



Business and Peacebuilding

PEACE, BUSINESS, AND DEMOCRACY

**CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY IN PEACE AND
GOVERNANCE**

Julia Croce



ROUTLEDGE

Peace, Business, and Democracy

This research volume explores the intricate relationship between business, peace, and democracy, focusing on the critical role businesses play in influencing these processes. It explores why and how businesses can contribute to peace- and democracy-building, examining their potential both as benefactors providing essential services and as beneficiaries exploiting local fragility. The book offers a unique management perspective on these complex, long-term processes, challenging traditional views on business responsibility. Readers will gain a comprehensive understanding of the positive and negative spillovers of business activities on peace and democracy. The book takes a pragmatist approach to theory building, linking core management concepts with real-world applications. It delves into the ethical and practical foundations of business responsibilities and assesses new ways of thinking about corporate social responsibility (CSR), Business for Peace (B4P), and Business and Human Rights (BHR). It also explores the political role of businesses in advancing sustainable peace, inclusive practices, transparent governance, and sustainable development. This book is essential for researchers, practitioners, civil servants in multilateral organisations, and advanced students in the fields of corporate social responsibility, business for peace, business ethics, and business and human rights studies. It provides valuable insights for those interested in the intersection of business practices and critical social goals, offering a comprehensive examination of how businesses can positively impact peace and democratic developments.

Julia Croce is an academic specialising in business ethics and business and human rights. Her work focuses on the growing responsibility of businesses in defining and respecting peace and democracy in fragile and conflict-affected societies. In 2024, she was honoured with the prestigious Prix William Rappard. More recently, Julia has been a research fellow at the Albert Hirschman Centre on Democracy at the Geneva Graduate Institute. Prior to starting her academic career, she served as a consultant at the United Nations on projects aimed at strengthening sustainable trade policies and worked in multinational corporations in the field of sustainability. Julia received a PhD in Management from the University of Geneva, Switzerland.

Business and Peacebuilding

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The *Business and Peacebuilding* series seeks to deliver applied and theoretical knowledge of the complex and shifting role of the private, corporate and civil-society sectors in enhancing peacebuilding. This series is designed to encourage cross-disciplinary approaches and to break down research silos, showcasing perspectives on business and peacebuilding through a broad array of strategies and delivery mechanisms. These may include: corporate social responsibility, business and human rights, socially responsible investment, participation in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, environmental, social and corporate governance guidelines, leadership studies, supply chain management, conflict-sensitive business practice, and indigenous studies.

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Peace, Business, and Democracy

Corporate Responsibility in Peace
and Governance

Julia Croce

First published 2026
by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

and by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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ISBN: 978-1-032-94010-6 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-94304-6 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-57004-2 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003570042

Typeset in Galliard
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

From the very little details you understand the human being that is in front of you.

But, it is the sky under we are born that influences the destiny.

The truth, how questionable is the truth?

Everyone has their own truth.

I have mine, and it is still not exhaustive for me and my sky.



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Abbreviations

ACP	Africa, Caribbean and Pacific
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Agreement
AGOA	The African Growth and Opportunity Act
AOM	Academy of Management
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
B4P	Business for Peace
BHR	Business and Human Rights
BDS	Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions
CBI	Caribbean Basin Initiative
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CHR	Commission on Human Rights
COP	UN Climate Change Conferences
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CPTPP	Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership
CTE	Committee on Trade and Environment
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EBA	Everything but Arms
e.g.	exempli gratia (for example)
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Global Network Initiative
GPA	Global Political Agreement
GVC	Global Value Chain
HRC	Human Rights Council
i.e.	id est (that is)
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund

MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MFN	Most Favoured Nation
MNC	Multinational Corporation
MNE	Multinational Enterprise
MSI	Multi-stakeholder Initiatives
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Area
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisation
NLD	National League for Democracy
NPRC	National Peace and Reconciliation Commission
NUG	National Unity Government
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
OHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PAC	Political action committee
PBNZ	Peacebuilding Network of Zimbabwe
PCSR	Political Corporate Social Responsibility
PDF	People's Defence Force of Myanmar
PRR	Protect, Respect and Remedy
PTA	Preferential Trade Agreement
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
RTA	Regional Trade Agreement
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
TBT	Technical Barriers to Trade
TPRM	Trade Policy Review Mechanism
TRIPS	Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP FI	United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative
UNGP	United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights
UNGC	United Nations Global Compact
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
US	United States
URSS	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WBCSD	World Business Council for Sustainable Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WTO	World Trade Organization
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front
ZDAMWU	Zimbabwe Diamond Allied Minerals Workers Union

Preface and Acknowledgements

This book was inspired by the journey I have taken thus far. Often, I have seen the paradox of industrialisation against poverty, alienation, and exploitation, as well as the principles of peace and democracy—which are often taken for granted—simply neglected or regarded as treasures. When an employee in the mining sector in Zimbabwe told me the idea of peace as a process that starts inside a human being and that spreads in society, I thought that perhaps this would be the key for having a more democratic global governance. Beliefs, values, and ethics can flourish in society only if each of us cultivates them within ourselves. Peace and democracy belong to those beliefs and ethical values that make all human beings equal and free. However, this is not always true. All human beings do not have the privilege of being considered as equal and free. Even in the face of technical advancement, interconnectedness, and seeming riches, equality and freedom are nonetheless privileges: the bravery of freedom is expensive. Single stories tell us about daily challenges faced by families, communities, and businesses. I have often wondered what it is that makes us free, a question that arguably deserves to be asked of the thousands of Starbucks baristas who went on strike during this cold winter in New York. Baristas reportedly felt that their remuneration was insufficient for what they perceived to be more demanding labour, and they were worried to see more hostile clients. Their actions remind us that tensions between employees and executives can arise from a hierarchical business paradigm. The traditional top-down method, which tends to widen the gap between employees and top managers, may be replaced by a new management strategy based on business resilience. This disconnect, which frequently gives the impression that managers do not care about their staff, is what causes psychological pain and affects how workers behave. When corporate leaders allow democratic ideals to take precedence, it is possible to lessen the hierarchical distance in the workplace. Although this equation is complex, there are real-world examples.

As I look back to when I started this book, peace and democracy have become more relevant than ever. Contemporary societies are increasingly

affected by political, social, and economic polarisation with consequent effects on the erosion of fundamental human rights. At the start of 2025, the *New York Times* reported several crises confronting democratic systems—including institutional, economic, and cultural challenges. Peace negotiations between Ukraine and Russia, the conflict in the Gaza Strip, the global COVID-19 pandemic, the military coup in Myanmar, the instability of the Sahel region, the increasing racism in Western liberal democracies, the controversial interest over Greenland, the fall of Maduro in Venezuela, these all highlight the urgency for more public debate on the essence of peace and what democracy entails: How can we support democratic developments and requests for peace and freedom? The utopia of peace and democracy is what drives thousands of migrants every day to come to Europe or the United States from countries where the democratic model has failed or was simply put on hold by authoritarians. Though conceptions of freedom and equality may vary, the aspiration remains alive—as exemplified by Martin Luther King’s vision.

Regional approaches to peace and democracy have emerged as a result of the differences between established Western democracies and newly emerging “new democracies.” Multinational corporations are reorienting the geography of their operations along regional lines, rather than global ones. Since universal solutions are failing, approaches must be adapted to particular circumstances. The “wind of unity and global solutions” that accompanied the fall of the Berlin Wall today seems out of date, and geopolitical tensions seem to be dividing the world. The emergence of nationalism in Western democracies reveals how fragile democracy is and reflects many of the conflicts and paradoxes of contemporary thought. This struggle can be traced back to the nature of democracy that requires commitment to be renewed every day. Peace also requires unlimited commitment by the political community, with the difference that there can be peace also in authoritarian regimes—a “silent deprivation.” While peace seems to have an apolitical nature, this is only at the superficial level. Western democracies understand peace as a wider socio-economic process where a central role is played by civil society. Business, certainly, as an integral part of civil society, has the power to affect peace and democracy. It can be part of the political system, lobby governmental institutions, and improve communities, societies, and the lives of employees. It can give freedom, but also take life (e.g. the collapse of Rana Plaza). The assumption that business has such power can be substantiated in the business-centrism of our contemporary societies. The adage *Homo Faber Fortunae suae*—“man is the architect of his own fate”—warrants scrutiny, as our destinies are shaped by profound social and historical forces, often reflected in one’s work. We recognise ourselves with our work. While this may be true for Western countries, in the least developed countries, notions of business, employment, and employees assume different meanings. Among

female employees in the mining sector in Zimbabwe whom I interviewed, going to work represents discrimination and isolation. Conversely, for small business owners in Myanmar, their businesses and employees represent a way to resist the political pressure. Business occurs at the confluence of peace and democracy, where these microcosmos of meanings, experiences, and perceptions intensify different outcomes. In Western countries, business may affect peace and democracy differently than in countries afflicted by conflict and institutional fragility. Business leaders frequently face financial, ethical, and technological dilemmas, requiring sound judgement under pressure. Prioritising peace and democracy in corporate responsibility initiatives is a long-term commitment, conferring a moral dimension to business decisions and enhancing their persuasive power. Dreams—visions—are necessary for citizens to protect equality and freedom. This is what makes democracy real. Business leaders have the duty to reflect in society these values. They represent the role of models for young managers, students, and families, who view them as a beacon of hope for future success. An insecure approach to protecting and spreading democratic values by business, it may lead to a divided and fragmented society.

Through the years of my doctoral studies and in the last year, I began to put together pieces of this puzzle by assembling various elements and processes among peace, business, and democracy. In finding each piece, I attempted to view it from a general perspective as well as from the particular perspective of fragile and conflict-affected societies. This inductive process has allowed me to develop a holistic view: How can we support democratic developments and requests for peace and freedom in contemporary societies? This book reflects on the results of this ongoing process and it focuses on the positive duties of business to promote peace and democracy in contemporary societies. It aspires to underpin and inform constructive and strategic forms of engagement by business in peace- and democracy-building, with the aim to develop “critical” methods of enquiry. Yet, we know little about the extent to which business can influence these processes. Throughout the chapters of this book, I explore the multifaceted nature of peace and democracy through a managerial perspective. While approaching the responsibility of businesses and long-term patterns of their influence towards peace and democracy may be theoretically and practically an unexplored field, it lays a foundation for further collaborative efforts between practitioners and researchers to understand these dynamics and business-political activities in today’s society.

Many individuals have contributed with valuable insights, critiques, and encouragement. In 2016, I first arrived in Geneva to attend a summer school at the University of Geneva. I was then recruited for an internship at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. I thank my former supervisor and my colleagues at the Africa and LDCs Division for

giving me this opportunity. It has been ten years already. I will be always indebted to Judith Schrempf-Stirling and the Swiss National Science Foundation. The doctoral years in Geneva have allowed me significant intellectual and personal growth and marked a period of development in my life. I thank Rebecca Henderson, Florian Wettstein, Andreas Scherer, Jonathan Kolieb, Tina Ambos, Dorothée Baumann-Pauly, Christine Lutringer at the Geneva Graduate Institute at UNDP, the members of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Commission of Inquiry for Myanmar, Karen Curtis at the ILO, Alexander Lembcke at the OECD, my former colleagues at the European Chamber of Commerce in Myanmar, and the Director of the Zimbabwe Diamond Allied Mine Workers Union. I also thank Walton Pantland at industriALL Global Union for his dedication to workers' rights, Dmitry Grozoubinski at the Geneva Trade Platform; Edwini Kessie, Christiane Wolff, Rolando Alcalá, and Helen Favez at the World Trade Organization; and Brianna Ascher and Jessica Rech at Taylor & Francis. Finally, I wish to express my gratitude for the financial support provided by the Swiss government for this publication. Over a year ago, my doctoral dissertation was honoured with the distinguished 2024 William Rappard Prize. I sincerely thank the Prize Committee for selecting my thesis for this esteemed award.

January 1, 2026,

Julia

Part 1

A Sky Full of Stars

Peace, Business, and Democracy



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1 Peace, Business, and Democracy in Contemporary Societies

1.1 The Unstable Relationship Between Peace, Business, and Democracy

A socially unstable relationship is characterised by rapid and unexpected changes. Just as in everyday life, you never know what will happen tomorrow. Progress or regress in societies is driven by unpredictable changes that force individuals to act and react accordingly. The outcomes of their actions typically signify the beginning of a new social phase, with potential evolutionary explanatory factors in the background. The philosopher Nietzsche in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* says, “human progress has been and will always be . . . perfectly zero. The more knowledge universities accumulate, the more possibilities there are for ignorance, for being mesmerised by their structured categories, ideas and theories instead of looking at a situation as an intelligent organism.”¹ Much like human progress, the relationship among peace, business, and democracy is remarkably unstable and characterised by a cause-and-effect structure. We recognise that this relationship entails a specific value, namely that progress can arise from potential “evolutionary” events and/or actions. For example, when slavery is abolished, sexism decreases, or political institutions become more democratic. Why is that? Because what ties up peace, business, and democracy is deeply rooted in contingent sociocultural and psychological factors, which are associated with cognitive processes such as sensemaking, well-being, and resilience. Both human and non-human animals have the ability to learn from events and actions, a crucial skill for survival in a constantly changing environment. The understanding of the cause-and-effect structure of the world is directly connected to the flexibility of our behaviour (e.g. the ability to decide how to decide in different situations; see Payne et al., 1993²). Like a “domino effect,” the actions of a single individual or state can have micro or macro effects on other individuals or states. Business—as an integral part of society—is at the centre of this unstable relationship. Understanding the role of business in society involves examining the values upheld by modern economic activity, such as markets and firms. However, it also requires

reevaluating the responsibilities and role of business in relation to the key social and political institutions of society.

