



كلية محمد بن راشد  
للإدارة الحكومية  
MOHAMMED BIN RASHID  
SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT



ABU DHABI  
GLOBAL MARKET  
سوق أبوظبي العالمي

**Academy of International Business (AIB)**

**The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Chapter**

**7th Annual Conference (Abu Dhabi & Dubai)**

**1<sup>st</sup> Call for Papers**

**Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government, Dubai, UAE**

**Abu Dhabi Global Market, Abu Dhabi, UAE**

**Dates: 7 to 10 December 2021**

## ***“Exploring Resilience and Agility within International Business in the MENA Region”***

The Academy of International Business MENA International Conference builds upon its 2019 conference theme of “Sustaining the Sustainable Agenda” Exploring Critical Multilayered Sustainable International Business Practices in the MENA Region”, by aiming to explore two very important and topical areas of “resilience” and “agility” in a MENA context.

From an international business context, the last two decades have witnessed a phenomenal rise of multinational enterprises from emerging countries (EMNEs). This trend is mainly due to increased globalisation and liberalisation of these emerging countries leading to a more competitive playing field resulting in more inward and outward FDI. Despite the fact that China and India have, over the years, made significant economic and technological progress, various recent economic challenges and political factors have seen Chinese outward FDI decline by 18% over the last two years (UNCTAD, 2019). Whereas emerging countries as a whole have seen a 10% fall in outward FDI, investments from the Middle East have reached their highest level of \$49 billion in 2018 (from \$39 billion in 2017), which is now equivalent to 40% of current Chinese outward FDI! Leading Middle Eastern countries, such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Turkey have significantly increased FDI in technology, finance, and infrastructure industries.

However, the MENA countries have had their own share of challenges. Since the economic crisis in 2008, the subsequent Arab Spring in 2010, and ongoing conflict in various countries, several

MENA countries have been trying to transform their economies to become more diversified, competitive, and innovative with the view to allow increased internationalization of their EMNEs as well as becoming more attractive to inward foreign investors. With the aim of transforming their countries into competitive, diversified and responsible participants in the global economy, several governments in the MENA region have managed to refocus on economic development. For example, the UAE is hosting the forthcoming Expo 2020 (in October 2021- April 2022), which has brought with it a number of policy measures to spur on economic development and the location attractiveness of the UAE. These efforts have called for government policy initiatives, which encompasses environmental, economic, cultural, and social standards, in order to foster sustainable business activities, which can help EMNEs become more resilient and agile.

According to UNCTAD (2019), the overall prospects for inward and outward FDI is positive for several main MENA countries. This is mainly due to the relatively favourable economic conditions as well as efforts to improve the business and investment climate. However, the current trade tensions, ongoing conflict, and other uncertainties calls for MNEs to be cautious and invest in their capabilities in order to become more resilient and agile.

While the existing International Business literature has focused predominantly on China and India (Buckley et al. 2007; Luo and Tung 2007; Gaur et al. 2018; Khanna and Palepu. 2004; Aulakh et al. 2016; Contractor et al. 2014; Ciftci 2019), there are far fewer studies on the MENA region, both as a host to and a source of foreign investment (see Budhwar, Pereira, Mellahi and Singh, forthcoming, for a review of the limited research). Our current understanding of the MENA countries is mostly from analysis at the aggregate level, either cross/within-country level or industry level. However, better access to primary and secondary data sources are allowing researchers to delve into the many multi-dimensional factors that characterise EMNEs and the MENA countries in their effort to become more resilient and agile. Therefore, this highlights the urgent need to research the many unique and complex characteristics that impact MNEs in the MENA region and try to uncover the MNE strategies to varied challenges to become more resilient and agile.

Resilience and agility are the most sought-after tools and strategies at individual, team, and organisational level(s) in the context of a dynamic and complex international business environment, which calls for resilient & agile characteristics (Hartmann, Weiss, Newman & Hoegl, 2019). Organisational leaders and managers who operate in the cross-cultural competitive business environment should possess key personal resources, such as resilience (Shin, Taylor, & Seo, 2012). Furthermore, several recent studies suggest that agile and resilient employees are open to change (Wanberg & Banas, 2000), engage in knowledge co-creation (Acharya, Singh, Pereira, & Singh, 2018), possess high intent to start business i.e. are entrepreneurial (Bullough, Renko, & Myatt, 2014), and adjust well in a host (foreign) country context (Singh, Pereira, Mellahi, & Collings, 2019). However, the challenge of firstly, fostering and then motivating, managing, and retaining resilient and agile talent remains a key challenge for organisations operating in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and hence calls for a multilevel & multi-country research inquiry.

