

An Analysis of the Prospect of the Implementation of China's "Belt and Road" Initiative (BRI) in the Caribbean Region from the Perspective of the Varied Cultural Norms, Values, Social Structures and Distinct Characteristics

Dahlia Patricia Sterling

School of Foreign Languages, Dezhou University, Dezhou, China

Email: dahlia_sterling@yahoo.com

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Abstract

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has been a major priority of the People's Republic of China (PRC) since 2013, and have garnered widespread awareness and prominence through its plan to connect China with the rest of Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Since the revitalization of the BRI, the Caribbean region's attention has been drawn towards this grand trade strategy; even throughout the many challenges the region faces. Primarily, the Caribbean region comprises a variety of small island countries, of which China has short and long-term interests. But, over the years, it seems China is destined to further connect the "Caribbean Island Countries" in the "backyard" of the traditional hegemon, the United States of America, to the revived "Ancient Silk Road" trade routes. Nevertheless, how does the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) fits into the Caribbean region? Will it also have a broader relevance in the Caribbean? Notable of importance, is that several Caribbean Island countries have indicated strong interest to participate in this grand trade policy. Thus, on this basis, this paper determines that China and the Caribbean region do have different cultural norms, values, social structures and characteristics, which are all rooted in their cultural backgrounds that has shaped and defined their identities to make them distinctively unique from each other, and also other nations around the globe. Furthermore, it is recognized that the prospect of the BRI presence in the Caribbean will mean cultural challenges, owing to the diverse cultures of the Caribbean region. So,

within this context, this paper intends to explore the prospect of China's plan to further increase its presence and motivation in the region through the implementation of the BRI, from a cultural perspective. With the focus on the varied cultural norms, values, social structures and distinct characteristics; what will the prospect of the implementation of China the BRI means in order to achieve further levels of mutual cooperation with the Caribbean region.

Keywords

China the BRI, Caribbean Region, Norms, Values, Social Structures, Characteristics, Culture, Acclimatization

1. Introduction

When we think about culture; it can be understood that culture is something that is relative to a country's values, norms, social structures and characteristics, and these cultural elements can in fact help us better understand country's strategic policies.

Largely, the notion of culture means conformity and it addresses the norms, values, social structures and distinct characteristics of a society. Accordingly, culture adapts, and it does not remain the same over time, it changes, that is, it is in continuous transition of development. Theoretically, culture differs from society to society and based on the needs and ways of life of a society and its people, then culture will develop and become adapted over the span of time based on norms, values, behavior, thinking, belief, and much more.

So, what does cultural identity means in respect to the Caribbean region and China? Compared to other countries that are in closer proximity to China than the Caribbean region, the obvious varied cultural norms, values, social structures and characteristics of both the country and the region are evident in the ethnic differences between China located in the Far east and the western style culture of the Caribbean region. So, what is the meaning of cultural values, norms, social structures and characteristics in relation to the country China and the Caribbean region? Essentially, this question will be answered throughout the presentation of the paper. Similarly, on what basis would China, through the prospect of the BRI want to further extent its "footprint" in the countries of the Caribbean region based on the vast distance that clearly exist between them?

Correspondingly in regards to China's the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which seeks to build a community of shared interests and norms, when observed closely it is noted, it does not pivot solely on the aspects of economic, security, infrastructure, trade investment, etc., but importantly it also revolves toward culture in its aspiration to contribute to global governance.

Over the years, the United States presence in the Caribbean has decreased tremendously, and the Caribbean region in turn has been showing strong wil-

lingness towards accepting China's the BRI. Ward states, Guyanese President David Granger remarked on what many small Caribbean nations face: "we cannot develop without infrastructure and we just do not have the capital to do it on our own. So, whether it comes from America, China or Britain, we have to have it and of course we have to look for the best deal" (Ward, 2019). Which means, this gives China through the BRI a greater chance of intensifying its presence in the region. Additionally, it is stated that President Xi Jinping has pointed to the fact that countries with different races, beliefs & values, diversified cultural background could co-develop and live peacefully together (China.org.cn, 2013). In effect, how could China realize the fusion of different culture beyond the geographic boundaries and think of reviving the brilliance of the traditional "Silk Road", in particularly in the region of the Caribbean?

Logically, culture is a shared concept, and when examined, it is noted it is relative to different groups. Moreover, individuals are essentially the carrier of culture. Reasonably, the elements of culture are an integral part of every culture in every society. In effect, being part of a culture that shares an essential set of values creates expectation, which solidifies individual's identity and a sense of worth of being a part of a particular society. Different culture reflects different cultural elements, therefore to understand people from various cultures, it is essential to understand their values, norms, social structures that motivates their behavior, and action. Accordingly, it is clear that the elements of culture, that is, values, norms, social structures, and characteristics of a country are primarily important benchmarks as determinants that can help others effectually understand a country's strategic policy.

