

# An exploratory study of myanmar culture

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Hofstede originally identified four dimensions of culture: power distance, individualism, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance. Power distance represents the degree of a culture's acceptance of inequality among its members. Individualism and collectivism represent a culture's main focus, being either the importance of the individual or the group. Masculinity and femininity represents the stereotypical characteristics of men and women as being the dominant cultural values. Uncertainty avoidance is essentially a collective tolerance for ambiguity for a culture. Later research with Michael Bond (Hofstede & Bond 1988) added a fifth dimension called long-term orientation. This dimension, originally called Confucian Dynamism, measures the preferences of a culture for a long-term and traditional view of time. Hofstede's work has attracted a number of critics. Some have expressed concerns about the generalizability of the sample, the level of analysis, the comparison of political boundaries (countries) to culture, and the validity of the instrument (Mc Sweeney 2002; Smith 2002). Others have challenged the assumption of the homogeneity of each studied culture (Sivakumar & Nakata 2001). The additional dimension of long-term orientation (LTO) has been challenged on the grounds of conceptual validity (Fang 2003). While many of the concerns raised by his critics can be considered to have some validity, Hofstede's research, nevertheless, represents the most comprehensive analysis of cultural values to date. This paper provides a preliminary look into the cultural assessment of a country not included in the Hofstede data set. Myanmar is located in Southeast Asia, bordering Thailand, China, India, and Laos. The country, formerly called Burma, gained its independence from Britain at the end of World War II, after a hard fought struggle with the

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colonial power and the Japanese invaders. Burmese nationalist and national hero, Aung San fought for his country's independence and for democratic rule (Khng 2000). His daughter, Nobel Peace Prize winner, Aung San Suu Kyi continues the struggle today inside Myanmar, even as she lives under house arrest. While Myanmar interacts with its ASEAN neighbors, a number of Western countries have placed economic sanctions on the country for its lack of democracy. These sanctions have limited foreign investment and other forms of economic exchange. A military junta has ruled the country for the past 17 years and the country has operated in various states of isolation from the world over those years. As a result of its isolation, very little research has been conducted on its culture or values orientation.