20 years have come to past, we might well be able to test the theoretical validity. Quite clearly, Francis Fukuyama’s “end of history” has largely lost its credibility in the non-Western world, however, “end of history” remains the most prevailing desire in the West, hence, Fukuyama is not only unabashed by “end of history”, quite the contrary, it even made him into something of an esteemed “establishment figure” in the West. The “two-world” and “realist” concepts are of course remaining persuasive, only that the “Western awareness” is much stronger than in the past, as rejection of “non-Western” has become much more intense than any time before. The “America first” promoted by a US administration headed by Donald Trump fully reflects the value outlook of “realism”. “Chaos” equally has exceptional theoretical persuasion. Except it is surprising that America and Europe somehow became emblematic of “chaos”! “Clash of civilizations” is of course also a pretty powerful notion, is not the “Charlie Hebdo” incident a classic example of this? But nevertheless, it is hard to tell if “clash of civilizations” is or is not more persuasive compared to “end of history”, “two-world”, “realism”, or “chaos”; in actual fact, the scope of validity is quite minimal for “clash of civilizations” and “end of history”, for these are only limited to the wishful thinking “narcissism” of the Western world. By even overshooting the Western world’s “baffling overconfidence”, these are wholly worthless. According to the theoretical paradigm for “clash of civilizations”, a Russia sharing cultural affinity with America and Western Europe should have a better relationship with the latter than with an obviously culturally divergent China; China’s relation with Japan should have been better than its relationship with America; India’s relation with China and Russia should have been better than its relationship with America and Western Europe; and for Taiwan region of China’s unification with the mainland, there should have been no obstacle at all.

Although their theoretical validity is severely limited, however, “clash of civilizations” and “end of history”, are nonetheless new ideas with the most significant impact in the Western academia. What is described by Samuel Huntington as “clash of civilizations” is evidently not a clash between different civilizations, it is the “clash with Western civilization” by another civilization, to be specific, and it only defines the defiance to Western civilization. In actual fact, in the eyes of many “civilized people” of the West, only the Western civilization is civilized, all the rest are not worthy of being described as “civilized”. “Civilization” is the “universal value”, that is, the “Western value system of democracy, free markets, limited government, human rights, individualism, the rule of law”. “Clash with Western civilization” would be taken to mean resistance by non-Western people to the “universal value” advocated by its Western proponents. This is like saying a “clash” has arisen because US warships can no longer conduct “freedom of navigation” in the South China Sea as freely as before whilst the PLA Navy is cruising into the Gulf of Mexico. On the issue of value system, whether or not the West can freely impose its own value system as “universal value” on others is indeed a question about the “universal value” that has attracted the attentions of Western and non-Western observers alike.

Conflicts Between Western Universalism and Non-Western Nationalism

The so-called “clash of civilizations” is in effect a clash between core value systems; in more specific terms, it is the conflict between Western “universal value” and non-Western values. Such “conflict” never surfaced in the past because it was firmly suppressed by the dominance of Western civilization. The reason such “conflicts” are now erupting is simply because of the appeal of Western culture fades at a time when the relative power of other civilizations increases. The Chinese civilization is the emergent power attracting the greatest attention; therefore, the clash of East-West value systems at this juncture is naturally becoming a focus of world attention.

Universal Values

In 2014, whilst giving a talk in an academic symposium in Peking University, Mr. Xi Jinping indicated that value system arises out of and plays a role in the process for humanity to accrue knowledge from and to reshape nature and society; for a people, a country must get to know who they are, where they come from, and where they are going; only after all these are clearly thought through and fully figured out, then it would be necessary to unswervingly proceed towards the chosen goals. It can be seen that the question of value system is indeed a universal question, because any people, any country, would always want to know who they are, where they have come from, and where they want to go. Renowned French post-impressionist painter, Paul Gauguin’s well-known work *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* (1897), expressed just such humanly universal concerns.

Every nation, every state, and every individual would be confronted by the same question of value system; this is the distinguish feature that sets apart humankind from animals. Marx pointed out in his “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844” that

The animal is immediately one with its life activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is its life activity. Man makes his life activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life activity... Conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from animal life activity. (Marx & Engels, 2009, p. 162)

The life activity of the animal is compelled by meeting physiological needs and for no other purposes whatsoever. The life activity of man does, of course, entail some measure of satisfying physiological needs just like that of the animal, however, the essential distinction between man and animal is his life activity is imparted with self-awareness and higher purposes, namely, he knows who he is, where he comes from, where he wants to go. At the most basic level, every person would at least know his or her role in the family, for example, he is the eldest son, he is the progeny of his forebears, and that he would bear the burden of providing for the family. If he has no awareness of the responsibilities of being the eldest son, he would have no idea of his obligations to his kinship, and the family clan might consequently go into decline. The casual observer may suppose he is living a rather muddled life, or he might even live his life in vain, being completely worthless. In the Shakespearean play “Hamlet” and the animated cartoon “Lion King” inspired by it, the value issues in the story told are wholly consistently with the Confucian classical teaching of “cultivate one’s moral characters, putting in order the affairs of family, and that of the state, and then going out to the world”. For Prince Hamlet, and by the same measure, the young lion king Simba and lioness Nala, when they are faced with family dispute, social unrest, and upheaval in the country, they want to flee but can’t. There is a good example in Simba’s dialogue with Nala, “If you say you don’t want to be lion king, that’s like saying you don’t want to be lion”. If you are

born a prince or princess, in the same manner as you are born a lion, if you don't want to be lion king then who shall be the lion king? You must accept the role as lion king, for that is the value of life for you.