Businesses have a direct impact on peace and democracy. They might be highly significant for future peace consolidation and social stability that built into major reconstruction projects, incentivising economic opportunities and leveraging on state-building governance. However, critical interlinkages between peace, business and democracy are still difficult to establish: What are business responsibilities in supporting peace- and democracy-building projects in societies emerging from conflict? Under which circumstances, business can contribute to implementing peace policies at the multilateral level? The dynamic relationship among these three elements has gained ground in academic circles and in peacekeeping and peacebuilding practices. Strong theoretical arguments exist for the positive impact democracy can have on building peace: First, through conflict moderation by transforming the manner in which conflict is processed; and, second, through conflict alleviation by reducing sources of conflict and violence. A democratic system provides peaceful, transparent and open mechanisms for the distribution of power, enabling diverse social groups to gain access to the government, to participate in decision-making, and to influence policy outcomes. As such, democratisation implies moving towards a closer representation of this concept in one or both dimensions: enhanced competition and/or better adherence to institutional constraints in the form of rights and principles. Definitions of peace, business and democracy have been developed singularly, drawing from practical case studies on how business can act in conflict-affected contexts. Nevertheless, studying the impact of business on peace and democracy implies much more and requires examining peace and democracy policies on (a) economic stabilisation, (b) social and economic development, and (c) business behaviour. According to these assumptions, in this book, I apply a management lens to peace and democracy. Guided by the question of whether and why business has a responsibility to promote peace and democracy, I undertake an in-depth analysis of how business affects these processes by addressing the following overarching questions: Why does business have a responsibility to promote peace and democratic developments? What are the spillovers of business activities regarding peace and democracy? And how does business affect peace and democratic developments?

1.1.1 Democracy

The Greeks invented the word *demokratia* to discuss the fundamental democratic practice whereby rulers must seek consent from a council that arose independently in a number of human societies. The idea of democracy is rooted in the liberal revolutions of the eighteenth century and acquired

force with the establishment of rights in acts such as the US Declaration of Independence of 1776³ and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789.⁴ These declarations entitled citizens to lay claim to personal and political freedoms, providing the inspiration for most contemporary understandings of democracy. The ideological underpinnings of democracy are to be found in the principle that the legitimacy of the government rests upon the consent of the governed: Government officials are selected by means of regular, competitive elections, giving citizens the opportunity to exert some control over which matters are placed on the decision-making agenda. On the institutional level, a democratic government is obliged to guarantee an orderly and peaceful process by means of which a majority of the citizens can induce the government to follow a course of action they find desirable and to prevent it from engaging in less desirable activities. Furthermore, a democratic government is charged with securing political liberty and equality for all citizens. While structural injustices on the level of wealth and income are likely to exist in any society, they should be limited under a democratic regime.

Theories of democracy are, for the most part, rooted in three principles: political equality, political participation, and deliberation. *Political equality* designates the equitable distribution of political influence, such that “the worth or usefulness” of rights and liberties is “roughly equal” for all citizens. Achieving this in practice can be challenging, however, since, for example, individuals suffering from malnutrition or living in violent and insecure contexts generally face higher costs when engaging in effective political participation, even if, in principle, they possess the same political rights as everyone else. For this reason, a democratic government is responsible not merely for guaranteeing universal, equal suffrage but also for ensuring that all citizens are in a position to make effective use of their suffrage on the practical level.

Another element of central importance in democracy is *political participation*, which refers to a variety of political activities that citizens engage in—such as writing letters or making campaign contributions—that go beyond simply voting in elections. The danger inherent in political participation is that groups representing a particular set of interests will participate more than others and thus exercise undue influence. Indeed, cases of powerful corporate lobbying are well documented. Participation is of particular relevance with regard to the broader social goals pursued by democratic societies: The more active a government is in the life of a society, the higher the stakes of political participation.

The final principle underlying democracy is *deliberation*, which refers to weighing up reasons for and against a course of action. Deliberation aims to mitigate conflicts resulting from diverging political preferences, while contributing to the legitimacy of democratic decision-making. An effective and legitimate deliberative process should fulfil the following five conditions:

First, participants should have access to the relevant information throughout the process; second, participants should evaluate alternatives; third, participants should represent diverse perspectives; fourth, participants should engage in a meaningful way and listen to all the arguments with respect and civility; finally, each argument or perspective should receive equal attention and consideration irrespective of the social or political status of the person who advances it. Deliberative democracy is regarded as an ideal legislative procedure in which political decisions are the result of deliberation.

Habermas,⁵ one of the founders of the theory of deliberative democracy, endorses the description of it presented by Cohen in *Reflections on Deliberative Democracy*⁶:

The notion of a deliberative democracy is rooted in the intuitive ideal of a democratic association in which the justification of the terms and conditions of association proceeds through public argument and reasoning among equal citizens. Citizens in such an order share a commitment to the resolution of problems of collective choice through public reasoning, and regard their basic institutions as legitimate insofar as they establish the framework for free public deliberation.

In other words, deliberative democracy entails that everyone who is subject to rules should have the opportunity to participate in their formulation. The reality is, however, that more powerful actors (including businesses) can and do impose themselves over and against less powerful and more vulnerable actors in deliberative arenas and forums.

The theory of deliberative democracy also establishes norms concerning what this deliberation entails. The outcome of deliberation is to generate rationally motivated “yes” and “no” attitudes. Public debates among informed elites have the dual function of “laundering” opinions and packaging them in propositions or policies that can generate a yes-or-no response. Habermas recognises that, most of the time, the public sphere is “infiltrated by administrative power and social power and dominated by the mass media.” However, he also sees civil society as an agent capable of bringing about change in the public sphere, which suggests that business, as a part of civil society, can also influence democratic processes.

That said, deliberative democracy suffers from the shortcoming that it cannot deal with the messy realities of everyday politics, due to its idealistic assumptions about the rationality of the participating actors. As such, deliberative democracy has been criticised for its excessive idealism about the prospect of reaching consensus, its failure to adequately account for structural inequalities that impact the deliberative process, and its role in potentially reproducing inequities that further marginalise less powerful

participants. Despite Habermas' vigorous defence of the prospect of a deliberative politics, numerous scholars have argued that experiments in expanding deliberative democracy have been quite limited in size, scope, and impact. Many interventions based on deliberative democracy focus on small-scale decision-making (e.g. modest local issues about the management of urban spaces), rather than addressing the thornier structural barriers that prevent communities from flourishing. These assumptions are particularly prominent in transitional democracies and countries emerging from conflicts; democracy deficits and weak institutions are among the main challenges, for instance, to the effective realisation of human rights. The link between democracy and human rights is captured in Article 21(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: "[t]he will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures." Human rights are defined as substantive natural rights that exceed politics and culture. However, they can be interpreted narrowly as rights that could be asserted against enemies in war or, more broadly, as aspirational goals. In this book, I do not select a single concept (definition) of human rights. My focus is rather on a specific political use of the human rights discourse (in relation to peace and democracy). According to this view, human rights, when discussed as a certain common standard—or at least a shared framework—for evaluating and criticising various practices of political societies in relation to their members, often are more likely to be implemented by democratic institutions. Thus, pursuing human rights and democracy is essential to success in overcoming institutional fragility and to overall efforts for securing peace in the long term. I also take into great consideration the institutions in which human rights are embedded in. Within the UN system, there have been progressive waves of limited reforms to the international human rights architecture, notably in 1993, with the creation of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and in 2006, with the transition from the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), overseen by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), to the Human Rights Council (HRC), elected by the General Assembly. However, the HRC is still plagued by a range of issues that previously beset the CHR, namely, but not limited to, issues of legitimacy, independence, impartiality and election of Council members.⁷

The main differences among democracies relate to how various human rights are protected, in addition to a shared emphasis on popular sovereignty and collective decision-making. Democracy takes many forms, which have been discussed by scholars, practitioners, and policymakers. These can generally be categorised into three main types: (a) procedural democracy,

(b) liberal democracy, and (c) social democracy.⁸ Recognising how each type of democracy incorporates different categories of human rights is important, as this influences how both concepts are measured and applied in empirical research—such as the three case studies featured in this book (see Part 3) and the review of democracy-building management practices in Chapter 4. Figure 1.1 depicts the various democratic systems, emphasising the interaction and overlap between their institutional frameworks and rights-related components. Procedural definitions of democracy allocate less emphasis to human rights compared to social definitions. These procedural models presume the legitimacy of organised political opposition, the right to challenge incumbents, the safeguarding of freedom of expression and association, the presence of free and fair elections, and a consolidated system of political parties. Liberal definitions retain the principles of contestation and participation found in procedural interpretations, while explicitly referencing the protection of specific human rights—namely, civil, political, property, and minority rights. Conversely, social definitions incorporate both the institutional and rights dimensions present in liberal models and further extend the scope of protected rights to include social, economic, and cultural entitlements. This approach encompasses provisions for social and economic welfare, as well as the progressive realisation of economic and social rights. From a management perspective, it is essential to grasp how democracy and human rights are defined and what distinguishes them from one another to guide business practices that support democratic values in society. Businesses can serve as catalysts for fostering and advancing civil and political rights—often associated with individuals’ personhood and their ability to participate in public life—as well as economic, social, and cultural rights, which ensure access to resources and opportunities for personal growth and allow people to enjoy their unique lifestyles. Additionally, solidarity rights are intended to secure public goods for individuals, including development opportunities, environmental benefits, and, increasingly, access to global economic progress. Businesses must remain cognizant of the political dynamics in which they operate, as these may sometimes conflict with purely economic rationales. Consequently, organisations encounter significant challenges in balancing political and commercial interests, which can heighten their sensitivity to interstate tensions and influence the formulation of politically oriented strategies that leverage business political resources. For example, such considerations will inform the degree of business engagement with governments and guide responses to risk and uncertainty arising from relationships between home and host countries (see multinational enterprises’ economic reasoning behind investment or divestment decisions related to Russian and Ukrainian territories). For an expanded analysis of how businesses actively promote democratic values within society and the workplace, refer to Chapter 4.

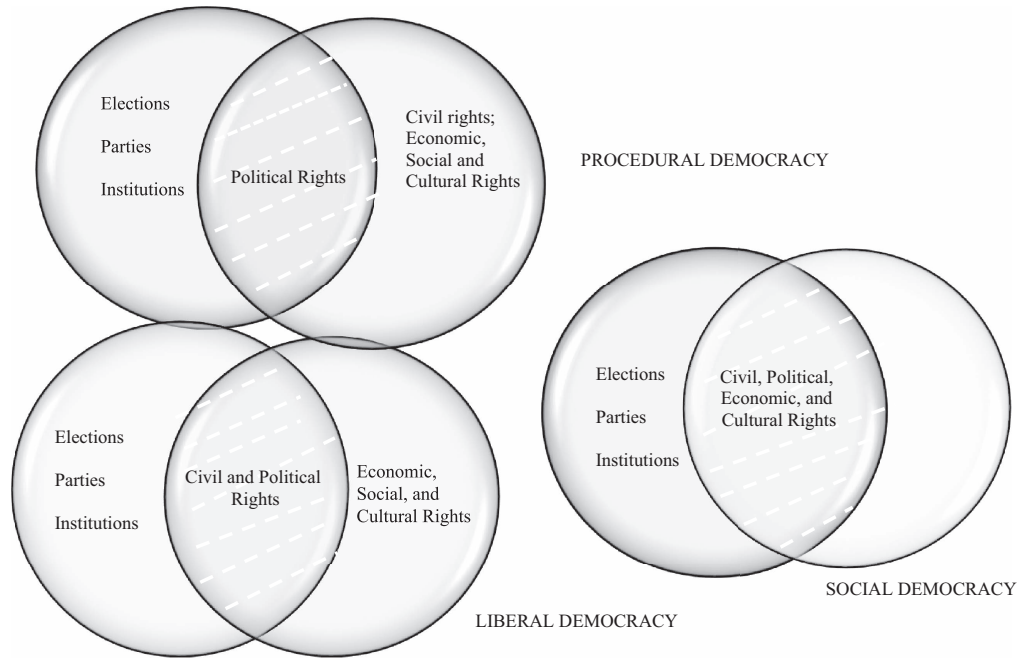


Figure 1.1 Categories of Democracy and Their Relationship to Human Rights.⁹

1.1.2 *Peace*

In the 1960s and 1970s, scholars developed many ideas on how to define peace. There is a wide range of perspectives—from the denial of any possibility to define peace, to definitions devised by Johan Galtung,¹⁰ to the determination of peace through “critical peace research.” For instance, Western ideas of peace often refer to peace treaties, peace-making at both the bilateral and multilateral levels, and simply to the recurring theme of “the absence of war.” The term peace predominantly is used to discuss social goals which may be complex and difficult, but not impossible, to attain. Others relate peace to God and religious cult. Nevertheless, peace can also acquire a geographical connotation where long-lasting contentions of terrains affect the course of war or the process of pacification. Peace treaties postulate the end of the war and they might set principles of “territorial integrity”¹¹ and “self-determination”¹² ensuring conditions for territorial adjustments between countries in conflict (see Kosovo-Serbia and Ukraine-Russia) and in local communities where, for instance, indigenous populations struggle to protect their autonomy, self-governance, and preservation of cultural knowledge and practices. The post-cold-war years have witnessed the rise of peace agreements as a tool for addressing protracted conflict among states, where typically the aim was to establish or extend a ceasefire by linking the ceasefire to new political and legal structures. In many peace negotiations, for instance, in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Central America, Southern Africa, and the former Yugoslavia, peace agreements have been shaped by the central place of human rights in reestablishing a domestic legal order. In the case of Cambodia, Central America, and the former Yugoslavia, the strategy of the peace agreements was to ensure the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms could prevail. To evaluate the political arrangements that emerge from negotiated settlements to conflict, researchers study the extent to which national actors opt for models of representative or participatory democracy. Transition from conflict to peace and to democracy has characterised the most common classifications of peace between *positive* and *negative*. Accordingly, positive peace involves multiple series of interactions framed as an ongoing and longer-term process which can be outlined in terms of social justice. As such, building a positive peace implies the construction of peaceful civil societies including principles of equity, equality, and human rights protection, while mitigating the recurrence of violence and reducing the economic toll of conflict. There are several dimensions that can be associated with the concept of constructing a positive peace in societies emerging from intra-state wars or civil conflicts. These include a well-functioning government, equitable distribution of resources, sound business environment, low levels of corruption, free flow of information, acceptance of the rights of others, high levels

