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Editorial

Letter from the Editors: Making International Business Scholarship Matter

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This *AIB Insights* issue presents articles associated with the 2025 Academy of International Business (AIB) theme: Making International Business Scholarship Matter. The issue starts with an introductory editorial by the AIB 2025 Conference Program Chair, Srilata Zaheer. This is followed by articles on MNE provision of meaningful work, MNEs' support of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Indigenous-owned SMEs and sustainable trade, the AIB-UNCTAD strategic alliance, factors affecting foreign entry decisions, and enhancing IB doctoral education.

This special issue of *AIB Insights* focuses on developing actionable insights to make international business scholarship matter, consistent with the theme for the 2025 Academy of International Business conference. This is our fourth issue focused on an AIB Annual Meeting theme, following issues on the 2022 theme of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (Newburry, Rašković, Colakoglu, Gonzalez-Perez, & Minbaeva, 2022), the 2023 theme of International Business and Societal Resilience (Dau, Moore, & Newburry, 2023), and the 2024 theme of the Dynamics of International Business (Newburry & Rose, 2024).

Our issue commences with an editorial by 2025 Academy of International Business (AIB) Annual Meeting Program Chair, Srilata Zaheer, titled, "Choosing to Make International Business Scholarship Matter." Within the editorial, Zaheer draws from four panels from the 2025 AIB that were designed to address four dimensions of the challenge of making IB scholarship matter. These panels examined challenges related to a sense of place (business schools), reclaiming a legacy of engagement, sustainability and influence, and broadening the field to address grand challenges. Drawing insights from these four panels, Zaheer provides guidance on how IB research can meaningfully influence business schools, managerial practice, public policy, and society. Zaheer notes that scholars must make a deliberate choice to make IB scholarship matter, which requires scholars to be "problem-driven, multidisciplinary, societally responsive, and grounded in context." Zaheer also stresses the need to develop mechanisms to disseminate academic research and the applied insights stemming from this research beyond scholars to the stakeholders who can use and benefit from these scholarly efforts. To achieve this will require a collective effort.

The first four papers in this issue address themes related to CSR-related themes, in the first case with respect to Indigenous-owned SMEs and sustainable international trade, followed by an article on MNE provision of meaningful work, and two articles related to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the first article, "Navigating Barriers and Opportunities: Indigenous-owned SMEs Driving Sustainable International Trade," Sui Sui (Toronto Metropolitan University, Canada), Jesse Bull (Florida International University, USA), and Sreya Tahsin (University of Ottawa, Canada) utilize a sample of SMEs from Canada, the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand to demonstrate how Indigenous-owned SMEs promote sustainable international trade. The authors overview endogenous (internal) and exogenous (external) opportunities and challenges faced by Indigenous-owned SMEs in a global context. They show how Indigenous-owned businesses have export opportunities stemming from their foci on sustainability, cultural authenticity, and reciprocity, while they simultaneously face significant challenges, such as financing barriers, infrastructure gaps, and regulatory hurdles. The authors provide practice insights organized at the macro (national policy), meso (organizations and communities), and micro (firm) levels to promote the efforts of Indigenous SMEs to simultaneously expand their global operations while also driving sustainable and inclusive international trade.

Multinational enterprises (MNEs) have the ability to shape cross-border labor conditions, although many opt not to do so. In the paper, "From Pipe Dream to Meaningful Action: How MNEs can Deliver Decent Work," Christiaan Roell (University of New South Wales, Australia), Anna Ocampo (ESADE Business School, Spain), and Mustafa Özbilgin (Brunel Business School, UK) discuss some of the challenges that people – especially members of marginalized communities – face, in terms of accessing decent work, and offer actionable strategies for MNE managers to adopt, including making supply chains more transparent and accountable, implementing inclusive human resource policies, and promoting living wage initiatives.

Addis Gedefaw Birhanu (Emlyon Business School, France) authored our next article, "Unlocking the Potential of EMNEs for Attaining the SDGs in Developing Economies." Birhanu argues that emerging market multinational enterprises (EMNEs) are critical stakeholders in achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in emerging economies. The author notes that EMNEs contribute to the eradication of poverty (SDG 1) by providing employment to a largely an unskilled and semi-skilled workforce. They promote economic growth (SDG 8) and reduce inequalities (SDG 10) by integrating regional and global value chains, particularly for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Moreover, they cultivate innovation (SDG 9) through their access to technologies and ability to leapfrog development stages. Birhanu also notes that EMNEs cannot do this alone, and provides recommendations for other key stakeholders, such as NGOs and governments, to assist in these efforts to impact the SDGs.