The value system is the self-awareness of human living activities as much as the yardstick by the family, the state, and society to measure the individual. The individual is a member of the family, the state, and society; the value of life cannot be fully determined by the individual; the family, the state, and society must also take part in adjudicating the value of life. In a manner of speaking, the earlier the stage of socioeconomic development for humankind, the weaker the human self-awareness and the more the adjudication of the value of life would be constrained by external forces like the family, the state, and society. The primitive society was the earliest stage of social development for humankind; it was also the stage at which human self-awareness was at its lowest, and the value system for mankind was most hazy. Quite possibly for most people, living is merely not being dead, and dying is merely not being alive. Living has value, and being dead has no value. The longer the life spans the more "valuable"; the shorter the life spans the "less valuable". This can be described as a stage when there is an outlook on life, but not a clear-cut outlook on values; as the life and death of people is not fundamentally different to the life and death of animals. Nonetheless, as the question of survival for the whole tribe must have already arisen, and the tribal leader must mobilize the tribesmen to fight for the whole tribe; thus, there is the notion of "who is the self, where it comes from, and where it is going". In order to avoid the whole tribe being slaughtered or captured by other tribes to become slaves, certain more advanced tribesmen would be prepared to sacrifice their lives to sustain the survival of the whole tribe. These people not only have an outlook on life, but also a clear-cut judgment on values. Quite obviously, the outlooks on life and value system are mutually intertwined and cannot be clearly distinguished. In general terms, each individual would have certain value judgment on life, and this is a kind of ambiguous value outlook on life. When an individual is willing to expend a lifetime's efforts or even sacrificing one's own life to attain a certain goal, he is thus gaining a clear-cut awareness of his own living activities, and his own life is therefore also imparted with a clear-cut value outlook.

National Values

As an awareness of man's life activity, the value outlook is ultimately determined by the existence of a society. In different historical stages of development of the human society, people's value outlooks are different. In the slave society, each serf would most likely yearn to be free; the celebrated Spartak slave uprising was a great revolution in the struggle by slaves to realize their self-worth. However, under most circumstances, slaves merely do not want to die, while their values are entirely determined by the slave master, and that in effect, is the price slaveholders are willing to pay in the slave market. From the point of view of the slave master, because they founded a state, they therefore would have much greater interest in the society than was the case with the primitive tribal chieftains, as they now also have a much more clear-cut value outlook, for example, engaging in struggles to safeguard the interests of the family clan or that of the state, more particularly so after the establishment of the ritual systems for perpetuating the ruling position of the slave masters. By the time of the feudal society, along with further development in economic and social division of labor, people are gain more opportunities for free choice, as the value choice for life is thus becoming ever more diversified. However, the means by which feudal rulers use to sustain and perpetuate their ruling position are also becoming more sophisticated; as in addition to consolidating ruling powers in the economic and political arenas, they would also endeavor to maintain feudal rule through propaganda to promote a value system that would benefit

perpetuation of feudal rule. Under the influence of the feudal value system, the royalties would seek to fulfill their value of life through performance of various courtly duties; other social strata would also have to carry out their respective duties to realize their life values. With “emperors and generals to run the country in peace, peasants and craftsmen to create wealth, merchants to keep the flow of goods, and priests and monks to deify the gods”, the value of life is hence clearly predefined by a set of feudal values. In the advent of the growth and proliferation of industry and commerce, the bourgeoisie gradually displaced the landlord class as the dominant force in the economy. At this time, as the bourgeois value system outlook starts to challenge the feudalist value system, the profit-seeking motive of the bourgeoisie is to be embellished and aggrandized as being far loftier than how feudal nobilities view money and wealth as “dung and dirt”. The now morally more respectable bourgeoisie eventually overturns the feudal nobilities’ rule by political revolution, and that further allows the bourgeois value system to seize the ideological high grounds. Human society henceforth enters the capitalist era.

The advanced capitalist countries of today are purportedly asserting democracy, freedom, equality, the rule of law and so forth as “universal values”, yet the feudal society of China espoused loyalty, filial piety, benevolence, righteousness, decorum, wisdom, faithful conviction and so on as universal values. Moreover, it is interesting to note they sought out justifications in “divine principles” or “natural laws”. Western bourgeois enlightenment thinker Rousseau posited “man is born free” (Rousseau, 2010, p. 5). America’s Declaration of Independence also enunciated “all men are created equal”. Yet, China’s *Book of Changes* articulates that there is heaven and earth then there be everything, there is everything then there be men and women, there are men and women then there be husband and wife; there are husband and wife then there be father and son, there are father and son then there be Monarch and his subjects, there are Monarch and his subjects then there be the social stratum, there is social stratum then there be etiquette and manners of rituals. In other words, man is born different from the beginning; therefore, there are distinctions in social statuses, and the ritual etiquette that should be followed would also be different. For Rousseau, the earliest of all societies, and the only natural one, is the family; yet the children remain attached to their father only so long as they have need of him for their own preservation. As soon as this need ceases, the natural bond is dissolved. The children being freed from the obedience which they owed to their father, and the father from the cares which he owed to his children, become equally independent. If they remain united, it is no longer naturally but voluntarily; and the family itself is kept together only by convention (Rousseau, 2010). This means with children and parents, the inequality and illiberality are temporary, as soon as the conditions are ripe, freedom and equality would be sought. Rousseau meant to get free from the nature, the *Book of Changes* told people to follow it. Heaven is superior to earth, heaven and earth are preordained; humble or noble is acceded from the ages, with genteel or humble being the order of things. In other words, the scheme of things with heaven and earth, statuses and endowments and the likes arise from an eternal natural order. Evidently, today’s so-called “universal values” would have been highly distorted values in the past, and they certainly will not have the same worth in the future as today.

Unity of Universality and Nationality

In fact, Americans, Europeans, and Chinese generally tend to regard their own histories and the progress of civilization as naturally rational, logically consistent whilst being universal, the most common approach in many countries around the world today is either their own historical culture is regarded as unique and distinct, or alternatively interpreting it to be universal and generally applicable (Soffel & Tillman, 2018). Each nation

state and the country's historical culture is the shared life of the people of this country, the latter therefore usually only view the historical culture from the perspective of their own life experience, and this is humankind's inherent "limitation". If only they could discover their own historical cultural defect, they would be able to purposefully carry out change and improvement. But the only way for this goal to succeed depends on interaction and exchange with other civilizations. Therefore, a rational approach to view the historical cultures of different countries would be to unify the universality, national distinctions, generality, and peculiarity of different historical cultures.

