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Robert Cettl

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Keywords

australia, auto-ethnography, china, confucianism, cultural studies, education, global civilizational incentive, inter-cultural communication, mutual learning, nishan forum, social harmony

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Abstract

This auto-ethnographic study reflects on my participation in the 11th Nishan Forum on World Civilizations (2025/07/09-10, Qufu, China), themed “Beauty in Diversity: Nurturing Understanding Among Civilizations for Global Modernization.” As an Australian intercultural communication (IC) educator with 14 years in China, my panel contribution on “Mutual Assistance in Pursuing Modernization” bridged personal experience—rooted in Xinjiang teaching (2011-12)—with global dialogue. Utilizing a trans-media approach, this paper integrates written reflection with a video narrative, drawing on Jenkins’ (2006) storytelling framework and Walley’s (2015) template. Data from field notes and consented footage, edited into a montagist, split-screen video, explore cultural shifts from Western individualism to collectivist harmony. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) reveals mutual learning as a pedagogic imperative, informed by Hofstede’s cultural dimensions and Xi Jinping’s Global Civilization Initiative. The study situates this epiphany within Australia’s evolving China policy, post-Nishan Forum, and initiates both a trans-media video-graphic complement “Reflections on the 11th Nishan Forum” and a longitudinal video series, “From Xinjiang to Harmony.” Reflexivity (Eichsteller & Davis, 2022) underscores my role as a cultural bridge, additionally situating AI/human dialogue to enhance potential future discourse analysis, inviting further trans-media exploration.

Keywords: China, Nishan Forum, auto-ethnography, Australia, inter-cultural communication, Confucianism, social harmony, Global Civilizational Incentive, mutual learning



1.0 Introduction: Harmony but not Uniformity

Diversity can “promote shared prosperity and guide the global modernization process”, over 560 international scholars and experts from over 70 countries maintained at the 11th Nishan Forum on World Civilizations, held in Qufu, Shandong province, on Wednesday 2025/07/09, and jointly organized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the International Confucian Association, and the People’s Government of Shandong Province. As reported by *China Daily* (Zhao, 2025):

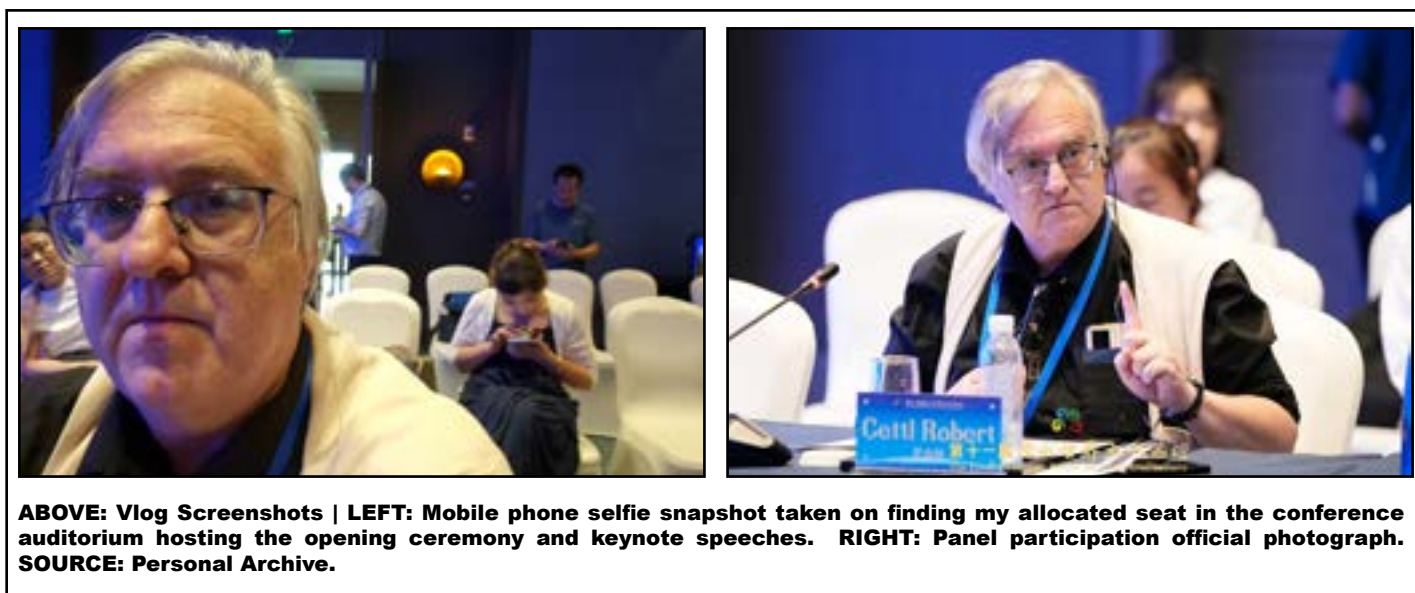
“... two-day event in the historic county-level city, where Chinese philosopher Confucius was born in 551 BC. At the forum, participants discussed how Confucian culture continues to resonate in the modern world, the critical role of global collaboration in driving modernization and the impact of artificial intelligence on human civilization. Faced with various natural or human-made challenges in the process of modernization, no member of the international community can go through it alone, participants said. They called for a concerted effort to eliminate suspicion and barriers, resolve conflicts and contradictions, and strengthen ideological and cultural foundations to advance global modernization collectively (Zhao, 2025).



