

**LEGACY OF EDGAR SNOW:
CONTEMPORARY VALUE
AND INSPIRATION TO THE WORLD**

Mr. Snow was a friend of the Chinese people. He devoted his life to promoting mutual understanding and friendship between the Chinese and American peoples, making important contributions. He will live forever in the hearts of the Chinese people.^①

— **Mao Zedong**

The Chinese people bear in mind the contributions made by international friends, including the Snows, to China's revolution and construction, as well as their sincere friendship with the CPC and the Chinese people.^②

— **Xi Jinping**

① Telegram of condolences sent by Mao Zedong to Mrs. Snow upon the passing of Edgar Snow, February 1972.

② "Xi Jinping Replies to Adam Foster, President of the Helen Foster Snow Foundation of the United States," Xinhua News Agency, February 7, 2022.

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Preface

The year 2026 marks the 90th anniversary of the victory of the Long March of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. Ninety years ago, Edgar Snow (1905-1972), a 31-year-old American journalist, broke through layers of blockades and ventured deep into China's impoverished Northwest to interview the poorly clad Red Army. He reported for the first time to the world what it was like in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia revolutionary base area led by the Chinese Communist Party, producing the world-shaking work entitled *Red Star over China*. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, he made three reporting trips to China, opening a new window on "Red China" for the international community.

The code of civilization and the genes of development. Snow diagnosed China through its cultural depths, understood China from the people's standpoint, and viewed China from its development realities. Thus, he was able to discern the inevitability and rationality of China's path, thereby gaining insights into the historical trajectory of this sophisticated civilization-state. Casting aside the prejudices against China held by many Westerners of his time, he rooted himself among the populace, conducted extensive fieldwork and investigations, and was the first to feel the pulse of China's social transformation and discover the forces that were about to change China and influence the world. He firmly grounded himself in China's soil, making calm observations and independent judgments; through long periods of tracking and comprehensive examinations of social realities, he formed a relatively objective and accurate judgment, thereby gaining a deep understanding of the path chosen by the Chinese people. He broke free from the then-popular "theory of stagnation of Chinese civilization", saw a "living China", and gained insights into the Chinese nation's self-renewal in the thick of war and change, as well as its continuous development through historical accumulation, feeling the strong resilience of Chinese civilization. He also viewed China through a wide global lens, comparing it with Asian and Western nations to gain a deeper understanding of the uniqueness of China's development path and a profound appreciation of the independent and self-reliant character of Chinese civilization.

Unique insights and scientific foresight. On multiple occasions, Snow made scientifically grounded predictions about China's social development. Ninety years ago, in Yan'an, he had personally experienced "the unconquerable power of mankind" and "the light of rejuvenation", predicting that this force would change China and influence the world. Just over a decade later, the founding of the People's Republic of China confirmed his foresight. Six decades ago, after yet another visit to China, he predicted that by 1986 China's population would have reached one billion, its GNP would have surpassed that of the Soviet Union and approached the 1950s level of the United States, and that Chinese society would have undergone a fundamental transformation, with its

international standing greatly enhanced.^① Twenty years later, those predictions came astonishingly close to reality. Today, if Snow could visit China again, he would surely marvel at the fact that the impoverished, weak China of yesteryear has today become a beacon of hope for world peace and stability, and would be taking pride in his own foresight at that time.

Yet, Snow was no prophet and still less a perfect man. He never shied away from acknowledging the limits of his own understanding. In his later years, he revised *Red Star Over China* on multiple occasions, drawing on the "new materials" and "new insights" of various experts to correct the oversights and misjudgments in the original text. It is precisely this spirit of constant self-correction and commitment to truth that has kept his records persuasive across nine decades. As John K. Fairbank observed: "This book (by Edgar Snow) has stood the test of time on both these counts — as a historical record and as an indication of a trend."^②

China-U.S. friendship—a witness to history. Edgar Snow was a good friend of the Chinese people, having dedicated his entire life to helping the people of China and the United States find a path of peace and friendship. He not only tirelessly kept telling China's story to the world, but also actively pushed for the thawing of China-U.S. relations, serving as the "swallow that heralds spring" in facilitating the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries. As Soong Ching Ling said, "the Chinese people will always gratefully remember Edgar Snow, the tireless partisan of friendship between the Chinese and American peoples, and future generations on both sides of the Pacific will be indebted to him for the legacy he left them" in their research on Chinese history. Snow was a benchmark for friendly coexistence and mutual benefit between China and the United States. He set an enduring example for today's effort to build a constructive China-U.S. relationship of strategic stability. The interaction concepts of equal respect, sincere mutual understanding, and open inclusiveness that he practiced have long since transcended his individual actions per se and evolved into a treasured legacy of China-U.S. people-to-people exchanges. His name will forever be engraved in the annals of China-U.S. friendly exchanges, serving as the freshest historical witness to the friendship between the two countries.

A lasting spiritual legacy. Today, in continuing to promote the building of a community with a shared future for humankind, we need to embrace in our dialogue the attitude of equal treatment and mutual respect to foster exchange and mutual learning among civilizations and to remove the obsession with the "theory of the clash of civilizations" through the ancient wisdom of "harmony in diversity". We need more "Snow-like figures of the New Era" to go straight to news scenes, to present a comprehensive, multi-dimensional, and truthful picture of the world from an objective stand-

① Gu Jiacheng. "A Long-Buried Manuscript Reveals Snow's Vision of China in 1986," *Yanhuang Chunqiu*, no. 4 (2026).

② Snow, Edgar. (1992). *Red Star Over China*. Hebei People's Publishing House, preface by John K. Fairbank.

point and with cool-headed observation. We need the power of facts and truth to transcend systemic chasms and ideological barriers and to inject into a turbulent world the stability and certainty of peaceful development and win-win cooperation.

Chapter I

If Snow Were to Visit China Again

In 1936, American journalist Edgar Snow broke through tight blockades and ventured deep into the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Revolutionary Base Area, where his first-hand observations gave rise to *Red Star Over China*. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, he visited the country three more times, documenting its development and transformations.



Edgar Snow (right) on his reporting trip in northern Shaanxi, 1936 (archival photo).

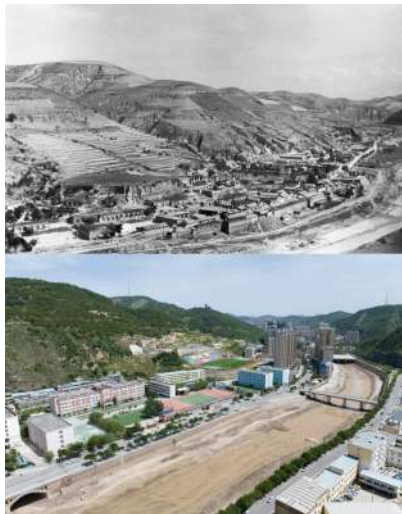
Today, if Snow were to retrace his former westward route and set foot on Chinese soil once more, what kind of China would he see? Recalling the past while looking at the present, what kind of emotions would he have?

1.1 Barren Plateau Transformed to Green Land

If Snow were to return to China today, the place he would most want to revisit would surely be northern Shaanxi—the land that enabled him to produce *Red Star Over China* and the "cradle of new China" that he had set foot on many times.

Ninety years ago, the first thing Snow saw upon arriving in northern Shaanxi was an expanse of "wonderful loess lands": "hills and mountains pitted, slashed and scored by torrential rains that left behind bald peaks, deep ravines and slanting arroyos—an earth that might have been clawed and torn by herds of angry whale-size centipedes."^① Behind this spectacle lay a cruel ecological reality: historically, soil erosion affected over 70 percent of the Loess Plateau's total area, resulting in an average annual sediment discharge of 1.6 billion tons into the Yellow River^②. At the founding of New China, the Loess Plateau had a forest coverage rate of only about 6.1 percent^③. The adverse ecological conditions posed extraordinary difficulties to the agricultural development and people's daily lives in northern Shaanxi.

If Snow were to revisit northern Shaanxi today, he would find an utterly different landscape. One of the most impoverished regions in China in the past has now become a living version of "the beautiful Jiangnan in northern Shaanxi"—a lush and prosperous land that rivals the famously fertile south of China. On the paddy field ridges of Nanniwán, rolling waves of rice stretch endlessly into the distance; Huanglong County now raises hairy crabs prized for their tender flesh and rich roe; across the mountains and hillsides, apples hang heavy on every branch, selling briskly at home and making their way to markets abroad. As a northern Shaanxi ditty sings: "A single tree, however strong, cannot stop a sandstorm; ten thousand trees, forming a forest, make it bow its head."



Top photo: Wuqi County, Shaanxi Province (archival photo).

Bottom photo: The same location in Wuqi County, photographed on June 2, 2026 (aerial drone photo by Shao Rui, Xinhua News Agency).

Starting in the 1950s, the people of northern Shaanxi embarked on a campaign to

① Snow, Edgar. (1984). *The Other Side of the River* (The Collected Works of Edgar Snow, Vol. 4). Xinhua Publishing House, p. 349.

② National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Agriculture, and State Forestry Administration. (2010, December 30). *Comprehensive Management Planning Outline for the Loess Plateau Region (2010–2030)*.

③ Chen Yiping. (2019, September 3). "Seventy Years of Dramatic Ecological and Environmental Transformation on the Loess Plateau". *China Science Daily*.

combat desertification and promote afforestation and, through sheer determination, achieved a remarkable ecological transformation—a metamorphosis from yellow to green. The Loess Plateau's vegetation coverage increased from 31.6 percent in 1999 to 67 percent in 2024; the annual sediment discharge into the Yellow River was reduced by over 80 percent, making it a global model for ecological governance^①. China's largest ecological restoration project is helping redraw the nation's ecological map. From the Three-North Shelterbelt Forest Program to the Grain for Green Program, from the Loess Plateau to the edge of the Taklamakan Desert, the Chinese people—working with shovels and spades, planting one seedling at a time—have "grown" with their own hands a "Great Green Wall" stretching across China's northern region.

Lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets. The people of northern Shaanxi have effectively integrated ecological governance with the development of specialized industries, achieving coordinated development of ecology and the economy. Wuqi County, by leveraging afforestation of barren hills, has built an industrial chain for fruit and forest product processing, nurturing a large number of deep-processing enterprises and directly driving steady income growth for farming households. Yulin has established a national-level Energy Revolution Innovation Demonstration Zone, with emerging industries such as hydrogen energy gradually taking root.

From the barren loess land to lucid waters and lush mountains, would these colossal ecological changes give Snow much to marvel at: that a profound sea change has taken place, completely reshaping the world?

1.2 Much Higher Standard of Living

In China 90 years ago, the average life expectancy of its nearly 500 million people was below 35 years; the percapita national income was only about 30 yuan, which was 22.43 percent that of Japan, 5.73 percent that of France, 4 percent that of Germany, 3.38 percent that of the United Kingdom, and 3.31 percent that of the United States^②.

Were Snow to visit China again, the journalist in him would surely walk into the lives of ordinary people once again, seeking to feel through their daily meals and changing seasons, their clothing, food, shelter, and transport, the change in their livelihoods.

On food. As the Chinese saying goes, "Food is people's first necessity." Snow would never forget in his entire life the hungry people he saw in the severe drought that struck North China in 1929. In his own words: "His flesh hangs from him in wrinkled folds; and even if he is a youth of twenty he moves like an ancient crone."^③ According to

① Jiang Chenrong and Zhang Jingpin. (2026, June 4). "The Yellow-to-Green" Transformation of the Loess Plateau". Xinhua News Agency.

② Zhao Dexin. (2003, August, 1st ed.). *Economic History of Modern and Contemporary China (1842–1949)*. Henan People's Publishing House, p. 247.

③ Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 213.

Snow's estimates, the number of people starved to death in the drought was "as high as six million". Snow would certainly still be able to recall that in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Revolutionary Base Area, he saw the diet of the Red Army soldiers and officers: year-round millet, coarse grain steamed buns, seasonal wild greens, and chili peppers, with rare intake of meat or fish. Chairman Mao Zedong's daily diet was the same as that of ordinary Red Army soldiers: steamed buns with chili peppers, coarse grain, and greens; small amounts of meat and dried fruit were added only when there were guests.

Today, China has met its food needs, firmly holding the rice bowl of its 1.4 billion people in its own hands. In 2024, China's total grain output exceeded 1.4 trillion jin (one jin equals half a kilo) for the first time, reaching a record high and staying above 1.3 trillion jin for the ninth year in a row.^① With about 9 percent of the world's arable land and 6 percent of its freshwater resources, China is able to feed a population that accounts for 18 percent of the world total.

Should he return to China today, Snow would find that the sugar, milk, coffee, and butter that he considered rare luxuries before have long since become everyday foods on the tables of the populace. China is now riding a wave of culinary enthusiasm: food documentaries such as *A Bite of China* have become household names, and food bloggers from China and beyond share all manner of specialty dishes on social media. The eating philosophy of the Chinese has also shifted — from "eating enough" to "eating well", and is now advancing upward toward "eating healthily".

On clothing. In Snow's records, the clothing of ordinary Chinese people was as destitute as their lives. In the 1930s, the Red Army soldiers' "uniforms were a motley patchwork of patches upon patches"; Zhu De, who bore the responsibility of Commander-in-Chief of the entire army, "had lived and dressed like the rank and file... often going without shoes in the early days"^②; during famines, men and women, young and old, clothed in rags, were forced to "[sell] the last rag of decency"^③. By the 1960s, "there was more uniformity of dress: blue and gray jackets and trousers...for both men and women", "with a greater mixture of army or militia khaki and navy pale blue."^④

Today, China has long since bid farewell to the consumption pattern of "three years new, three years old, and another three years of mended and patched clothes". It has broken through the monotonous "black, gray, and blue" uniformity in dressing style and entered an era of pursuing beauty, showcasing beauty, and leading beauty. Many international fashion brands have listed China as one of their most important markets globally. Chinese homegrown apparel brands have also entered the wardrobes of many Westerners. At international fashion weeks in Milan, New York, and elsewhere, Chinese

① Xinhua. (2024, December 13). "China's Annual Grain Output Reaches a New Milestone of 1.4 Trillion Jin for the First Time".

② Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 357.

③ Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p.213.

④ Snow, Edgar. (2005). *The Long Revolution*. Oriental Press, p. 21.

style has already become an important element of fashion.

On housing. Under Edgar Snow's pen, Mao Zedong, like the soldiers and civilians in the revolutionary base area, lived in "a two-room yao-fang with bare, poor, map-covered walls"^①. In those days, cave dwellings were typically dug into hillsides; the walls were plastered with mud and windows pasted over with hemp paper. The interior space was cramped and dim, usually furnished with only a clay kang (heated earthen bed), a desk, and a stool; heating came from burning firewood and straw in the kang. Rainwater seeped through on rainy days, in addition to posing a cave collapse hazard during the rainy season. It was in such a cave dwelling that Snow had more than a dozen extended conversations with Mao Zedong.

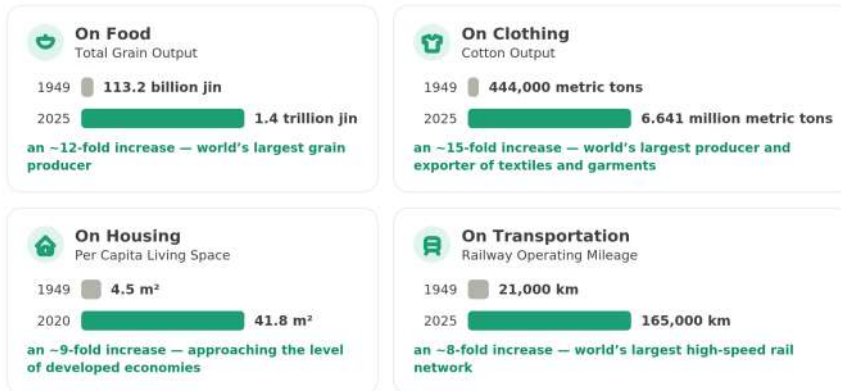
If he were to return to northern Shaanxi today, Snow would find that the old earthen cave dwellings have been phased out as everyday residences, with most of the remainder preserved as historic sites for red culture and tourism. In rural areas, new vaulted stone caves and brick-concrete bungalows have become popular, improving the living environment significantly. In urban areas, modern residential communities rise row upon row, with well-developed supporting facilities, convenient shopping and transportation, and parks, green spaces, and fitness venues everywhere. Enjoying a decent home and a rewarding occupation has become a reality.

On transportation. Back then, departing from Xi'an, Snow traveled by vehicle, on foot, by mule, and on horseback, taking more than a dozen arduous days before reaching what was then the Red Capital—Bao'an (present-day Zhidan County, Yan'an City, Shaanxi Province). With deep ravines and high mountains, travel was extremely difficult; "going on a journey is like going to war" was a lament often on the lips of the people of northern Shaanxi.

Today, departing from Xi'an aboard a Fuxing high-speed train, Snow could reach Yan'an in a mere 68 minutes. He could also see that northern Shaanxi is now served by a network of expressways, asphalt roads connecting counties and townships, and paved roads linking villages, providing seamless connectivity; Nanniwan Airport now operates dozens of domestic routes, completely casting off the old isolation of roads blocked by mountains and goods transported on human backs and mule packs. The launch of the China - Europe Railway Express and the development of cross-border e-commerce have further infused northern Shaanxi with the opening-up momentum of "turning an inland hinterland into a forward frontier". Looking across the whole of China, the transformation in transportation would perhaps surprise Snow even more: over the past several decades, China has built the largest modern comprehensive transportation system in human history, realizing the vision of "people enjoying their travels and goods flowing freely".

The people are well-supplied, families are well-off, and the nation is strong. Would these realobservable and tangible changes lead Snow to a new appreciation of the Chinese concept— "the people are the bedrock of the state"?

① Snow, Edgar. (2016). Red Star Over China. People's Literature Publishing House, p.73.



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (total grain output, cotton output, per capita housing space); China State Railway Group (railway operating mileage).

Chart: Comparison of Some Key Livelihood Data

1.3 Destitute Nation Risen as Global Contributor

"Industry (is) the basic necessity for any nation to win in modern war."^① Ninety years ago, Snow, together with Rewi Alley and others, witnessed firsthand how old China's industry had been destroyed by the flames of war and how laborers had been left displaced and destitute, and thus conceived the idea of organizing refugees and workers into cooperatives to produce goods locally, support the war effort, and aid laborers at the bottom of society. Thus began the Chinese Industrial Cooperative Movement, which became an object of lifelong attention for Snow.

If he were to revisit China, Snow would certainly focus on studying China's industrialization process and assessing the cornerstone of the country's economic development.

At the beginning of the last century, China's industrial foundation was exceedingly weak—it could not even produce basic industrial goods and was forced to rely heavily on imports. Many daily necessities were labeled with the prefix yang (foreign): yangbu (foreign cloth), yangding (foreign nails), yanghuo (foreign matches), and yangyou (foreign oil). Moreover, China's limited near-modern factories were mostly clustered in coastal treaty ports such as Shanghai and Tianjin while the hinterlands of Northwest and North China had virtually no modern factories at all.

Today, China has become the only country in the world that possesses all the industrial categories classified by the United Nations; its manufacturing value-added accounts for nearly 30 percent of the global total, and its overall scale has remained

^① Snow, Edgar. (1984). *The Edgar Snow Papers, Vol. 3: The Battle for Asia*. Xinhua Publishing House, pp. 134–135.

first in world ranking for 15 consecutive years.^① "Made in China" is comprehensively advancing toward "Created in China" and "Intelligently Manufactured in China", injecting powerful momentum into China's high-quality social development. Since 2010, China has consistently maintained its position as the world's second-largest economy. In 2025, China's GDP exceeded 140 trillion yuan for the first time. Against a backdrop of overall pressure on global economic growth, China's average annual contribution to world economic growth has remained at around 30 percent for five consecutive years.^②



Chart: Comparison of China's Industrial Value-Added in 1952 and 2025

On the strength of its comprehensive industrial support capacity, enormous manufacturing scale, and highly efficient production system, China has grown from the world's factory into a hub of global supply chains, effectively hedging against risks such as supply-demand imbalances in industrial chains. China remains committed to opening up and cooperation, constantly exporting advanced industrial technology and mature industrial solutions, and driving global green transformation and industrial upgrading.