The unity of universality and peculiarity is an interpretation implicit in materialist dialectics, and it is no exception on the issue of value system. Mencius once said:

In the *Book of Poetry*: "Heaven in producing mankind, Gave them their various faculties and relations with their specific laws. Such are the invariable rules of nature for all to hold, And all love this admirable virtue." Confucius observes, "The maker of this ode knew indeed the principle of our nature!" We may thus see that every faculty and relation must have its law, and since there are invariable rules for all to hold, they consequently love this admirable virtue.

He further added: "Everything of the same kind is alike; why questions arise when it comes to people?" (*Mencius—Letters to Gaozi*, Part I"). All men are of the same kind and must have the same qualities; Mencius regarded this as due to "man on earth, good at birth". Westerners also deem all men have the same nature. Except they hold a completely opposite view to that of Mencius' with "man on earth, evil at birth". It is the same situation with the so-called "universal values", as everyone thinks there is a set of "universal values", but each respective interpretation of such "universal values" may be completely opposite to others. For this reason, when it comes to dealing with the so-called "universal values" of the West, from a dialectical materialism perspective one should not reject it out of hand, but should instead directly and clearly advance one's own set of "universal values".

In reality, just as Marx has pointed out,

For each new class which puts itself in the place of one ruling before it, is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to represent its interest as the common interest of all the members of society, that is, expressed in ideal form: it has to give its ideas the form of universality, and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones. (Marx, 1995, p. 100)

Or putting it differently, "universal values" are no more than just the ruling class's values that the latter wants all the rest to accept. In the feudalistic age of medieval Europe, European people's values might not be that much different to that of the ancient Chinese. European people of that time generally believed in the Bible's preaching about "it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to get to heaven", and be disdainful of the bourgeoisie driven by profits as their lifetime goal the likes of loan shark Shylock in William Shakespeare's play "The Merchant of Venice". However, after the bourgeoisie succeeded in seizing power, money lending is put on a new cloak of financial service to take over the whole of Europe's socioeconomic life, capturing full control of industrial production, the communications and transportation industry, as well as various service industries; it effectively strangleholds the government, the army, education, culture and other areas. Wall Street is likened to be the heart of America. Its capital operations can cause either anemia or hypertension to different industries of the country, or it might also cause cerebral hypoxia to Washington which is the brain of America. It is precisely because the bourgeoisie has commanded a ruling position in America that it could flagrantly and unabashedly purport the bourgeois value notions of democracy,

freedom, and human rights to “universal values”, purporting the bourgeois liberal democracy institutions as “universal institutions”, purporting the capitalist economic system to be “economic science”, and even purporting capitalism as the “end of history”. Whether or not history will come to an end, or whether humanity would eventually accept “universal values”, are foretelling with no way to proof. However, by reflecting on history, absolute “universal values” evidently never existed, as these are mere fancies of people of an age of flourish. In actual fact, the so-called “universal value” notion is no more than an expression of the spiritual needs of human society during certain stage of its development. It guides the work and daily life of a people, a country’s society at certain stage of its development. In addition, humankind’s material production and spiritual output, as soon as these are generated, would immediately take on their respective living forms; this is like chicken and ducks, peaches and plums have similar cultivation processes, but chicken and duck, peach and plum cannot transform between one and other.

The people of different countries might, as a result of divergent historical cultures, different stages of historical development, and different practical circumstances, have different value outlooks and endeavor to attain different value goals. For the Western countries, starting from the ancient Greeks’ belief in god, have experienced the Reformation, Renaissance, industrial revolution, and the bourgeois political revolution to gradually formulated the value system with democracy, freedom, the rule of law, and so forth deeply etched into people’s minds, for which German sociologist Max Weber summed it up in “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism”. China is a country with a long historical heritage going back five thousand years; what would the Chinese people’s core values and spiritual quest be like?

Contemporaneity and National Characteristics of Socialist Core Values

In November 2012, the 18th CPC National Congress formally spelt out “fostering the socialist core values of prosperity, democracy, civility, harmony; freedom, equality, justice, rule of law; patriotism, dedication, trustworthiness, friendship; and actively disseminating knowledge on socialist core values”. Then, in December 2013, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee circulated the “Recommendations Regarding Knowledge Dissemination and Practical Fulfillment of Socialist Core Values”. Nonetheless, the academic circles in fact have many different views on socialist core values. The most typical positions come under three categories. The first of these holds that freedom, democracy, and the rule of law are the same as that of the capitalist core values and therefore cannot reflect the distinction between capitalist core values and socialist core values; the second argument deems this set of twelve notions encompasses too wide a span and therefore cannot capture the essence of “core” values; the third contention considers the notions of “prosperity, democracy, civility, harmony” to be outside the definitions of values as these are merely the means for fulfillment of values. No doubt, this set of socialist core values is unlikely to be immediately accepted by society as soon as it is proposed by the party central committee; for a set of core values is the basic value identity for a people, a country gradually formed over a long historical development process, and the socialist core values must necessarily be gradually refined over the course of socialist revolution, reconstruction and reform in this country. At the present time, as the socialist revolution, reconstruction and reform in this country has been underway for nearly a century, concomitant with this, the advanced Western capitalist countries are carrying out ideological infiltration against us through their so-called “universal values”, China therefore must formulate its own core values sufficient to act as cohesive bond for Chinese people of all ethnic nationalities and to respond to the challenge posed by the West. The overriding importance of putting forward a set of

socialist core values is that it squarely confronts the key issues facing China today; it not only shows the great capacity for inclusiveness in “letting ancient wisdom serve the present; adapting foreign inventions to China’s circumstances”, and it also shows the national characteristics of uniting individual value pursuits with the country and society’s development needs.