of human capital, and good relations with neighbours. A well-functioning government entails high-quality public and civil services ensuring large participation by civil society and demonstrating political stability and strong rule of law. On the other hand, peaceful societies tend to ensure equity in having access to resources for education, health, and strive to achieve low levels of corruption. Thus, positive peace assumes that formal institutions might support the operations of the private sector and promotes business competitiveness and economic productivity. Peaceful societies protect basic human rights of individuals and promote free and independent media information which ensures individuals, businesses, and civil society can make better and informed decisions. Differently, peace in its most simplistic form is understood as the absence of violence and interpreted as negative peace or a Western definition of peace. Peace researchers explain a negative peace as the absence of personal violence. However, conceptions around peace do not stop with the absence or termination of violence. For instance, they do not assume disagreements will vanish but rather that conflicts will be comparatively minor and resolved through existing institutions and political processes such that the outcome is regarded as legitimate. These might be democratic institutions and procedures within a state or negotiations and common rules between states. Thus, considering peace as exclusively the absence of conflict is often only transitory. The definition of negative peace, furthermore, poses also several questions on how “conflict” and “violence” are categorised. There is a large variety of conflicts and many types of violence. Conflict is narrowed as an event which breaks the current status quo and the socio-political order. Definitions explore how negative and positive processes are perceived by the main actors in war settings. As Table 1.1 points out, three types of conflict can be identified: *global conflict*, which usually involves in the conflict a coalition of countries such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); *civil conflict*, commonly defined as a situation where a government faces a violent challenge by one or more rebel actors over some articulated goal of political change; and, *bilateral conflict* which occurs between two nation states and one state formally claim legitimate jurisdiction over the same piece of territory. A different use of violence criterion can be applied to these typologies of conflict: non-violent where the use of army is not foreseen; minor armed where the use of army by the parties in conflict is relatively restricted; major armed where the use of army by the parties in conflict is foreseen with adverse effects on civilians; and war where there is a widely use of army by the parties in conflict and a considerable number of death among civilians and soldiers.

Analysts and peacebuilders usually undertake a critical analysis of the conflict to understand the root causes of wars. A conflict analysis maps the dynamics in which the conflict is manifested, namely, the relationships and

Table 1.1 Types of conflict

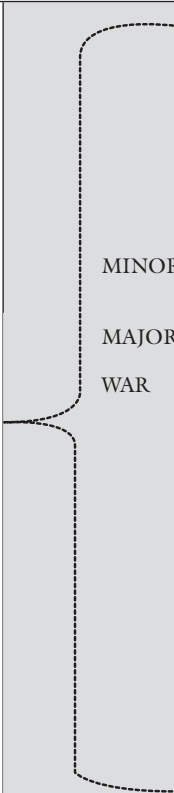
CLASSIFICATION OF CONFLICT	INTENSITY OF CONFLICT— USE OF VIOLENCE	SUPPORT TO THE CONFLICT
• <i>Global Conflict</i> → <i>large-scale conflict involving multiple countries and coalition</i> <i>Examples:</i> <i>II World War</i> <i>Cold War</i>	 MINOR ARMED MAJOR ARMED WAR	Purely domestic (See rebel groups, ethnic armed organisation, and/or national political coalition which support one of the party in conflict. This type of support to the conflict can be observed in the ongoing civil war in Myanmar after the 2021 military coup. The Bamar People's Liberation Army is a resistance group which was founded by human rights activists in response to the 2021 military coup with the objective to fight the military regime and restore a democratic government).
• <i>Civil Conflict</i> → <i>intra-state conflict usually politically organised between individuals, groups, and/or ethnic groups</i> <i>Examples:</i> <i>Myanmar civil conflict</i> <i>Zimbabwe civil conflict</i> <i>Haitian civil conflict</i> <i>Syrian civil conflict</i>		Internationalised internal
• <i>Bilateral Conflict</i> → <i>conflict which involves an attacker with several alternative attack methods and a defender who can take various actions to better respond to different types of attack</i> <i>Examples:</i> <i>Russian invasion of Ukraine</i> <i>Israeli-Palestinian conflict</i>		(See foreign military assistance to an ongoing conflict. Such type of assistance to a conflict is provided, for instance, by the United States to Ukraine since Russian's first invasion. This includes air defence, fairs, ground manoeuvre, aircraft and unmanned aerial systems, small arms, and maritime.¹³) Coalition or intra-allied defensive intervention (See military assistance provided by allies within a coalition to a state member of the same coalition which is under military attack. This type of conflict support was typical during the Cold War, with over 690 military interventions conducted by all world states between September 1945 and December 1991.¹⁴)

Table 1.2 Typology of violence

TYPE OF VIOLENCE	SURVIVAL NEEDS	WELL-BEING NEEDS	IDENTITY NEEDS	FREEDOM NEEDS
<i>Direct violence</i>	Killing	Maiming, sanctions, misery, siege	Desocialisation, resocialisation, secondary citizens	Repression, detention, expulsion
<i>Structural violence</i>	Exploitation (A)	Exploitation (B)	Penetration, segmentation	Marginalisation, fragmentation
<i>Cultural violence</i>	Ideology	Misery, exploitation	Marginalisation, desocialisation, language, and religion	Legitimation of structural violence through legal norms

hierarchy of positions between the conflicting parties, and their interests, needs and motivations. The assessment includes:

- Outlining the type of the conflict.
- Examining the reasons for the conflict.
- Defying the causes and mapping consequences of the conflict.
- Identifying the components and the different actors involved.
- Tracing the levels (e.g. level of hostility and intensity. For instance, micro-level conflict between individuals and/or ethnic groups and macro level between countries and/or coalition) at which the conflict takes place.¹⁵

A conflict standardly outbreaks in several stages, specifically, pre-conflict, during-conflict and post-conflict; interventions always take place during the peak of the conflict, while peacebuilding actions are implemented in the pre- and post-conflict stages. However, practice in the field has shown the value of intervention in the pre- and post-conflict phases for preventing the eruption of violence. Definitions of violence can differ considerably across contexts. In regions affected by ongoing conflict, civilians may experience both physical violence (e.g. the Rwandan genocide or the Holocaust) and *psychological violence* (such as political violence within authoritarian regimes like those in North Korea or Venezuela). Galtung and others¹⁶ have identified three primary categories of violence: direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence (see Table 1.2). Direct violence is characterised by the breakdown of human relations and the widespread killing of civilians during conflict. In contrast, structural violence refers to the marginalisation and division of societal groups, which can adversely impact civilians, including instances of human trafficking and exploitation of local populations. This form of violence may stem from legal frameworks that enforce exclusion

(as seen with apartheid in South Africa), or cultural practices lacking formal legal authority, such as restricted access to education or healthcare for marginalised communities. Cultural violence pertains to dominant social norms or beliefs that render direct and structural violence “natural,” “justified,” or at least tolerable. Galtung’s conceptualisation of cultural violence elucidates how entrenched convictions can become so integral to a culture that they are accepted as inevitable truths and transmitted uncritically through generations.

Peace is frequently threatened in situations where democratic principles are missing or simply seen as ideals rather than realities. Democracy is seen as a form of good governance because it creates laws by and for the people, making these norms self-imposed (autonomous). In contrast, autocratic systems have lawmakers who are separate from those governed, resulting in externally imposed (heteronomous) norms. Democracy relies on treating everyone equally as autonomous contributors to self-governance, and this kind of equality forms the basis for peace and democracy alike, stemming directly from the definition of democracy itself—democracy depends on equal participation in democratic processes. This principle of equality is also reflected in peacebuilding efforts, where agreements or new constitutions are sometimes put to a popular vote among those affected. Public approval not only shields peace deals from opposition but also grants legitimacy and public backing, increasing their durability. For example, in Nepal, months of widespread protests in 2006 pressured conflicting sides to end hostilities. By contrast, during Sri Lanka’s 2002 peace process, protests—mostly led by Buddhist monks—against negotiations became more common than demonstrations supporting peace talks. This book examines Myanmar and Zimbabwe, two countries marked by internal conflicts involving local actors and classified as civil wars. Moreover, civilians—including business owners, workers, and entrepreneurs—in the case studies faced structural and cultural violence as a direct result of these conflicts.

1.1.3 Business

Defining the nature of business presents several challenges. The field of business history originated in regions with significant modern business success, influencing the direction of scholarly research. When the subject was introduced at Harvard Business School after 1928, a central concern was how historical analysis could inform the education of managers leading major US-based corporations. In the 1940s and 1950s, Harvard’s Research Center in Entrepreneurial History broadened this focus internationally by investigating the comparative lack of entrepreneurial success in developing countries relative to the United States. As the discipline gained prominence in Europe and Japan, much of the scholarship examined why the United States

developed large, professionally managed firms in capital-intensive manufacturing, which helped establish its dominance in the global capitalist system through innovation and multinational expansion, while also exploring the unique characteristics of European and Japanese business systems in contrast to those in America. Business might be discussed as a mode of human social interaction and works both in society and for society. Broadly, the successful businessman works not only in order to secure a competency which will enable him later to devote himself to his real interests in life, such as art and politics; whether he knows it or not, business is in most cases his real interest and his real talent. While in the 1980s and 1990s business has moved (or been moved) to demand more rapid, flexible responses from itself in its attempt to increase its productivity, in recent years definitions related to business have been linked to the expanding development of technology, and the increased importance of knowledge has also produced forces which bring issues of trust to the fore. For example, the increasing pace of technological development permits more intense forms of competition and the possibility of greater forms of control over employees and production processes. Similarly, new forms of technology permit the development of new organisations, as well as pressures for a globalised business. Virtual corporations become desirable and the globalisation of business has brought people of vastly different backgrounds, beliefs and assumptions together on a much more frequent and extensive basis.¹⁷ For instance, Kofi Annan (2001),¹⁸ in his address at the US Chamber of Commerce about HIV/AIDS aid, stated: “Business is used to acting decisively and quickly. The same cannot always be said of the community of sovereign States. We need your help—right now.” This ability of businesses to respond swiftly and provide practical solutions to societal challenges has given them a greater political role today. This approach to integrating business with society suggests that companies can anticipate social issues and conflicts, establish regulations beforehand, and enforce legal rules and contracts through official systems. Businesses have extensive responsibilities regarding peace and democracy, including ensuring that their entire operations, including all suppliers and subcontractors, are free from conflict. Business groups can also help foster personal responsibility and resilience against divisive or extreme political content. Additionally, business leaders are expected to uphold basic moral rights such as liberty and physical safety. However, it’s important to remember that “business” isn’t a single entity; it encompasses many different types of production and exchange throughout society. Understanding all forms of business is essential to fully grasp the connections between peace, business, and democracy. Therefore, I analyse business responsibilities towards peace and democracy from two angles: one focusing on MNCs and the other on SMEs.

The definition of a multinational corporation is not controversial. Clearly, a MNC involves control by business management over the firm’s operations

in foreign countries; MNCs undertake direct foreign investment and can influence income distribution, allocation of managerial talent, and intervention in political processes. However, as economies globalise, expectations of domestic and global stakeholders, political actors, and home and host country institutions increase for MNCs. The significance of foreign capital, including multinational investments, is well established. Prior to World War II, British, German, and French capital—often in the form of freestanding companies or diversified business groups—played a major role. In the postwar era, US-based multinational enterprises became increasingly prominent, particularly within oil and mining, manufacturing, infrastructure, and agricultural commodities sectors. Since the mid-1980s, foreign direct investment in oil and mining has been especially pivotal to the region's export economy. The early twenty-first century experienced renewed European (primarily Spanish and French) investment alongside an emerging influx of Asian investment most notably from China. These flows of foreign capital were often accompanied by individuals who established themselves as entrepreneurs within host countries. MNCs are finding themselves subject to a particularly critical dynamic: exposed to various home and host country pressures to engage in socially responsible behaviour, they face not only increasingly complex but sometimes also competing social expectations. While MNC obligations for implementing human rights standards appear consolidated from both a governmental and managerial perspective (see the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights; see also the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct and Chapter 2), political and legal strategies for holding businesses accountable for their violations in peace and democracy objectives remain vague and an underexplored field. In contrast, SMEs have often been described as innovative “tools” and processes that facilitate widespread social changes in diverse socio-economic sectors; these are defining elements of democratic governance and central to achieving sustainable peace. SMEs have been defined in terms of the number of employees, type of ownership, degree of independence, nature of managerial processes, use of business planning, turnover rates and value of assets, but the most widely used definition suggests that small businesses have fewer than 249 employees. Small players, such as SMEs, can become decisive: in conflict settings, local businesses not only provide goods, services and jobs but are critical contributors to conflict transformation as they can maintain economic influence and local political contacts during conflict, and thus serve as a good starting point for a conflict resolution process (see Chapter 5).