China, once impoverished and weak, is now actively giving back to the world and empowering the globe. Such a sight would surely fill Edgar Snow with deep gratification and emotions.

1.4 From Seeking Path to Striving with Vigor

During his 13 years in China, Snow kept searching among China's youth for the nation's future and hope. From the progressive students in the Nationalist-controlled ar-

^① Xinhua. (2025, September 9). "During the 14th Five-Year Plan Period, China's Manufacturing Value-Added Increment Is Expected to Reach 8 Trillion Yuan".

^② National Bureau of Statistics of China. (2026, June 2). "Responding to Challenges, Breaking New Ground, and Composing a Brilliant Chapter – Report on Economic and Social Development Achievements during the 14th Five-Year Plan Period, No.1 of a Series".

as to the "Little Red Devils" in the revolutionary base areas, from the technicians of the "Gung Ho" cooperatives to the "heroines" of Yan'an University, his lens never departed from the young people of China. At a time when the nation's mountains and rivers lay broken and the country was threatened by existential perils, the courage and perseverance with which Chinese youth struggled for survival and searched for a way forward deeply moved Snow; in Yan'an cave-dwelling school, the young Red Army soldiers' eyes, full of hunger and thirst for knowledge, also deeply pained him.

In Northwest China 90 years ago, education was an inaccessible luxury for most young people. The Northwest region Snow saw was "culturally one of the darkest places on earth", where "virtually nobody but a few landlords, officials, and merchants could read".^① "Official estimates varied from eighty-five to ninety-five percent, but probably well over ninety percent of the rural population was illiterate, while in a few cities the figure was possibly seventy percent."^② The lack of education meant that "ignorance, superstition and the vastness of a roadless land enslaved them".^③

If Snow were to revisit China, the large-scale universalization of basic education and the tremendous improvement in young people's mental outlook would surely fill him with relief and comfort. Today's China has built the world's largest education system, with nine-year compulsory education by and large universal and illiteracy among young and middle-aged adults essentially eliminated. By 2024, the average years of schooling for China's newly added workforce had exceeded 14 years^④ and the gross higher education enrollment rate had surpassed 60 percent.^⑤

Data sources: The illiteracy rate in northern Shaanxi in 1936 is cited from Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China*; the national literacy rate, gross enrollment rate in higher education, and average years of education for new entrants to the workforce are cited from the Ministry of Education and the National Bureau of Statistics.

A new era forges a new generation of youth and the new youth in turn shape the new era. In the fields and villages engaged in poverty alleviation and rural revitalization, at the frontiers of science and technology where they "sharpen the sword over ten years" through persistent effort, on the frontlines of emergency rescue, disaster relief, peacekeeping, and pandemic response, and in the streets and alleys of community ser-

① Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 239.

② Snow, Edgar. (1984). *The Edgar Snow Papers, Vol. 4: The Other Side of the River*. Xinhua Publishing House, p. 164.

③ Smedley, Agnes. (1985). *The Agnes Smedley Papers, Vol. 4*. Xinhua Publishing House, preface by Anna Louise Strong, p. 2.

④ Wei Yukun, Zou Duowei, and Zhang Xiaojie. (2025, July 9). "Successful Completion of the 14th Five-Year Plan: New Pioneering Progress, Breakthrough Changes, and Historic Achievements – A Press Conference by the State Council Information Office Focuses on China's Economic and Social Development during the 14th Five-Year Plan Period". Xinhua News Agency.

⑤ The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China. (2025, September 23). "Text and Photo Record of the Thematic Press Conference on Successful Completion of the 14th Five-Year Plan: Progress and Achievements in Accelerating the Building of a Strong Education System during the 14th Five-Year Plan Period".



Sources: The 1936 illiteracy rate in northern Shaanxi is cited from Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*. National literacy rate, gross higher education enrollment, and average years of schooling of the new workforce are from the Ministry of Education and the National Bureau of Statistics of China.

Chart: Comparison of China's Education Situation in 1936 and 2026

vice and grassroots governance—everywhere one finds young people striding forward with vigor. Openness, inclusiveness, and confidence are becoming the hallmarks of more and more Chinese youth. Snowboarder Su Yiming, having endured injuries and setbacks yet continuing to fight for his dreams, won China's first gold medal at the Milan-Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics. He was determined to "let the whole world see the charm and perseverance of the Chinese and of China's ice and snow sports". Internet celebrity Li Ziqi draws her materials from rural daily life, using videos to document food preparation, farming, traditional crafts, and seasonal customs, allowing the world to see an idyllic Eastern aesthetic; she has amassed a huge global following on social media platforms.

They might be the Chinese youth that Snow "wanted to see" yet "could never have imagined". In their own ways, they march in step with the times and engage in dialogue with the world, bringing vibrant vitality to this ancient land.

Today, if Snow were to document China again, faced with these earth-shaking changes, he would surely be probing deeper: Why has China been able to achieve this? What kind of path and system have enabled this ancient nation to make, after just a few decades of development, the leap from standing up to growing prosperous, and then to becoming strong? What forces have continued to drive such transformative changes in China and profoundly influence the world?

Chapter II

Discovering the Forces That Transformed China

What forces have driven such an earth-shattering transformation in China? The answer was found by Edgar Snow with foresight as early as nine decades ago.

In the revolutionary base areas led by the Communist Party of China (CPC), Snow discovered that a simple yet unwavering faith had ignited the public's hope for a better life, that the awakened masses proactively supported the revolution and strove to transform the world, and that the protracted aggression and warfare had sparked a surge of patriotism, forging the national spirit. These, along with the integration of Marxism with China's specific conditions and its fine traditional culture, had become the most unswerving, profound, and enduring drivers behind the Chinese revolution.

Despite the fact that "Red China" was then confined to merely a remote corner of Northwest China, Snow became convinced, based on this observation, that these forces were bound to transform the country and influence the world.

2.1 A Faith That Ignited Hope

In early summer, an incessant stream of visitors arrived at the Red Army's Western Expedition Memorial Hall in Tongxin County, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. At the entrance stands a sculpture of the young Red Army soldier from Edgar Snow's classic photograph—The Voice of the War of Resistance. The bugle in the soldier's hand seems to resound through time and space, bringing the visitors back to the critical moment of national survival amid the smoke of war. It prompts them to wonder, just as Snow did nine decades ago: What were the Chinese Communists like? What made them fight as they did?



Left: The iconic photograph *The Voice of the War of Resistance*, captured by Edgar Snow in August 1936 at Yuwangbu (present-day Yuwang Town, Tongxin County). This widely circulated image once graced the cover of the Chinese edition of *Red Star Over China*.

Top right: The sculpture *The Voice of the War of Resistance* standing at the entrance of the Red Army's Western Expedition Memorial Hall in Tongxin County (photograph by Wang Peng, Xinhua News Agency).

Bottom right: A close-up detail of *The Voice of the War of Resistance* sculpture inside the exhibition hall of the Red Army's Western Expedition Memorial Hall in Tongxin County (photograph by Peng Zhaozhi, Xinhua News Agency).

The Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia revolutionary base area back then was in a state of existence bordering on the paradoxical. In extremely impoverished material conditions, the people there lived in loess cave dwellings, slept on earthen beds, wore homespun clothes, and used coarse straw paper.

Yet, in the midst of such material destitution, Snow beheld "a group of people full of the greatest hopes" in all of China. In *Red Star Over China*, he wrote that the Red Army soldiers were "the first consciously happy group of Chinese proletarians"^①, their faces invariably glowing with a self-respect and vigor rarely seen among the contemporary Chinese. The "Little Red Devils" (the energetic Red Army young soldiers affectionately dubbed by Snow) he encountered were invariably cheerful and optimistic, and older men often forgot their own pessimism on looking at them.^②

① Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 64.

② Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 346.



The "Little Red Devils" are playing games (photograph by Edgar Snow).

What power on earth sustained these people, enabling them to maintain such an incredible, unyielding fighting spirit while living on the brink of despair? Mao Zedong told Snow that "everyone in the Soviet (the Communist-led revolutionary base area) was ready to fight for his government against his oppressors because every person was voluntarily and consciously fighting for his own interests and what he believed to be right"^①. A Red Army soldier told Snow that "here everybody fights to help the poor, and to save China"^②.

Snow discovered that in the thick of the arduous revolutionary struggle, rock-firm ideals and convictions served as a tremendous spiritual driver for the Chinese Communists, acting as a banner to rally the people and a bond to unite them with unyielding strength.

Such faith stemmed from their profound love for this soil and grew out of a simple, pure pursuit of equality and dignity. Snow recorded a highly symbolic vignette: when he, out of habit, called out to two young boys serving a meal, "Wei, bring me some cold water," he was met with sheer scorn. Later, he was told that these Little Red Devils were members of the revolution and should be addressed as "comrades", with an apology due^③. Within the Red Army, from the commander-in-chief to a cook, there was only division of labor with no hierarchy in human dignity, a principle that was an absolute luxury in the dark era of old China.

The Communist ideal serves as the soul of their faith, endowing it with a deeper the-

① Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 92.

② Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 62.

③ Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, pp. 45 – 46.

oretical consciousness and dynamic power for action. In his interview by Snow, Peng Dehuai (Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army) said: "Formerly I had been merely dissatisfied with society, but saw little chance of making any fundamental improvement. After reading the Communist Manifesto, I ceased to be pessimistic and began to work with a new concept—that society could be changed."^①

Snow had attempted to explain the Long March with Western military theories, but he ultimately admitted that tactics fell short of explaining that epic migration. He astutely observed that the Red Army was not just a fighting force, but more of a great school. He documented their daily routine in meticulous detail: besides military drills, most of their time was devoted to political studies, literacy classes, and seminars. Crudely finished rifles in hand, the soldiers were analyzing the international situation and deliberating on Soviet policies. This exceptional political consciousness tightly bound individual lives with the future of the nation, class liberation, and national rejuvenation.