As we know, China's the BRI is envisioned to connect its growing economic development with Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa through its proposed trade route, and this is generally interpreted as a policy aimed at enhancing trade, investment, infrastructure, energy technologies, cumulative criterions for communications, etc. According to scholar Chance, as the world places great attentiveness on infrastructure, China seems to have been working assiduously on "all five of its 'pillars' of the Belt and Road Initiative: policy coordination; facilities connectivity; unimpeded trade; financial integration; and people-to-people bonds" (Chance, 2017). However, while it is also intended to augment people to people and cultural ties, the aspects of culture is frequently overlooked from the perspective of a country's cultural norms, values, its social structures and characteristics, which is established, plays a dynamic role in the development of every society, and equally as an agent of socialization in the transmitting of information, which can be effective in boosting cooperation and growth.

Admittedly, through the increase in influence of the BRI, many governments in developing countries around the world have been taking notice of China's impact. In this respect, it is observed that China is perceived by many as possibly attempting to reshape the notion of the global economic trade principles. On this basis, this paper examines the BRI from the cultural elements of the country

China and the Caribbean regions' diverse cultures, to establish that cultural acclimatization is crucial for successful cooperation in the conduct of business internationally in or with a foreign country. Identifiable, is the prominence of culture in every society, and as stated earlier, culture varies greatly from one culture to another, and differences are generally obvious in society through its people and groups and how they express themselves and adapt to society's collective values (**Culture and Society Defined**). Holistically, our thinking, feeling, judging, acting, values, traditions, beliefs, customs, shared understanding about the differences and similarities in norms, values are in fact culture and indispensable.

Essentially, **Goraieb et al. (2019)**, in their assessment between cultures and the efficiency of trade internationally between countries, states, it is assumed that the greater the similarity between cultures, the greater the ratio of international trade between countries, since uncertainty is reduced and it becomes easier to understand and learn how to negotiate with this country that is culturally closer.

Given that this speaks to the assumption that the greater the similarity of cultures between countries, then the probability exist that this might reduce uncertainty. Then, what does this mean for countries that do not have any form of similarities in culture? Concerning this, it means that there is the need for cultural acclimatization by countries that intend to undertake business venues in and with foreign countries in which similarities in culture does not exist. Which, therefore would be applicable to China and it's intended prospect of implementation of this ambitious policy, the BRI in the island countries of the Caribbean. Equally, **Hofstede (1993)**, commented that national culture is molded according to its fundamental values, which in turn are absorbed and built by people during their childhood, through the rules and prohibitions, that is, during the educational process. Against this milieu, this paper discusses the different cultural norms, values, social structures and characteristics of China and the Caribbean region and the direction of achieving success of the implementation of the BRI, given the vast differences in cultures. Furthermore, it also identifies and discusses the cultural elements that shape China's behavior and thinking towards the intended prospect of the BRI in the far distanced Caribbean Island countries.

2. Conceptual Understanding of the Setting of the Caribbean Region and the People's Republic of China

What is the Caribbean region? The Caribbean region is a group of islands located in the Caribbean Sea and is an oceanic area located in the Western and Northern hemispheres, found North of South America, East of Central America and South of the United States (<https://www.caribbeanislands.com/>). In principle, the Caribbean stretches from the Yucatan peninsula to Puerto Rico and down to Venezuela and borders the Gulf of Mexico. The Caribbean is known as the "Island Countries" because the Caribbean isn't a country itself but in actuality is made up of thousands of islands with a composition of twenty-six (26) different "Island Countries" (<https://www.caribbeanislands.com/>).



Source: Council on Hemispheric Affairs: China vs. Taiwan: Battle for influence in the Caribbean. (2012, March). Retrieved from: <http://www.coha.org/china-vs-taiwan-battle-for-influence-in-the-Caribbean/>.

In contrast, China is a country in Asia and is largely located in the Eastern side of Asia (<https://www.china-family-adventure.com/where-is-china.html>), with strong distinctive cultural background, large geographical dimension that includes Provinces, Autonomous Regions, Municipalities and Special Administrative Regions, and a large population of approximately 1.38 billion people, the main spoken languages Mandarin, Cantonese, Taiwanese and a variety of Chinese dialects, etc. (<https://www.china-family-adventure.com/where-is-china.html>). The Chinese history is also cultivated through thousands of years, by past powerful empires, regimes and the lessons of the Western intrusion in the 19th century, which impacted greatly on its foreign policy even today and in shaping its unique characteristics. In comparison to the island countries in the Caribbean region located in the West, with an estimated combined population of approximately 43 million people, the main spoken language that of English, with a region home to a diverse multi-ethnic composition, which many non-Caribbean people cannot comprehend the large distinct “diversity” and what it means to be “Caribbean” unless from the region or has some special affiliation.