Management theories, such as Business for Peace (B4P), political CSR (PCSR), and Business and Human Rights (BHR) research, have encouraged businesses to implement and engage in deliberative democracy and peace processes, addressing governance gaps where governments and/or

civil society actors are unwilling or unable to do so. However, the use of the concept of deliberative democracy and peace in management research needs to be theoretically extended and empirically justified. I address these criticisms by placing the patterns within the context of today's societies. Here, "contemporary society" refers to our current era, known for its dynamic changes in social, political, and economic areas. Following the Great Recession from December 2007 to June 2009—the longest since World War II—global growth slowed markedly. The recession was especially severe, with real GDP dropping 4.3% from its peak.¹⁹ As a result, organisations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) became concerned, and thinkers and journalists debated whether globalisation (refer to Box 1 for insights about the definition of globalisation) was ending, possibly giving way to regional approaches to global governance.²⁰ In December 2024, the *Washington Post* commented,

Americans are done with globalization . . . the narrative that globalization has sacrificed broad-based prosperity to serve the interests of multinational corporations and the oligarchs at their helm is ultimately wrong. Yes, the American social contract is deeply flawed. It has produced the most unequal society in the affluent world, exhibiting symptoms of social dysfunction unheard of in other developed nations. But hanging these ills on globalization lets us off the hook.²¹

Historical political and geopolitical events—including European imperialism, trade imposition on independent countries like China and Japan, the pax Britannica's influence on European peace (see Schroeder, 1994²²), and pre-1870s European trade liberalisation—also helped shape our societies. The optimal model for contemporary societies, especially regarding democratic legitimacy—the right, opportunity, and ability for people affected by collective decisions to participate meaningfully—remains deliberative democracy. As I have previously argued, liberal democracy is not just an academic concept but a true reform movement driving political innovation in Western countries and particularly in conflict and post-conflict contexts. Barack Obama supported deliberative democracy as a programme aligned with the US Constitution.²³ In his August 31, 2010, speech marking the end of US military action in Iraq during a period of peace and reconstruction, he said, "the greatness of our democracy is grounded in our ability to move beyond our differences, and to learn from our experience as we confront the many challenges ahead."²⁴ How business can protect peace and democracy in our contemporary societies? Though business interests may oppose to an active political role, the public demand for social policy is too strong for businesses to stop it. Businesses advance their interests through political campaign finance, lobbying, philanthropy, and other

political avenues. However, we know less about what drives corporate advocacy on contentious political issues beyond their business interests. In fragmented contemporary societies, it is difficult to explain business mobilisation for the protection of peace and democracy and how such mobilisation affects liberal-democratic institutions and business—government relations. There is a great divide between an ideal democratic society and the everyday struggle to maintain a society democratic. As Kloppenberg notes, “democracy will always be unfinished.”²⁵ A comprehensive assessment of business’ democratic commitment thus requires also a focus on nation states and national governments. Large, resourceful, and productive firms—often MNCs—benefit from the increasingly criticised global economic order, frequently profiting from trade agreements that aim to increase their economic power. As a result, these firms that depend significantly on international trade have a stake in the upkeep of an open world economy. They also have the ability and means to engage in political mobilisation to counteract the anti-globalisation sentiment (see the “Battle of Seattle” which refers to the 1999 massive protest against the role of the WTO in shaping the global economy) and protectionist tendencies (see the April 2025 introduction of US sweeping tariffs on imports from the EU and the United Kingdom, raising transatlantic tensions and prompting debate over Europe’s response), which may derive from the negative effects of their global operations. These ideas, developments, and methods—exploring the unstable links between peace, business, and democracy—are discussed throughout this book and form the core of this interdisciplinary theoretical and empirical study.

Box 1. CSR in A Globalised World

The concept of globalisation gained significant prominence in the 1990s, although business literature had previously documented the activities of multinational corporations and transnational economic interactions. Globalisation has largely been driven by MNCs. They have shaped an increasingly global economy through their widespread activities, facilitated by new technologies and revolutions in communication and transportation. MNCs control the majority of global production networks, and their political behaviour and business strategies directly affect the distributional consequences of international trade. As economic globalisation became a central theme, other forms—including social (such as travel, migration, and intermarriage), cultural (such as the international exchange of music, cuisine, and films), and political (where foreign affairs increasingly rival domestic

concerns)—came into focus. The IMF defines globalisation as “the growing economic interdependence of countries worldwide through the increasing volume of cross-border transactions in goods and services and of international capital flows, and also through the more rapid and widespread diffusion of technology.” This interdependence has empowered businesses to offer globally standardised products, resulting in an unprecedented level of value-chain standardisation. Reflecting this shift, the CEO of Coca-Cola stated in 1996, “The labels of ‘international’ and ‘domestic’ no longer apply. Think global, act global.” In this context, distinctions based on culture, administration, geography, and economics appear diminished, and increased trade and development have been associated with peace and prosperity (see Chapter 7). At the time, many organisations viewed globalisation as the geographic extension of a superior business model (see Ghemawat, 2003). This perspective also coincided with the rise of CSR, emphasising that businesses should be accountable for their societal impact. Advocates of CSR posit a strong interdependence between companies and society, arguing that organisations should address negative externalities and develop CSR agendas that maximise both societal benefit and economic profit. Vogel in his study titled *Private Global Business Regulation* estimated that, by 2008, more than 300 voluntary CSR codes existed, covering all major sectors of the global economy. Additionally, Forbes reported a 9.4% average increase in support for climate change-related shareholder resolutions among Russell 3000 companies from 2016 to 2017, with related proposals rising from 20 to 24. These trends highlight growing stakeholder pressure on companies to address social issues and the significant financial risk for those failing to maintain acceptable corporate conduct. In recent years, discussions surrounding CSR have prompted increased scrutiny of global business governance and the continued relevance of globalisation. A notable example came in April 2025, when the CEO of Coca-Cola emphasised the importance of brand “localness” during periods of geopolitical tension. This indicates a strategic shift from global standardisation to Local differences—including religion, race, language, and social norms—can significantly influence both business investment decisions and the selection of suitable CSR practices. Accordingly, local CSR refers to how MNCs fulfil their social responsibilities in line with the expectations of specific communities (e.g. BMW Group South Africa’s Youth Employment Service [YES] programme targeting youth unemployment). Localised approaches often result in less universal consistency and allow for greater responsiveness to diverse

stakeholders and local contexts. Conversely, global CSR integration involves consistently addressing CSR obligations across all countries of operation, upholding transcultural or universal standards, sometimes referred to as hypernorms (see Donaldson & Dunfee, 1999). MNCs that achieve successful global integration of CSR can harmonise their practices internationally, as exemplified by Unilever's adoption of a standardised global CSR strategy.

Notes

- 1 Nietzsche, F. W. (1844–1900 [2006]). *Thus spoke Zarathustra: A book for all and none*. Cambridge University Press.
- 2 See Payne, J. W., Bettman, J. R., & Johnson, E. J. (1993). *The adaptive decision maker*. Cambridge University Press.
- 3 The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen United States of America, In Congress, July 4, 1776, marked a new era for the recognition of unalienable rights, and the separation between Law and God. <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/GO/GO00/20220929/115171/HHRG-117-GO00-20220929-SD010.pdf>
- 4 Inspired by the American Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the spirit of the Enlightenment, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789 marked the beginning of a new political era, in terms of civil liberties and political values. For instance, it states: "I. Men are born, and always continue, free and equal in respect of their rights. Civil distinctions, therefore, can be founded only on public utility. IV. Political liberty consists in the power of doing whatever does not injure another. The exercise of the natural rights of every man, has no other limits than those which are necessary to secure to every other man the free exercise of the same rights; and these limits are determinable only by the law." https://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/declaration_of_the_rights_of_man_1789.pdf
- 5 Jürgen Habermas refers to his democratic theory as a "discourse theory of democracy". He starts from the idea that politics allows people to organize their lives together and decide what common rules they will live by. To do this, it must accord a prominent place to political argumentation and justification. For more insights, see www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/jurgen-habermas/deliberative-democracy/F9D4327C35D306E5EA49E66DD90445E5
- 6 Joshua Cohen states "Democracy is a way of making binding, collective decisions that connects those decisions to the interests and judgements of those whose conduct is regulated by the decision." Cohen, J. (2009). Reflections on deliberative democracy. In J. Cohen (Ed.), *Philosophy, politics, democracy: Selected essays* (pp. 326–347). Harvard University Press.
- 7 See Lopez-Claros A., Dahl A. L., & Groff, M (2020). Human rights for the twenty-first century. In *Global governance and the emergence of global institutions for the 21st century*. Cambridge University Press. www.cambridge.org/core/books/global-governance-and-the-emergence-of-global-institutions-for-the-21st-century/AF7D40B152C4CBEDB310EC5F40866A59

- 8 See Beetham, D. (1999). *Democracy and human rights*. Polity; Beetham, D., Carvalho, E., Landman, T., & Weir, S. (2008). *Assessing the quality of democracy: A practical guide*. International IDEA; Freeman, M. (2017). *Human rights* (3rd ed.). Polity; Landman, T. (2013). *Human rights and democracy: The precarious triumph of ideals*. Bloomsbury Academic; Sørensen, G. (1993). *Democracy and democratization*. Cambridge University Press.
- 9 This illustration is adapted from Beetham, D. (1999). *Democracy and human rights*. Polity Press.
- 10 John Galtung is considered “the father of the peace studies” and wrote more than 1’600 articles and 160 books on this subject. He not only developed critical understanding on peacebuilding issues, but contributed to create a methodology for analysing conflict dynamics. In his renowned Galtung’s Violence Triangle, Galtung attempts for the first time to define three critical concepts, namely, “direct violence”, “structural violence”, and “cultural violence.”
- 11 The concept of territorial integrity is widely used in the international law practice and recognized as associated to the notion of political independence. The law as it stands closely connects territorial integrity and political independence. In the 1856 “General Treaty for the Re-Establishment of Peace between Austria, France, Great Britain, Prussia, Sardinia and Turkey, and Russia” the signatory states committed to “respect the independence and territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire.” After the II World War, the concept became an important component of bilateral and multilateral treaties. The United Nations (UN) Charter underscores the protection of territorial integrity as a crucial component of the prohibition of the use of force and for maintaining a peaceful international order. Article 2(4) of the UN Chart declares: “All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.”
- 12 Self-determination is considered a basic human rights. The legal right to self-determination is based on the UN Charter. Article 1(2) of the Charter states that the purposes of the United Nations is to “develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples.” Furthermore, Article 55 highlights that the United Nations shall promote a number of goals with a view “to the creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples.”
- 13 See the *United States announces significant new military assistance for Ukraine* (2024, August 9). Press Statement by Anthony J. Blinken, Secretary State. <https://2021-2025.state.gov/united-states-announces-significant-new-military-assistance-for-ukraine-9/>
- 14 See Tillema, H. K. (1994). Cold war alliance and overt military intervention, 1945–1991. *International Interactions*, 20(3), 249–278.
- 15 The Council of Europe. *Understanding conflict*. <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261899/3-Understandingconflict.pdf/0f63c846-6942-4e8f-83c0-3626f2f73dfa>
- 16 See Galtung, J. (1990). Cultural violence. *Journal of Peace Research*, 27(3), 291–305. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0022343390027003005>. See also: Galtung, J. (1980). *Peace and world structure. Essays in peace research* (Vol. IV). Ejlers; Roth, M. (1988, April). Strukturelle und personale Gewalt: Probleme der

- Operationalisierung des Gewaltbegriffs von Johan Galtung. *HSFK Forschungsbericht* (1); Saner, H. (1982). Personale, strukturelle und symbolische Gewalt. In *Hoffnung und Gewalt. Zur Ferne des Friedens* (pp. 73–95). Lenos & Z Verlag.
- 17 See for instance: Vogel, D. (2008). Private global business regulation. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 261–282.
- 18 On a trip to Washington DC, the United Nation Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged business leaders to join anti-AIDS fight. The full speech is available here: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2001/05/8142#:~:text=On%20Friday%2C%20the%20Secretary%2DGeneral,have%20surpassed%20those%20of%20men>.
- 19 See The Federal Reserve History. *The great recession*. [www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/great-recession-of-200709#:~:text=Real%20gross%20domestic%20product%20\(GDP,10%20percent%20in%20October%202009](http://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/great-recession-of-200709#:~:text=Real%20gross%20domestic%20product%20(GDP,10%20percent%20in%20October%202009).
- 20 See for instance: Ghemawat, P. (2005). Regional strategies for global leadership. *Harvard Business Review*, 83(12).
- 21 Abandoning globalization is a sure path to immiseration. *The Washington Post*. www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2024/12/17/globalization-trump-poverty-disruption-trade/
- 22 Schroeder, P. W. (1994). *The transformation of European politics, 1763–1848, Oxford history of modern Europe*. Clarendon. See also the definition of Pax Britannica by Paul Kennedy, “Paul Kennedy says, “Pax Britannica was a three-sided equation that consisted of an expanding formal empire together with a larger informal empire both of which provided raw materials and markets for the British economy; an adequate and overwhelming navy, and an industrial revolution that poured British products into the rest of the world.” In Kennedy, P. (1976). *The rise and fall of British naval mastery*. Charles Scribner’s Sons. <https://academic.oup.com/ahr/article-abstract/82/2/356/131780>
- 23 Obama, B. (2006). *The audacity of hope: Thoughts on reclaiming the American dream* (p. 92). Crown Publishers.
- 24 For a critical review about deliberative democracy, philosophical pragmatism, and Barack Obama’s conception of American governance, see Kloppenberg, J. T. (2010, November–December). Excerpt from ‘reading Obama’. *Harvard Magazine*. www.harvardmagazine.com/2010/10/a-nation-arguing-with-its-conscience
- 25 Kloppenberg, J. T. (2016). *Toward democracy: The struggle for self-rule in European and American thought*. Oxford University Press.