In the book, Snow wrote, "and then through it all, like a flame, an undimmed ardor and undying hope and amazing revolutionary optimism of those thousands of youths...."^② This is a sublimation of faith—when an individual fully merges himself into a collective cause and when sufferings are deemed the inevitable path to liberation, the fears they bring are completely conquered. Snow exclaimed with amazement: "Neither can the democratic Socialist ideas for which tens of thousands of youths have already died in China, nor the energies behind them, be destroyed."^③

"Only when people have faith will the nation have a bright future and strength." "Chinese modernization is the modernization of material and cultural-ethical advancement." With an unchanging original aspiration, the Chinese Communists have responded to Edgar Snow's "Yan'an discovery" with the achievements of the new era. Generations of the Chinese people have defined faith in their own ways, with the same pursuit, courage, and power.

2.2 Earth-Shaking Power of the People

During her third visit to China in the 1930s, American journalist Anna Louise Strong expressed her heartfelt admiration, noting that in Yan'an, the most frequently heard words were "the people". She discovered that slogans such as "Go to the people" and "Learn from the people" seemed to carry a meaning far beyond themselves, expressing a sense of "eternal love" and "ultimate faith".^④

Snow discovered that, even in his younger days Mao Zedong had already developed a deep recognition of the power of the masses, believing that China's greatest reservoir

① Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 279.

② Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 184.

③ Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 463.

④ Strong, Anna Louise. (1988). *One-Fifth of Mankind & The Chinese Conquer China (Selected Works of Anna Louise Strong, Vol. 3)*. Xinhua Publishing House, pp. 236– 237.

of creativity lay hidden within the impoverished masses the absolute majority of which were illiterate: "In that immense labor power lay the 'capital' necessary to put China on the path of industrialization and enable her to become a prosperous and powerful country."^① Mao Zedong wrote as early as 1934: "What is a true bastion of iron? It is the masses, the millions upon millions of people who genuinely and sincerely support the revolution."^② This was not merely the judgment of a revolutionary leader, but also the shared impression of international friends who visited Yan'an, and ultimately, the very conclusion Snow drew from the decades of observation, recording, and study of China that ensued.

In *Red Star Over China*, Snow captured such a scene: when the Red Army marched through a village, a Hunan blacksmith's apprentice nicknamed "Iron Tiger" resolutely laid down his bellows and pans. Bearing no luggage, he rushed to enlist, wearing nothing but a pair of straw sandals and a pair of trousers.^③ According to British journalist James Bertram, along the route of the Long March, the Red Army had attracted and taken in sons and daughters of workers and peasants from over a dozen provinces who wanted to devote themselves to the fight to save the nation from Japanese aggression. Bertram remarked that this army was more truly representative of the Chinese people than any other army.^④



Red Army soldiers and local peasants in the Northern Shaanxi Base Area, 1937 (archival photograph).

① Snow, Edgar. (1984). *The Other Side of the River: Red China Today*, Selected Works of Edgar Snow, Vol.4. Xinhua Publishing House, p.110.

② Mao Zedong. (1967 ed.). *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. 1. People's Publishing House, p. 125.

③ Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 63.

④ Bertram, James M. (1988), *North China Front* [buke zhengfu de renmen: yige waiguoren yanzhong de zhongguo kangzhan]. Qiushi Publishing House, p. 85.

Where did the revolutionary enthusiasm of the ordinary people come from? Why were they so willing to follow the Communist Party? Snow's answer was: inspiration and awakening—with its class sentiments and real actions of "coming from the people and working for the people", the Communist Party of China inspired the toiling masses living in dire straits and the awakened people burst forth with unprecedented energy and creativity.

Snow wrote: The Communist Party of China aimed "to shake, to arouse the millions of rural China to their responsibilities in society". The peasant class, gradually standing up in an awakened state after two thousand years of slumber, was more capable of driving monumental changes in China.^① Before the arrival of the Red Army in the Northwest, the peasants had been taxed up to 60 percent of their income. "Excessive taxation and indebtedness had forced many farmers to sell all their cattle and abandon their lands"; "over 70 per cent of the farmers were in debt and about 60 per cent were living on food bought on credit."^② The first reform brought by the Red Army was the abolition of exorbitant levies and the redistribution of land, which secured the right to subsistence for the grassroots population.

Faced with Kuomintang's multi-layered encirclement and economic blockades, rather than cringing, the army and people in the revolutionary base areas threw themselves into the Great Production Movement with even greater revolutionary enthusiasm under the slogan of "Ample food and clothing through self-reliance". According to Harrison Forman, an American journalist, Yan'an was a laborers' society^③ where cooperatives guided peasants in their labor while students, civil servants, and factory workers each had a spinning wheel or a small plot of land, and every department boasted its own "Labor Heroes".

"The Chinese people were capable of radically changing their country and quickly lifting it from bottom place to the rank its history and multitudes merited in the world,"^④ Snow wrote in *Journey to the Beginning*.

As time rolls on, the monumental leaps and bounds upon this land echo what international friends witnessed and felt decades ago. From the "bean voting" in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region to the establishment of the system of people's congresses, from the exploration of the "three-thirds system" for democratic governance during the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression to the continuous development of whole-process people's democracy in the new era, putting the people first remains an enduring philosophy and practice of the Chinese Communists. By the end of 2020, China had accomplished an anti-poverty campaign on an unprecedented

① Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 112.

② Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 325.

③ Forman, Harrison. (2002). Report from Red China [beixing manji]. PLA Literature and Art Publishing House, edition, p. 69.

④ Snow, Edgar. (1984 ed.). *Journey to the Beginning (Selected Works of Edgar Snow, Vol.1)*. Xinhua Publishing House, p. 99.

scale, successfully lifting all 98.99 million rural residents out of poverty under the prevailing standard. In public safety, when confronting major disasters such as pandemics, floods, and earthquakes, the CPC has consistently put lives above all else, disregarding short-term costs and group differences to maximize the protection of every citizen's life and health. In its inclusive development effort, China has consistently refined its social security system, achieved universal coverage of public services including healthcare, elderly care, education, and employment and steadily advanced common prosperity, ensuring that the fruits of Chinese modernization benefit every Chinese.

General Secretary Xi Jinping stated: "The people are the creators of history; they are the real heroes." "Our Party has in the people its roots, its lifeblood, and its source of strength." "To meet their desire for a happy life is our mission." "What the people welcome and support, we must do resolutely; what the people oppose and resent, we must firmly refrain from doing." It is precisely this original aspiration and mission that has always tightly bound the hearts of the Party and the Chinese people together.

2.3 The Power of Solidarity—A Nation of One Mind

When Edgar Snow was writing *Red Star Over China*, the country was "in a state of disintegration" and on the eve of the most catastrophic disaster. How the Red Soviet could be galvanized into a formidable force was one of his paramount interests. Before his journey to northern Shaanxi, Snow questioned, "What was a Chinese Soviet like? Did the peasantry support it? If not, what held it together?"^① "What did the Communist proposal for a 'national united front' in China to stop civil war really mean?"^②

During his field interviews in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia base area, Snow sensed a spiritual fortitude and witnessed a vibrant tableau that were exceedingly rare at that time: the army and the people in Yan'an shared a bond of seamless unity and braved hardships together; ordinary citizens eagerly delivered grain and drove carts to support the frontlines; young people marched onto the battlefield without a second thought; women spun yarn, wove cloth, and tended to the wounded. This formidable centripetal force—transcending ethnicities, social statuses, and geographical boundaries—imbued the base area under the Red Army leadership with a burgeoning vitality. He discovered, "...the Red Army and the Soviet Government had built a rocklike solidarity among the whole population of their areas."^③

In a cave dwelling at Yan'an, Mao Zedong addressed Snow's queries regarding the "National United Front": The core objective of this initiative was to forge the will and actions of all political parties, ethnic groups, social classes, strata, organizations, and overseas Chinese into a monolithic whole, striving in concert for a shared goal. During the days he spent interviewing Red Army officers and soldiers on their marches and in

① Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 5.

② Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 7.

③ Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 92.

campaigns, Snow witnessed firsthand how this strategy was propagated, implemented, and used to unite friendly forces and disintegrate enemy ranks during battle. For five consecutive days, Snow documented these details meticulously in his diary, hailing them as the "united front in action".^①

Still later, Snow observed that the Anti-Japanese National United Front demonstrated a profound cohesiveness and appeal, unlocking the infinite might latent within hundreds of millions of people and laying a rock-solid foundation for the ultimate victory of the war. American journalist Anna Louise Strong described it thus: "Yet, under the pressure of this aggression, the Chinese people began to awaken, to unite, and to develop the concept of a nation."^② The consciousness of a Chinese national community, erupting at a moment of existential crisis, miraculously galvanized a then-fragmented, weak, and defenseless China into a Great Wall of flesh and blood, where millions acted with one mind to resist foreign aggression.



In 1936, the First Army Group of the Red Army in Ningxia (photographed by Edgar Snow).

This spiritual bond that rallies hearts and inspires collective progress has evolved with the times. Today, the people of all the 56 ethnic groups of China "remain closely united like the seeds of a pomegranate", with the depth and breadth of their interactions, exchanges, and integration reaching unprecedented levels. The "new type of political party system", which grew out of China's own soil, closely unites the CPC, the democratic parties, and personages without party affiliation into a harmonious "concen-

① Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 347.

② Smedley, Agnes. (1985). *Collected Works of Agnes Smedley, Vol. 4*. Xinhua Publishing House, 1985, preface (by Anna Louise Strong), p. 3.

tric circle". In the realm of social governance, the philosophy of "collaboration, participation, and common interests" brings together the government, society, the public, and other entities, generating a healthy synergy for governance. In the sphere of livelihood security, top-level designs—such as unified national emergency dispatching, East-West collaboration, and paired assistance—have translated the spirit of solidarity and mutual aid into highly actionable policies and institutions.

