

CALL FOR PAPERS

Managing, theorizing, and policymaking in an age of social and political uncertainty

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Special Issue Editors

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The Topic, Its Importance, and Reasons for Having a Special Issue in JIBP

The last fifteen years have brought a fracturing of the relative stability of the post-Cold War world, an era characterized by the ascendance of free markets, consumer choice, globalization, and social progress. In the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11th and the global financial crisis of 2007 to 2009, the “end of history” and supposed triumph of liberal democracy (Fukuyama, 1992) has been replaced by a variety of different ideas and perspectives about how to run a country. This change has seen a move from global super power politics to a much more disjointed global and local political landscape where the mixture of players is more fluid and uncertain. Contemporary threats and alternative viewpoints reflect fragmentation of power and new competing alternatives of politics, economics, and business, at both the global and local levels. This has, to some degree, spawned comparisons with both the recent and far past. However, the issues today are complicated most obviously by threats relating to global demographics, population growth, resources, environmental challenges, and technological change.

At the end of the 20th century, a complacency arose within international business research as to the extent to which socio-political factors impacted upon national economies, policy formation, and global management. To a great extent, the 1990s were a period in which the benefits of the Western liberal democratic market system seemed to be on a winning streak. However, the period post-2001 has highlighted the fractures in the socio-political structure that perhaps always existed, and with increasing intensity revealed the extent to which that viewpoint was invalid. This revealed itself in business realities but also reflected a lack of meaningful and effective theorizing within the international business (and to a lesser extent, economics) literature. None of our theories predicted the fall of the Berlin Wall. None of them predicted the 9/11 attacks. None of them predicted the political fracturing of many Western democracies and the rise of populism (e.g., Devinney & Hartwell, 2019). None of them

predicted the degree to which social media could be weaponized so quickly by individuals and nation-states. In addition, few of our theories – which are based dominantly on institutional-level analyses and structures that are stable and rational – provide the guidance needed for policymakers charged with driving longer term global, national, and regional decisions as well as addressing the day-to-day and functional operational imperatives of policy.

The issue of socio-political disruption is not just an institutional phenomenon. As we have seen with anti-immigration sentiment (Chacón, 2016), citizen tax revolts (Martin, 2008), modern slavery (Crane, 2013), and a host of other social movements, these issues impact the nature of not just stakeholder and institutional theory but the actual management and operations of business. This has arisen not just when CEOs behave badly but also when there are issues of stakeholder conflict across countries or questions on the limits of free speech on social media and employment rights and management of supply chains (e.g., with respect to modern slavery). To date we have limited theoretical and practical guidance on how to address, manage, and understand these phenomena in the context of business and business operations.

Another challenge is that – in many cases – public policy has a direct bearing on the strategic response options available to business. For instance, public policy can mitigate or exacerbate socio-political uncertainty and the impact on business. For this reason, papers that propose new policy directions for addressing today’s complex challenges are particularly encouraged.

As with any set of issues, there are a number of related theories that we as scholars call on to address the management of socio-political movements and the implications for policy (Davis et al., 2005), including focusing on stakeholders (Devinney, 2011; Devinney et al., 2013; Nartey, 2018) and political institutions (e.g., Murtha & Lenway, 1994; Henisz & Swaminathan, 2008; Tihanyi et al., 2012; Doh et al., 2017). While these theories have some resonance, they are limited on four dimensions. First, they focus on the degree to which there is a commonality of purpose that can be found with respect to stakeholder interests – hence, they avoid issues of stakeholder conflict, particularly around complex issues, and how this conflict can come to a head. Second, they operate predominantly in environments where stakeholders are viewed as having degrees of legitimacy and there is a non-violent process of arbitration and resolution – hence, they prove less valuable in autocratic environments in which some stakeholders are declared illegitimate or in cases where physical violence and intimidation are the norm. Third, there is a decided lack of acknowledgement of the “sand pile” nature of socio-political movements and their inherent complexity, in that long-simmering issues can suddenly explode onto the national scene with (seemingly) small provocation; understanding this chaotic nature is crucial for distilling firm and policymaker responses. Finally, existing theories focus on analysis at a level of abstraction that does not provide either predictive or normative guidance, treating institutions as black boxes, equating formal and informal institutions or dismissing the role of informal institutions, and/or ignoring the role of personalities in galvanizing movements. In this sense, much of the work is related to what is easily measured rather than what may be theoretically and practically important.

Hence, we believe there is a need to address these issues via three perspectives.

