

Critical Perspectives on International Business in Africa

Special issue call for papers from critical perspectives on international business (cpoib)

By the end of this decade, the majority of African countries would have celebrated their 50th independence anniversary. The world has been carefully watching developments on the African continent during this half-century journey, and perceptions broadly oscillate between optimism and pessimism. Rapid socioeconomic gains achieved during the early decades of independence heralded hopeful predictions that the continent was on the march towards prosperity. This Afro-optimistic promise has alternately given way to Afro-pessimism as respective African countries have faltered and encountered difficulties in the lead up to the turn of the century. References to a 'hopeless continent' (The Economist, 2001) tend to highlight unfavourable business environments, weak institutions, and limited opportunities (Asiedu, 2004).

Rapid economic growth in recent decades and the resilience of African economies in the wake of global recessions have seen the pendulum shifting back towards optimism. Investors and observers increasingly speculate on the promise Africa has for global economic development. Positive perceptions of new and emerging opportunities on the continent underscore this logic. These opportunities are occurring against a backdrop of new developments within Africa which include, *inter alia*, the emergence of a sizeable middle-class with enhanced purchasing power, the emergence of multinational enterprises (MNEs) from within the region, the evolution of multi-lateral and international trade and investment agreements, and the rising levels of both inward and outward foreign direct investment flows. Alongside these shifts is a widespread transformation of structural, economic, political and social institutions currently underway across numerous African countries. New and rapidly growing trade and investment links are evident between African economies and new emerging economies such as China and India.

A resurgent scholarship on international business in Africa has resulted, focusing variously on the motives and determinants of foreign direct investment (Naudé and Krugell, 2007; Asiedu, 2006); the role of government policies, institutions and corruption on foreign direct investment (Musila and Sigue, 2006), knowledge transfer, and human resource practices within multinational corporations (Horwitz, 2015; Osabutey, William and Debrah, 2014). These and related studies present mixed and sometimes conflicting findings.

What this body of scholarship may tend to share is the unequivocal acceptance of the legitimacy of existing paradigms to explain current shifts being played out across Africa. Critical perspectives of international business in Africa therefore remain few and under the research

radar. This widespread acceptance and application of established models may, in particular contexts, limit the ability to critically probe and analyse the current shifts in order to generate fresh insights.

For instance, given the diversity and pluralism of political, economic, sociocultural, and institutional systems among African countries, what are the implications of recent foreign investment flows on existing management practices or inter-state power relations in Africa? Do these represent new possibilities or are these simply a recreation of previous trends? Additionally, in which new ways are the current national, regional and global institutions influencing the international business environment in Africa? How are colonial legacies shaping investment flows in recent times? To what extent might post-colonial African countries be experiencing new forms of colonialism (neo-colonialism) through inward FDI? How does the nature and role of inward FDI from Asia (China and India for example) differ from that originating from the EU, USA or Japan? In which ways do international business and trade fuel conflict and the erosion of human rights in Africa?

The assumption of African homogeneity tends to obfuscate the realities of diversity and complexity as well as limit impactful research. Traditional models of inquiry may not necessarily explain these unanswered questions and leave us less knowledgeable about the motives, practices and implications of international business in Africa. There is however a growing research interest in critical perspectives on international business in Africa (e.g. see Amankwah-Amoah, 2016; Ado and Su, 2016; Ayres, 2012; de Jonge, 2016; Eweje, 2006; Konijn and Tulder, 2015). Although there has been a growing body of research on Africa, it has been suggested that this needs to be marshalled towards a better narrative and understanding of how firms behave, the role of leaders and the management of indigenous enterprises (Amankwah-Amoah, 2016).

This special issue on critical perspectives on international business in Africa is therefore timely. Following the mission of *cpoib* (Roberts and Dörrenbächer, 2016, 2012) this issue supports critically reflexive discussion of the nature and impact of international business activity in Africa on individuals, specific communities, the environment, the economy and society from inter-, trans-, and multi-disciplinary perspectives. The special issue seeks to contribute to IB and related literature, and generate useful information and analysis for business educators, management practitioners and policy makers. Moreover, this special issue aims to provide a platform for scholars to rethink and further develop integrative as well as novel IB frameworks that are relevant in the African context.

Researchers are invited to consider and address these critical IB issues in the African context from a variety of perspectives. Scholars can identify and examine common issues in Africa as well as highlight country-specific issues. We encourage scholars to apply a wide variety of rigorous methodological approaches drawing on the latest research in this respect. Manuscripts may cover wider perspectives as long as the papers are in line with the broad theme of the proposed special issue: Guiding areas of useful contributions may include, but are not restricted to:

1. *Theory of international business*
 - I What is the influence of western IB theory and management practices within international business in Africa?
 - I i Are there African-specific perspectives which non-African firms could learn from? Are western business practices appropriate within African multinational firms?

2. *Institutions*
 - i. What are the implications of the wide-ranging diversity of national institutional and governance systems within African countries on foreign direct investment flows and management practices?

 - ii. In which new ways are national, regional (African Union/ ECOWAS/EAC/SADC) or international institutions (World Bank/ IMF/UN) influencing the international business environment in Africa? How is regional integration shaping the reality of international business within Africa?

 - iii. How are perceptions of fragility, corruption or instability influencing the dynamics of international business in Africa?

 - iv. In which ways do colonial legacies influence flows of foreign direct investment (FDI) to Africa? To what extent do the recent flows of foreign investment into Africa constitute neo-colonialism?

 - v. Is there a new narrative to the new Afro-Sino relations? Is there another story behind resource-seeking motives of Chinese MNEs in Africa?

3. *Bottom of the pyramid*
 - i. Which are the opportunities and challenges that international business may encounter in developing new products and markets to service consumers at the so-called 'bottom of the pyramid' within African countries?

4. *Risk*
 - i. What are the implications of the contemporary risks of doing business in Africa, including terrorism, domestic insurgencies and political interference?

Submission process and deadlines:

Submissions should follow the author guidelines for critical perspectives on international business which can be found at: <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/cpoib.htm>

The submission deadline is **30th November, 2016**, with initial reviewing to be completed by **1st March, 2017**, revisions due by **30th June 2017**, final decisions by **31st August, 2017**, and anticipated publication in **2018**.

Submissions should be via the Scholar One Manuscripts online submission system (<http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/cpoib>). Enquiries about the special issue should be directed to the special issue guest editors Dr Richard B. Nyuur (Richard.Nyuur@northumbria.ac.uk) or Dr Roseline Wanjiru (Roseline.Wanjiru@northumbria.ac.uk) or Dr Joseph Amankwah-Amoah (Joseph.Amankwah-Amoah@bristol.ac.uk) or Dr Simeon E. Ifere (sifere@unilag.edu.ng).

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Bios of Guest Authors

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