Understanding how MNEs handle and overcome the unique political, religious, cultural and commercial environments present in the MENA region becomes critical for the global success of MNEs in remaining resilient and agile in the face of uncertainty. Combined with the efforts of EMNEs from the MENA region to increasingly engage in outward investments offers a rich contextual testbed for theorising and analysing the strategic role that the MENA region can play in the global business community.

Therefore, the focus of this conference is to offer new insights into the unique challenges and opportunities that the MENA presents for MNEs. More specifically, it seeks to bring forward insights about resilient and agile international business practices in the MENA region. We welcome conceptual and empirical papers that employ quantitative, qualitative, and/ or mixed-methods approaches to address one of the following topics or other related themes, within the four broad tracks:

**Track 1: International Management (Track Chair: Dr Yama Temouri, Khalifa University, Abu Dhabi, UAE)**

1. FDI, mode of entry choice, and internationalisation in MENA
2. International Marketing and creating global brands in MENA
3. International relations between MENA countries
4. International/Islamic Finance and Banking
5. International entrepreneurship and family business in the MENA region
6. Crisis management (including climate change, refugees, pandemics etc.)

**Track 2: International Human Resources and Human Capital Management (Track Chair: Professor Beverley Dawn Metcalfe, ESA Business School, Lebanon)**

1. HRM in the MENA region
2. Cross/intra cultural management in a MENA context
3. Expatriate and international mobility and careers in MENA
4. Knowledge management in the MENA region
5. Employment, employability, and entrepreneurship in the MENA region
6. Indigenous management practices in MENA
7. Women studies (including diversity and inclusion) in the MENA region and beyond.

**Track 3: International Policy Relations and Historical Studies (Track Chair: Professor Vijay Pereira, NEOMA Business School, France and AIB MENA Vice President)**

1. Regional policies, NGOs, and governance in MENA
2. Government Policy and national competitiveness in MENA
3. MENA-Africa relations: past and present trends
4. Research methods in international business in the MENA context
5. Enhancing learning ecosystem in MENA
6. MENA Business history

**Track 4: International Sustainability and Responsibility (Track Chair, Dr Vikash Ramiah, University of Wollongong, Dubai Campus, UAE)**

1. Corporate social responsibility in MENA

2. Building Cities of the Future: Sustainability, security, and migration in MENA
3. Creating and enabling ecosystems and policies for Born Global/Health/Education/Social in the MENA region
4. Social Entrepreneurship and Sustainability in MENA
5. Social media and digital divide in MENA
6. The changing landscape of energy sector in the MENA region

Please note that those articles submitted for this conference will be in consideration for either of the two special journal issues (ABDC, ranked A and B) (*more information forthcoming*)

PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE WILL BE AN ONLINE PAPER DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP in collaboration with the AIB Fellow(s) (August/ September- TBC). There will also be an opportunity to meet the editors of top-tier journals online.

Additional activities during the conference include ADGM, World Expo 2021, tourist attractions: Grand Mosque/ Louvre, etc.

A special issue of journal (upcoming) First preference can be given to AIB-MENA submissions.

Contact: Please contact Professor Vijay Pereira at [vijay.pereira@port.ac.uk](mailto:vijay.pereira@port.ac.uk) and cc: AIB MENA Chapter [mena@aib.msu.edu](mailto:mena@aib.msu.edu) to clarify or for details about the AIB MENA 2021 conference.

Conference Website: <https://mena.aib.world/>

Membership joining fees: <https://www.aib.world/membership/new-members/>

### **Important Dates**

**Paper & Panel Submission system opens: 1st July 2021**

**Paper & Panel Submission system closes: 30<sup>th</sup> August 2021**

**Paper Decision Notification for online: By latest 15th September 2021**

**Registration opens: 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021**

**Early Bird Registration ends: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021**

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