Regrettably, the Caribbean region does not embrace a long chronological history compared to China. But it embraces a Caribbean society which emerged from a history of colonialism, categorized by ruthless attacks on its natives, years of devastation from brutal slavery and eventually the introduction of foreign cultures. However, in the end, the Caribbean society emerged to be extremely diverse embracing a varied and strong identity and ethnicity, with distinct cultural norms, values, social structures and characteristics.

Nevertheless, despite the Caribbean region having a distinct African background, which causes people from the Caribbean to be identified as such, there are many different families from Indian, Chinese, Middle Eastern, European descents, and numerous other people of mixed backgrounds who are also identified as Caribbean, thus encompassing, for example the motto of the Jamaican

Caribbean island “Out of Many One People” Jennings (2009); which categorically speaking makes the Caribbean region a strong “melting pot of diverse multi-ethnicity”.

Largely, culture in the Caribbean region elaborates the unique social appearances and idiosyncratic style considered to be unique to that of the Caribbean region, and this is broadcasted through the actualization of the tremendous potential and identity of the Caribbean region’s togetherness as a people and commitment to pursuing a common goal.

Thus, when one thinks about culture the first catchphrases that comes to mind is, way of life, food, customs, dress, language, beliefs, and much more, which the Caribbean region like other countries also identifies with. Therefore, according to the Cambridge English dictionary, culture means the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time, music, art, theatre, literature, etc. (Cambridge English Dictionary). Additionally, sociologists define culture similarly, as the set of customs, attitude, values, and beliefs that characterizes one group of people and distinguishes them from other groups (Culture: Values, Norms & Material Objects Research Paper Starters). Clearly, this is apparent within the Caribbean region and China, each having their own sets of customs, attitudes, values, norms and beliefs. Correspondingly, culture embraces the passing from one generation to succeeding generations. On another level, culture is passed through what is called non-material culture, such as values, norms, languages, rituals and symbols, such as objects, art and institutions, and much more, which makes up the overall culture of any society (Historyplex).

In reality, when one thinks about culture; culture has many different meanings and is essentially a vessel for the way we think, knowledge acquired based on the things we do repeatedly over time, which becomes values, norms, preserved in our social structures and hence is disseminated in the cultural characteristics of the various ways of our life; specifically for instance, in the “island countries in the Caribbean and China, making them exceptionally unique.

Of importance, it is stated that for many people in a society, their own cultural values are too important to put a price tag on... (Culture and Globalization). For Trouillot (1992), he pointed to the fact that Caribbean societies are inescapably heterogenous... the Caribbean has long been an area where some people live next to others who are remarkably distinct. The region and indeed particular territories within it have long been multi-racial, multilingual, stratified, and some would say, multi-cultural (Trouillot, 1992). Again, this speaks directly to the region’s exceptional cultural diversity. Irrefutably, when we think about the Caribbean, the Caribbean society stands tall as a tower with its diverse uniqueness, symbolizing a culture that stands out worldwide, despite its geographical location, and different small island countries.

Culturally, the Caribbean has by far been able to stand tall, holding its own among world cultures, achieving great recognition for its strength, vibrancy, color and characteristics of its diverse culture, and from the raw influence of the

region's music such as reggae and dancehall, soca music, colorful and vibrant personalities, illustrative languages, divine cuisines, blue mountain coffee, celebrated world market leaders, sports personalities, beautiful beaches, and much more. This overall signifies the cultural roots and ethnicity of the Caribbean society, and having the pride and commitments to promote positive attitudes, values, norms, thereby showing their dedication to the development of the region. Thus, with the intended prospect to further connect the Caribbean Island countries with the BRI, in reality it seems to mean another step for China in gaining global importance. But whilst doing this, close attention will need to be paid to garner precise understanding of the conceptual setting of the varied cultural differences between the Caribbean and China in establishing how to achieve success in their mutual cooperation of the BRI.

3. Assessment of China—The Caribbean Island Countries Mutual Relationship

In establishing a clear understanding of the cultural setting above, in relation to China and the Caribbean region. Within this framework, it is imperative to assess the mutual relationship of China and the Caribbean region over the years. Obviously, there are many cultural differences that exist between the Caribbean Island countries and China that are distinct, and can be found in many aspects of their cultures. However, these cultural differences have not prevented China and the Caribbean Island countries to establish mutual relationship over the past years. Nevertheless, over the current years, it seems that China's interest in the region has now turned into something much broader and seemingly more strategic in importance (The Caribbean Council, 2012).