The "Minning Model" (or Fujian-Ningxia Model) serves as a vivid footnote to the spirit of solidarity in the new era. In 1996, Fujian Province and the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region "paired up" under the East-West paired assistance policy to jointly build the ecological migration settlement of "Minning Town". After 30 years of joint endeavors, Minning Town has been transformed from what was originally a small village of 8,000 into a model migration town of 66,000 residents, having turned "arid sandy beaches" into "golden sand beaches" and brought about an unprecedented, earth-shaking metamorphosis from scratch.

The power of solidarity not only bridges mountains and seas, but also transcends time and space. On the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War, Adam Foster, the grandnephew of Helen Foster Snow and President of the US Helen Foster Snow Foundation, said in an interview: World War II taught us deeply the price of division and the power of unity.^① He expressed the belief that the spirit of cooperation that once united nations against fascism can still provide inspiration for humanity today as it tackles global challenges such as climate change and poverty.

2.4 The Power of Culture: Innovating on Tradition

In the very year Snow arrived in Yan'an, *Living China*, an anthology of modern Chinese short stories he had compiled and translated, was printed and published in the United Kingdom. Featuring works by Lu Xun and other Chinese writers, this book was the first to present "China in literature" to the West, dissecting the cultural texture and pulse of China in that era.

During the process of compiling the anthology, Snow "saw the scars and bloody weald of a whipped nation, but also saw the stubborn, noble soul of this people".^② He keenly captured the pangs and joys of young Chinese intellectuals as they broke free from ancient traditions and sensed that China was in a state of "healthy ferment". Through these literary narratives, he hoped to reveal the cultural forces that were reshaping Chinese society.

Unlike most Western missionaries and travelers, Snow excelled at piercing through surface phenomena to understand the deeper drivers of China's social transformation

① Li Zhiwei. (2025, August 11). "Remembering the History of World War II Guides Us to Move Forward Better". *People's Daily*.

② Liu Yueyue. (2021, October 1). "Edgar Snow: Introducing a True China to the World". *Guangming Daily*.

from the perspective of underlying cultural logic. Upon his arrival in China, Snow read extensively the works of various philosophical schools of China, including Confucius and Xunzi, and gained a deep familiarity with literary classics such as *The Water Margin* and *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. He noted, "In Powell's library there were many books on Orientalia, which I read hungrily.... The more I read, the more fascinated I became. I discovered the meaning of 'old'; I saw a very young China struggling for a place in the modern world."^① While historical documents and classics revealed to him the profound heritage of Chinese culture, Snow's journey into northern Shaanxi allowed him to witness firsthand the vibrant manner in which this ancient wisdom took root and flourished.

Before heading to Yan'an, he was brimming with curiosity about its "Red culture". "What were Chinese 'Red factories' like? What was a Red theater? What about public health, recreation, education, and 'Red culture'?"^② ...Carrying with him these "unanswered questions", Snow witnessed in Yan'an that the CPC attached paramount importance to education, eradicating cultural illiteracy through literacy campaigns, mass propaganda, wall newspapers, and theatrical performances. He observed a cultural experiment that sought to dismantle traditional ties based on bloodlines and geography in order to forge a new type of "comradely" relationship. He regarded this as a highly efficient organizational culture through which the CPC had constructed a new "world of meaning" among an impoverished and illiterate populace.



"The poor must read too" (Illustration from the 1938 edition of *Red Star Over China*)

① Snow, Edgar. (1984). *Collected Works of Edgar Snow, Vol. 1: Journey to the Beginning*. Xinhua Publishing House, p. 25.

② Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 6.

The journey to Yan'an deepened Snow's comprehension of Chinese culture. In a more intuitive manner, he truly felt the power of culture and experienced how it reshaped the spirit of the Chinese people and stimulated the vitality of Chinese society. This profound understanding of culture, in turn, enabled him to grasp the pulse of China's social development with greater precision and successfully foresee its future trajectory.

When culture prospers, the nation prospers; when culture is strong, the people are strong. The profound and extensive fine traditional Chinese culture has always nourished the sustainable development of the Chinese nation. In 2005, Xi Jinping, then Secretary of the Zhejiang Provincial CPC Committee, wrote in his column "Zhejiang Xinyu" (Fresh Thoughts from Zhejiang) in the Zhejiang Daily: The power of culture, or what we call the cultural soft power that constitutes composite competitiveness, is always imbedded in economic, political, and social powers in a manner that "nourishes things silently", serving as a "booster" for economic development, a "navigation light" for political civilization, and a "glue" for social harmony.

The core logic of integrating the basic tenets of Marxism with China's specific realities and its fine traditional culture follows a continuous line of inheritance. The introduction of Xi Jinping Thought on Culture in 2023 marked a new pinnacle in the Communist Party of China's systematic understanding of cultural inheritance and development. It guides this ancient nation to view the vital function of culture in advancing human civilization from the long river of history, to grasp the crucial role of culture in leading social transformation amid the tides of the times, and to leverage the significant value of culture in creating a better life through the comprehensive development of individuals.

Chapter III

Insights into the Charm of Chinese Civilization

The yearning for an exotic world brought Snow across thousands of miles to China. The surging transformative power of Red China and the unique charm of Chinese civilization captivated him deeply, causing him to linger and stay. What had originally been planned as a brief journey ultimately turned into a thirteen-year vigil and a lifelong attachment.

With his unique observation power and objective documentation, Snow gained insights into the civilization code that enabled the Chinese nation to stand tall despite repeated tribulations and to thrive continuously through endless vicissitudes. In his own way, Snow dedicated his entire life to conveying the unique charm of Chinese civilization to the world.

3.1 The Enduring Sentiment of Family and Country

"Self-cultivation, family management, state governance, and bringing peace to all under heaven"; "Be the first to worry about the nation's woes and the last to share in its prosperity"; "If it is to benefit my country I will lay down my life. What then is risk to me?"—the concept of the "family-country integration", which closely links individual growth and family destiny with the future of the nation, is a unique value coordinate of Chinese civilization and an unchanging spiritual pursuit for generations of Chinese.

In modern times, the Chinese nation suffered unprecedented catastrophes and tribulations—the nation was humiliated, the people were subjected to untold sufferings, and the civilization was plunged into darkness. Countless people of vision and integrity, driven by a deep devotion to their country, rose in resistance. This spiritual force, inherited over millennia, became a strong bond for safeguarding the continuity of the civilization.

In *Red Star Over China*, Snow wrote, "Many people think of the Red Army as a collection of tough desperadoes and malcontents. I had some such vague notion myself. I soon discovered that I was entirely wrong. The great majority of the Red Army were young peasants and workers who believed they were fighting for their homes, their land, and their country."^① What prompted Snow to change his view was precisely the profound devotion to family and country and the sense of mission that had erupted from the sons and daughters of China amid the flames of revolution.

After the full outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, more than 40,000 young intellectuals, carrying the conviction of serving their country, flocked to Yan'an. Students, teachers, workers, and overseas Chinese bade farewell to

^① Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 263.

comfortable lives to plunge into the arduous cause of national salvation. In 1938, Kung Mai (originally named Kung Tung-ping), an Indonesian Chinese at the tender age of 19, bought, behind his parents' back, a ship ticket to return to China after learning of the Japanese invasion of his homeland. He asked someone to mail a photograph to his mother. On the back, he wrote, "Mom, dedicate me to my motherland." Thus, he parted with his parents forever. This simple vow is the most moving portrayal of patriotism of that era. During the war-torn years, Yan'an became a beacon in the hearts of patriotic youths, who trekked as far as thousands of miles and broke through blockades to join the torrent of national salvation, fulfilling their original aspiration to serve the motherland with their youth and blood.

The spirit endures and the torch is passed down. The great righteousness of family and country continues to manifest in generations of Chinese people. In the early days of New China, a group of scientists including Qian Xuesen, Deng Jiaxian, Qian Sanqiang, and Guo Yonghuai gave up their affluent life and superior research conditions abroad. They resolutely returned to a China that was impoverished and waiting to be rebuilt from scratch, working incognito in the desolate Gobi Desert to forge the national defense bedrock for the new republic. At the 2024 Paris Olympics, China's rising tennis star Zheng Qinwen defeated multiple formidable opponents to win the gold medal, achieving a historic breakthrough for Chinese players in the Olympic tennis singles event. After the match, exhausted from the grueling battle, she collapsed onto the ground, picked herself up, and choked back tears: "I'm happy for myself and for my country because this is a historic breakthrough, a historic breakthrough I achieved for my country."^①

From a time of turbulence to an era of peace and prosperity, the "indomitable spirit of humanity" described by Snow still surges within every generation of Chinese. The love for family and country has never been an abstract slogan; rather, it represents the tangible choices made by generation after generation of Chinese at critical junctures in history. Today, it has turned into the burgeoning vitality of development across the vast Chinese land, settling into the spiritual bedrock of Chinese civilization—ever-thriving and passing down from generation to generation.

3.2 The Innovative Spirit of Keeping up with the Times

As an ancient Chinese saying goes, "If you can improve yourself in a day, do so each day, forever building on improvement." Enduring without interruption, Chinese civilization features a distinct character of staying grounded in reality, answering the call of the era, and embracing the future. It has endowed the Chinese nation with an innovative spirit of constantly renewing itself and navigating major changes throughout history.

① Agence France-Press (AFP). (2024, August 2). "Fight, Queen Wen!". Reference News.

"Why were the Chinese able to invent everything and develop nothing? What happened to China's creativity?"^① These were the questions asked by Dr. Victor Frencof Germany when Snow had first set foot in China. Then and there, Snow had no ready answers to offer, yet these questions sparked his curiosity about China's innovative spirit.

In the barren Northwest of China, people tackled life challenges for survival and development with remarkable ingenuity, leaving a lasting impression on Snow."In this medieval world it was astonishing suddenly to come upon Soviet factories, and find machines turning, and a colony of workers busily producing the goods and tools of a Red China."^② Such was his first impression of "Soviet industries".

He also observed that despite the Kuomintang economic embargo, the Red political power built its own arsenal, weaving mills, shoe factories, paper mills, oil wells, and coal mines across the loess gullies. This barren land, whose "combined machine-industry investment certainly must be considerably less than the plant of one big assembly branch of, for instance, the Ford Motor Company",^③ was managed as a self-sustaining economic unit. In its management system, the finance department had devised a new managerial method of "collective control of receipts and disbursements" to prevent falsifying accounts so that altering figures for private profit was made extremely difficult.^④ These "novel" practices struck Snow as compelling evidence of people's surge of creativity even under harsh conditions.