2 Management Theories as a Reflection of Societal Needs

2.1 The “Jungle” of Management Theories

Research on business conduct and management has exerted both notable positive and negative impacts on managerial practice. Rather than the widespread adoption of individual theories, these influences are more evident in the integration of prevailing concepts and assumptions into managers' worldviews—ideas that now underpin much of contemporary management research. The globalised economy has introduced new levels of risk reminiscent of major crises such as the Great Depression of the 1930s and, more recently, the financial crisis of 2008. To date, no comprehensive mechanisms have been established at the global level to effectively predict or prevent economic downturns. Nevertheless, such crises have had a pronounced effect on economic ideology, which in turn has increasingly informed management theories. For example, Milton Friedman's interpretation of “liberalism” is grounded in a set of cautious assumptions regarding individuals and institutions. According to Friedman, a market economy defined by economic freedom may incidentally promote greater income equality; however, he argues that equality itself should not be a fundamental objective of economic policy, “few trends could so thoroughly undermine the very foundations of our free society as the acceptance by corporate officials of a social responsibility other than to make as much money for their stockholders as possible.”¹ Social theory is designed to address the “negative problem” of minimising the social costs caused by human flaws. This approach has led management research towards making overly ambitious claims based on incomplete analysis and both unrealistic and biased assumptions. Ghoshal (2005)² observes that this pessimistic outlook—and the failure to include common-sense perspectives in business education—stems largely from what he described as the “Chicago agenda.” He argued that this agenda not only favoured negative, deterministic theories but also condoned unethical business behaviour by dismissing the political and moral responsibilities of businesses in today's society. Friedman (1970) took this pessimistic view even

further, stressing the inherent wickedness of humanity and the supposed need for elites to govern and control society: “the discussions of the ‘social responsibilities of business’ are notable for their analytical looseness and lack of rigor. What does it mean to say that ‘business’ has responsibilities? Only people can have responsibilities.” Critics of Friedman’s economic theories and historical interpretations argue that his promotion of individualistic and pessimistic views—such as the belief that morals should be left to individual discretion, humans are driven solely by self-interest, and individuals are inherently imperfect—are deeply rooted in the context of the Great Depression of the 1930s.³ These perspectives imply that managerial actions may foster opportunistic behaviour; however, contemporary management theories place a stronger emphasis on ethics and moral principles.

In his article, *Why do bad management theories persist? A comment on Ghosal, Pfeffer (2005)*⁴ advocates for business scholars to address broader societal concerns and encourages robust discussion regarding the applications and implications of business concepts, with a special focus on societal well-being. This ongoing dialogue underscores business as a central force in civilisation, emphasising honesty, trust, and ethical conduct. Nonetheless, significant uncertainty remains regarding the boundaries of corporate responsibility and the ethical conduct of managers. Historically, the assessment of management’s impact on firm performance began with the use of manager (or CEO) fixed effects (see Mundlak, 1961).⁵

The influence of managers is shaped by “agency power,” referring to the misalignment between managerial and ownership incentives (see Bebchuk & Fried, 2003),⁶ which is particularly pronounced in large, geographically dispersed firms. Roth and O’Donnell’s (1996), in their study of managerial compensation in foreign subsidiaries, demonstrate that the weight accorded to pay-for-performance increases with the “cultural distance” between subsidiary managers and central headquarters—a logical conclusion, as cultural distance heightens information asymmetry and exacerbates agency problems.⁷ The initial ambiguity in defining the “principles of management” contributed to ongoing disagreement and confusion regarding management theory, which initially prioritised mechanical efficiency, control, and specialisation. The “Management Theory Jungle”⁸ encapsulates these challenges arising from the proliferation of management theories and their practical implementation. Modern theories have since shifted focus towards human capital, organisational culture, and the interconnected nature of systems-oriented approaches. In trying to bring order to this “jungle,” Koontz (1961, 1980)⁹ and other management theorists¹⁰ classify the major schools of management theory into six main groups. These varying schools, or approaches, led to a jungle of confusing thought, theory, and advice to practising managers. I summarise here the key assumptions of each school of management theory.

The Management Process School

This approach to management theory perceives management as a process of getting things done through and with people operating in organised groups. It aims to analyse the process, to establish a conceptual framework for it, to identify principles underlying it, and to build up a theory of management from them.

The Empirical School

The empirical school identifies management as a study of experience, sometimes with intent to draw generalisations but usually merely as a means of teaching experience and transferring it to the practitioner or student. Typical of this school are those who see management or “policy” as the study and analysis of cases.

The Human Behavior School

This approach to the analysis of management is based on the central thesis that, since managing involves getting things done with and through people, the study of management must be centered on interpersonal relations. Various called the “human relations.” This approach is grounded on psychology and social psychology.

The Social System School

Closely related to the human behaviour school and often confused or intertwined with it is one which might be labelled the social system school. This includes those researchers who look upon management as a social system, that is, a system of cultural interrelationships.

The Decision Theory School

Another approach to management theory, undertaken by a growing and scholarly group, might be referred to as the decision theory school. This group concentrates on rational approach to decision—the selection from among possible alternatives of a course of action or of an idea.

The Mathematical School

Theorists of this school believe that management, or organisation, or planning, or decision making is a logical process, which can be expressed in terms of mathematical symbols and relationships.

Management theory and science keep evolving, making the field even more complex. During the 85th Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management (AOM), Academy President Tammy L. Madsen emphasised this point, “strategic leaders look for inflection points. This year, ours is to continue turning Vision 2030 strategic initiatives into visible impact—by building stronger global connections, especially in regions of the world that are underrepresented. . . . All of the activities are aimed at making AOM an even more vibrant global platform for ideas that make a difference.” Management theory, as a multidisciplinary field, aims to develop principles, practices, and techniques that business leaders and managers can use to positively impact

communities every day. When considering the question of where new management theories are emerging, answers may vary depending on research streams and geographic contexts. B4P, PCSR, and BHR research are widely regarded as some of today's emerging management theories. Although progress in this area has been gradual, it is hoped that increased agreement within this complex field will foster accelerated advancements towards a better society through improved managerial practices.

The core management theories in this book—B4P, PCSR, and BHR—align with Koontz's school of thought except for the Mathematical approach. Scholars in these fields agree that theory must be understood as part of a broader knowledge framework and recognise the heterogeneous and confuse understanding of business' response towards peace and democracy. In recent years, B4P researchers have investigated the interrelationships between business and peace. A highly interdisciplinary field of research—spanning anthropology, political science, economics, and moral theory—has been developed to explore the conditions that may influence the relationship between business and peace. While management theories and practices have dedicated less effort to addressing issues of business and peace, B4P research outlines the strong case for a central proposition: that business can have a significant effect on the conditions that influence peace and conflict. However, the lack of conceptual and typological clarity on definitions in business and peace indicates the need for further investigation into which specific management practices promote peace. Two of the main challenges in considering the role of business in promoting peace are the difficulties of defining peace and determining the factors that lead to a more peaceful society. Although B4P researchers have established a common starting point for their analyses by applying the most fundamental definition of peace as the absence of violence, they also recognise the importance of adopting a nuanced understanding of peace, “positive peace” or “sustainable peace,” which includes fundamental notions of justice, fairness, and the protection of human rights and democratic values. Ending direct violence alone has been considered insufficient for bringing about positive peace. B4P researchers explore how a positive or sustainable peace can be developed by business through five peace-enhancing activities: (1) promoting economic development, (2) promoting the rule of law, (3) engaging in two-track diplomacy through, for example, NGO partnerships, which help alleviate the causes of conflict, (4) creating a sense of community, and (5) engaging in conflict-sensitive practices and undertaking a risk assessment before entering and while operating in conflict and post-conflict countries. In these developments, the processes of building and maintaining peace are heavily influenced by governmental and political actors.¹¹

Debate in the fields of B4P and PCSR has posed questions not only on the relationship between business practices, politics, and governmental

institutions, but also on how peace promotion is able to convince society at large of the capacity of business to set a wider political agenda. Literature on PCSR (e.g. has broadly investigated the political role of business in different contexts such as in conflict zones, in maintaining peace, global governance, censorship, and corruption). However, this politicisation of corporations—defined as “an extended model of governance with business contributing to global regulation and providing public goods” (see Scherer & Palazzo, 2011, p. 901)¹²—has raised concerns surrounding the conceptual and normative foundation of this state-like role of corporations in terms of legitimacy and democratic processes.

Deliberative democracy has often been used to explore questions of PCSR, becoming a prominent theory in both business ethics and mainstream management. According to this theory of democracy, everyone who is subject to rules should have the opportunity to participate in their formulation. Researchers in both the fields of deliberative democracy and PCSR emphasise that “outcomes are democratically legitimate if and only if they could be the object of a free and reasoned agreement among equals” (see Cohen, 1997, p. 71; see also Dawkins, 2022).¹³ However, deliberative democracy is much more difficult to apply to a management context. Critics argue that deliberative theory shifts societal ethical expectations in ways that often further only the interests of large firms. Thus, one of the main challenges is to address the questions of how and why businesses become active in democratic processes, taking into consideration the size and type of business.¹⁴

The current interest in PCSR and B4P focuses on the investigation of how the size of firms is posited to affect both the incentive and the amount of activity towards democracy and peace. Businesses vary in size, ownership, and industry, each influencing peace and political developments differently. From a management perspective, these research questions are based more sharply on the global context in which businesses operate, which often lacks the institutional structures that characterise Western liberal-democratic countries. Broadly, the globalisation of business raised also new questions around human rights due to the significant increase in size and power of businesses, and the speed and extent of their activities. The proliferation of human rights issues that derived directly from business practices in the last decades has been widely discussed as the result of the changing context of doing business in the post—Cold War global economy (see Box 2 on the Cold War roots of business responsibility).¹⁵ It is in the 1990s that BHR began to gain widespread attention as an academic field which attempts to define and create scholarship around the role of business with respect to human rights.¹⁶ John Ruggie in the keynote address at the “Business & Human Rights: Towards a Common Agenda for Action” conference defines BHR as “the social sustainability of globalization. . . . Today, people around the world are telling us that we have fallen short, that the benefits and burdens of globalization have been

unequally distributed within and among nations. . . . When seen from the perspective of enterprises, business and human rights is about ways they can recover trust and manage the risk of harmful impacts. Undeniable progress has been achieved by individual firms, business associations, and even sports organisations. But not enough, and not by enough of them.”¹⁷

BHR has moral and legal foundations which has shaped its emphasis on business accountability for human rights and regulation, while B4P has an ethical foundation rooted in integrated social contracts theory, which assumes that ethical business is by definition peace enhancing. BHR “examines the human rights responsibilities of business, which include (a) the respect and protection of human rights along corporate value chains, (b) the avoidance of causing or contributing to human rights violations through business activities and conduct, and (c) the provision of remedy to those whose rights have been violated by business” (see Schrempf-Stirling et al., 2021, p. 1282).¹⁸ B4P, in contrast, largely addresses the positive impact business can have through its contributions to peacebuilding. Linked to the focus on accountability, BHR focuses mainly on the negative impacts of business activities and the victims’ quest for remedy. The final research stream focuses on the impact of corporate human rights management, such as reducing human rights abuses or providing remedies (see e.g. how business representatives act and react towards extensive international legal obligations not only in relation to human rights but to CSR more generally).¹⁹ While human rights-related contributions to the political CSR literature and deliberative democracy theories have a long way to go, starting in the mid-1980s with questions on workplace discrimination, the sweatshop debate and child labour controversy, attempts to bridge the academic divide between B4P and BHR are still relatively recent.

Emerging developments in these management theories are distinguished by their principles, methods, and strategies designed to tackle key societal issues—including political gaps, safeguarding human rights, environmental challenges, advances in technology, security concerns, and efforts to promote peace and democracy.

BOX 2. The Cold War Roots of Corporate Social Responsibility

The term “the Cold War,” caught on in the 1950s, remains firmly in place today. Both its oxymoronic resonance and its connotative utility contributed to its lexical success over the years. The label’s connotations were useful for both superpowers. It implied the reality of a global normative order—a world culture or world society—in which

the United States and USSR were not allowed to engage in a direct war with each other, but they were given much latitude for behaving as they pleased in the Global South. The relationship between the United States and USSR lacked of the key defining attributes of interstate peace (i.e. it implies the idea of positive peace and suggests that peace is a matter of neutral coexistence among nation states. Thus, states may not fight any war). These defining attributes are routine and extensive diplomatic coordination, major cooperative agreements, institutionalised and friendly communication, no ongoing conflict issues, and no plausible counterfactual war scenarios. As such, the Cold War is a clear instance of not-peace. In fact, among not-war cases, the Cold War is an exemplary case of not-peace. This understanding provided a shield under which the United States and the USSR engaged in meddling around the world that was justified under doctrines such as Containment and the Molotov Plan. The cost of avoiding nuclear holocaust included a thuggish US hegemony in Latin America, Western forbearance of Soviet totalitarianism in Eastern Europe, and interference and exploitation by both superpowers in Africa and Asia.

From the perspective of Management research, the roots of the CSR movement can be traced back to the early years of the Cold War. Led by Donald K. David, Dean of the Harvard Business School and with other academics and executives given voice on the pages of the *Harvard Business Review*, advocates for an expanded business social responsibility as a means of aligning business interests with the defence of free-market capitalism against what was depicted as the clear-and-present danger of Soviet Communism. Intellectuals called upon business leaders to become engaged in public affairs beyond the immediate economic functions of business, which they regarded as its fundamental contribution to society. Philosophical foundations arguing the responsibilities of businessmen arose from four concepts of justice: exchange justice—the trust underlying exchanges in the market; distributive justice—the just relation between the government and individuals; general justice—acceptance of legal frameworks but beyond this to acceptance of ethical obligations; and especially social or contributive justice—the obligation to contribute to the well-being and progress of individuals and society. Milton Friedman, often cited in a 1970 *New York Times* magazine article, defined CSR, as a matter of principle, is “fundamentally subversive” of the true responsibilities of business, which are enhancing profitability and shareholder value. This point of view, rooted in the economic theory, articulated first by Adam Smith, that a free market and pursuit of self-interest (later shareholder value) resulted in the greatest benefit for society overall (refer to Chapter 2).