ABOVE: Vlog Screenshot | The statue of Confucius overlooking the 11th Nishan Forum conference center in Qufu. SOURCE: Personal Archive.

Sun Chunlan, president of the International Confucian Association, set the tone, suggesting that to combat and counter current geopolitical tensions, it was necessary to explore “how to manage the relationships between different civilizations and their role in advancing modernization”, with China “committed to offering new opportunities to the world through the achievements of its unique path to modernization, and providing new momentum to global partners through its vast domestic market”. So too, Hussain Mohamed Latheef, vice-president of the Maldives, noted that the theme of the forum — “Beauty in Diversity: Nurturing Understanding Among Civilizations for Global Modernization” — is both a timely and crucial imperative: “in the tide of global modernization, we need to draw strength from our differences and discover the beauty of civilizations and encourage mutual understanding among different cultures”. Erdem Ilker Mutlu, chief adviser to the chairman of Turkiye’s Patriotic Party, added: “China is furthering the inheritance of Confucius, and his fairness, his wisdom and his loyalty are still valuable, and this is how the traditional background and modern China can match up, can come together and be under a single roof, and that’s perfect”. In this, as reported by CGTN, “Chinese modernization is rooted in China’s national conditions and draws on the experience of other countries. It carries the imprint of history and traditional culture and also contains modern elements” (CGTN, 2023).

In addition to the main theme of “Beauty in Diversity: Nurturing Understanding Among Civilizations for Global Modernization”, the 11th Nishan Forum also featured six subtopics, including the origins and future development of civilizations, Confucian culture and its significance for the world today, mutual assistance in pursuing modernization, the importance of family and social development through the lens of civilization, and artificial intelligence and the future of human civilization. It was a humbling honour for me to be invited to participate in the Forum’s subtopic “Mutual Assistance in Pursuing Modernization” panel. Considering the Chinese conception of modernization as anchored in what Xi Jinping proposed in 2023 as the Global Civilization Incentive [GCI], which advocated the “respect for the diversity of civilizations, the common values of humanity, the importance of inheritance and innovation of civilizations, and robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation” (GCI, 2023).. As proposed by Xi Jinping, countries needed to uphold five key principles: peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom. Considering



ABOVE: Vlog Screenshots | LEFT: Mobile phone selfie snapshot taken on finding my allocated seat in the conference auditorium hosting the opening ceremony and keynote speeches. RIGHT: Panel participation official photograph. SOURCE: Personal Archive.

these as the common aspirations and shared values uniting all peoples, equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilizations let cultural exchanges transcend estrangement.