"Elements carried over from the past were engaged in dynamic combination and recombination with new elements of the time-present which was itself always becoming a future something-else."^⑤ These were the words Snow used to describe the Socialist China when he revisited New China in 1960. What struck him most deeply this time was not the largest projects, but the ingenuity of the Chinese building modern industries all from scratch. At Tsinghua University's machinery factory, students made small cars with their own hands. In the ancient city of Luoyang, a school integrated hands-on work with classroom learning, with the motto on the wall reading: "Dare to think, dare to act, and dare to innovate!"He then penned this metaphor: "China had two legs, with one foot still bound, the other wearing winged sandals."^⑥

Time marches on, yet the spirit of staying grounded in reality and upholding fundamental principles while breaking new ground continues to thrive in the new era. Today, China is deepening the implementation of the innovation-driven development strategy and accelerating the shift away from factor- and investment-driven growth to-

① Snow, Edgar. (1984). *The Collected Works of Edgar Snow, Vol. 1, Journey to the Beginning*. Xinhua Publishing House, p. 125.

② Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 263.

③ Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 251.

④ Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 235.

⑤ Snow, Edgar. (1984). *The Other Side of the River* (The Collected Works of Edgar Snow, Vol. 4). Xinhua Publishing House, p. 121.

⑥ Snow, Edgar. (1984). *The Other Side of the River* (The Collected Works of Edgar Snow, Vol. 4). Xinhua Publishing House, p. 156.

ward innovation-powered development. Innovation has become the key driver for high-quality development. Denis Depoux, Global Managing Director at Roland Berger, a German-based international management consultancy, pointed out: China is a global manufacturing center and is increasingly becoming a global innovation center as well. This not only drives its own growth, but also brings important opportunities to the world.

As American sinologist Paul Cohen revealed, there has long been an internal driving force for self-generated transformation in Chinese society; the modernization of Chinese civilization is by no means a rupture with its traditions, but an inevitable extension of its historical logic.^① Observations and accounts from generations of international friends transcend time and space, connecting China with the rest of the world. They enable the vitality of innovation and wisdom of the East that are rooted in Chinese soil to be constantly seen, understood, and recognized across the world.

3.3 Peace—the Genes of Good–Neighborliness and Amity

Throughout its more than 5,000 years of history, the Chinese nation has always upheld and carried forward the firm ideals of peace, amity, and harmony. Since time immemorial, Chinese civilization has embraced the philosophies of "maintaining peace among countries", "harmony in diversity", and "harmony as the most valuable".

In *Red Star Over China*, Snow recorded from a microscopic perspective the consciousness of peace and humanitarianism displayed by the Red Army. He noted that the Red Army treated captured Kuomintang soldiers and Japanese prisoners of war with unbelievable mercy, that it sought to resolve conflicts by political means instead of resorting to violence, and that many of the captives even became fine Red Army soldiers.^②

During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, Snow was deeply struck by Mao Zedong's view on war: "War, this monster of mutual slaughter among mankind, will be finally eliminated through the progress of human society, and in no distant future."^③ On joint resistance against aggression, Mao Zedong proposed: "The Chinese people will take the road of struggle against its oppressors, and we hope also that the statesmen and people of foreign nations will march with us on this road, and not follow the dark paths laid down by the bloody history of imperialism."^④

In the World Anti-Fascist War, China was the first to open an anti-Fascist battle-

① Colin, Paul A. (2022). *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past*. Zhonghua Book Company.

② Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 375.

③ Snow, Edgar. (1984). *The Other Side of the River (The Collected Works of Edgar Snow, Vol. 4)*. Xinhua Publishing House, p. 107.

④ Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 87.

ground and drive the formation of the international anti-Fascist united front so that countries that were friendly to China and opposed to aggression and colonialism also joined this united front and made great contributions to world peace. This was precisely what Mao Zedong described: "Anti-imperialist, anti-Fascist alliances are in the nature of peace alliances, and for mutual defence against war-making nations."^①

Following the founding of the People's Republic of China, the country put forward the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, namely, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. They serve as the basic guidelines for China in handling state-to-state relations. As the world moves toward multipolarity and economic globalization, countries worldwide have transcended geographical barriers and become an increasingly interdependent community. In *The Other Side of the River*, Snow predicted: "There is no prospect but defeat for the victor in any attempted armed conquest of one nation by another."^②

In today's world, with international relations in disorder, major-country relations in disarray, and regional conflicts in frequent flare-ups, peace and multilateralism are all the more valuable. For more than seven decades since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the country has never provoked any war or conflict, nor has it seized one inch of foreign territory. China is the only major country that enshrines peaceful development in both the constitution of the country and the ruling party, elevating it into a national will. While seeking its own development by resolutely safeguarding global peace and development, China is in a better position to contribute to the maintenance of global peace and development with its advancement. China has blazed a path to modernization featuring common and peaceful development based on win-win cooperation.^③

Invited to participate in the commemorative event marking the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War, Thomas Rabe, grandson of John Rabe—the author of *The Diaries of John Rabe*^④, said with great emotion: On many occasions, Chinese leaders spoke of and reaffirmed the beautiful vision of building a community with a shared future for humankind. This fully demonstrates the responsibility expected of a major country and a strong sense of responsibility for the times.^⑤

① Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 87.

② Snow, Edgar. (1984). *The Other Side of the River* (The Collected Works of Edgar Snow, Vol. 4). Xinhua Publishing House, p. 480.

③ Guo Chunli. (2023, November 29). "The Chinese Characteristics and Global Significance of Chinese Modernization". *Economic Daily*.

④ Rabe, John (Germany). His on-site diaries of the Nanjing Massacre as important firsthand historical documents exposing the atrocities committed by the Japanese army.

⑤ *People's Daily* (Overseas Edition). (2025, September 5) "March Toward New Victories! — A Sidelight on the Gathering Marking the 80th Anniversary of the Victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War".

3.4 Embracing Inclusiveness with an Open Mindset

Since time immemorial, Chinese civilization has been renowned worldwide for its openness and inclusiveness like the seas that take in all rivers. It features both an open mindset that embraces all and the wisdom of accommodation.^① Through cultural communication and integration as well as exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations, Chinese civilization keeps drawing on all fine achievements of human civilizations and thrives with lasting vitality.

Snow experienced this inclusiveness firsthand. In *Red Star Over China*, he wrote, "I never suffered from any 'anti-foreignism' in the Reds' attitude towards me." He added, "Even their anti-Japanese agitation was not directed against the Japanese on a racial basis." Furthermore, "[i]n their propaganda the Reds constantly emphasized that they opposed only the Japanese militarists, capitalists, and other 'Fascist oppressors', and the Japanese masses were their potential allies."^②

This was true of the revolution and the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. So is it of China's exploration of its development path. When Snow asked: "Do you think Russia's form of government better suited to China?", Lu Xun, a great Chinese writer, thinker and resolute Marxist, responded: "No doubt we can learn from Russia. We can also learn from America. But for China there can be only one kind of revolution—a Chinese revolution."^③ As the saying goes, only when numerous streams are not resisted can they converge into big rivers and seas. By embracing diverse ideas and adapting them to China's realities, Chinese Marxists have forged a theoretical framework that not only draws upon foreign experiences, but also transcends them.

Though geographically regional, China holds a global vision. Their confidence rooted in Chinese civilization and their spirit of internationalization touched their international friends deeply. Snow observed that Mao Zedong's readings went beyond Marxism. Works by some ancient Greek philosophers as well as Western thinkers like Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, and Rousseau were also within his purview. "Mao is exceptionally well-read in world history and has a realistic conception of European social and political conditions. He was very interested in the Labour Party of England. ... Mao had read a number of books about India."^④

Snow also sensed the peasants and the Red Army soldiers' interest in and curiosity about the outside world. His lecture on "British and American policies toward China" at the Red Army Academy attracted over 200 cadets. "Beginning at ten in the morning

① Yu Shuaibiao. (2024). "How General Secretary Xi Jinping Talks about the Inclusiveness of Chinese Civilization". *Outlook Weekly*, no.12.

② Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 383.

③ Snow, Edgar. (1984). *Journey to the Beginning* (The Collected Works of Edgar Snow, Vol. 1). Xinhua Publishing House, p. 158.

④ Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 75.

it continued till late in the afternoon." Snow noted that he was at his wits' end when confronted with the cadets' barrage of questions.^① He remarked, "Despite their geographical isolation, these rustics now knew much more about world politics, thanks to radio news and wall newspapers and Communist lecturers and propagandists, than the rural population anywhere else in China."^②

Such an open mindset of inclusiveness is also reflected in enhancing and strengthening inter-ethnic unity. The development process of Chinese civilization is itself a history of mutual absorption, embracing and accommodation in coexistence by various ethnic groups with different regional cultures through longstanding interaction, exchanges, and integration. During the arduous revolutionary years, this powerful spirit of inclusiveness broke down the barriers of classes, geography, and beliefs. It served to combine the advanced scientific and cultural knowledge of other countries with the indigenous traditional culture and the distinct cultures of various ethnic groups. This resulted in the shaping of an organizational culture that is highly open and cohesive, strengthening through a profound spiritual resonance the bonds of shared destiny among the people.

The inclusiveness that turns all fine civilizational achievements of humankind into the nutrients that support its own growth precisely defines the inherent character and spiritual endowment that are driving the sustainable development of Chinese civilization. It is graphic proof that in its exchanges with the rest of the world, the Chinese civilization refrains from both blind rejection and passive attachment. It engages in creative transformation and innovative development by firmly upholding its cultural subjectivity. This endowment not only empowers contemporary China with strong self-confidence to steadily advance its high-level opening-up, but also offers unique Chinese wisdom to create a new form of human civilization and enrich the garden of world civilizations.