Scholars in the fields of B4P, PCSR, and BHR are divided on the responsibility of business and its role in contemporary societies: some stress the controversial effects of limited roles and responsibilities for business with respect to deliberative democracy and human rights, while others argue for a more expansive understanding of those roles and responsibilities. Similarities among these academic fields can be identified by a common tendency to focus on multinational corporations with great attention on business operations in fragile countries affected by conflict. However, despite the fact that B4P and BHR are directly linked to PCSR due to the interrelation of human rights and peace with the political arena (e.g. both peace and human rights can be regarded as political objectives of democracies) academic conversations in management and business responsibilities towards peace, human rights, and political processes continue to lack a theoretical framework and empirical evidence (refer to Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Comparing B4P, PCSR, and BHR research

<i>Characteristics of business responsibility in management theories</i>	<i>B4P</i>	<i>PCSR</i>	<i>BHR</i>
Genesis in the post-Cold War globalised society	✓	✓	✓
Moral legitimacy of the role of business in society	✓	✓	✓
Focus on MNCs and their responsibility in society	✓	✓	✓
Focus on SMEs and their responsibility in society	✓	✗	✓
Focus on business principles and multilateral institutions, such as the UN Global Compact, OECD, and WTO	✗	PARTIALLY (e.g. see private–public partnerships in the PCSR discourse)	✓
Business responsibility towards social challenges (e.g. human rights, peace, politics, and the environment)	✓	✓	✓
Political role of business in society (i.e. business organisations performing governmental functions, such as contributing to the enforcement of the Rule of Law)	✗	✓	✓
Democratic deficit in contemporary societies and the response of business (i.e. deliberative theory of democracy and CSR)	✗	✓	✓
Empirical evidence and case study	✓	✗	✓
Business in peacebuilding mechanisms and fragile and conflict-affected settings	✓	✗	PARTIALLY
Business responsibility in global governance; enforcement and adoption of regulations negotiated at the multilateral level (i.e. within multilateral institutions, such as the UN, WTO, OECD, and ILO)	✓	✓	✓
Local vs. global business responsibility and vice versa	✓	✓	✓

From a pragmatic perspective, international organisations have applied management theories previously discussed—framing business responsibility towards peace, democracy and human rights—by developing business principles (see The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights²⁰), standards and guidelines for MNEs and SMEs. I choose to introduce the OECD guidelines, which are commonly used by practitioners to develop, for instance, codes of conduct and CSR reports. Furthermore, the WTO has enforced a programme which has the objective to pragmatically promote the benefits of the role of trade and economic integration in promoting peace and democratic values, especially among WTO Members of fragile and conflict-affected countries. This Programme calls for collaboration between the trade, peace and humanitarian communities to enhance opportunities to leverage the multilateral trading system for a sustainable peace domestically and internationally.

2.2 Principles and Programmes That Cannot Be Forgotten

Business principles are taken to be very rudimentary (essentially restricted, directly or indirectly, to profit maximisation), but with a very wide reach in economic matters (covering effectively all economic matters):

- a. Scientific job analysis: Scientific management is the search for the most efficient way of performing a particular task.
- b. Hiring and training: Rather than comparing people, hire and train them by means of scientific selection and training.
- c. Division of work: The scheduling job has to be separated from the job of doing it.
- d. Pay for performance: Motivate employees to do better by giving them money that is related to productivity.
- e. Impact: Mass production systems like the assembly line. Nevertheless, the detractors asserted that the workers being treated as nothing but parts of the machine was the main cause of dehumanising work.

They play a central role in influencing the behaviour of businesses, and these principles can extend well beyond the straightforward seeking of individual advantage. This is not intended to deny that individual advantage may be a crucial motivating concern that helps to drive the engine of economic enterprise, and can also seriously influence the forms and limits of communication and agreement involved in economic and business activities. Globalisation has influenced the importance of business principles. Many industrialised countries have experienced factory closings in entire branches of their industries, and a large percentage of businesses have either moved abroad or declined. For instance, the textile and sports utility industries, the

steel industry, and the computer and semiconductor industries have delocalised their production to Asian-LDCs (see Myanmar).²¹ However, it is not only the lower labour costs that attract investments into other countries. Many developing and least developed countries have conditions where regulations on safety and health at work, trade-union activities, and environmental protection are unknown, where wages are below the minimum wage, and where child labour and discrimination against women and ethnic minorities are frequent (refer to the Myanmar case study in Chapter 5 and the Zimbabwe case study in Chapter 6). In this context, many newly industrialised countries seek to use their comparative cost advantage to attract MNE capital by maintaining low business standards. They impede the passing of general social and environmental standards for international business in the multilateral negotiations of WTO,²² UNCTAD,²³ and ILO.²⁴ Conversely, corresponding initiatives of the Western industrialised countries are criticised in particular by representatives of developing countries as protectionist measures that are to prevent the critics from using their cost advantages and gaining an entry to world markets. The assurance of global peace and stability relies on sustaining public confidence in the integrity of international competition. To preserve this trust, coordinated actions by governments, MNEs, intergovernmental organisations, and civil society are essential. Among these stakeholders, MNEs play a pivotal role in advancing this objective.

The OECD was established by industrialised nations in 1961 to promote optimal economic development, employment opportunities, and an improved standard of living among its member states, while ensuring financial stability. In 1976, the “OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises” were introduced as a framework to translate these objectives into practical policies guiding the conduct of multinational corporations. Developed by industrialised countries, the Guidelines embody their collective values and are consistent with prevailing standards related to human rights, labour practices, and environmental stewardship. Additionally, the OECD developed the Recommendation for SMEs and Entrepreneurship, serving as a reference point for government policy formulation. The Guidelines and the Recommendation are discussed in detail here due to their application by businesses featured in the two empirical case studies—Myanmar and Zimbabwe—where they informed both the drafting of codes of conduct and the development of internal human resources strategies and policies.

2.2.1 *OECD Guidelines*²⁵

The OECD Guidelines for MNEs are a key tool for establishing principles and standards of responsible business conduct. These guidelines have a wide scope, addressing human rights, employment and industrial relations, the

environment, bribery and corruption, consumer protection, science, technology and innovation, competition, and taxation. The Guidelines are considered a “soft-law” instrument focused on areas where states are required by law to promote responsible practices. They serve as a strong example of effective governance achieved through cooperation at multiple levels. Their implementation relies on collaboration among various institutions, including international organisations, NGOs, and experts, all working together to advance corporate social responsibility.

The six chapters of the Guidance offer a comprehensive overview of due diligence measures for businesses, outlining key concepts and characteristics essential for responsible business conduct. The main section details the due diligence process and associated support mechanisms, noting that in practice, due diligence is a continuous, iterative process in which certain steps may occur concurrently and inform one another. Each stage includes “practical actions” designed to exemplify or tailor the implementation of supporting measures and the due diligence framework. The OECD Guidelines are referenced across various related OECD instruments, underscoring the interconnectedness between responsible business practices and other domains such as the G20/OECD Principles of Corporate Governance, Guidelines on Corporate Governance for State-Owned Enterprises, Common Approaches for Officially Supported Export Credits and Environmental and Social Due Diligence, Policy Framework for Investment, Recommendation of the Council on Public Procurement, and the Recommendation of the Council for Further Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions.

1. First Chapter

The first chapter of the Guidelines sets out concepts and principles that put into context all of the recommendations in the subsequent chapters. These concepts and principles (e.g. obeying domestic law is the first obligation of enterprises) are the backbone of the Guidelines and underline the fundamental principles for responsible business conduct.

2. Second Chapter

This chapter is the first to contain specific recommendations to enterprises in the form of general policies which establish a framework of common principles for the subsequent chapters. It includes important provisions such as implementing due diligence, addressing adverse impacts, engaging stakeholders, and others.

3. Third Chapter

Clear and complete information on the enterprise is important to a variety of users. This chapter set the regulation for enterprises to be transparent in their operations and responsive to increasingly sophisticated public demands for information.

4. Fourth Chapter

Enterprises can have an impact on the entire spectrum of internationally recognised human rights. As such, it is important that they meet their responsibilities. This chapter of the Guidelines draws on and is aligned with the UN “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework²⁶ and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights²⁷ that operationalise that framework.

5. Fifth Chapter

The ILO is the competent body to set and deal with international labour standards and to promote fundamental rights at work as recognised in the ILO 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.²⁸ This chapter focuses on the role the Guidelines have in promoting observance among MNEs of the international labour standards developed by the ILO.

6. Sixth Chapter

The environment chapter provides a set of recommendations for MNEs to raise their environmental performance and help maximise their contribution to environmental protection through improved internal management and better planning. It broadly reflects the principles and objectives of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development²⁹ and Agenda 21.³⁰

2.2.2 *Recommendation of the Council on SME and Entrepreneurship Policy*³¹

The Recommendation on SME and Entrepreneurship policy was adopted by the OECD Council in June 2022. As part of a broader OECD SME and Entrepreneurship Strategy, the Recommendation has the scope to provide an evidence-based and holistic framework to support effective and efficient SME and entrepreneurship policies and to encourage an inclusive and sustainable growth, especially, in developing contexts and during emergency crises (see post-COVID-19 crisis; refer to Chapter 5).

1. Put in place crosscutting and coherent approaches to SME and entrepreneurship policy design and implementation by:
 - a. Co-ordinating and aligning SME and entrepreneurship policy across government entities and levels through effective governance mechanisms and place-based approaches, in line with each country’s institutional setting, circumstances and needs.
 - b. Ensuring that implications for SMEs and entrepreneurs are considered across the diverse policy areas that influence their prospects and outcomes in order to enhance policy synergies, address potential trade-offs and reduce administrative burdens, including through increased

- attention to their specificities and circumstances in policy and regulatory design, SME tests and evaluations, consultation mechanisms, streamlined processes and user-centric approaches in implementation.
- c. Taking account of the diversity of SMEs and entrepreneurs throughout policy making, by assessing implications for different types of SMEs, entrepreneurs and self-employed, adopting policy-relevant typologies and collecting granular data on SME and entrepreneur key features, performance and behaviour.
 - d. Setting up robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that systematically assess policies for their SME and entrepreneurship impacts, using relevant data and methodologies and feeding results into new policy initiatives.
2. Facilitate the transition and resilience of SMEs and entrepreneurs by:
- a. Supporting the adoption of digital technologies, services and data by all SMEs and entrepreneurs in line with their needs, digital maturity and aspirations by enhancing access to digital infrastructure; strengthening digital skills, data literacy and management of digital security risk; and ensuring open and well-functioning markets for digital goods and services.
 - b. Encouraging and enabling SMEs and entrepreneurs to transition to sustainable business models, practices and technologies, and to drive green innovations, taking into account their specificities and needs in environmental policies; fostering their access to resources, including sustainable finance; and supporting their adoption of circular economy strategies.
 - c. Enhancing SMEs and entrepreneurs participation in international trade and global value chains through open markets; conducive regulatory frameworks; trade facilitation and trade finance; and by strengthening their access to services and networks, including with foreign partners and multinationals.
 - d. Enabling entrepreneurship by reducing barriers to entry, exit, business transfer and business succession, and by easing possibilities to re-start for entrepreneurs who fail; and ensuring that policies and the regulatory environment support competition and provide incentives and support for innovative entrepreneurs to scale up.
 - e. Encouraging and supporting underrepresented or disadvantaged groups to participate in entrepreneurship, by taking into account structural barriers and specific challenges and needs through appropriate targeted measures, where necessary, and through equal access to wider entrepreneurship support programmes.
 - f. Facilitating the transition from informal to formal entrepreneurship, easing access to resources where needed; and ensuring a level playing

- field and enabling conditions for productive employment and decent work for the self-employed and for all kinds of entrepreneurship, including in the platform economy.
- g. Promoting responsible business conduct and the engagement of SMEs and entrepreneurs in avoiding and addressing adverse environmental and social impacts and improving social outcomes associated with their activities and business relations along value chains and within their local communities.
3. Enhance SMEs and entrepreneurs' access to resources by:
- a. Providing adequate incentives for SMEs and entrepreneurs to innovate and fostering their capacity to benefit from innovation diffusion, through conducive market conditions; robust and inclusive innovation ecosystems, local networks and infrastructure; and appropriate targeted measures, where necessary.
 - b. Enhancing SMEs and entrepreneurs' access to a diverse range of financing instruments, sources and channels that are adapted to their needs in terms of development, growth and sustainability, by implementing evidence-based policies and regulatory approaches conducive to transparent and resilient SME finance markets; leveraging the role of new technologies; encouraging timely payments; and strengthening SME financial skills and vision.
 - c. Encouraging the development of an entrepreneurial mindset throughout society, and creating adequate incentives for SMEs and entrepreneurs to invest in skills; in particular, promote the development of and access to skills that are transversal across jobs and contexts, such as management, problem-solving and digital skills.
 - d. Strengthening entrepreneurial ecosystems at the national and local level, including by developing networks and linkages along supply chains, between SMEs and with large firms, within and across sectors; and by enhancing SME access to and participation in public procurement.