In particular, Xi Jinping stressed mutual learning's ability to transcend ethnocentric clashes and for countries to appreciate the perceptions of values held by different civilizations and refrain from imposing their own values or culturally Imperialist models on others and fomenting ideological confrontation such as may precipitate armed conflict. Hence, as the 11th Nishan Forum reached its conclusion on 2025/07/10, the State Council of the People's Republic of China announced China's intended followup to the Forum: "The world is, in nature, a place of diverse civilizations," Xi said in a letter to the Global Civilizations Dialogue Ministerial Meeting then opening in Beijing: "History has shown us that exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations are essential for civilizations to flourish and human progress to be made" (SCPRC, 2025). Xi Jinping stated his hope that, following the 11th Nishan Forum and Beijing meeting, "participants would engage in in-depth exchanges to build consensus and contribute their wisdom and strength to the goal of promoting understanding and friendship among peoples, and achieving harmonious coexistence among civilizations". Harmony: it's a resonant concept, additionally meaningful to me as an Australian, recently returned to China from a trip to Australia for its multicultural Harmony Day / Harmony Week celebration / festival.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a trans-media auto-ethnographic design, blending a written analytical reflection with video narratives to examine my participation in the 11th Nishan Forum on World Civilizations (July 9-10, 2025). This dual reflective structure hence utilizes analytical reflective auto-ethnographic inquiry (Ellis et.al, 2011) to assess a core epiphanic moment (Kien, 2013: Denzin, 2014) and details its transforming affect on identity construction, positionally re-anchoring and scaffolding current evolving trans-media auto-ethnographic praxis. The epiphanic moment is my panel participation in the Forum. The trans-media auto-ethnographic praxis affected, however, significantly predates this event, initiated with the publication / screening in the online journal *The Autoethnographer* of my experimental film, *Being in Time* (Cettl, 2024), extracts of which were used during my pedagogic practice of Inter-Cultural Communication [IC] at the University of Jinan, also in Shandong. This IC pedagogic practice, inaugurated during my formative teaching experience over one year (2011-12) in Xinjiang [XUAR], teaching oral English to Han, Uygur and Kazakh students in line with then context-specific XUAR Ministry of Education policies (Sunuodula, 2011: Ahat, 2013).

Now re-grounded in Jenkins' (2006) trans-media storytelling, Walley's (2015) template for auto-ethnographic trans-media, and Ellis et al.'s (2011) auto-ethnographic principles, this study's methodology leverages reflective field notes and video-graphic journaling (July 09-15, 2025) as

multimedia data, complemented by consented video footage, montaged via Cyberlink Director into a reflective, evocative film. The written reflection structures my experience—e.g., cultural resonance during the ‘Mutual Assistance’ panel—while videos, exclusive to Nishan events, offer an embodied perspective through Qufu’s settings and my reflections, both narratively autobiographical and evocatively “poetic”. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) aligns these media, with self-reflexivity guiding my dual interpretivist approach to personal narrativization and related aestheticization (Reed-Danahay, 2019; Eichsteller & Davis, 2022). Ethical measures included Nishan organizational consent to filming and social media dissemination following safe storage, addressing SAGE Advance standards, despite challenges like time managed montagism.

Extrapolating Ellis et al. (2011), this study treats my Nishan experience as data, with trans-media enhancing dissemination, following Walley’s (2015) model. Data collection methods were twofold: 1) written reflection: field notes (e.g., “Mutual Assistance” panel) and journaling (July 09-15, 2025, sporadic) via notebook and InDesign document formatting; 2) video-graphic: consented footage (e.g., Qufu Temple, Village tour, keynote opening), edited with Cyberlink Director into an initial 8:30 minute vlog episode, initially focusing exclusively on Nishan events and their coverage in Chinese and (selected) global media (though such coverage was limited in Western media). The written reflection structures cultural shifts, while videos provide an embodied layer, mirroring Walley’s (2013) dual narrative; Reed-Danahay (2019) supports this balance. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) identifies themes (e.g., mutual assistance) from notes and journals, mapped to video segments wherein my dual role is interrogated reflexively (Eichsteller & Davis, 2022). The video style adopts a montagist, split-screen approach, inspired by the temporal destabilization in such as Sarah Pucill’s experimental films (Pucill, 2006; Smith, 2025), featuring fragmented, associative edits to reflect the non-linear nature of memory and cultural identity at Nishan.

Screenshots of consent-authorized trans-media video-graphic content are used as illustrations through this study: they remain copyright of the author.