Contemporaneity of Socialist Core Values

China is the most ancient country in the world. It is even more ancient than Jesus Christ, more ancient than Buddha Shakyamuni, and more ancient than Allah. In his book *The Spirit of the Chinese People*, Gu Hongming (2020) found the Chinese belief in the absolute stability and permanence of the state solid and perpetual entity. This absolute stability and permanence of the state again secures the infinite continuance and lastingness of society, this infinite continuance and lastingness of society finally secures in the minds of the Chinese population the immortality of the race. Thus, it is this belief in the immortality of the race, derived from the belief in the loyalty, which gives to the Chinese people, the mass of the population in China, the same sense of permanence in their existence which the belief in a future life of religion to the mass of mankind in other countries (Gu, 2020). The home country is a spiritual haven for the Chinese people. To die in a “foreign land” is viewed as becoming a “lost soul and wandering ghost”. “What comes from the soil returns to the soil” is a cherished desire for most Chinese drifting afar from home. For the vast majority of Chinese people, China’s long historical heritage and the country’s brilliant civilization is always the source of pride for them. When the country was impoverished and lagging backward, one thing they most yearn for is for the country to prosperous and strong bringing about national revival. President Xi Jinping pointed in a talk during an academic symposium in Peking University that, in the ensuing aftermath of the Opium War, the Chinese nation fell into the misfortune of decline and deprivation to be trampled upon at will by other powers. This tragic history must never again be repeated! Developing a prosperous, democratic, civilized, and harmonious modern socialist nation is our goal as well as our duty; it is our obligation to the Chinese nation, to our forebears, and to future generations.

In the eyes of the Chinese people, if there is anything that can ever achieve immortality, it must be the “country” and the “world”. “A prosperous country with contented people, peace and security in the world” is the biggest desire for Chinese people. Anyone who could usefully contribute to “putting in order the affairs of state, and then going out to the world” would be eternally cherished by the people; the Chinese people liken it to be “remembrance into posterity”, and this is also what Westerners would call “immortality”. “Cultivate one’s moral characters”, “putting in order the affairs of family” are basic requirements for living a normal life, only “putting in order the affairs of the state, and then going out to the world” is the highest attainment in life. In Chinese people’s value outlook education, individual liberty is never in any way a central focus. Quite the contrary, Chinese people would be quite cautious about the idea of personal freedom, by worrying that it might dilute personal responsibility. Hungarian poet Petöfi Sándor’s verses had the lines “Life is precious, love is worth more. If it is for freedom, both can be given up for free”; this, in Chinese eyes, may represent the worst value outlook. The Chinese people also embrace personal freedom, however, the kind of freedom Confucius talks about is “have your heart’s desires within bounds”; in other words, freedom means knowing how to restrain oneself. For China, the shining example of quest for personal freedom is perhaps none other than Lao Zi, except his understanding of freedom is in effect “*an atman*”. He mused:

Heaven and earth endure as the universe, and because they do not live by themselves, heaven and earth can live forever. That is why, a virtuous sage who otherwise shows unassuming diffidence as others clamor, may still come out

ahead of the rest; distancing oneself from the centre of attention may instead become strong means of self-preservation. Isn't this precisely because he is "*an atman*"? Hence, he can consummate himself.

He went on further: "A sage never has possessive lust, on the contrary, doing the utmost to help others engenders fulfillment to him; the more he gives the more enrichment begets him." These notions are almost diametrically opposite to those Western perceptions of the pluralistic political liberalism founded on a footing of individual rights, the laissez-faire market economic liberalism with the rational basis of the "economic man" seeking to maximize personal gains as cornerstone, and the cultural liberalism founded on a premise of individual freewill. Chairman Mao pointed out in a forum for "Discussions on the Soviet Union's 'Political Economy Textbooks'": "We need to education the people, not for the sake of any individual; it is for the good of the collective, for future generations, and for the purpose of endeavoring for the socialist future" (Mao, 1999, p. 133). For the interest of the country and society rather than the individual, altruism rather than egotism, and collectivism rather than individualism, these are the most distinctive features of Chinese value outlook education, as much as being the most unique spiritual quest and national characteristics that set the Chinese apart from Westerners.

The German literary giant Goethe once concluded, after comparative reviews of the value outlooks in Eastern and Western literary works, that the Chinese would seem to be almost the same as us in their thinking, conduct and sensibilities, which quickly make us feel that they are of the same kind, except for the fact everything in their land seem more lucid, more pure, and also more decent. In their land, everything can be within grasp, and approachable, as there is no passionate lust and agitating urge in their poetic inspirations ... it is precisely because of everything is kept under strict restraint that allows China to continue on for many thousands of years, and it would keep on continuing (Eckermann, 2013). The Chinese people should get a clear understanding of the distinctive qualities and strength of Chinese culture, carrying forward the Chinese spirit and national characteristics; only in this way will the accomplishment of economic prosperity and national rejuvenation be possible.

Xi Jinping has pointed out that, there is always a concomitant contemporary spirit for a contemporary era, and for each contemporary era there is a concomitant contemporary value outlook. "A State has four dimensions, namely, decorum, justice, integrity and honor; when these four dimensions are not upheld, that country is doomed". This is the forefathers of the Chinese people's understanding on value outlook that is relevant to the present. In contemporary China, what value outlook should our people, our country be holding fast to? This question is a theoretical question, as well as a practical question.