- First, socio-political uncertainty is ultimately manifest in the behavior/decisions/choices of individuals – e.g., as employees, managers, consumers, policymakers, and social actors. Hence, it is important to have more studies that examine behavior/decisions/choices at the individual level and to examine this across political domains and time. In-depth, historical case studies, perhaps situated in one country but with resonance across countries, which are relevant to today’s environment would be particularly germane. So too would papers utilizing decision theoretic approaches.

- Second, by definition socio-political uncertainty operates in complex environments that exhibit homogeneity and heterogeneity. Hence, studying socio-political uncertainty also requires comparative analysis to disassemble the lessons that can be generalized from those that reflect specific contingencies. Moving beyond comparative capitalism to varieties of political change and their implications on performance would be critical to understand the extent to which politics and society interact locally and globally. Papers that make comparisons between institutional structures, their utilization by political actors, and natural experiments of policy initiatives across countries would be valued in this context.
- Third, the most effective means to build theory in the social sciences is to triangulate multiple methods simultaneously as a means to ensure that the development of theory and its subsequent testing is not simply validating a joint test of theory and method. Hence, it is important to generate research that looks across levels of analysis to understand the individual, the organization, the institutional setting, and the larger global context. Submissions that provide multiple lenses on the phenomenon being studied will ensure greater confidence in how we might learn and provide policy advice going forward.

Papers submitted to the special issue could address local, regional, and global dimensions but should focus on implications of social and political uncertainty on the nature of policymaking and the impact of these policies on key stakeholders in business and society. The sorts of questions being addressed could encompass:

- How do we understand social and political uncertainty and turbulence, its dimensions, and their impact on firms, economies, and key stakeholders?
 - What are alternative ways of characterizing and parameterizing socio-political uncertainty? Are existing characterizations (e.g., Boddewyn, 2016) still appropriate?
 - How are socio-political change and social movements organized, and do they follow a more business-like approach with tangible goals or a more passionate, good versus evil narrative (e.g., Dobbin, 2001)?
 - Companies are increasingly joining social movements aimed at political and social change (e.g., gun control, immigration, etc.). How does corporate activism on divisive issues play out across multiple markets? How do companies pick and choose the issues they support? Are firms simply responding to material stakeholders or are there larger issues at play? And how do the personalities of management drive these changes?
 - How do local and global socio-political actors/agents take advantage of this uncertainty and turbulence?
 - How does such uncertainty influence policymaking, either directly (through legislation) or indirectly (through regulatory change or via implementation of existing regulatory structures)? How does this uncertainty flow through the policymaking process?
 - What are the thresholds for uncertainty; that is, when does socio-political uncertainty move from being bounded and when does it become a phenomenon?
 - What are the economic and business implications of various types of socio-political uncertainty?
 - What are the implications of such uncertainty on long-term institutional structure, governance and efficiency/effectiveness?
- How does this socio-political uncertainty and turbulence impact on the role of locals versus global players?
 - In an “us” versus “them” environment, is the liability of foreignness (Zaheer, 1995) made worse? If so, how is this manifest? How do foreigners and foreign firms deal with the increased cost of the liability (Salomon, 2018)?
- Who takes advantage of this socio-political uncertainty?

- What are the implications for global policymaking, MNEs, and local firms with different local versus global orientations?
- How do local political and social movements impact on the globalization agendas of policy makers?
 - What are the implications for different types of firms? Local versus foreign MNEs? Born Global firms? Local producers?
 - For FDI inflows and outflows?
 - In the face of serious questions about the relative benefits of globalization, are companies considering how their activities increase or decrease economic inequality in the locations where they operate? How does this factor, if at all, into business decisions?
- What is the role of multilateral organizations in this new reality? To what extent does this uncertainty and turbulence reduce the role and importance of multilateralism against unilateralism and isolationism?
- What market and non-market strategies can managers of global and local firms with an international orientation use when faced with socio-political uncertainty? How can they mitigate its potential negative effects (e.g. loss of market share, see King & Soule, 2007).
- What is the role of culture in influencing responses to socio-political uncertainty and turbulence?
 - Do existing theories and methods help us understand and predict the rise of such uncertainty and turbulence and reactions to it by citizens, policymakers and business decision makers?
 - How do demographic differences within and between countries (or regions) explain the attitudes and reactions to socio-political turbulence?
- What can theories from law, political science, sociology, psychology, and other disciplines related to international business inform us about the implications of socio-political uncertainty and turbulence?
 - How might we integrate these ideas into our existing theories to make them more parsimonious and relevant to policymakers and businesses?
- Do our existing viewpoints on institutions and laws help or hinder our understanding of the impact of socio-political turbulence? How might we improve these theories in light of new evidence?