With an open and inclusive mindset, China continues to expand its high-level opening-up and promote exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations, from setting up Confucius Institutes to running Lu Ban Workshops, from holding a series of activities including the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations (CDAC) and the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting to hosting tourism year, cultural festivals, and youth arts festivals, from proposing to the world the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) to bringing about the unanimous adoption of the UN General Assembly resolution on designating the International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations. So far, China has joined over 200 international organizations and multi-lateral mechanisms and participated in nearly 60 International Big Science Programs and Big Science Projects^③. In 2024, China became a major trading partner for over 150

① Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 102.

② Snow, Edgar. (2016). *Red Star Over China*. People's Literature Publishing House, p. 384.

③ Chen Zhi. (2025, June 20). "Forge Ahead to Deepen Opening-up and Cooperation in Science and Technology". *China.org.cn*.

countries and regions, and a major export destination for nearly 80 economies.^①

The openness and inclusiveness of this ancient civilization are now unfolding on an even larger scale in the new era. This represents both a contemporary continuation of the cultural and philosophical heritage of millennia-old Chinese civilization, and China's present solemn commitment to the shared future of humankind.

[①] Xinhua. (2025, December 24). "Daily Q&A on Studying the Recommendations for China's 15th Five-Year Plan: Why Should We Promote Balanced Development of Imports and Exports?".

Chapter IV

The Contemporary Relevance of Edgar Snow's Legacy

"I love China." These were the words the 66-year-old Edgar Snow left with deep emotion in his deathbed in February 1972. Having devoted his life to "telling China's story", this American journalist requested in his will that part of his ashes be buried in China. For more than half a century since then, Snow's tombstone, inscribed with the epitaph "An American Friend of the Chinese People", has been standing quietly beside Weiming Lake on Peking University's campus, silently bearing witness to the profound changes that have unfolded in China and around the world.

In today's world, the old scars of geopolitical conflict, compounded by the haze of a shifting order and emerging global challenges, bind the destinies of nations ever more closely together. More than ever, humankind needs the courage to bridge differences, the wisdom to foster mutual understanding, and the foresight to recognize a shared future. Edgar Snow and other international friends have left us philosophical footprints that provide enduring spiritual treasures for us to discover truth, foster friendship, and advance cooperation in an era with division, anxiety, and turmoil intertwined.

4.1 Bridging the Civilizational Divide to Understand the Real China

Ninety years ago, China—poor, backward, and repeatedly ravaged by war—was not valued or understood by the outside world. Even today, some external observers are still used to the practice of censoring China's realities with the yardstick of the "Western-centric theory". As a result, it is not easy for people outside of China to have a truthful, multidimensional, and comprehensive understanding of China.

On the 90th anniversary of Edgar Snow's first interviewing journey to northern Shaanxi, reviewing the observations and accounts of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Chinese people as found in *Red Star Over China* and other works not only gives us a clearer understanding of the historical logic and realistic choice made for China's path, but also reminds us of the value of bridging divides and seeking truth as a cognitive paradigm.

Edgar Snow often said, "I'm from Missouri,"^① a reference to the American "Show Me" saying, which means "show me the evidence" or "seeing is believing." It was guided by this conviction that he had the courage and resolve to ask whether "one foreign neck" could be "better hazarded than in an effort to discover why" and set out on his

① Sun Hua. (2023, August 16). "East-West Question: Why Was Half of Edgar Snow's Ashes Buried in China?". chinanews.com.

"attempt to break a news blockade" that was ironclad. Through extensive interviews and field research, Snow brought to life a vivid, flesh-and-blood portrait of the revolutionary forces, providing people around the world with authentic first-hand materials for understanding China, the CPC, and the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.

At the time, there was a host of foreign journalists and observers like Snow who braved hardship and danger, pushing through layers of blockades and gunfire, to record the struggle and hopes unfolding on Chinese soil. Works such as James Bertram's *North China Front*^①, Evans Fordyce Carlson's *Twin Stars of China*^②, and Agnes Smedley's *China Fights Back*^③ enable more and more readers to gain a direct and more in-depth understanding of the Chinese revolution and the CPC.

Today, as China has become the world's second-largest economy, it is just as important and urgent to enable the world to understand the real China as was the case 90 years ago. To understand China in the new era requires upholding the journalistic principles of fairness, objectivity, independence, and truth-seeking, on the one hand, and adapting to the changes of the times, breaking free from entrenched prejudices, and viewing China's transformation from a developmental perspective, on the other. As Adam Foster observed, "Helping the world understand China was Helen Foster Snow's life's work, and it is a mission we should carry forward."^④

In recent years, a growing number of international friends have set foot on Chinese soil, recording this rapidly changing country from diverse perspectives. American writer Robert Lawrence Kuhn has devoted decades to the study of China and authored works including *The Inside Story of China's 30-Year Reform and What This Means for the Future*. American journalist Eric Nilsson, who came to China in 2005, has focused his reporting on China's ecological conservation efforts and participated in establishing the "New Era Snow" Studio of China Daily. Pakistani scholar Zafar Uddin Mahmood has long been engaged in fieldwork in rural China, documenting stories of the country's industrial development and educational progress...^⑤ There is a surge of witnesses to and tellers of China's story in the new era.

Only by entering China with an objective eye, walking its ground, listening to its people, and seeing it for oneself as Snow did, can one move beyond prejudice and stereo-

① James Bertram was the first British journalist to visit Yan'an. *North China Front* records what he saw and heard during his visits to Yan'an and the Eighth Route Army's anti-Japanese front line in the early stages of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression.

② Evans Fordyce Carlson was an officer in the United States Marine Corps. *Twin Stars of China* records what he observed in China's guerrilla areas, where the Eighth Route Army under the leadership of the Communist Party of China fought against Japanese forces.

③ Agnes Smedley was an American journalist, writer, and social activist. After the outbreak of the Chinese people's all-out war of resistance against the Japanese aggression, she wrote a frontline diary of some 80,000 words while reporting with the Eighth Route Army, later published as *China Fights Back*.

④ Cankao Xiaoxi Online. (2022, March 31). "Helen Snow and a Bridge of China—U.S. Friendship Spanning 90 Years".

⑤ People's Daily Online. (2025, September 10). "Spreading the Voice of Justice to the Whole World (Remembering History and Shaping the Future)".

types, understand the historical inevitability and practical rationality of China's pursuit of the Chinese path, and view China's development achievements, opportunities, and challenges fairly.

4.2 Moving Beyond Civilizational Conflict by Building Bridges of Friendship

Since the end of the Cold War, some Western scholars and think tanks have viewed the world through the lens of the "clash of civilizations" and promoted a fatalistic view that different civilizations are destined to descend into bloody conflict. Given that the China-U.S. relationship is the most consequential bilateral relationship in the world today, whether the two countries can avoid falling into the "Thucydides Trap" and avoid conflict, confrontation, and even war has a greater bearing on the destiny of humankind as a whole.

When Snow and other foreign journalists came to China in the early 20th century, there were far greater differences between China and the United States than today and a higher degree of impeded exchange of information between the countries. Yet they crossed cultural and ideological barriers, presented the world with a truthful picture of China as it was, and helped build bridges of mutual respect and exchange between the two different civilizations.

Snow was not only an outstanding journalist, but also an envoy of friendly exchanges between the Chinese and American peoples. During the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, his reporting on and assistance to China's wartime struggle made the Chinese people feel the friendly sentiments of the American people. At the same time, through Snow's writings, the American people gained a deeper understanding of the Chinese revolution and the Communist Party of China. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Snow visited China three more times and conveyed the realities of New China to the U.S. government and people, which facilitated Nixon's "ice-breaking" visit to China and made an indelible contribution to the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the United States.

For nearly a century, many friends from overseas such as Snow have bridged the ideological divide through sincere dialogue, bearing witness to the profound truth: "Amity between the people holds the key to sound state-to-state relations; the affinity of hearts brings the people closer."

The Helen Foster Snow Foundation features on its homepage the message of "building bridges of understanding between China and the rest of the world". Over the years, the Foundation has launched programs such as Camp Gung Ho and translation competitions, working to deepen communication and understanding between the young people of China and the United States. Adam Foster said, although China and the United States have differences in some areas, the history of exchanges between the two countries and the friendship between their peoples remind us that we have much in com-

mon. We should work for unity, not division.^①

The foundation of China-U.S. relations was laid by the Chinese and American peoples; its door was opened by the two peoples; its stories are written by the two peoples; its future will be created by the two peoples. It is the convergence of many streams of goodwill and friendliness that has formed a strong current surging across the vast Pacific Ocean; it is the two peoples' reaching out to each other that has time and again brought China-U.S. relations from a low ebb back onto the right track. In 1985, Xi Jinping, then Party Secretary of Zhengding County of Hebei Province, led a delegation to Iowa, which started a sincere friendship across national borders. In 2023, at the welcome dinner by friendly organizations in the United States held in San Francisco, President Xi once again recalled this friendly episode, saying, "That was my first face-to-face contact with the Americans." "For me, they represent America."^② Kuliang in Fujian Province was once a "second home" to more than a hundred American expatriates and bore witness to the deep attachment to China felt by American friends such as Milton Gardner. This "Bond with Kuliang", passed down for more than a century, has kept alive the warmth between the Chinese and American peoples through generations. From Iowa to Kuliang, these simple yet sincere people-to-people bonds form the most solid underpinning of China-U.S. relations.

During his visit to the United States in November 2023, President Xi announced an initiative to invite 50,000 young Americans to China for exchange and study programs in the following five years. Since the launch of the initiative, more than 50,000 young Americans have visited China, achieving the target two and a half years ahead of schedule.^③ In January 2026, teachers and students of a U.S. youth education exchange delegation wrote to President Xi, describing the experience of their visit as opening a window to understand the real China and expressing gratitude for the "50,000 in Five Years" initiative for providing a valuable opportunity to enhance mutual understanding between youth of the two countries.