As time has changed, is the traditional Chinese value outlook still relevant? For this question, there have always been two entirely divergent views: One of which says, the traditional value system represented the decadent culture of despotic and benighted feudalism, and therefore it should be forsaken completely. The May 4th New Culture Movement of 1919 rallied cries of "Down with Confucius and sons!" and Exaltation to "Mr. Democracy" and "Mr. Science", which may be seen as the most defining examples of the thinking with total repudiation of traditional culture and traditional values. The second viewpoint holds that, only traditional Chinese culture, especially the Confucian culture, can offer national salvation for China, and even Western culture is in dire need of salvation by traditional Chinese culture. Gu Hongming was of the view that Confucianism played the role as a state religion. Confucian virtues are not only the keystones for building the nation; they are also a good dose medicine for world salvation. After the Reform Movement of 1898 failed,

Kang Youwei continued his campaign in the political mantle as a royalist; culturally, he advocated decreeing Confucianism as the state religion. In addition, there have been certain ant-science followers of the metaphysics school during the period of the New Cultural Movement who also stood on a platform of traditional Chinese culture to oppose Western culture. The New Cultural Movement of 1919 led by student leaders who returned from overseas studies, like Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao, Hu Shi, and others formed the mainstream of Chinese ideological culture in that period; Gu Hongming, Kang Youwei, and the “metaphysicists”, on the other hand, symbolized the backward and reactionary ideology, and have thus been reviled as “freaks” or “metaphysics ghosts”. Leaders of the New Culture Movement later parted company. One group headed by Hu Shi persevered with the capitalist culture based on democracy and science as the main precept. Another group personified by Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao turned to the socialist culture. Nevertheless, anti-traditional Chinese culture remained their common ground. Since all leading exponents of reactionary political forces in China at the time, like the Empress Dowager, Yuan Shikai, Kang Youwei, Generalissimo Chang Kaishek, the last emperor Pu Yi, all leveraged Confucianism to prop up and sustain their reactionary power; consequently, the traditional Chinese culture centering on Confucianism must unavoidably become target of the revolutionists. Even after the founding of New China, due to continued existence of the phenomenon of feudal paternalism, there had even been the emergence of a campaign of “animadversions to Lin Biao and Confucius” during the Cultural Revolution. Because of the fact Confucianism has long been a target of revolution as the symbol of degeneracy and decadence that US scholar Levenson propounded in his book *Confucian China and its Modern Fate*, the communists celebrating the birth anniversary of Confucius are just singing his dirge, sending him into the graveyard of history (Levenson, 1968). In actual fact, he was attempting to elucidate a counter proof that China has already entirely accepted Western cultural values, and the difference only lies in capitalism or socialism.

However, judging from practical experience, even though such value notions as market, efficiency, rule of law, democracy, freedom and so forth were introduced from the West since the advent of the Reform and Opening, in today’s China very few people would entirely reject such traditional cultural virtues as “decorum”, “harmony”, “benevolence”, “righteousness”, and so on, no more than they would easily repudiate such socialist values like “co-prosperity”, “collectivism”, “serve the people” that were initially affirmed during Chairman Mao’s era. When today’s China is beset by such problems as moral decline, official corruption, income disparity and so on, people often rekindle a longing for traditional virtues, or alternatively considering things were better before the Reform and Opening, with the feeling that we have lost something rather precious. But of course, when the traditional values are seen to be hampering the reform efforts, people would immediately think of pushing ahead with reforms by leveling criticisms at traditional values. In fact, some of those holding the view that reforms should be accelerated would often like to repudiate the historical period before the Reform and Opening by citing the historical period after the Reform and Opening, or alternatively, use Deng Xiaoping to repudiate Chairman Mao; on the other hand, some of those who have benefited very little from the Reform and Opening or even hurt by it would cite the historical period before the Reform and Opening to repudiate the historical period after the Reform and Opening, or alternatively, use Chairman Mao to repudiate Deng Xiaoping. For those who like to criticize Chairman Mao and the Cultural Revolution, there is an attraction in Western culture and the Western value notions of freedom, democracy, human rights and so forth and they would be prepared to portray these Western value perspectives as universal values. Those who extol Chairman Mao mainly assert that Chairman Mao fought for the benefits of the toiling masses whilst hitting hard at bureaucracy of the political establishment, capitalism in economic sphere, and elitism in cultural

domain; that and that alone, they claim, is the true core value of socialism. This recaps the conflict and standoff between them, but nonetheless, they can both criticize the value notions of “the doctrine of the golden mean” and “moderation in harmony” of the Confucianism school, by deeming these to be aimed at protecting the vested interests of certain groups.

The National Characteristics of Socialist Core Values

As Xi Jinping pointed out, a set of core values sums up the spiritual quest of a nation, a country, and it embodies the benchmark yardstick for a society’s judgment on rights and wrongs. We are born Chinese, our most defining character is that we have a unique Chinese inner world, a value perspective that the common people apply in everyday life without even noticing it. Therefore, the set of socialist core values can be said to embody the Chinese people’s spiritual quest, as it also embodies the national characters of China. It bears the essential characteristics that distinguish the Chinese people from the Anglo-Saxon, Germanic, Slavic, Daiwa and other peoples, as well as an emblem of national identity setting China apart from countries, such as America, Germany, Russia, Japan, and so on. The late professor Huntington of Harvard University aroused a worldwide cause célèbre with his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. He devoted the last years of his life to writing another book *Who Are We?—The Challenge to America’s National Identity*, in it, he appealed to the American people to rekindle the Anglo-Protestant culture, traditions, and values (Huntington, 2005). What kind of Chinese spiritual quest and Chinese national characteristics are the socialist core values embodying?