Source: Jamaica Observer, February 8, 2005.

In 2005, Neville Duncan, a well-known Caribbean political scientist declared: “I cannot see that the Caribbean has any other choice but to develop a relationship with China” (Duncan, 2005). Interestingly, this feeling is echoed in the cartoon shown above (Jamaica Observer, February 8, 2005), and is an overall atmosphere felt across the Caribbean region, wherein China is seen as not only an important player in the international system, but also one that the Caribbean Island countries should position themselves to obtain benefits from (Morris, 2008).

But, in terms of the specifics of the relationship between the island countries

of the Caribbean and China, it is useful to note that historical diplomatic relationships have been established since the 1970's (Bernal, 2010). Currently ten (10) Caribbean countries out of the fourteen (14) members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) have diplomatic relations with China (Bernal, 2010). Hence, for example such as: Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago have constantly acknowledged China, and not Taiwan since the 1970's (Bernal, 2010).

In June 2013, President Xi Jinping, visited the Caribbean region to elevate the Caribbean on China's Foreign Policy agenda (Campbell & Valette, 2014), and to strengthen its relation in the region, more than his predecessors (Campbell & Valette, 2014). Notable, throughout the years, the Caribbean region have tended to view China's presence in the Caribbean auspiciously. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has also signaled its interest in working with China to ascertain how its goals and priorities can be best linked with existing, new and emerging developmental initiatives from the East Asian country (CARICOM Today, 2018). Yet, remarkably, one leading influence of China in the Caribbean region is through that of cultural influences. Categorized in the contexts of soft power influences, this is upheld through that of the establishment of Chinese embassies in the Caribbean, which plays an important role in liaising with Chinese working overseas, and overseas Chinese communities in the region and much more.

Notwithstanding this, it is observed though that China's strong interest in its economic, mutual cooperation and infrastructure investments overseas, does not frequently take into consideration the cultural elements of a country's norms, values, social structures and characteristics, which is not in any way negative, since many foreign businesses generally do not do so. But this is necessary to be better able to understand the reasons why people within other society's behavior the way they do. Thus, for instance in infrastructure investments of foreign businesses that enters a new country, in order to avoid business problems, and for potential success in a foreign country, it means considerable reliance on the awareness and respect of accepting and understanding the cultural differences of a country, which relates to the ultimate, acclimatization. Without reservation, it should be understood that one country's way of conducting business, may be different for another foreign country's society, thus the great need for understanding.

In practicality, for the prospect of China's BRI to prosper in the Caribbean region, admittedly there need to be clear understanding and awareness of the region's values, norms, social structures and its characteristics, to achieve successful mutual exchange and likewise on the side of the Caribbean region to also develop a clear understanding and awareness of China's culture. Correspondingly, Beijing has a larger willpower to gain in its approach to key markets globally, and in expanding its links in the Caribbean Island countries. Except in order for China to continue to genuinely build goodwill throughout the region through the extension of the BRI, it requires awareness, understanding and respect of the

unique cultural diversity that exists.

Inaptly, it is assumed that there is the hidden perception and connotation that China wants to ensure that its presence is undoubtedly felt throughout the Caribbean region. Nevertheless, positively the Caribbean stance regarding China's presence has enabled the region to find new sources of economic supports and likewise gain some semblance of influence in the international arena as small nation states to be able to respond to global issues.

4. Exploration of the Varied Cultural Norms, Values, Social Structures, Characteristics and Prospect of China the BRI in the Caribbean Region

Unquestionably, Beijing's view toward the Caribbean region is of strategic importance. This strategic importance is by reasons of the Caribbean nation's closeness to the United States and its tactical importance for banking and commerce, tourism opportunities, logistics hub, major maritime trade routes and infrastructure, such as the Panama Canal and the region's many ports. The Caribbean islands signaling interest in further working with China to establish its goals and priorities can be linked with the benefits to be gained from the new emerging developing initiative of China's BRI. Hence, it is stated that many of the developing small island countries in the Caribbean are in great need of more and better infrastructure. This has created possibilities for China to expand its role in the region (van der Putten, 2019), despite the vast distance.

In retrospect, several Caribbean countries have already signed bilateral memorandum of understanding with China to cooperate on the BRI. Still, in terms of actual projects for infrastructure development the impact of the BRI remains limited (van der Putten, 2019). However, this will in fact, open new prospects for mutually beneficial cooperation between China and the Caribbean (van der Putten, 2019).

Caribbean & West Indies Nations That Have Joined China's Belt & Road Initiative



Graphic © Asia Briefing Ltd.