Today, although China-U.S. relations still face real and present challenges, the shared pursuit of dreams and the common aspiration for a better life form a solid foundation for friendship between the Chinese and American peoples and provide a firm bedrock for the steady and positive development of bilateral relations. During their meeting in May 2026, the Chinese and U.S. heads of state agreed on building "a constructive China-U.S. relationship of strategic stability". Providing strategic guidance for China-U.S. relations over the next three years and beyond, this new positioning will promote the steady, sound, and sustainable development of China-U.S. relations and bring greater

① People's Daily. (2023, October 3). "Valuing Friendly Cooperation Between the Chinese and American Peoples and Building Bridges of Exchange" (When the Great Way Is Followed).

② Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China. (2023, November 16) "Xi Jinping's Speech at Welcome Dinner by Friendly Organizations in the United States (Full Text)".

③ "Xi Jinping Replies to Letter from Chinese and U.S. Students Participating in 'A Shared Voyage: China-U.S. Youth Friendship Program'", Xinhua News Agency, May 28, 2026.

peace, prosperity, and progress to the world. In building such a relationship of strategic stability, it is all the more necessary to carry forward Snow's legacy by rejecting narrow-mindedness and prejudice, choosing dialogue over confrontation, addressing differences through cooperation, and exploring the right way for these two major countries to get along with each other.

4.3 Rejecting Civilizational Superiority and Promoting Exchanges and Mutual Learning

There is no such thing as a superior or inferior civilization; civilizations are different only in identity and location. The garden of human civilizations is rich in color. To force all flowers to bloom in the same color is neither possible nor desirable.

In today's world, misunderstanding, discrimination, and conflict among civilizations still persist and the notion of "civilizational supremacy" continues to cast its shadow. This notion reduces differences among civilizations to a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority. It represents an attempt to attribute the achievements and advantages of Western civilization in the course of modernization to "superiority" in race, institutions, and culture while disparaging non-Western civilizations as "backward". On this basis, it has served as a propellant of colonial expansion and global hegemony, intensifying civilizational conflicts and divides in the international community and causing far-reaching harm.

Snow consistently approached the Chinese people in a spirit of equality, empathy, and friendliness, making him a true practitioner of inter-civilizational dialogue on an equal footing. While in Shanghai, he published articles in *The China Weekly Review* criticizing racist acts by Westerners who "insulted the Chinese", and he was consequently subjected to joint suppression and retaliation by Western racist and colonialist forces. Ma Rulin, Snow's former interpreter, recalled that when Snow was a lecturer in the Department of Journalism at Yenching University, he was approachable and unassuming and that, far from showing any sense of white superiority, Snow had asked him many questions about China in an inquiring tone even though Ma was only aged 22 then.^①

In writing *Red Star Over China*, Snow did not have the condescending and self-important approach toward China that was common among many Westerners of his time. Instead, he met everyone he interviewed and worked with on equal terms and in mutual assistance, regardless of background or nationality. This enabled him not only to gain access to more authentic information, but also to win broad trust and respect.

This is yet another valuable inspiration Snow offers to the world of today. Only by understanding the different perceptions of values by different civilizations with an attitude of openness and tolerance like "a sea that admits all rivers" and by refraining from claiming civilizational superiority, engaging in ideological confrontation, and imposing

^① Ma Rulin. (1984). "The Days I Spent with Snow". *Xinwen Yanjiu Ziliao*, no. 1, p. 1981. Later included in Liu Liqun's *Commemorating Edgar Snow*. Xinhua Publishing House, p. 113.

one's own values or development model on others, can onejoin in breaking the mental barriers that hinder people-to-people interaction to paint together a broad vistas of human civilizations that flourish in all their diversity.

4.4 Addressing Global Challenges with Joint Hands and Aligned Efforts

Now, the changes of the world, of our times, and of history are unfolding in ways unprecedented. Acts of hegemony, high-handedness, and bullying that are characterized by the tyranny of the strong over the weak, rapacious pursuits, and zero-sum games, among others, have brought great harm and peril. Deficits in peace, development, security, and governance are ever-growing. All this throws human society in front of unprecedented challenges.

Ninety years ago, the world similarly faced a grave crisis as fascism was expanding globally and posing an existential threat to human civilization. Edgar Snow's reporting on the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression conveyed to the world the ardent hope of the CPC to form a global anti-fascist alliance in his expression of solidarity for the just cause of resisting aggression and pursuing national liberation. Five years after Snow's first visit to northern Shaanxi, the CPC organized the Anti-Fascist Assembly of Eastern Nations in Yan'an attended by more than 130 representatives from 18 countries and established the Eastern Nations Anti-Fascist League with its headquarters in Yan'an. Yan'an thus became a globally recognized center of the anti-fascist struggle in the East.

Following Snow's footsteps, Helen Snow traveled to Yan'an for interviews and wrote *Inside Red China*, which delivered to the world the news that the Kuomintang and the CPC were about to embark on their second cooperation. In his book *The Challenge of Red China*, British journalist Günther Stein systematically presented the social conditions of the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region. Israel Epstein, who was born in Poland and later acquired Chinese citizenship in 1957, followed and reported on China's War of Resistance over a long period and wrote *The Unfinished Revolution in China*. ... These reports spread rapidly both in China and overseas, sparking shared indignation at the war of aggression, building a powerful consensus on resisting fascism, and making an indelible contribution to the great victory of the World Anti-Fascist War.

Today, China and the world remain a community with a shared future, echoing each other and sharing weal and woe. In the face of global risks and challenges, the CPC always regards making new and greater contributions to the human race as its mission. It has proposed building a community with a shared future for humankind and advocated building a clean and beautiful world that enjoys lasting peace, universal security, common prosperity, openness, and inclusiveness.

From leading the high-quality development of Greater BRICS cooperation to building the Shanghai Cooperation Organization into a regional international organization

with the largest geographical coverage and population in the world, from announcing the carbon peaking and carbon neutrality targets to declaring a new round of nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to better address the challenges of climate change... , China is working with people of all other countries to promote the common values of humankind, i.e., peace, development, equity, justice, democracy, and freedom. They are working in concert to safeguard world peace, promote global development, and continuously advance the building of a community with a shared future for humankind.

We look forward to people from different civilizations and regions enhancing understanding through emotional resonance and building consensus through shared narratives. We expect more international visionaries who care about the future of humanity and the world to carry forward the spirit of internationalism in the new era, transcend differences in ideologies, social systems, and levels of development, achieve the broadest solidarity in the international community, and march together toward the shared goal of lasting peace and sustainable development of the world.

Concluding Remarks

Over the past ninety years, the footprints Edgar Snow left on the Loess Plateau have long since morphed into a spiritual bridge connecting the past and present, China and the world. Today, we are not only honoring the memory of a great journalist, but seeking to draw wisdom from his legacy to shed light on the path forward amid the major changes of our new era.

Snow's View of China: Compassion, Empathy, and Affection

What Snow saw was not merely war and poverty, but more importantly, the great faith forged in sufferings, the transformative power of the people, the strength of solidarity, and the enduring heritage of Chinese culture. The "Red China" under his pen was a revolutionary base full of vitality and hope, a nascent force led by the Communist Party of China, rooted in the people, and carrying forward the fine traditions of Chinese civilization. He objectively recorded the hardships and real challenges of the revolution and had a deep foresight that this force was bound to change China and, for that matter, the world at large. Through the sufferings, he envisioned glory and discerned a deep cultural resilience and historical inevitability; through the revolution, he saw rebirth and understood the continuity between China's path grounded in reality and its civilizational traditions. Today, Snow's view of China remains a clear mirror for the world to read and interpret China as it offers a historical reference for observing China, understanding China, and telling China's stories well. By going to the scenes, witnessing China as it was, listening to its voices, and speaking the truth, Snow broke through prejudice with facts, removed barriers with sincerity, and connected hearts with empathy. He proved through practice that the most powerful communication power comes from the faithful telling of true, credible stories of China itself.

Snow's Epistemology: Equality, Truth-Seeking, and Comprehensiveness

The formation of Snow's view of China was rooted in an epistemology that transcended ideological prejudice. Instead of looking down upon the East through the lens of Westerncentrism, he treated the Chinese people and the Chinese revolution with equality. Committed to a truth-seeking approach, he was never satisfied with hearsay; instead, he immersed himself in the field to observe, interview, and record, letting facts speak for themselves. Placing himself on the scene, he had a panoramic view of China through the widths and depths of Chinese history and global trends, by putting together complementary macro perspectives on the country's political, economic, military, and other situations with micro observations of its society, culture, education, and down to daily life, in a complementary fashion. This equal, truth-seeking, and comprehensive epistemology is the only way to correctly understand a major Eastern country undergoing profound changes; it is also a "gold key" to promoting exchanges and mutual learning among different civilizations. By bridging cultural divides, understanding different civilizations, and finding common emotional ground, we can ensure that China's stories are heard, understood, and embraced by the world. Communicators of the new era

must stay deeply grounded in China to bring its stories to life.

Snow's Methodology: Understanding, Friendship, and Cooperation

Behind Snow's epistemology was a methodology oriented toward understanding, friendship, and cooperation. He was not a detached observer, but a sincere participant and bridge-builder. Through longstanding in-depth research and face-to-face exchanges, he achieved the leap from "seeing China" to "understanding China". With friendship as its bond, this methodology was underpinned by the sincere ties Snow established with Chinese leaders as well as ordinary soldiers and civilians, which became both the emotional impetus and the source of trust for his in-depth reporting. The most valuable enlightenment Snow left us is that international communication is not about indoctrination, but dialogue; not about preaching, but empathy; not about one-way output, but truthfulness, credibility, equality, and mutual respect. Throughout his life, Snow devoted himself to China-U.S. exchanges. Even during the most difficult periods in China-U.S. relations, he remained firmly committed to an objective and impartial position, playing a unique role in reducing misunderstandings and enhancing mutual trust between the two sides. This methodology points to peace rather than confrontation, and to common progress rather than zero-sum games. This is all the more valuable today as globalization continues to deepen while encountering headwinds.

Today, on the new journey of the new era, as we review Snow's journey to China and his spiritual legacy, we call for more "new Snows" to uphold an attitude of openness, inclusiveness, exchange and mutual learning, continue writing new chapters of friendship between China and the rest of the world, illuminate the way forward for the peace and development of humankind, and rally the people of all countries around a new vision of building a better world.

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