

The Multinational Business Review

Special Issue on

The Arab Spring and the multinational enterprise: challenges and opportunities

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About the special issue

The Multinational Business Review (MBR) invites the submissions of articles that fit the theme, "The Arab Spring and the multinational enterprise: challenges and opportunities".

The Middle East in general and the Arab world in particular have experienced significant changes as witnessed by recent events in the region where extant institutions have been challenged. Coupled with a growing demand for democratic polities across countries, the Arab Spring has created volatility in the external environment and in the nation-state institutional environments, i.e. the set of fundamental political, social, and legal ground rules that establishes the basis for production, exchange and distribution (Davis and North, 1971, pp. 6-7). The Middle East is clearly at a crossroads.

This confluence of forces (political, social, economic and cultural) represents unique challenges and opportunities for firms doing business in the region, both home-grown and foreign multinational enterprises (MNEs). As Zahra recently highlighted, the Arab Middle East is an understudied area of the world that represents fertile ground for empirical research, especially for international business scholars (Zahra, 2011). This special issue of *MBR* addresses the dearth of scholarship in and about the region. Its main objective is to encourage academic inquiry that examines meaningful questions related to how the Arab Spring has changed – for better or worse – the business environment for MNEs in the region.

Topics for this special issue can include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The current revolutions in the Arab Middle East are expected to lower the grip of the government on various resources of production.

This is likely to open up new opportunities for MNEs in the region. What opportunities do the current changes in the Arab Middle East provide MNEs?

- The Arab Spring has highlighted the power of technological advances and the role of social media both to diffuse information and to increase political, economic, and cultural transparency. Newly-opened societies tend to attract more firm-level activity and, thus, competition. As the Middle East continues to gain the attention of the outside world, how will these forces of change influence MNEs? What impact is this likely to have on the performance of domestic and multinational firms in the region?
- The current upheaval in the region is assumed, in part, to be a function of significant underlying cultural changes that, in turn, may generate still more cultural modifications to the status quo. What is the role of culture *vis-à-vis* investment, trade, and MNE activity in the region?
- The Middle East falls behind many other regions of the world with respect to aggregate levels of FDI inflows, with the exception of a few countries such as Saudi Arabia. What do we know about current FDI? What types of companies, industries, home-countries represent the area's FDI? More important, how will the forces of change that led to the Arab Spring make the region more competitive for attracting FDI by MNEs from around the world?
- On a similar note, prior to the Arab Spring a large amount of direct and indirect investment owned by wealthy Arab residents was invested outside the region in places such as the USA and Europe. Will a post-Arab Spring Middle East meet the necessary and sufficient conditions to entice higher levels of FDI flows from native firms to remain within the region; and/or to foment the creation of "born-Arab" multinational corporations that seek to compete outside the bounds of the region?



- The Middle East has long been identified with a lack of strong institutions, i.e. institutional voids. These range from autocratic polities to weak property rights regimes, unenforceable contracts, and corruption. In what ways have weak institutions influenced MNEs in the region? Similarly, what is the potential impact of institutional change in the region on MNEs?

This is not an exclusive list. We welcome creative manuscripts that use an empirical (quantitative/qualitative), conceptual, or case study methodology. Papers that contribute to extending theory or suggest new theoretical approaches are encouraged. Our goal is to begin an ongoing conversation that will foster serious academic investigation regarding the opportunities and challenges for MNEs in a region of the world that is experiencing important societal changes.

Guidelines and submission information

- All papers will be subjected to double-blind peer review.
- Authors should follow *MBR* guidelines for constructing and formatting the title page and manuscript at: www.emeraldinsight.com/products/journals/author_guidelines.htm?id=mbr
Note that authors' names should appear on the title page only.

- The first page of the manuscript should include title, abstract, and keywords.
- Submit online an electronic copy of the two separate documents (the title page and the manuscript) as a word-file to: <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/tmbr>
- The review process (desk review and first round) will take approximately three to four months.
- Questions about the special issue can be directed to the guest co-editors: Morris Kalliny (kalliny@slu.edu) and Candace Martinez (cmarti58@slu.edu).

References

- Davis, L. and North, D. (1971), *Institutional Change and American Economic Growth*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK.
- Zahra, S. (2011), "Doing research in the (new) Middle East: sailing with the wind", *Academy of Management Perspectives*, Vol. 25 No. 4, pp. 6-21.