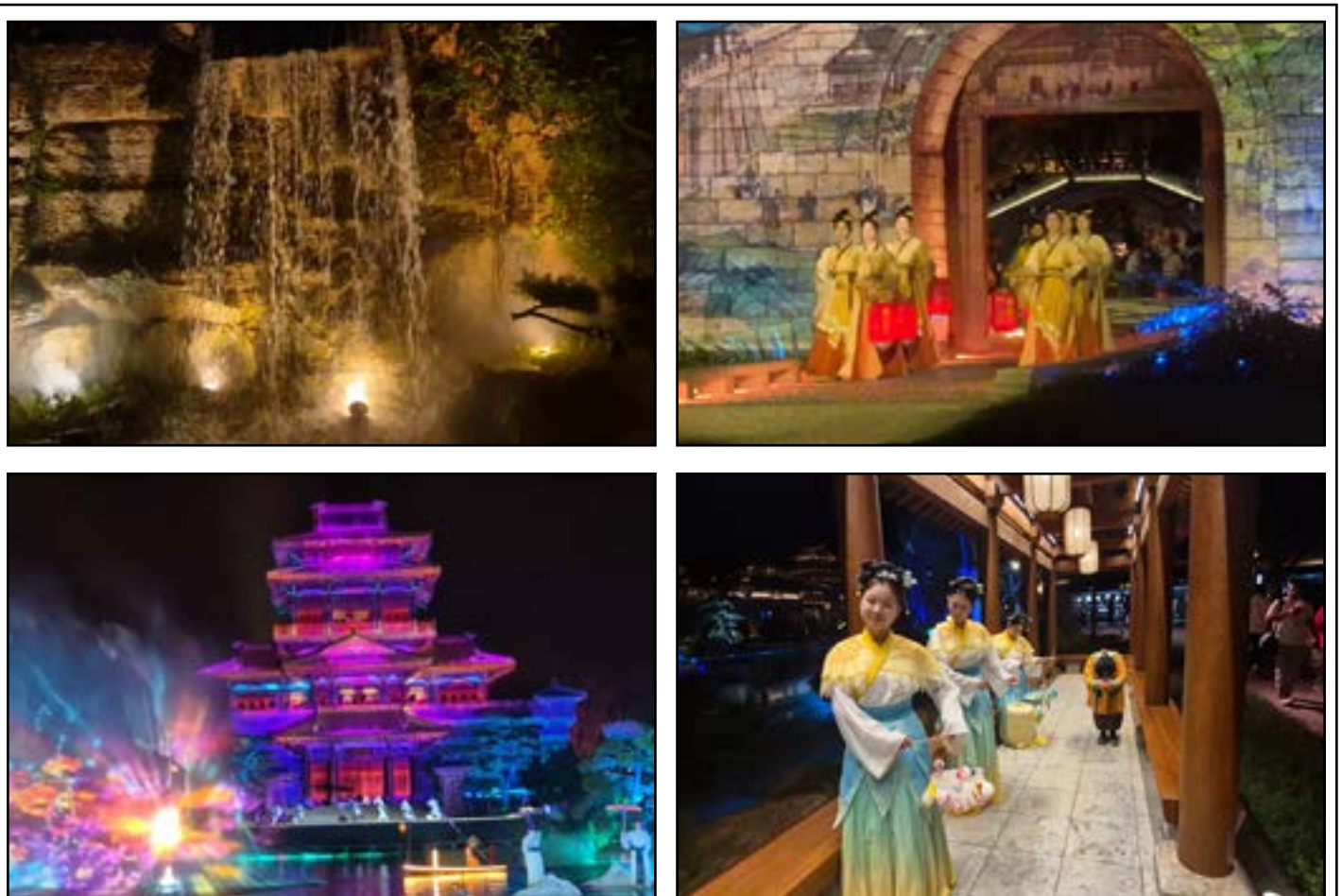
3. Research Context: A Harmonious Personal Positioning

As many of the scholars and experts in attendance wore their nationality proudly, I soon, however, noticed that I was evidently the only Australian “guest” (to the best of my knowledge) participating in the 11th Nishan Forum, a situation that progressively made me cognitive of the prospect of my position, albeit in a minor way, as a national representative, previously never a consideration prior to arrival in QuFu, orientation to the Nishan hotel complex and re-engagement with my tentative panel presentation content. In my session, as the penultimate speaker, I listened to Indonesia’s Dr. Samsul Hidayat speak of Confucius’ contribution to intra-faith dialogue in his country, and a Ugandan representative discuss philosophical parallels between Confucius and, initially Hegel. The former’s intra-faith context reminded me of similar concerns within Australia national “multicultural” identity construct while the latter’s presentation, however, was cut short by the time restriction (7 minutes per presentation) and I was left wondering if his full presentation of philosophical parallels would have extended to Husserl and the phenomenologists, especially since in my research domain, initial qualitative studies into inter-cultural communicative competence [ICC] since originating during the Covid-19 lock-down period (Zhou, Samad & Perinpasingam, 2024; Feng, Aziz & Dalib, 2025) were extending into phenomenological inquiry (Taskiran et.al, 2024; Xin, Alibakhshi, & Javaheri, 2025; Yan & He, 2025: addressing foreign teacher lived experience in Yan, He & Zhang, 2023). Indeed, there is a direct humanist parallel between the reflective subjectivism of phenomenological inquiry and the “self-cultivation” of Confucianism, both arguably intersecting intentionality and reciprocity: hence, my current integration of auto-ethnographic methodologies into personal self-cultivation through phenomenological inquiry and its manifestation in longitudinal trans-media cultural storytelling.

