

The Cultural Imperative

*Global Trends
in the 21st Century*

Richard D. Lewis

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To Serge Morette and Michel Tissier, two splendid Frenchmen

One ship drives east and another drives west
With the self-same winds that blow;
 'Tis the set of the sails
 And not the gales
 That tells them the way to go.
Like the winds of the sea are the winds of fate
As we voyage along through life;
 'Tis the set of the soul
 That decides its goal
 And not the calm or the strife.

—*World Voices*

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

New York: Hearst's International Library Company, 1916

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Preface

This book is being published at a time when cross-culturalists are engaged in lively debate about the future course of humankind in the early twenty-first century. In an age of developing globalization, questions are being raised about the importance of cultural differences that will surely impede rapid progress toward standardization of rules and uniform acceptance of mutual goals. With the increasing internationalization of trade and the ubiquitous presence of the Internet, are cultural differences on the decline? Or are the roots of culture so varied that worldwide convergence can never succeed? Will considerations of gender, which is growing in importance, outweigh those of national characteristics? How can we classify cultures with any accuracy or neatness? Is it possible to cluster cultures, not only for academic con-