In contemporary settings, numerous multilateral organisations employ innovative approaches to advance peace and democracy, often guided by the OECD Guidelines and Recommendations. The United Nations promotes democracy as a preferred political system, recognising its capacity to contribute to peace by facilitating constructive conflict resolution and mitigating underlying sources of tension. Democratic systems typically rely on transparent, equitable, and non-violent mechanisms for power-sharing, which enable diverse social groups to engage in governance, influence policy decisions, and affect outcomes. As a result, democracy serves as an effective framework for managing disagreements by accommodating varying perspectives rather

than suppressing them. Since the end of the Cold War in 1990 and the emergence of a new global order, backing democratic development has become a key part of international peacebuilding.³² UN peacekeeping operations have expanded in the 1990s not just in numbers, but also in the nature and scope of their missions.³³ Today, global supply chains have acted as a form of modern peacekeeping. The interconnected nature of global production networks means that disruptions caused by armed conflict become challenges of collective significance. Integration and interdependence between business and society underscore this dynamic. When an organisation utilises the value chain to systematically map the societal consequences of its actions, it generates an inventory of issues and potential solutions. This strategic approach to risk and opportunity identification serves as an effective tool for evaluating social tensions, conflict-related risks, labour market trends, employment changes, and evolving skill requirements. Such insights prove valuable for peacekeepers working to establish long-term stability; further discussion on mapping social opportunities within the value chain can be found in Porter and Kramer (2006).³⁴ International trade offers shared benefits, encourages participation in global value chains (GVCs), and fosters cooperation over confrontation. For instance, economic ties between the United States and China illustrate how mutual economic interests may mitigate geopolitical tensions by emphasising the costs of conflict.³⁵ Moreover, economic interdependence and sound business principles extend beyond bilateral engagements, enabling collaborative responses to common challenges. Multilateral institutions—which are informed by economic interdependence—provide platforms to discuss and apply these principles in conflict-affected settings. A broad array of UN bodies, commissions, programmes, specialised agencies, and related entities play crucial roles in advancing human welfare and socio-economic development. These institutions constitute valuable repositories of expertise vital for effective international governance. They offer leadership on global challenges, establish international standards, and provide operational guidance to countries facing instability. As the need for coordinated global attention continues to evolve, governance mechanisms must remain flexible and adaptable. Presently, some of the most pressing global risks are not well understood by policymakers or business leaders, given their complexity and the perception that they are not immediate priorities. Issues such as democratic development—including freedom of expression and equality—fall into this category (see Chapter 4). Businesses seeking to enter post-conflict markets face significant uncertainty, relying on both technical analysis and probabilistic assessments, which is even more pronounced when addressing infrequent or distant risks (see Chapters 5 and 6). Risks increasingly intersect and compound one another in our interconnected world, with individual crises likely triggering additional challenges, particularly within fragile economic systems—the focus of this book. A core

issue is poverty, which is shaped both by population figures and by economic structures that fail to promote equitable wealth distribution. Following the conflict between Russia and Ukraine (see Table 1.1), cascading consequences such as reduced agricultural labour, damaged infrastructure, and restricted access to farming inputs have jeopardised Ukrainian food production. Elevated energy costs and supply-chain interruptions have amplified these effects, contributing to a global increase in food prices—with international cereal prices rising by 20% in the first three months after the onset of the conflict in February 2022.³⁶ These effects led to higher prices, reducing food importers' purchasing power and contributing to famine in parts of the Horn of Africa, the Middle East, and South America. In situations of crisis, the vulnerability of our globalised economy and society shows the interrelations between trade and peace, thus the effects on prosperity. The Trade for Peace Programme, introduced at the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires in December 2017, comprises a group of nine least developed countries (LDCs) seeking accession to the WTO. The initiative is designed to assist fragile and conflict-affected economies in integrating into the global trading system. Through political partnerships, public dialogue, research, and capacity-building efforts, the programme facilitates the transition from instability to economic growth, leveraging trade's potential to promote peace. Integration within the WTO has supported peacebuilding by fostering cooperation and reducing activities such as the trade in conflict resources (refer to Box 3 and Chapter 7).

BOX 3. Liberal Peacebuilding and Economic Prosperity

Drawing upon Kant's *Perpetual Peace*, advocates of liberal peace theory assert that the political and economic structures of liberal states serve as institutional constraints and establish trade disincentives that reduce the likelihood of war. Accordingly, research in this tradition maintains that economic interdependence between states fosters interstate peace. Liberal peacebuilding is defined by external interventions characterised by three primary features: they are initiated by liberal Western nation states; motivated by objectives such as responding to major human rights abuses or fulfilling an international responsibility to protect; and aim to promote liberal-democratic institutions, human rights, effective governance, and economic liberalisation as means to achieve peace and prosperity in conflict-affected regions. This approach extends beyond traditional notions of conflict prevention, which focus on achieving "negative peace," to include the comprehensive

reconstruction of post-conflict societies through the implementation of frameworks emphasising good governance, democratic processes, human rights, rule of law, and market-oriented relations.

Notably, the post-Cold War period has seen renewed debate among scholars and policymakers regarding whether increased trade yields positive or negative outcomes within and among nation-states. More recently, international relations scholarship has focused on evaluating the widely held belief that trade actively promotes interstate peace. This perspective draws from the concept of commercial peace, rooted in Kant's vision of lasting international order. Kant's framework for perpetual peace relies on three interrelated pillars: (a) the republican constitution—representative democracy—which serves to limit autocratic ambitions; (b) the commercial spirit—economic interdependence—which reinforces liberal norms by cultivating transnational relationships conducive to cooperation rather than conflict; and (c) international law—including contemporary international organisations—grounded in the recognition of the legitimate rights of all citizens and states. Based on these foundations, trade among states is theorised to decrease the probability of militarised conflicts. Furthermore, development is closely linked to peaceful behaviour by nations, with the effective functioning of democratic values requiring a certain level of socio-economic advancement (refer to Chapter 7).

Notes

- 1 See Friedman, M. (2002). *Capitalism and freedom* (40th Anniversary ed.). University of Chicago Press.
- 2 See Ghoshal, S. (2005). Bad management theories are destroying good management practices. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 4(1), 75–91. www.corporation2020.org/documents/Resources/Ghoshal.pdf
- 3 See for instance: Chernomas, R., & Hudson, I. (2017). Milton Friedman: The godfather of the age of instability and inequality. In *The profit doctrine: Economists of the neoliberal era* (pp. 55–77). Pluto Press.
- 4 See Pfeffer, J. (2005). Why do bad management theories persist? A comment on Ghosal. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 4(1), 96–100. www.jstor.org/stable/40214268
- 5 See Mundlak, Y. (1961). Empirical production function free of management bias. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 43, 44–56. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.2307/1235460>
- 6 The “managerial power” approach discusses that the executive compensation is not only as an instrument for addressing the agency problem between managers and shareholders but also as part of the agency problem itself. As a result, managers wield substantial influence over their own pay arrangements, and they have an interest in reducing the saliency of the amount of their pay and the extent

- to which that pay is de-coupled from managers' performance. In: Bebbchuk, L. A., & Fried, J. M. (2003). Executive compensation as an agency problem. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 17(3), 71–92.
- 7 In the global industry context, the cultural distance is one factors, which is critical in influencing goal incongruence and information asymmetries thereby determining the potential agency problem within the headquarters-foreign subsidiary relationship. The cultural distance, determined by the degree to which there are differences in the cultural characteristics common to the headquarters market and the market of the foreign subsidiary. In: Roth, K., & O'Donnell, S. (1996). Foreign subsidiary compensation strategy: An agency theory perspective. *Academy of Management Journal*, 39(3), 678–703. www.jstor.org/stable/256659
 - 8 This term was firstly introduced by Harold Koontz in the Academy of Management Journal to explain the “chaos”, specifically the chaotic and apparent confusion around management theories. The term refers to management process and looks for some theoretical underpinnings to help improve research, teaching, and practice in management. Koontz has the ambitious to bring order to this jungle and brings to light some of the issues and problems involved in the present management theory. See Koontz, H. (1961). The management theory jungle. *Academy of Management Journal*, 4(3), 174–188. And, Willmott, H. (2025). Management theory: Jungle, myth, or hoax? *Academy of Management Review*, 46(3), 466–487. <https://journals.aom.org/doi/10.5465/amr.2023.0098>
 - 9 See Koontz, H. (1961). The management theory jungle. *The Journal of the Academy of Management*, 4(3), 174–188; Koontz, H. (1980). The management theory jungle revisited. *The Academy of Management Review*, 5(2), 175–188. See also: Koontz, H., & O'Donnell, C. (1955). *Principles of management: An analysis of managerial functions*. McGraw Hill; Koontz, H. (1964). *Toward a unified theory of management*. A symposium held at the Graduate School of Business Administration, University of California, November 8–9, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Los Angeles. Koontz, H., & O'Donnell, C. (1976). *Management: A systems and contingency analysis of managerial functions*. McGraw Hill; Koontz, H., & O'Donnell, C. (1978). *Instructor's manual to accompany Koontz and O'Donnell essentials of management*. McGraw Hill; Koontz, H., O'Donnell, C., & Weihrich, H. (1982). *Essentials of management* (3rd ed.). McGraw Hill; McFarland, D. (1971). *Management: Principles and practices*. Mac Millan.
 - 10 See George, J. (1972). *The history of management thought*. Prentice-Hall. Graham, G. (1975). *Management: The individual, the organization, the process*. Wadsworth Publishing Company; Grant, J. D., & Mills, A. J. (2006). The quiet Americans: Formative context, the academy of management leadership, and the management textbook, 1936–1960. *Management and Organizational History*, 1(2), 201–224; Grattan, R. (2013). *Management research during World War II*. Oxford University Press; Greenwood, W. T. (1974). Future management theory: A 'comparative' evolution to a general theory. *Academy of Management Journal*, 17(3), 503–513.
 - 11 See for instance: Kolk, A., & Lenfant, F. (2015). Partnerships for peace and development in fragile states: Identifying missing links. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 29(4), 422–437. www.jstor.org/stable/43822393 And, Oetzel, J., & Doh, J. P. (2009). MNEs and development: A review and reconceptualization. *Journal of World Business*, 44(2), 108–120. www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1090951608000400
 - 12 Scherer, A. G., & Palazzo, G. (2011). The new political role of business in a globalized world: A review of a new perspective on CSR and its implications for the firm, governance, and democracy. *Journal of Management Studies*, 48, 899–931. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2010.00950.x>

- 13 Cohen, J. (1997). Deliberation and democratic legitimacy. In J. Bohman & W. Rehg (Eds.), *Deliberative democracy: Essays on reason and politics* (pp. 67–92). MIT Press; Dawkins, C. (2022). Varieties of deliberation: Framing plurality in political CSR. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 32(3), 374–403.
- 14 For critical views see Sabadoz, C., & Singer, A. (2017). Talk ain't cheap: Political CSR and the challenges of corporate deliberation. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 27(2), 183–211. www.cambridge.org/core/journals/business-ethics-quarterly/article/abs/talk-aint-cheap-political-csr-and-the-challenges-of-corporate-deliberation/9F188FAA24685A290BF5EF4C0BBE9768
 See also: Whelan, G. (2012). The political perspective of corporate social responsibility: A critical research agenda. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 22(4), 709–737. www.cambridge.org/core/journals/business-ethics-quarterly/article/abs/political-perspective-of-corporate-social-responsibility-a-critical-research-agenda/898B5C458AFC6905B78ADF1BA86DD5C6
- 15 See for instance: Spector, B. (2008). “Business responsibilities in a divided world”: The cold war roots of the corporate social responsibility movement. *Enterprise and Society*, 9(2), 314–336. www.cambridge.org/core/journals/enterprise-and-society/article/abs/business-responsibilities-in-a-divided-world-the-cold-war-roots-of-the-corporate-social-responsibility-movement/701FF88D35755C263A7802B2975E3FDE
- 16 See for instance: Ramasastry, A. (2002). Corporate complicity: From Nuremberg to Rangoon; An examination of forced labor cases and their impact on the liability of multinational corporations. *Berkeley Journal of International Law*, 20(1), 91–159. Wettstein, F., & Schrempf-Stirling, J. (2019). Business, peace, and human rights: A political responsibility perspective. In J. Miklian, R. M. Alluri, & J. E. Katsos (Eds.), *Business, peacebuilding and sustainable development*. Routledge. White, J. (2004). Globalization, divestment and human rights in Burma. *Journal of Corporate Citizenship*, 14, 47–65.
- 17 See John Ruggie's statement: www.hks.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/centers/mrcbg/programs/crj/files/Brussels%202019%20Final.pdf
- 18 See Schrempf-Stirling, J., Van Buren, H. J., & Wettstein, F. (2022). Human rights: A promising perspective for business & society. *Business & Society*, 61(5), 1282–1321. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00076503211068425>
- 19 See Muchlinski, P. (2021). The impact of the UN guiding principles on business attitudes to observing human rights. *Business and Human Rights Journal*, 6(2), 212–226. www.cambridge.org/core/journals/business-and-human-rights-journal/article/impact-of-the-un-guiding-principles-on-business-attitudes-to-observing-human-rights/FEE3FAF436FBA634AC2BDC3823021A38
- 20 The UN Guiding Principles are a set of global standards for nation states and companies to prevent, address and remedy human rights abuses. They were developed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises. The Human Rights Council unanimously endorsed the Guiding Principles in its resolution 17/4 of 16 June 2011. For instance the Principle n° 1 declares: “States must protect against human rights abuse within their territory and/or jurisdiction by third parties, including business enterprises. This requires taking appropriate steps to prevent, investigate, punish and redress such abuse through effective policies, legislation, regulations and adjudication. See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinesshr_en.pdf
- 21 The development of the Myanmar's garment industry was triggered by the relocation of production bases in Asia and the reapplication of the EU's Everything but the Arms (EBA) scheme to the country (the EBA scheme is explained in the WTO case study in Chapter 7 of this book). Because of that preferential treatment, clothing exports increased markedly, with the EU as the main export destination.