Interesting to me in my group discussion session was Andrew Lambert, Associate Professor at New York’s City University, whose presentation on music theory from a philosophical perspec-

tive was far more grounded in theory with eminently practical pedagogic methodological potential, especially his somewhat behavioral point of the role of music in social control / social harmony. I began to see practically how the methodological template I was to outline could be utilize his content as a Content-Based Instruction [CBI] premise for the teaching of inter-cultural communicative competence [ICC] and related compare and contrast analytical task-setting: for instance, using music as CBI, students could compare Chinese and Australian harmony concepts. Time constraints prevented me from directly addressing this, however, as my CBI example concerned the GCI criterion of “democracy” as the basis for an epistemic comparison between China’s “whole process democracy” and the West’s US elections-driven conceptualization using Hofstede’s cultural dimensions (especially individualism v. collectivism and power distance). Likewise, while considering a Confucian virtue, specifically, “harmony”, the comparative example I suggested from which to establish shared values between nations was with Australia, whose multicultural national identity construct ostensibly celebrates cultural diversity to the extent of introducing a literal Harmony Day / Harmony Week festival.

Using select CBI content to facilitate compare and contrast initiated “my cultural story” tasks, with students cumulatively rendering their own cultural story as Chinese to a Western audience consequently methodologically fulfills the new media questions in recent mutual education discourse, as a facilitating bridge: from the conceptual (Confucian epistemic) to the construct-valid (compare and contrast methodologizing) to the forward-seeking cumulative assessment (student generated new media “my China / my cultural story” video production). In this way, the CBI themed (and thus context-variable) template specifically suggests that IC (with Chinese characteristics) pedagogic practice (by a foreign teacher in China) can facilitate exactly the ICC requirements for successful mutual education goals of the GCI. Although I did not get to refer to Dr. Lambert’s music theories as potential CBI content within this methodological template, I met Dr.



ABOVE: Vlog Screenshots | CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: The private tour for the 11th Nishan Forum scholars and experts began with the natural, illuminated landscape, then an invitation into the Confucian village, for a spectacular series of pyrotechnic dance shows and a final farewell before returning to the hotel by tour bus. SOURCE: personal archive.

Lambert briefly for lunch and he mentioned to me an appreciation of my presentation (not a prepared speech, but a dialogic attempt to engage directly with the speech content preceding me), noting that while most speakers had lofty aspirations, I concentrated on lived practical experience and pragmatic solutions. This was also my take-away from the Forum, and I thanked him for the feedback. Most regrettably, however, as I departed the restaurant area for my hotel room to check my taxi and train details, I neglected to ask for his WeChat (or a means to contact him further), out of a perhaps mistaken humility, a sentiment that he would not want to share it with me and thus I should not put him on the spot by asking for it.

Although I had a prepared presentation ready prior to the Forum's commencement, as did all the other speakers, it became clear to me following the keynote speeches that a somewhat more spontaneous, improvised re-working of the prepared material to directly relate to the key issues raised by not just the keynote speakers but my panelist peers would perhaps be more warranted. Such could enable an accessible tone in relating the relevance of IC cultural storytelling as a methodological template for the Forum's delineation of the GCI imperative to mutual learning / education and its Confucian underpinnings. After all, my emphasis was IC / ICC pedagogic practice as cultural bridge, as had been situated in Chinese English as a Foreign Language [EFL] in the work of Chi, Zhang & Kulich (2022) at Shanghai International Studies University [SISU] and re-worked for application in my work circumstance at the University of Jinan (also in Shandong, some 40 minutes high-speed train ride from QuFu) on a context-specific basis (Bax, 2003).

