

Diana Madibekova
Postgraduate Researcher (2020-2024)
University of Liverpool Management School
Diana.Madibekova@liverpool.ac.uk

Understanding the connection and casual mechanism between Business and Peace

Abstract

While the idea that economic prosperity fosters peace and lessens conflict is old, the field of business and peace within management studies is new.

Despite the field being around twenty years within the academic scholarship, there has been very little attention to consider examination of how businesses impact issues of peace and conflict and how their operations help or hinder those dynamics. The casual mechanism proposed by Fort and Schipani (2007) argues that economic development, support for rule of law, sense of community within diverse teams and two-track diplomacy are what business for peace is about that was empirically tested by Katsos and Alkafaji (2019) who subsequently suggest that the field remains on a delicate footing without the clarity of the envisaged nature and extent of claimed business impacts on matters of peace and conflict, and this theoretical shortcoming that has practical and policy implications needs a remedy. Two seminal empirical studies that have been conducted using qualitative approach suggest that there is still a need for more qualitative research and have prioritized the peace part as, despite the works being published in management journals such as *Journal of Business Ethics* and *Business & Society*, were written by scholars from development studies (Miklian & Bickel, 2020) and law and ethics (Katsos and Alkafaji, 2019) background. Semi-structured interviews with elite informants (company managers) will be used for this research. Interviewing corporate elites has its own methodological challenges such as access, power dynamics, authenticity of information provided by the participants; nevertheless, the usage and importance of elite interviewing is self-evident: the information offered by elite informants is crucial for building and evaluating theories for certain type of questions (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019).

The existing literature is unclear about what exactly it is that firms do that results in peace. Is it that they create symbolism through their activities of shaping public discussion on climate change, equality and human rights? Is it that they bring people of different nationalities into cross-cultural teams or employ diverse managerial staff? Is it the creation of cross-border economic interdependency that makes countries more unwilling to go to war? Is it something else? Therefore, the central question is how can we better understand the connection between business and peace?

In attempting to identify the precise interdependence and connection between business and peace, this research has relevance for organisations operating in developed

and developing markets, both concerning the way geopolitical and conflict risk is managed as well as in relation to their impact on wider social cohesion in a post-crisis world. The attempt is to develop a study that will travel to a variety of audiences and construct a contribution to knowledge that is sophisticated, insightful, reasoned. In summary, this study may be interpreted as the starting point for a significant evolution of the business and peace research.

Keywords: business and peace, conflict risk, qualitative methods, semi-structured (elite) interviewing

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