In the article, "MNE-SME Engagement for the SDGs," Shameen Prashantham (China Europe International Business School, China) explores how MNEs can collaborate with SMEs to advance the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Using a case study of Bayer's partnership with Ghanaian digital health startup Bisa, Prashantham suggests a shift from traditional "joint value creation" (mutual business benefit) to "shared value creation", where partnerships also deliver measurable social impact. Rooted in the division of entrepreneurial labor framework, the paper proposes a three-part partnering process: (1) leveraging complementary social innovation capabilities (capability dimension), (2) co-opting non-profit actors to enhance collaboration (connectivity dimension), and (3) scaling impact in underserved regions (contextuality dimension). The Bayer–Bisa collaboration enabled mobile health access in Ghana and Senegal, demonstrating how such partnerships can support SDG 3 (Good Health & Well-being) while fostering innovation and impact at scale. The paper offers actionable insights for MNE managers to rethink partnership strategies and emphasizes the importance of ecosystems in achieving SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). This shift from joint to shared value creation offers actionable insights for MNE managers seeking sustainable development impact through innovative partnerships with SMEs.

The next three articles in the special issue relate to some of the primary foci of many international business studies: strategic alliances and foreign market entry. Robert Grosse (Thunderbird School of Global Management, USA) and Ari Van Assche (HEC Montréal, Canada), in their article, "The AIB-UNCTAD Strategic Alliance," examines the long-standing international strategic alliance between the Academy of International Business (AIB) and the United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The authors focus on the collaboration between these organizations in both publishing research and organizing conferences on topics related to foreign direct investment and the role of multinational firms in promoting economic development. Grosse and Van Assche analyze the alliance's history, structure, and longevity, and use this analysis to develop recommendations for other academic organizations regarding the importance of people and the development of explicit coordination mechanisms, along with potential costs and risks associated with their recommendations.

In "From Micro Differences to FDI Strategies: How Chinese SOE and POE Managers Shape Foreign Entry Decisions," Sichang Liu and Daniel Gelsing (Tilburg University, The Netherlands) challenge traditional ownership-based explanations of Chinese firms' FDI by focusing on managerial micro-foundations. The authors argue that individual managers, not just institutional or organizational factors, play a pivotal role in shaping FDI strategies, especially in Chinese State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and Privately Owned Enterprises (POEs). SOE managers, typically career bureaucrats, are often more risk-averse, shaped by political goals, fixed tenures, and promotion systems based on reputation and policy compliance. In contrast, POE managers, often founders or entrepreneurial professionals, tend to be risk-tolerant, motivated by performance-based incentives and long-term business success. The paper introduces a "P+F" framework, linking managerial past experiences and future expectations to explain decision-making in foreign market entry. It also highlights within-group variation (e.g., central vs. municipal SOEs, founder vs. successor CEOs) that leads to different FDI risk profiles. For both scholars and managers, the study offers a powerful lens to rethink internationalization: aligning managerial characteristics with project risk, tailoring governance mechanisms, and acknowledging the human factor in global strategy decisions. Furthermore, the paper offers practical mechanisms for incentive design, project matching, and tenure management, and outlines a future research agenda applying the same micro lens to investigate SOE and POE global strategies.

In the article, "Host Government Incentives and MNE Strategy for Market Entry: The Case of the CHIPS and Science Act and TSMC's U.S. Market Entry," JungYun Han (National Taiwan University, Taiwan) considers the interaction between government incentives and MNEs' strategies by investigating the United States' CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 and the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company's (TSMC) entry into the U.S. While the government incentives were valuable, in terms of mitigating liabilities of foreignness, rigidity in some of TSMC's strategies and processes created barriers to a smooth entry into the U.S. market.

Our final article of the issue is "Sensing, Seizing, Transforming: A Student Perspective on Enhancing IB Doctoral Education for Meaningful Scholarship," by Katernia Boncheva (Cardiff University, UK), Mimisha Gadhia (University of Leeds, UK), Theuns Mans (University of Pretoria, South Africa), Marleth J. Morales Marenco (University of Alabama, USA), Khaled Shukran (Sunway University, Malaysia) and Alexander Tonn (University of St. Gallen, Switzerland). Developed by a geographically and institutionally diverse group of doctoral students, this article uses a dynamic capabilities sensing-seizing-transforming lens to provide advice to support International Business (IB) students in developing their research careers. In particularly, the authors identify seven "scaffolding techniques" related to Professional Development, Crossing Disciplines, International Exposure, Methodological Mastery, Crafting Collaboration, Complementing Training and Mastering Peer Review.

Thank you to all the authors and reviewers who contributed to the development of this issue. Congratulations to everyone involved with planning a fantastic 2025 AIB Conference in Louisville, including Program Chair Srilata Zaheer, Pre-Conference Program Coordinator Sjoerd Beugelsdijk, AIB Executive Director Tunga Kiyak and all the wonderful AIB staff, among many others! Please also look for more content related to the AIB 2025 conference in our annual awards issue, featuring the Peter J. Buckley and Mark Casson AIB Dissertation Award Finalists, and AIB Fellows award recipient interviews. We look forward to seeing everyone again next year at AIB 2026 in Manchester, UK.

Please also see our calls for papers on the 2026 AIB theme, "Generational Shifts and International Business: Navigating Demographic Change in a Diverging World," with submissions due February 28, 2026, "Underrepresented Voices in International Business Research: Insights from Island Economies," with submissions due April 10, 2026, and "The Implications of Digital Globalization in International Business," with submissions due April 30th, 2026. We, of course, welcome and encourage submissions on any topic related to international business on an ongoing basis.

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