A value outlook that is universally embraced by a people, a country is collectively reflecting the dreams pursued by the people of that nation. If we compare the China dream and the American dream, we will immediately notice the fundamental differences between the two. In an address delivered to commemorate the May 4th Movement, Xi Jinping illuminated building a prosperous, strong, democratic, civilized and harmonious socialist modern China, attaining great revival for the Chinese nation is the greatest dream of the Chinese people since the Opium War, as it is the supreme and fundamental interest of the Chinese people. Today, all the endeavors of 1.3 billion people in this country are ultimately aimed for the realization of this great goal. Very clearly, the China dream first and foremost emphasizes the attainment of prosperity for the country and national revival, rather than personal success. Setting in contrast with this is the American dream with its first mention of personal success; the former farm boy Ford becoming an automobile king, son of quack doctor Rockefeller becoming oil baron; though born of a Handicraft workers’ family, Carnegie became a steel magnate; Abraham Lincoln’s rise from humble rural origins, and Barak Obama as the first black person, to becoming presidents of the United States; all these are symbols of the American dream. The China dream is in no way disavowing personal success, however, it is through shouldering the great burden of prosperity for the country and national revival that personal success is to be realized. Just as Xi Jinping pointed out in a talk delivered at the conclusion of the first session of the 12th National People’s Congress, the China dream is a dream of the Chinese nation, as much as it is a dream for each individual in this country. So long as we unite together, direct all efforts into one purpose endeavoring towards realization of our common dream, the power for attainment of our dream becomes infinitely strong, then there will be vast scope for the efforts to realize our individual dreams. To be able to live in a great country in a great era, the Chinese people are able to share the opportunities to live a most fulfilling life, share the opportunities to make dreams come true, and share the opportunities to grow and prosper with the mother country.

Ji Xianlin (2013) ponders in his book *The Chinese Spirit and People*: What is the most refined tradition of the Chinese nation? After much thought, I decided it is patriotism. Ji Xianlin thinks social existence determines consciousness; there must be an environment that can engender patriotism before we could have a deep-seated sense of patriotism. Only a brief look at the several thousand years of history of this country and such environments immediately pop into view. Over the course of our thousands of years of history, there was no end of enemies; they came from four directions from east to West, north to south. The Chinese nation is evidently a people that endured much suffering, and China can be described as country that has been through vicissitudes of changes; it is because of such suffering and great upheavals that molded a deep sense of patriotic feelings into the minds of the Chinese people.

No one is suggesting Americans have no patriotism or that patriotism is not encouraged in America; it is just America that has never been subject to foreign invasion since its founding as a nation, hence, patriotism cannot become a mainstream sentiment. For a country that has never experienced external aggression, it would be entirely natural for its citizens to generally hold in esteem personal freedom. Because of this, liberalism has become the very essence of America's national spirit, and the state and the government are the "Leviathan" monsters that the American people would be most vigilant about. America's leading exponent of Neo-liberalism had been Milton Friedman. In the opening chapter of his book *Capitalism and Freedom*, he leveled criticisms on President Kennedy's inaugural address words "don't ask what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country".

Neither half of the statement expresses a relation between the citizen and his government that is worthy of the ideals of free men in a free society. The paternalistic "what your country can do for you" implies that government is the patron, the citizen the ward, a view that is at odds with the freeman's belief in his own responsibility for his own destiny. The organismic, "what you can do for your country" implies that government is the master or the deity, the citizen, the servant or the votary. To the free man, the country is the collection of individuals who compose it, not something over and above them. He is proud of a common heritage and loyal to common traditions. But he regards government as a means, an instrumentality, neither a grant-or of favors and gifts, nor a master or god to be blindly worshiped and served. He recognizes no national goal except as it is the consensus of the goals that the citizens severally serve. He recognizes no national purpose except as it is the consensus of the purposes for which the citizens severally strive.

The free man will ask neither what his country can do for him nor what he can do for his country. He will ask rather "What can I and my compatriots do through government" to help us discharge our individual responsibilities, to achieve our several goals and purposes, and above all, to protect our freedom? And he will accompany this question with another: How can we keep the government we create from becoming a Frankenstein that will destroy the very freedom we establish it to protect? (Friedman, 1962, p. 1)

Without any doubt, this kind of liberalism view with respect to the state can be very persuasive and seductive; hence, it created huge impacts on the thinking of people around the world including that of our country, as if the Chinese people have for thousands of years been the slaves of despotic autocracy. Unfortunately, China never had the idyllic conditions that fostered liberalism; from the time of the Spring and Autumn Period to the Ming Dynasty, the country was constantly building defensive great walls, even so it did stop the invasion of marauding external tribes. Comparing this to the sparsely populated America which also enjoys the protection of natural barriers like the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans, there really is a world of difference! Under such a setting, if Chinese people were to consider their respective individual aims and goals first and foremost, the Chinese nation would have perished long ago. Therefore, in ancient China, not only was the Confucian school an ardent proponent of "cultivate one's moral characters, putting in order the affairs of

family, and that of the state, and then going out to the world”, it is not an exaggeration to say that all the philosophers and thinkers alike would willingly subscribe to the notion of “putting in order the affairs of the state, and then going out to the world”; the reason for that is because there really had been too much internal and external menaces in the history of China! It is because of the likes of external threats that compelled patriotism to assume core importance in Chinese civilization. Famous literary pieces on the theme of patriotism were even included in China’s oldest poems and songs collection *The Book of Songs*, such as “how shall it be said that you have no clothes? I will share my long robes with you. The king is raising his forces; I will prepare my lance and spear, and will be your comrade” (Legge, 2011, p. 311).

Uniting the entire nation to face the enemy has always been the essence of vanquishing the enemy for China, and it has also become a cornerstone of patriotism. Equally, such patriotic sentiment also played a part in shaping the Chinese people’s cultural and spiritual life. Whenever there is national misfortune, there would always be large number of men of letters “putting down pens to take up arms or garrison the frontiers”, and they left us innumerable poetic verses filled with passionate national spirits. Yue Fei, Wen Tianxiang, Qi Jiguang, and other patriotic heroes like them have been venerated like deities by the Chinese people; whilst characters, like Qin Hui, Wang Jingwei, and the likes who harmed the national interest are despised as treacherous traitors. Lu You’s deathbed testament was a verse titled “Letters to My Son”: “I always know dying means all worldly affairs will be relevant no more; I only grieve not seeing the country unified; the day the imperial army retakes the lost land, Forget you not to tell your father in a family oblation!” In this family letter, the country became the poet’s last spiritual refuge, as unification of the country has taken on religious sanctity.