Source:

<https://www.silkroadbriefing.com/news/2019/05/24/chinas-belt-road-caribbean-west-indies/>

Upon further assessment of the prospects of China the BRI in the Caribbean region, it is noted that the following Caribbean nations, depicted in the picture

above illustrates according to Devonshire-Ellis, not just China's attempts to bring them into the BRI sphere, but because each of them adds another notch to China's attempts to brand it as a global initiative (Devonshire-Ellis, 2019).

With China's involvement extending more and more in the region, and equally more through the prospect of the implementation of the BRI, it means more infrastructure investments, trade, the building and improvement of roads, highways, ports and shipping docks through improved logistics, but with this, it simply means interaction is unavoidable, and without a doubt will transpire, which therefore will mean differences in cultures arising at the forefront.

Visibly, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has two (2) components, the Silk Road Economic Belt on land and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road on sea, and in particular it is foreseen will create both an opportunity and a challenge for the Caribbean region once executed. Thus, while looking forward to the prospect of the BRI, the region is still very cautious, and at the same time eager, since this might give China an economic leverage over them, but evidently will also be advantageous for them.

On a broader level, the cultural component from the perspective of the varied norms, values, and the relationship between China and the Caribbean region is as interesting as the economic and political realms in the international system. Clearly, the acclimatization to different cultural norms and values relating to work and personal values, such as communication style, scheduling of meetings, coordinating training, team activities, holidays and festivals, things such as lunch hours, work hours, overtime, weekly work schedule, behavior and style, use of language, age, eating and drinking traditions, etiquette, cultural assumptions, ethics, political correctness, solving problems, and conflict, negotiation, work conduct, how we go about creating relationships, and much more, will create challenges for any country establishing businesses in a foreign country based on the different ways of life. Therefore, when one works in an environment that comprises others from various cultures, one need to be aware of their own culture. Explicably, these cultural differences can cause respect and trust issues leading to major obstacles that can afflict any organizations collaborating. Hence, in the case of the prospect of the BRI in the Caribbean region, there will be the need to be aware of the different cultures and to effectively incorporate cultural sensitivity from the perspective of the Caribbean diverse cultures. In sum, to develop a clear understanding means adjustment to avoid obstacles in the process of mutual exchange.

China 4.1

In respect to the Chinese culture from the perspective of the varied norms, values, social structures and distinct characteristics, it is noted that culture tends to be more interconnected in the relationship in the Chinese culture in comparison to that of the Caribbean diverse cultures, which is centered on the influence of Confucianism. Thus, to really understand the Chinese way of thinking, understanding Confucius is key; since Confucius wield a profound influence on the society even in contemporary China today.

Accordingly, it is also stated that cultural values have been perceived as a key function in distinguishing work values. This is observed by the following scholar that states, “no one type of work goal is likely to be the most effective across all cultures” and that “the type of work goals whose pursuit is encouraged and rewarded depend in part on the prevailing cultural value emphasized in a society (Schwartz, 1999). Separate and apart from this, with China entering the Caribbean regions market, how would this be applicable, being confronted with new cultural values and different values to work. Obviously, this would lead to potential conflict, misunderstanding and miscommunication. Accordingly, it would be ideal to create a successful environment by quickly adjusting to the local preferences, customs and habits to ensure everyone is able to work together, despite the differences.

As we know, the Chinese society social structure is very formal and hierarchical. This also spreads to the contexts of how businesses are conducted. In the Chinese society, collectivistic culture is the norm, which emphasizes the importance of the community. One’s actions and how it affects family, friends, co-workers and neighbors are greatly taken into consideration. Working together as a group and supporting each other is fundamental. So, it is said that workers’ living in a collectivist cultural society might try to relinquish their own happiness for the greater good of the group. Thus, in accordance to Hofstede (1985), there is increasing argument into the intricate nature of culture, and its importance as a way of affecting an acceptable sense of order within a community (Hofstede, 1985). Hofstede (1985) & Yamagishi et al. (1998), further defines a collectivist society as one that has a preference towards a tightly knit social framework in which individuals can expect a deep-set sense of trust from their relatives, clan or other group members in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. Relatedly, the individual is part of a “we” mindset and is nothing without his or her group, and will strive for actions that enable a positive outcome for the group (Powell, 2018).