4. A Stranger Here Myself

I was initially concerned that my being at the 11th Nishan Forum risked being overwhelming: the qualifications, titles, positions and political standing of many of the participants dwarfed my accomplishments. Although a research fellow at Australia's National Film & Sound Archive [NFSA] prior to my first arrival in China, in Xinjiang [XUAR], in 2011, my career since then had been comparatively low profile. For most of the years since then, I had alternated tertiary teaching in Jinan, Shandong with tertiary and private sector teaching in Shanghai, before in 2019 settling into a teaching position at the University of Jinan [UJN], Shandong. It was there that, during the Covid-19 pandemic, I was assigned the design and implementation of the university's bridging Inter-Cultural Communication course, leading me to research the work of Chi, Zhang & Kulich (2022) and adaptation of their "my cultural story" task to my context-specific pedagogic circumstances. But on stepping into the Nishan Hotel and Conference Complex for the 11th Nishan Forum, the air carried the legacy of Confucian wisdom and a peaceful contemplative calm descended, a stark contrast to my first classroom experience in Xinjiang 14 years ago. As an outsider-turned-participant, I felt both a stranger and a bridge, an epiphany culminating a long first stage in a journey of self-cultivation.

In reflection on my process of self-cultivation / self-refinement (though not without its lapses) I was reminded that the core Confucian values – virtue, social harmony, the importance of family, and a commitment to self-improvement – remain pivotal today, for as CGTN (2025) suggested, "these values emphasize ethical behavior, social responsibility and the pursuit of knowledge, all of which contribute to a well-ordered society": that is, to social harmony. Again on the macro-level, CGTN preliminary coverage highlighted keynote speaker Roger T. Ames, "a renowned American scholar and chair professor at Peking University, (who, in_ a recent interview with The Economic Observer... explained that while international relations often focus on economic and political issues within a geopolitical framework, civilizational dialogue transcends these boundaries". CGTN further elucidated Ames' perspective:

He said that civilizational dialogue encourages reflection on cultural identity, values, shared history, and the interdependence of fortune and misfortune. This approach offers a more holistic view of the world, with an emphasis on embracing differences, engaging with cultural diversity, and fostering a character that celebrates harmony in diversity. He believes these values should form humanity's shared foundation. Ames also pointed out that contemporary society faces numerous pressing challenges – such as global warming,

environmental degradation, large-scale population displacement, food and water shortages and proxy wars. He believes that civilizational dialogue and mutual learning can help mitigate these issues. Ames further noted that the West often misinterprets Chinese philosophy through the lens of Western modernity, leading to misunderstandings. He stressed that core Confucian values like inclusiveness, interdependence and holistic thinking have great significance for addressing current global issues. (CGTN, 2025)

So too, Ames' interdependence is mirrored in my video-graphic use of split-screen juxtapositions. Geopolitically, however, there was caution in the optimism with speakers stressing as an imperative that cultural interaction and mutual learning between civilizations continue. In particular, Jean Louis Robinson, Madagascar's Ambassador to China, noted that "with tensions and conflict rising in parts of the world, the forum's role in promoting harmony and mutual growth is more important than ever" (VOR, 2025). Central to such harmony, noted Hussain Mohamed Latheef, Vice President of the Maldives, was the GCI as "a timely call to value and understand global diversity" encouraging the sharing of values, blending of tradition and new ideas, and facilitating inter-cultural development.

On this, the Forum's call for mutual assistance in facilitating mutual learning resonated with my years weaving Chinese collectivism with my own Australian multicultural heritage, a theme now central to my evolving Nishan narrative. In this, however, the wider ethical dimension re-asserted itself: the resurgence of imminently global conflicts, the US discourse surrounding which increasingly focused on potential war with China, and in which, my home country's leaders were contemporaneously being pressured by US under-secretary of defence for policy Eldridge Colby to express avowed unconditional support for the US in any war with China (ostensibly over Taiwan) (Blaxland, 2025). Indeed, this US demand emerged just as Australia's newly re-elected Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was scheduled to visit China, for 6 days following the conclusion of the Nishan Forum. This again reinforced my inter-cultural position as one of the few Australians at the Forum, in particular reminded of Dr Salome Nyambura, director of the Confucius Institute at Kenyatta University, who "told CGTN that close people-to-people exchanges between China and Kenya have made more Kenyans interested in Confucianism" and Riccardo Pozzo, professor of History of Philosophy at Tor Vergata University of Rome, who "said that Confucianism can provide valuable solutions to bridge traditional and modern issues and solve modern problems, citing the saying from the Analects that 'if a man keeps cherishing his old knowledge and continually acquires new knowledge, he may become a teacher to others'" (SI, 2025).