The contemporary era began with China suffering external invasions when Western imperialist powers blasted open the doors to invade China from the ocean and from land. Their gunboats shattered China’s defensive fortifications along the southeastern coastal seaboard, to be followed later by cavalries and legions rolling in from the northeast, the northwest, and southwest. The Chinese people cried out in alarm: The Chinese nation is imperiled by national subjugation and extermination! “I exert all it takes to serve my country, even at the cost of my own life; come that may misfortune to me, for eluding and running away I shall never do”, the spirit of these lines by Lin Zexu has since found its way into the moral integrity code for contemporary Chinese people. In the period between the Opium War and the founding of New China, generation after generations of men and women with lofty ideals have fought and died for the great dream of building a prosperous country and national resurgence. The late Mr. Deng Xiaoping wrote in his senior years in a resignation letter to the politburo: “As an old Party member and senior citizen who had struggled for decades for the communist course and for the great enterprise of national independence, unification, reconstruction, and reform, my life belongs to the Party, to the country.” The last wish in his life was “I want to live till 1997, when I can go to Hong Kong stepping onto our land to take a look around.” This kind of sentiment with national unification as the lifetime ultimate ideal is a vivid depiction of Chinese people’s patriotic moral fiber that looks upon the country as their own spiritual haven.

Unity of Contemporaneity and National Characteristics

In general, there are roughly three main tendencies in the value outlook of Chinese people today; the first is predisposed towards gradually expand the Western value outlook after the Reform and Opening; the second is the socialist values that were gradually formed under communist party leadership of the Chinese revolution; the third is tended towards the value outlook of traditional Confucian virtues. A value outlook is first and

foremost the personal judgment on value; it is therefore fundamentally affected by the value of the personal quest. Those that have benefited the most in the Reform and Opening process are generally more highly approve of the value outlook on freedom, democracy, rule of law and so on, and would hasten to apply these value notions to oppose government intervention in the market, centralization of authority, public ownership in the economy, etcetera. Conversely, those who have benefited less in the Reform and Opening process or even hurt by it would generally identify with such value notions as “co-prosperity”, “equality for all”, “collectivism” and so on, and thus demand a strengthening of the government’s greater role in such areas as narrowing the wealth gap, creating the opportunities for equality, boosting social security and so forth. Quite obviously, the conflict between these two divergent value perspectives is a mild manifestation of the former controversies on proletarian or bourgeoisie leadership and socialist or capitalist path struggle. If this cannot be properly resolved it might well develop into open power struggle and political conflict.

But luckily, with social development having reached today’s level, we have gained practical experience on the social consequences of various value choices. Generally speaking, America is a country with the highest degree of identification with the value perspectives like freedom, democracy, and the rule of law; America under the influence of such value perspectives is also a role model of free market economy, universal suffrage, and governance by the rule of law. America’s respect for individual values has meant personal creativity can attain its highest potential, as America’s science and technology innovation and enterprise creation are showing vitality that is second to none in the world. America’s individual people and corporations may justifiably be said to have fully controlled the government and society, as the individual and corporation can change the American government and society through legal processes. For a long time, America is allegedly the “lighthouse” for countries of the world, with the so-called “universal values”, “universal system of government”, “universal history”, and other similar notions all originated from America. However, in the advent of the outbreak of the 2008 financial crisis with the ensuing aftermath of economic recession, political struggles and social conflicts, less and less people are believing in “universal values”, “universal system of government”, or “universal history”, and the people of America are protesting the minority of elites and multinational’s control of government and society. The former Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc countries dominated by highly centralized authority and state planning were once paragons of “co-prosperity”, “equality for all”, “collectivism”, and other similar value notions. But unfortunately, the latent wealth disparity, bureaucracy, and vested interest groups in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries eventually compelled the communist parties of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries to lose the support of their people. The communist parties of the former Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, along with the Eastern Bloc socialist countries, in the end became something like oppressors of the individual and society to be overthrown by the people of the former Soviet Union and eastern European countries. Europe of today represents a milder form of the quest for values like “co-prosperity”, “equality for all”, and “collectivism”. Its powerful unions and various other community organizations have become strong organizational entities for bringing about such value notions as “welfare sharing”, “social equality”, and “collective power”. The individual, corporation, and the government have truly become integral parts of society. However, the heavy burden of social responsibilities is currently keeping the governments deeply in debts with corporations losing competitiveness, individuals lacking initiatives, and may eventually cause society to turn lethargic and then becoming entrapped by conflict of interest.

American liberalism places the individual as the mainstay of all values, and the country and society are constrained by the value quest of the individual. The former Soviet Union and traditional socialism of Eastern Europe effectively had the country as the mainstay of value system, with the individual and society's value quest basically submitting to the constraints of the state. The democratic socialism of northwestern Europe, on the other hand, lets society assume the role as mainstay of the value system, with community organizations exemplified by the unions dominating the value quest goals of the individual and that of the state. From the Western countries' standpoint, freedom means personal freedom, including freedom of speech, freedom for assembly, freedom of the press, etc.; democracy is also a personal right, and it is mainly defined as the right to vote in election; even prosperity also implies individual creation of wealth. In their eyes, the state is merely a tool, and its value lies in seeking welfare for the individual. All men are born to be free, in order to protect personal asset and the right for personal liberty. It is only due to the people's relinquishment of a part of their rights that we would have the state. Government officials are servants fed and clothed by the people using tax money, and their duties are to use the power of the state to protect personal assets and personal rights. In the eyes of the Westerner, if there is any entity other than the individual that is worth some value, that would be God. For He is the mainstay for all values, whilst the value of human being is to realize God's intention; if God's intention cannot be realized, then all endeavors of man would become meaningless.