Besides, further to the Chinese society and its collectivistic culture, Powell accentuates the difficulties encountered in international business negotiation (Powell, 2018). This, Powell highlights, that Western firms have suffered drawbacks or failure with Chinese businesses hitherto (Powell, 2018). He attributes this to one reason, identified as a lack of cultural compatibility between Western and Far east counterparts that caused confusion over how to tackle the seemingly “inefficient and indirect” style of Chinese executives (Graham & Lam, 2003). It should also be made clear, that this should not be perceived as incompetence in the process of business interaction, but unquestionably has to do with differences in cultural practices. This is for reasons, that within the Chinese society the element of collectivistic means collaboration and cooperating effectively. But, in other societies based on the type of cultural values, work values and attitude will vary, which does not mean inefficiency and unproductiveness.

Correspondingly, an illustration that expounds the concept of the different cultural values, is an example of an American manager who states that he was

quite happy with his Chinese team's performance. So, he decided to give some reward and motivational boost. He promoted one of the top performers to the post of Assistant manager. To the manager's surprise, the team's performance deteriorated in the next business quarter. Upon discussion and personal research, he found that the team performs well for the sake of the team, but the team members don't perform so well when they work for the benefit of one individual (IIM Shilong PGPEX, 2015). It is likewise stated that, when people from different cultures come together, they tend to assume certain things (unaware of difference in the communication styles and cultural values) and don't take cognizance of the value system of the other culture (IIM Shilong PGPEX, 2015). This it is said, leads to a situation where the listener not only loses part of the message but also develops an incorrect perspective about the delivered information (IIM Shilong PGPEX, 2015).

Caribbean 4.2

For that of the Caribbean nations, most seems to promote collectivistic and individualistic values, that is, a mix of cultural values. For example: this mix is evident in the Caribbean English-speaking Island country of Jamaica. Evidence revealed, based on survey conducted that the island country of Jamaica's cultural values and norms appears to display a mixture of both values, that is, collectivist and individualist. Here, individualist culture stresses the needs of the individual over the needs of the group as a whole. People are seen as independent and autonomous and people may feel that their own personal happiness and success carry greater influence.

This mix of individualistic and collectivistic values are based on the obvious, that of honoring of parents and elders, family security, equality, friendship responsibility, etc., which is also clearly in line with the collectivistic value which is also a very big part of the Jamaican society.

Nonetheless, individualist value is also obvious based on one's drive for independence, success, ambition, freedom, choosing one's own goals, etc., which in all is also observed in the Jamaican society (Powell, 2010). Generally, this individualistic system is encouraged in the Caribbean region, whereby individuals are encouraged to strive for success at an early age. Thus, the goal to succeed at all level in schools by competing to get the best grades, to get the best results in performance appraisal of work achievements, to compete against each other for the best positions at work, to be oneself and be different from others, the acquisition of personal gains, and much more. Furthermore, when one also takes a closer look at the other island countries in the Caribbean, it is apparent that a mix of cultural values likewise exist, reinforcing the notion that the Caribbean region is culturally and exceptionally diverse.

In regards to Hsu, he fortifies the cultural concept that individual in the oriental society are inclined to be more socially or psychologically dependent on others and are tied closer to their fellow people (Hsu, 1981). Primarily, individuals in the oriental society are more likely to have a set of common value dimensions than people in the West with even Western style culture. On a whole, it is

stated that people in the East, clearly knows where they fit in the social structure and generally adhere to the rules in society.

However, in the West, individuals' norms, values and social structures, tend to lean more towards being more encouraged to be different from others and to be themselves. Hence, according to scholar's Lu and Shih, the Chinese cultures value the collectivist ideology, which affects family functions and behaviors (Lu & Shih, 1997). Hofstede relatedly revealed that based on researches conducted it has been found that the cultural difference between the Chinese and the Western society, lies especially in terms of Confucian dynamism (Hofstede, 1980a, 1980b, 1993).

5. Applicability of the Diverse Cultures: Prospect of the Implementation of the BRI in the Caribbean Region

Here, the elements of the varied cultural norms, values, social structures and characteristics regarding the differences in China culture and the Caribbean will be presented and applied to the prospect of the implementation of the BRI in the region.

Of significant, is that many cultural differences exist and even today cultural diversity remains important amongst different countries around the globe. Rabushba, states that culture and geography may have an impact on human affairs, but the main causal factor in determining differences in economic performance among nations is the rules of the game that govern the way that people interact with one another within and beyond national borders (Rabushba, 1987).

Within the Chinese culture, it is evident that cultural values, especially through that of Confucianism, do have a deep influence on the Chinese value system, and norms, even today. This value system is one set of rules that govern the way that Chinese people interact with one another within the Chinese society. Notwithstanding this, what is of great importance is that within the values of Confucianism, when we dig deeper, it is determined that there are five (5) basic relationships for humans, that of the father-son, emperor-subject, husband-wife, elder-younger, friend-friend (Chang & Holt, 1991). It is specified that three (3) out of five (5) elements in the Chinese cultural value system accentuates that a healthy spiritual existence begins at home (Chang & Holt, 1991), and this shapes the Chinese traditional value system.