Process Associated with the Special Issue

15 March 2021: Deadline for full paper submission via the Manuscript Central portal for JIBP (<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jibp>)

September-December 2021: Paper Development Workshop for papers under review for the special issue after the first round of reviews

15 March 2022: Deadline for submission of last round of SI papers

1 August 2022: Deadline for final acceptance of SI papers to be included in the SI

December 2022: SI published

The Guest Editors

The guest editors for this Special Issue bring a complementary mix of skills and backgrounds in terms of (a) proven theoretical and empirical skills in culture research, and (b) editorial experience.

Timothy M. Devinney, Professor of International Business at Alliance Manchester Business School, has significant skills and experience in theory development, econometric modelling, experimental and questionnaire design. He has published more than a dozen books and 100

articles in leading journals including *J. International Business Studies*, *Management Science*, *the Journal of Business*, *The Academy of Management Review*, *Organization Science*, *California Management Review*, *Management International Review*, *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Management*, *Long Range Planning*, *Journal of Business Ethics* and the *Strategic Management Journal*. In 2008 he was the first (and only) recipient in management of an Alexander von Humboldt Research Award and was Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Fellow, and was elected a Fellow of the Academy of International Business. Timothy also has extensive editorial experience. He was the co-editor of *The Academy of Management Perspectives*, co-editor of the *Advances in International Management* series (Emerald Publishers), an Associate Editor of *Management Science* and the Director of the International Business & Management Network of SSRN. He is on the editorial board of more than 12 of the leading international journals.

Christopher A. Hartwell is Professor of Financial Systems Resilience at Bournemouth University, Professor of International Management at Kozminski University in Poland, Visiting Professor at the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA), and Fellow and former President of the Center for Social and Economic Research (CASE) in Warsaw. A leading scholar on the evolution of economic institutions. Dr. Hartwell's interests are in institutional development, especially the interplay between financial institutions and other political and economic institutions and how firms deal with institutional volatility. Over his career, Professor Hartwell has advised governments in Kazakhstan, Armenia, Russia, Poland, Tonga, Kosovo, and numerous other countries around the world. Dr. Hartwell holds a PhD in Economics from the Warsaw School of Economics, a Master's in Public Policy from Harvard, and a BA in Political Science and Economics from the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of *Two Roads Diverge: The Transition Experience of Poland and Ukraine* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), as well as *Institutional Barriers in the Transition to Market: Examining Performance and Divergence in Transition Economies* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

Jennifer Oetzel is the Dean's Faculty Fellow and Professor of International Business at American University's Kogod School of Business. Her research focuses on understanding how firms manage risk. More specifically, Professor Oetzel examines how businesses can best manage violent conflict, natural disasters, and other discontinuous risks and how promoting economic and social development, and, in some cases peacebuilding, can minimize business risk and positively contribute to the local/regional community and the overall business environment. Recent work has appeared in the *Strategic Management Journal*, *Organization Science*, *Journal of International Business*, and the *Journal of International Business Policy*, among other outlets. In 2018 she won the Emerald Literati Award from Emerald Publishing for a "Highly Commended" article. In 2015 she won a Best Paper Award at the Academy of Management Meeting, was a finalist for Haynes Prize for the Most Promising Scholar at the Award Academy of International Business. She has been nominated twice at the Strategic Management Society (SMS) for best paper awards. Professor Oetzel also serves on the Editorial Boards for the *Strategic Management Journal*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of International Business Policy*, *Journal of World Business*, and *Business & Society*, where she was formerly an Associate Editor.

Paul M. Vaaler is the John and Bruce Mooty Chair in Law & Business at the Carlson School of Management at the University of Minnesota. Prior to that he was on the faculty of Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy and the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign) School of Business. His research and teaching interests lie at the intersection of

business, law and politics: understanding long-term performance stability trends and their competition (antitrust) policy implications for firms in the US; understanding how migrants from developing countries remit money and ideas to fund, found and grow new businesses in developing countries with poor legal infrastructure; and how elections change the attractiveness of new democracies for lending and investment. Professor Vaaler is the author and editor of numerous books as well as journal articles published in the *Academy of Management Journal*, *Economics Letters*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of International Management*, *Journal of International Money and Finance*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Journal of World Business*, *Organization Science*, *Review of Development Economics*, *Strategic Management Journal*, *Strategy Science*, and other academic journals. He serves on the editorial boards of the *Global Strategy Journal* and the *International Journal of Strategic Change Management*. He is a Senior Editor at *Journal of International Business Policy*. He is a Consulting Editor of the *Journal of World Business*. He is Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Social Science Research Network Global Business Issues electronic journal. He received his B.A. in History from Carleton College, his M.A. in Philosophy, Politics and Economics from Oxford University where he studied as a Rhodes Scholar, his J.D. from Harvard Law School, and his Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota.

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