The socialist core value system can be said to have transcended American liberalism, the narrowly defined value notions of the former Soviet Union, Eastern European socialism and European democratic socialism. It espouses patriotism, dedication, trustworthiness, and friendship at the personal level, prosperity, democracy, civility, and harmony at the state level, freedom, equality, justice, and the rule of law at the society level. As the socialist core value system espouses value notions at three levels, which means there is no single mainstay entity for values, nor would there be any abstract universal value. Value must necessarily be worth something to some people or some organizational entity, and the personal value system must be compatible with the value system for the state and society. Chinese people would say, without the family you would not exist; without the state there would be no family; without peace and security in the world there would be no prosperous country with contented people. Only if there is peace and security in the world that there will be a prosperous country with contented people, and only if the country is safe and sound can everybody be safe and sound. The world, the country, and family are all mainstay entities of the value system. The Chinese people seek harmony between the state, society, and the individual whilst recognizing only if the individual has patriotism, dedication, trustworthiness, and friendship then a country with prosperity, democracy, civility, and harmony can be brought about, which further facilitates building up a society in which everyone enjoys freedom, equality, justice, and the rule of law. A core value system is the common value quest by a people, a country; even though it must take account of the individual's value quest, for otherwise it cannot become a common value quest by a people, a country. However, if every individual starts to view the value issue purely from a personal perspective, conflicts most certainly would arise on the value system. Only by transcending the value quest based on personal interest, and by incorporating the interests of the state and society into the common value system of a nation, can a country be formulated.

Promotion of the socialist core value system is not a once for all ideological and theoretical innovation, it is more akin to refinement and summing up of historical experience and practical requirements. Its specific content is not the most crucial; helping people to adopt a form of value judgment thinking is the most important. For example, the family is the conduit for values that the common people of China hold with the highest regard;

since value notions sought after in family relations, such as “filial piety”, “amicability”, and so on are not included, which in many people’s view is a rather significant deficiency. Nonetheless, as the traditional Chinese society tends to place too much importance on the family it may be prone to result in family clan influences disrupting the state and social order. The traditional Chinese family’s dominant role, the former Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc’s centralized authority, America’s personal liberty, Europe’s welfare society all have their unique qualities and respective shortcomings; a most striking feature of the socialist core value system is that it makes people think and recognize its uniqueness and any deficiency, taking on board the quintessence and discarding any drawback. Just as Xi Jinping has pointed out, the socialist core value system must reflect the primary requirements of socialism carrying forth the fine traditional culture of China, as much as its having to take on board the beneficial attainments of civilizations of the world to embody a spirit of contemporaneity. In other words, the socialist core value system stems from three principal legacies, namely, socialism, a refined traditional Chinese culture, and world civilizations including the capitalist civilization. To borrow the words of author Gan Yang, it is “a thread through three traditions”, namely, connecting through the three traditions of Chinese historical cultural tradition, the socialist tradition, and the Reform and Opening tradition; or alternatively it may simply be generalized as the connection linking the tradition of Confucian virtues, and a tradition of Chairman Mao and Deng Xiaoping’s legacies (Gan, 2007).

In the words of Confucius: “A gentleman unites with people for principle and never follows others blindly. A petty man follows others blindly without regard to principle” (*Analects of Confucius—Teachings of Chief Disciples*), a gentleman of high moral fiber can be in amicable terms with others without demanding the latter to agree with him; a mean and despicable character, on the other hand, bickers with others to agree yet unable to live in peace. There has been the Confucius saying:

The practice of decorum derives precious benefits from harmony; therein lies the secret of good governance by ancient monarchs. Whereas, affairs of differing natures sometimes cannot be dealt with in the same manner; that is, harmony for harmony’s sake, without moderating by decorum, that would be unworkable.

Embrace harmony without uniformity, look upon peace-loving as a virtue of moral ethic form the most distinctive features of the refined tradition of Chinese culture. However, the ancients were also quite aware that, stereotyping major or minor affairs to be handled solely according to the notion of “harmony” would sometimes run into difficulties. And “muddleheaded” harmony of harmony for harmony’s sake would mean a disregard of the differences in each other’s core values, and that will also get nowhere. “The practice of decorum derives precious benefits from harmony; therein lies the secret of good governance by ancient monarchs”, that requires us to respect others different value outlooks, so that we can be “appreciating the virtues in others; upholding the virtues of humanity”. “Affairs of differing natures sometimes cannot be dealt with in the same manner; that is, harmony for harmony’s sake, without moderating by decorum, that would be unworkable”, this is like saying it is not necessary to strictly “harmonize” all the big and small affairs any more than it is necessary to surrender one’s core values for the sake of “harmony”, and this in effect encapsulates “seeking common ground on major issues whilst leaving aside minor differences” to attain “living with the virtues of humanity; harmony and unity for humanity”. The Chinese people’s quest of “unity for humanity” does not mean homogeneity, but instead, it is a “greater unity” on the basis of “minor differences” as much as being a “commonality” for humanity based on respect for the “diversity” of nations. It is the unity of such “diversity” and “commonality” that gives rise to the ultimate embodiment of humanity’s cultural civilization.

Conclusion

The clash of civilizations between the West and China woke the Chinese sleeping lion up, to learn from the West, firstly the capitalism and freedom, and then socialism and plan. China integrated them into socialism with Chinese characteristics, after many wars and conflicts, and in the end re-made Chinese civilization. On March 27th, 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered an address on the occasion of his visit to UNESCO¹, which could be a good way for the remaking of the world order.

Civilizations are like water, moistening everything silently. We need to encourage different civilizations to respect one another and live together in harmony while promoting exchange of mutual learning as a bridge of friendship among people, a driving force behind human progress and a strong bond to human peace. We should seek wisdom and nourishment from their civilizations to provide people with spiritual support and comfort, and work together to tackle challenges facing mankind.

A civilization carries on its back the soul of a country or nation. It needs to be passed on from one generation to the next, and more importantly, it needs to keep pace with the times and innovate with courage. As we pursue the Chinese dream, the Chinese people will encourage creative shifts, and innovative development of the Chinese civilization in keeping with the progress of the times. In this way, the Chinese civilization, together with rich and colorful civilizations created by the people from other countries will provide mankind with the right cultural guidance and strong motivation.

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¹ Xi Jinping addresses UNESCO. http://www.china.org.cn/video/2014-03/28/content_31930317.htm.