It is further implied that Chinese cultures advocate that one should strive to expand the prosperity and vitality of one's family (Lu & Shih, 1997). In this regard, it can be accepted, that group of people living together plays an important role, and is the center of an individual's life within the Chinese society, and in the everyday existence of life. Hence, the Confucian value, and its ideologies affects every aspect of the Chinese behaviors and attitude, which is embodied in the Chinese people's moral values, which helps in guiding people's action.

Given this, how does this currently relate to China's the "Belt and Road", and the prospect of its extended presence in the Caribbean region? Noticeable is that, China's social structure is formal and hierarchical, which allows for its individuals to clearly know where one fits in the social structure sphere, and thus, there-

by abides by the rules of the society. On the other hand, although most of the Caribbean regions social structures are less rigid and somewhat a little informal, notwithstanding the mix of collectivistic and individualistic cultural values, unfortunately the well-defined differences are still obvious and without a doubt will cause problems in international business relationships. Because of the cultural differences and ways of doing things.

Distinctively it is well-known that, the Caribbean region has benefited tremendously since its establishment of diplomatic relations with China through economic engagements, numerous investments, through cultural dimensions, etc, and China in turn has gain added influences globally. But as stated clearly the prospect of the BRI in the region, will definitely bring forth many cultural problems with projects during the construction and operational stages.

So, in making sense of China and the prospect of its extended footprint in the Caribbean through that of the BRI, it has been established that it's imperative to understand other countries cultural values and norms, because it is important in the success of international business. For instance, it is stated that a project manager will have to adjust their negotiating strategies to the cultural characteristics of the overseas organization they are negotiating with (Ray, 2011). It is further implied, that it is no longer enough to treat people the way you would expect to be treated, now because of cultural diversity you have to treat people the way they would expect to be treated (Ray, 2011). So, when we think about it, management in fact manages a group and not individuals as groups, which is very important in collective cultures (Mujuru, 2012). It is also asserted that subordinates in collectivist cultures feel emotionally integrated into work group, so managers in such culture should be sensitive to the factors that affect the group (Mujuru, 2012).

According to Hofstede (2001), collectivistic cultures have a great emphasize on groups and always think more in terms of "we" and harmony, loyalty and respect inside the company, which is vital and should always be maintained. Nonetheless, as business organizations from developed countries that might decide to venture into foreign markets, it would be essential to understand the culture of the targeted market before the project resume so as to reduce the cultural crush (Hofstede, 2001).

Thus, for example, the Caribbean Island country of Jamaica, it is stated that as soon after president Xi Jinping announced the launch of the BRI, construction of the North South Highway started and was completed in 2016. This, indicated that this was the first major infrastructure projects in Jamaica built by a Chinese state-owned company (Foxcroft, 2019). Here, the contractor is imported from China, as many of the workers (Foxcroft, 2019). Foxcroft (2019) affirmed that this is most often the case when projects are funded by grants, loans and private investments from China and other countries around the world.

Recognized with these projects is that, "the Chinese do not engage Jamaican engineers and Jamaican management on the construction job, they only engage labor," said Carvel Stewart, a civil engineer and former president of the Incor-

porated Master-builders Association of Jamaica (Foxcroft, 2019). But, in thinking about the statement, “the Chinese do not engage Jamaican engineers and Jamaican management on the construction job,” Foxcroft (2019), this could stem from the issue of lack of cultural appropriate and sensitization to the difference in cultural practices, languages, norms, values and, this also reinforces scholar Hofstede (2001), statement regarding the necessity of “understanding the culture of the targeted market before starting international projects, so as to reduce cultural crush”. In this instance, the island country of Jamaica is only one such example of many such cases.

In looking further at the applicability of the elements of the varied cultural norms, values, social structures and characteristics regarding the differences in cultures in the China and the Caribbean, for the prospect of the implementation of the BRI in the Caribbean. It is indeed clear that cultural factors do play a key role in the influence of communication. For instance, communication as a cultural value and norm, is essential in the success of any international business, and this can be observed based on many projects undertaken in many different countries around the globe. Thus, amid the increase presence of China, the prospect of the BRI in the Caribbean region, means there will a genuine risk of messages getting “lost in translation” through the process of communication.