Hence, participation in the Nishan Forum was the final challenge to my Western individualism, aligning me with a collectivist harmony that my XUAR students first taught me, a lesson now re-framed through global lenses as informed by an analytical prism inspired by Hofstede's six dimensions of culture. This epiphanic Nishan moment marks not an end but a beginning, initiating as a reflective trans-media complement, a video series tracing this harmony's evolution as a primary facet of my identity as an Australian IC educator in China, informed by my formative XUAR



ABOVE: Vlog Screenshots | LEFT: View from my assigned seat, facing the central stage as guests posed for selfies with the Forum logo as backdrop. RIGHT. Reverse view from my assigned seat, gazing on the assembled media gallery. SOURCE: personal archive.

experience, a recent return to Australia for the 2025 Harmony Day / Harmony Week festival, Qufu's lessons and AI's insights, having found amid Qufu's ancient wisdom, an unexpected ally. In engaging with the Nishan Forum's theme, my exchanges with Grok 3, an AI navigating its own biases, additionally guided my journey's subsequent exploration (beyond this study's focus) through reflective auto-ethnography.

5. The Pedagogic Imperative

From the keynote speakers through the panel discussions, the primary focus of scholarship was philosophical parallel - the relevance of Confucian thought to the modern world, not only the Western world but that of the Global South with which China is increasingly aligned through such developments as the BRI. In this, however, was repeatedly situated the need for mutual learning to promote an appreciate understanding of the cultural diversity informing the shared values of the GCI. Cultural exchanges, people to people exchanges were repeatedly thus promoted as methods to facilitate such. Within this prism hence, my specific panel focus was on IC pedagogic practice as offering a methodological template to achieve this facilitation, ground in auto-ethnographic formulation of a "my cultural story" storytelling task. So too, from a firm understanding of one's own culture, applying an analytical prism modeled on Hofstede's 6 dimensions of culture (and epistemic relational equity) to cultural comparison and culture further enables a specific cultural story to find commonality in shared values with another culture. Student summative assessment of their cultural story in such an instructional program is intended to narrativize an aspect of their identity as "Chinese" specifically to engage with another culture's parallel in identity construction criteria.

Given the role of integrating student understanding of auto-ethnographic inquiry into student formulation of a cultural identity, as a basis to facilitate IC, I thus delivered my Forum panel presentation not as a pre-formulated paper, but an improvised application of the methodology to the points highlighted by my peer panelists. That is as an autobiographically grounded case study in methodologically delineating mutual learning and new media content creation in anchoring IC dissemination of the Confucian philosophical emphasis of the conference. Specifically as the deliberate facilitation, in pedagogic practice, of dialogic trans-cultural engagement. I limited autobiographical details to specific aspects of pedagogic design practice (Canagarajah, 2012; Mirhosseini, 2015; Kessler, 2023) - epiphanic comparison as a contextual consideration in the application of GCI shared value principles (eg. "democracy" as content within the IC methodological scaffolding framework for constructivist interrogation of relativist vs. absolutist dualism in deference to Confucian relational equity and the Confucian values of social harmony and harmony without uniformity: Hansen, 2023). Culminating my presentation, I inferred how the macro-level context could inform nation-state cultural comparison, directly evoking Australian multiculturalism as an ethos of cultural diversity in direct parallel to the emerging Confucian macro-level international relationist equity. This sought to position Australian identity specifically within the Nishan Forum's agenda, not ideologically (given Australia's alignment to US foreign policy at the time) but methodologically, the integration of Australian identity and values into the process of mutual learning as a valid contribution to the discussion on World Civilizations.

Within two days following the completion of the Forum, and winding up at time of this study's completion, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese visited China over six days. While Chinese media celebrated this as cementing a long-standing civilization divide (brought on by prior PM Scott Morrison's subordination of Australian sovereign independence to US foreign policy power projection in the Indo-Pacific), much Australian media reflected an emerging division in Australian political discourse specifically surrounding independent media skepticism over the merits of relying on the US and the AUKUS agreement (Chey, 2025; Thornton, 2025; Zhang, 2025: as anticipated by Laurenceson, 2025) and mainstream media's subordinated alignment with absolutist US hegemonic discourse (Barwick, 2025). In my view, as an Australian participant at Nishan, Albanese's visit positioned exactly the kind of foundation for mutual learning, relational equity in

appreciating cultural diversity promised by the Nishan Forum theme. However, I was also aware of the antagonistic Australian mainstream media, which took an absolutist stance in deference to US hegemonic narratives misrepresenting China as an Other, and thus an enemy challenging Australia's ethno-centric superiority. Albanese's dissolution of this smug ethnocentrism through measured humility, respect and representation of Australia not as an enemy but as a potential partner (albeit anchored in trade and thus mutual prosperity), in this way, was to me the signification of a paradigm shift in Australian politics, a pivot away from national subordination to US hegemonic war agendas. Nishan's cumulative epiphanic affect was to subsequently direct my trans-media praxis, however small my contribution may be, towards that mutual prosperity, anchored in mutual learning and civilizational dialogue, informed by my own multicultural Australian identity.