6. Analysis of the Cultural Elements for China BRI and the Caribbean Region

As a part of the culture and work values, language differ around the world, and different languages, ways and style of communicating will occur. The language spoken and the way it is conveyed is very important, so traditions depict a country’s unique cultural traits. Moreover, even if one speaks a language very well, understanding subtle nonverbal communication and slangs between different cultures is very critical in the development of international business. Consequently, what is normal in the Caribbean most likely is not the same for other cultures. For example: language spoken, slangs, gestures, etc. Therefore, foreign managers need to understand, know and speak at least the local language (slangs) as this helps to avoid cultural barriers, which would be applicable for example to the execution of the BRI in the Caribbean. Furthermore, a kiss on the cheek, handshaking, direct eye contact would be deemed the norm in the Caribbean, but amongst the Chinese cultural norms and values these would most likely be considered inappropriate. Thus, as established, the need for clear understanding of cultural differences and sensitivity toward the cultural values, norms, social structures, and characteristics of a country is crucial, which would assist in creating mutual exchange in international business at an early stage. This would help in creating an atmosphere of relaxation, avoiding embarrassment, and to center the focus on building success together.

Modesty, courteousness and patience are likewise other elements of the Chinese cultural values, that might also be different in the cultural elements that ex-

ist in the Caribbean region. In effect, saving and giving face is another one of the most important elements that exist in the Chinese business culture. Moreover, paying attention to positions and having high respect for elders are key on the elements of the Chinese cultural values and are all marked high in Chinese business interactions. Generally, hierarchy in some countries are very important elements, in effect strict hierarchy defines people's roles, status and social order. So, observing hierarchy, even in business meetings helps one understands the levels of respect rendered to the business delegates and, or the management of a company (Global Etiquette, 2005).

Importantly, there are many additional cultural elements that can also be considered in the applicability of the prospect of China the BRI in the Caribbean region.

Correspondingly, the Caribbean in its cultural diversity, and approach to business meeting is generally conducted and concluded in meeting rooms, unlike some Chinese approach, which most often generally entail that of starting with a business relationship and then takes a social relationship form thereafter. This in the Chinese culture is thought of as building personal relationships. In doing this, the aim is to determine what type of character one has to establish the feasibility of conducting business based on personal discussions, such as family, hobbies, friends, etc. Likewise, that of the notion of punctuality is another cultural element, and can differ between cultures. In international business this may differ base on what constitutes being on time. For instance: being late does not constitute lateness but it is appropriate based on a society's culture. While for other culture, such as for the Chinese culture, punctuality, that is, being on time is appropriate. Subsequently, if this notion of punctuality is not clarified, then it may lead to misunderstanding or negative cultural perceptions.

Interestingly and of importance, the differences in cultural etiquette brings forth differences in attitude especially in the workplace. Rules, regulations and assumed working hours may be considered as extra hours and requires payment, but sadly it might be perceived as lack of efficiency, but for others it might mean commitment, dedication and achievement.

On a whole, developing a transparent and perfectly good working relationship will without a doubt reduce problems in the future in the conduct of foreign business. Thus, the overall synopsis of the applicability of the element of the different cultural values and the prospect of China the BRI in the Caribbean region should not only be about economic aspects, but should also be about aspects relating to culture, that relates to a society's cultural values, norms, social structures and characteristics. In the end, it is clear that cultural understanding, sensitization and acclimatization are necessary for the prospect of China the BRI to work effectively in the Caribbean region.

7. Conclusion

In sum, China has included the Caribbean region in its global campaign in its construction of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). At the moment, China the BRI is somewhat at a standstill because the entire world has been affected by the

Coronavirus-(COVID-19) pandemic. This has literally affected all countries around the world and reduced the progress of countries benefiting from the prospect of economic projects momentarily.

Despite this, China the BRI is an envisioned project, intended to strengthen economic development and security by “creating a community of common destiny and a community of shared interests” as explained by President Xi Jinping, (Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, 2013). Comprehensible, is that the aspect of culture in relation to the BRI (closer people to people ties) should not only mean carrying out diverse forms of cultural exchange, such as hosting arts festivals, film festivals, music festivals, cultural relics exhibitions, book fairs, radio, television programs, etc. (China Daily, 2019); but it should go deeper in order to develop a clear understanding of a society’s actual way of life, its customs, belief, and to be sensitized to why people do the same thing they might do in a different manner before the construction and operational stage of a project, to avoid conflict. Thus, as outlined, culture is learnt and plays an essential influence in every country’s way of life and also in the development of the potential of its economy.

Noteworthy, China is committed to working together with many countries around the globe to foster the development of the BRI. The region of the Caribbean, is one such area that China is determined to further extend its presence through the BRI, despite the differences in both cultural norms, values, social structures and characteristics. In achieving its strategic aims, China the BRI should not only focus on the economic dimension for success, but it should also focus on the cultural aspect for ease of success in its expansion. In practicality, culture is key to ensure that the BRI evolve in the Caribbean region successfully without conflict.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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