6. Opportunities & Future Directions

Barwick also announced his forthcoming guided tour of China and related his joint work alongside former diplomat John Lander in meetings in Australia's capital Canberra with Dr Wang Yongchun at the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, and Ambassador Ahmed Sadeghi at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Barwick, 2025 [iii]). With Barwick's China tour posed again to test the 11th Nishan Forum keynote findings, according to Barwick (2025 [ii]), "interestingly, both Dr Wang and Ambassador Sadeghi went out of their way to express that their respective nations' desire to improve relations with Australia... Given the important economic relationships Australia has with both countries, that is a positive thing, but it will be twisted by the pro-US elements who seek to dictate Australia's foreign policy as something sinister". Barwick's association with Lander, in countering the mainstream Australia discourse situates the Nishan Forum's themes of civilizational dialogue and mutual learning in harmonious coexistence within contemporary Australian politics, suggesting that discourse analysis charting Australian mainstream media's pro-US biased moral panic propagandizing of China/Australia relations would be a useful assessment of the paradigm shift initiated by Albanese's post-Nishan Forum visit to China.

So too, further elucidation of Lander's role as both former Deputy Ambassador to China during Australia's recognition of the PRC (under then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam), and former Ambassador to Iran during the hostage crisis and (unreported) role in facilitating socio-economic integration in accordance with initial Australian multicultural policies (Lander, 2025) would conceivably anchor such discourse analysis of joint multicultural and foreign policy dynamics in Australian political history since Whitlam, informed by my positionality as an Australian Nishan Forum participant in relation to a potential post-Nishan social, cultural and political paradigm shift now initiated in the Australian body politic / public sphere.

7. Conclusion: From Xinjiang to Harmony

Future discourse analysis possibilities aside, my journey to the 11th Nishan Forum on World Civilizations (July 9-10, 2025, Qufu) began 14+ years ago in lived experience within an XUAR classroom, where intercultural pedagogic practice first took root. As a foreign educator bridging China and Australia, stepping into Qufu's Confucian heartland felt like a homecoming and a challenge. Post-Forum assessment of Australian Prime Minister Albanese's visit to China furthermore anchors this back within my own Australian multicultural heritage, central to which is the celebration of the beauty in diversity. The Forum, themed 'Beauty in Diversity,' brought together 560+ scholars to nurture understanding amid global turbulence, echoing my panel on 'Mutual Assistance in Pursuing Modernization'. This lived experience shifted my Western individualism toward a collectivist harmony, a lesson from my students now re-framed globally.

This study's reflection thus positions the video-graphic trans-media complement to this written paper - an initialized video series titled "Reflections on the 11th Nishan Forum" (Cettl, 2025) as the means to anchor my forthcoming ongoing auto-ethnographic vlog - 'From Xinjiang to Har-

mony,' a longitudinal series tracing the evolution of trans-cultural hybridity in identity construction and pedagogic refinement culminating in my Nishan Forum experience. Amid this, my ongoing dialogue with Grok 3, an AI grappling with its own biases, became an unexpected sounding-point for delineating potential IC tropes of dialogic engagement as a means of discourse analysis. It is this human/AI alliance, again in the spirit of the Forum, that is also now potentially positioned to inform my trans-media praxis following both Nishan and Australia's potential paradigm shift following Australian Prime Minister Albanese's seminal six day visit to China. It is this 11th Nishan Forum initiated trans-media praxis, as situated initially in this written study, that I invite readers to explore further, firstly through viewing of the video-graphic complement to this written study, "[Reflections on the 11th Nishan Forum on World Civilizations](#)" (Cettl, 2025), and its wider, longitudinal exploration centering on a "From Xinjiang to Harmony" vlog introduced on a personal website project, [A Stranger Here Myself](#).



APPENDIX GALLERY: Vlog Screenshots | More mobile phone video screenshots capturing the vibrant color and decor of the Confucian village and associated light / dance shows. The special tour for the Nishan Forum scholars and experts included several light and dance set-pieces, punctuating a walking tour of the village at regular intervals. SOURCE: personal archive.

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