- 22 The Singapore Ministerial Declaration was the result of the first WTO Ministerial Conference, held in Singapore from December 9–13, 1996. The declaration focused on the multilateral trading system, including trade liberalization, the “four new issues” (trade and investment, trade and competition, government procurement, and trade facilitation), and addressing the concerns of developing countries and LDCs, such as the risk of marginalization and the issue of core labour standards.
See www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/min96_e/wtodec_e.htm
- 23 The 1994 UNCTAD publication, titled “Relationship Between the Trading System and Internationally Recognized Labour Standards,” discusses the challenges and implications for LDCs in the context of the Uruguay Round agreements. It addresses issues such as the difficulty for LDCs in fully implementing and interpreting the new multilateral agreements, the complexities of their domestic legal systems, and how parallel processes by other members in the global trading system create further problems for them. Available at: <https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ldc98ove.pdf>
- 24 During the 1993 negotiations of the “Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration),” the Indonesian, Malaysian, Philippine, Singaporean, and Thai government delegations called for the ILO to oppose the social clause in international trade agreements and to review ILO standards, expressing resistance from developing countries to linking labour standards to trade. They argued that it could be used as a protectionist tool by developed countries, and they questioned the ILO’s existing standards, requesting a review and a focus on reviewing the implementation of existing ILO standards rather than creating new ones:
 - (a) The resolution was a direct challenge to the idea of a “social clause,” which links international trade to core labour standards.
 - (b) The delegates believed this was a form of disguised protectionism by developed nations, designed to gain a competitive advantage by imposing their own labour standards on developing countries.
 - (c) The resolution asked the ILO to actively resist the introduction of such a clause and to focus on a review of its existing standards, rather than developing new ones or enforcing the social clause. Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration).
- 25 See *The OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises on responsible business conduct*. www.oecd.org/en/publications/2023/06/oecd-guidelines-for-multinational-enterprises-on-responsible-business-conduct_a0b49990.html
- 26 The framework rests on differentiated but complementary responsibilities. It comprises three core principles: (a) the State duty to protect against human rights abuses by third parties, (b) including business; (c) the corporate responsibility to respect human rights; and the need for more effective access to remedies. Each principle is an essential component of the framework: the State duty to protect because it lies at the very core of the international human rights regime; the corporate responsibility to respect because it is the basic expectation society has of business; and access to remedy, because even the most concerted efforts cannot prevent all abuse, while access to judicial redress is often problematic, and non-judicial means are limited in number, scope and effectiveness. The three principles form a complementary whole in that each supports the others in achieving sustainable progress.
For more insights, see <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/625292?ln=en&cv=pdf>
- 27 See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinessshr_en.pdf

- 28 The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, adopted in 1998 and amended in 2022, is an expression of commitment by governments, employers' and workers' organizations to uphold basic human values – values that are vital to our social and economic lives. It affirms the obligations and commitments that are inherent in membership of the ILO, namely:
 - (a) freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;
 - (b) the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour;
 - (c) the effective abolition of child labour;
 - (d) the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation; and a safe and healthy working environment.
- See the integral text: www.ilo.org/resource/conference-paper/ilo-1998-declaration-fundamental-principles-and-rights-work-and-its-follow
- 29 See www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_CONF.151_26_Vol.I_Declaration.pdf
- 30 Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally and locally by organizations of the United Nations System, Governments, and Major Groups in every area in which human impacts on the environment. See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/outcomedocuments/agenda21>
- 31 See The Recommendation of the Council on SME and Entrepreneurship Policy: <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0473>
- 32 For more insights on how the 1990s were discussed as the great triumph for liberal democracy and Western modernity, read Ikenberry, G. J., & Trubowitz, P. (2025). *Rethinking the 1990s: Liberal world order-building in the aftermath of the cold war* (Online ed.). Oxford Academic. <https://academic.oup.com/book/61378>
- 33 Read the following paper for a historical review of the UN peacekeeping operations in the 1990s: Andersson, A. (2000). Democracies and UN peacekeeping operations, 1990–1996. *International Peacekeeping*, 7(2), 1–22. www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13533310008413832
- 34 Porter, M. E., & Kramer, M. R. (2006). Strategy & society: The link between competitive advantage and corporate social responsibility. *Harvard Business Review*, 84, 78–85. <https://hbr.org/2006/12/strategy-and-society-the-link-between-competitive-advantage-and-corporate-social-responsibility>
- 35 In a recent paper, it has been discussed the impacts of structural US-China political tensions and global supply chains pressure shocks. The US-China tensions have been shown to influence economic activity across different proxies of global economic conditions. See Cai, Y. (2025). US-China tensions, global supply chains pressure, and global economy. *Economics Letters*, 250. www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S016517652500120X
- 36 See Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (2023). *World food situation: FAO food price index*. www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation/foodpricesindex/en/.

3 **Puzzling Business Responsibility Towards Peace and Democracy**

3.1 Researching the Role of Business in Promoting Peace and Democracy

The role played by business in building peace and democracy, which is the focus of this book, reflects many of the social and economic concerns associated with globalisation. As we have seen, literature on peace and democracy discusses how peace remains a common aspiration for industrialised democracies. However, its fragility influences economic prosperity and global security. While the general assumption that more democracies imply fewer wars has been compelling to researchers who contend that the nature of world politics changed radically in the last decade of the twentieth century thanks to the “end of history”¹—would mean the end of wars and bloody revolutions—and the triumph of the free world in the Cold War,² the missing piece of the puzzle is to identify what sustains peace in the long term and, in turn, what produces democracies. In this context, a difficult challenge that management researchers face is how to articulate the responsibility of business on peace and democracy. And, therefore, how to broaden corporate obligations for all human rights beyond labour rights (see third “wave” of intersection between the BHR agenda³ and broader practices of CSR).

Against this background, the analysis in this book takes on the least-studied aspect of business responsibility in peace- and democracy-building to establish linkages among B4P, PCSR, and BHR research. In doing so, at the macro level, it involves understanding complex systems which are stable in function and organisation but are highly dynamic and uncertain at the micro level. Dynamism and uncertainty are associated with organic, long-term, and complex processes of peace- and democracy-building that are extremely difficult to impose from the outside.

A 2007 decision by the UN Secretary-General’s Policy Committee⁴ defines peacebuilding as:

A range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict

management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a prioritized, sequenced, and . . . narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives.

While traditional peacekeeping typically involves international efforts to maintain ceasefires between former combatants, peacebuilding goes further by implementing projects that reshape a country's socio-political systems after conflict, helping to prevent future unrest. Building new post-conflict governance from the ground up is challenging, with no universal solution for reconstructing or reorganising a modern nation state. Still, business and management often rely on relationship networks formed through factors like shared social backgrounds or education. For example, when the Swiss multinational Nespresso entered South Sudan's coffee market—a country plagued by civil war and genocide—they explored several different models (see Chapter 1 for conflict context). Partnering with TechnoServe, an international NGO, Nespresso began a pilot project with over 500 local farmers in 2012, investing CHF 700,000. However, renewed civil conflict in late 2013 forced TechnoServe's international staff to evacuate. Fortunately, since the southern coffee region largely escaped the worst violence, staff returned after almost a year. The programme's early achievements paved the way for long-term investments and substantial positive change in South Sudanese communities. Over recent years, Nespresso and TechnoServe have engaged around 15,000 farmers, laying the groundwork for an industry that could eventually support 50,000 farmers and benefit about a quarter of a million people. Farmers can sell their coffee beans to Nespresso—or any other buyer—at a 40% price premium. “A small farmer working an acre of land can produce the best and most valuable coffee in the world,” says TechnoServe CEO William Warshauer, speaking on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum for Africa in Cape Town in early June 2015, “we want the multinationals to make profits, and we want farmers to lift their families out of poverty. This project ticks both boxes.”⁵

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been significant growth in both the number and complexity of multilateral peace operations. As of December 2024, approximately 59,887 personnel were deployed across 11 United Nations peacekeeping missions globally (United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 2024),⁶ in regions including Kosovo, Lebanon, Cyprus, India and Pakistan, South Sudan, and Syria. Furthermore, the events of September 11 led to US interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, resulting in extensive post-intervention counterinsurgency and stabilisation activities in those countries.

The adaptive peacebuilding approach seeks to assist societies in building the resilience and robustness necessary to manage and adapt to change by fostering greater institutional complexity. This methodology emerges from dynamic and non-linear interactions among individuals and institutions within civil systems. While complex systems—such as political and governmental entities—can be analytically understood through examining their constituent parts and their interrelations, social systems develop and maintain norms, identities, structures, hierarchies, and behaviours that fulfil communal needs. Studying business organisations within their societal context, rather than as isolated units, reveals additional dimensions of their function, particularly in relation to their societal roles. The adaptive peacebuilding approach provides a targeted framework for managing the complexity, uncertainty, and unpredictability encountered by post-conflict societies striving to influence multifaceted social systems. Rather than employing a top-down control model, this longitudinal methodology emphasises active engagement with communities, co-developing interventions from the bottom up to encourage self-organisation rather than dictate community responses.

Broadly speaking, peacebuilding processes can be divided into three phases: (1) the settlement phase, which marks the end of the conflict and starts with a UN peacebuilding mission; (2) the transitional governance period, during which a transformative peacebuilding intervention is implemented with the assistance of domestic elites, with the goal of creating sustainable peace through democracy-building; and (3) the aftermath of the intervention, in which there is a pivot from a “post-conflict” country to a “normal development” phase, marked by the ratification of a constitution, which includes core choices about administrative and political institutional architecture. The issue arises from recognising that both freedom and the establishment of democracy often remain superficial. In this third and final phase, countries face two distinctive challenges: economic recovery and reducing the risk of conflict recurrence. The difficulty is that while economic development is widely considered one of the most important factors in reducing the recurrence of conflict, leaders of post-conflict states face significant constraints when it comes to attracting international investments (i.e. FDI). These constraints result from persistent political instability, a lack of liberal economic policies, and the systematic violation of human rights. This means that designing democratic states and building peace are not necessarily identical processes, even if they are compatible strategies. Although the relationship between sustainable peacebuilding and democracy-building goes beyond the mere design of political institutions and their impact on society, much of the democracy-building debate revolves around the normative and pragmatic arguments about the desirability and feasibility of institutional designs. However, the task of building democratic states following conflict is a broader one, and vicious circles arise from the need to

simultaneously maintain peace and engage in (democratic) state-building. The foundation of the new democracy lies in local citizens, who can vote for a local government that will gradually gain control over key areas of the economy. An important lesson from this intricate peacebuilding system is that, for a peace process to sustain itself, strong social institutions must develop organically from within—drawing on local culture, history, and the socio-economic context. External groups such as international peace-builders, the national government, and businesses can support and facilitate these efforts; however, excessive interference can disrupt the self-organising dynamics that are essential for building resilient social institutions. Therefore, peace and democracy-building initiatives should prioritise protecting, encouraging, and enabling societies to cultivate robust capacities for self-organisation. In this context, “resilience” refers to the ability to manage, withstand, and recover from crises. It involves reducing vulnerability and managing risk—for instance, through preventive measures—and encompasses various ways of coping with and responding to shocks, beyond simply adapting to change.⁷ Ungar (2013, p. 256)⁸ defines resilience as “the capacity of both individuals and their environments to interact in ways that optimize developmental processes.” In adaptive peacebuilding, resilience can be seen as a society’s (and businesses’) capacity to prevent, manage, and recover from violent conflict in ways that foster development. From a management standpoint, leadership during crises becomes a moral responsibility that underpins both social and economic resilience—an area where leaders are evaluated, especially amid significant uncertainty and societal divisions. This pursuit of resilience presents an important ethical challenge for leaders.

The *Management and Organization Review’s Resilience Forum*⁹ began by examining how the Covid-19 pandemic transformed society. The ongoing “new normal” highlighted the need for honest reflection and scientific thinking.¹⁰ Depending on political leadership, such crises can either strengthen community bonds or deepen divides. In business, resilience is connected to workplace happiness—positive feelings at work—which, according to research (see Cohn et al., 2009), can predict success, strong relationships, and well-being. Thus, resilience and adaptive capacity reinforce each other: adaptive capacity focuses on how well civil society and institutions, including businesses, can adjust flexibly to sudden changes.¹¹ Both resilience and adaptive capacity are grounded in social capital (see Putnam, 1993; Chapter 9)—the resources and benefits individuals and institutions access through networks and communities. People actively build and use different forms of capital, leveraging them for benefit. Social capital essentially describes how networks promote trust and cooperation (i.e. social cohesion). No nation has yet implemented a comprehensive programme for social cohesion, notwithstanding US Senator Chris Murphy’s proposal for a national strategy to strengthen social capital policies.¹²

Taken together, resilience, adaptive capacity, and social capital reflect a society's or community's ability to grow and adapt while keeping its core values and identity intact. In particular, MNCs have an interest in social capital development. They benefit from more efficient health care and a workforce prepared by a first-rate public education system. (see Chapter 9). At the regional level, it is even clearer that the post-conflict period is characterised by business dominance. After the World II War, heads of banks, executives in corporations were power-brokers in their communities. In some cities, the CEOs all lived in the same neighbourhood, "CEOs knew one another and were always in town. A phone call could bring them together within a day, and they could each pledge a million dollars to support a project" (see Hanson et al., 2006).¹³ The discussion over the CEO-led civic organisations and the relocation of corporate headquarters from central cities to suburban office generated competing local claims on available resources. Public sensitivity to corporate power politics created public relations and litigation hazards for inexperienced executives and their businesses. These ideas describe how communities reorganise, learn, and adapt after major disruptions like war or conflict. For example, in northern Uganda, survivor groups have built support and healing networks using creative and participatory methods, helping members cope with trauma through activities like peer support, collective enterprises, and joint financial projects such as Village Savings and Loan Associations.¹⁴ Viewing adaptive peacebuilding and resilience as complex, multi-layered processes that require relationships and local ownership allows us to acknowledge the nuances of post-conflict societies. Within these systems, the economy functions as a part of broader social structures, all of which are capable of self-organisation—managing themselves, even during crises. Civil interventions—including those led by businesses—carry significant responsibility, as their actions deeply affect society. Carefully balancing unforeseen effects can greatly improve outcomes and shape the community's future. This transformative end is also driven by the widespread of socio-economic rights (see Figure 3.1). It is recognised that socio-economic rights serve to sustaining capitalism. In the welfare state—of which socio-economic rights are an expression—social protection is a product of capitalism. Socio-economic rights, the common argument goes, therefore counterbalance the power exercised by a market economy over society. The Commission on the UK's Future chaired by Gordon Brown has recommended that there should be new, constitutionally protected socio-economic rights. The Guardian commented in the article *Socioeconomic Rights Deserve Legal Protection* from 2022, "socioeconomic rights are the material conditions of freedom, necessary so that everyone can contribute meaningfully to society. Most constitutions recognise socioeconomic rights in one way or another, but the UK is an outlier of continental proportions. What is more, the government is seeking to dilute the already limited Human Rights Act."¹⁵

In this study, I focus on the interface between the second and third phases of the peace- and democracy-building process, in which elementary forms of human-rights protection emerge and domestic actors, such as businesses, assent to the construction of a modern political order that is conducive to economic productivity (see Figure 3.1 and Chapter 4). Since this is what enables us to investigate businesses as actors capable of creating jobs and assisting with economic rejuvenation, emphasis is placed on the need to expand the discourse and political practice of business in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Applying a business lens to peace- and democracy-building can thus help us to reframe the diverse roles that businesses can play in local contexts—for instance, as “benefactors” providing essential services to local

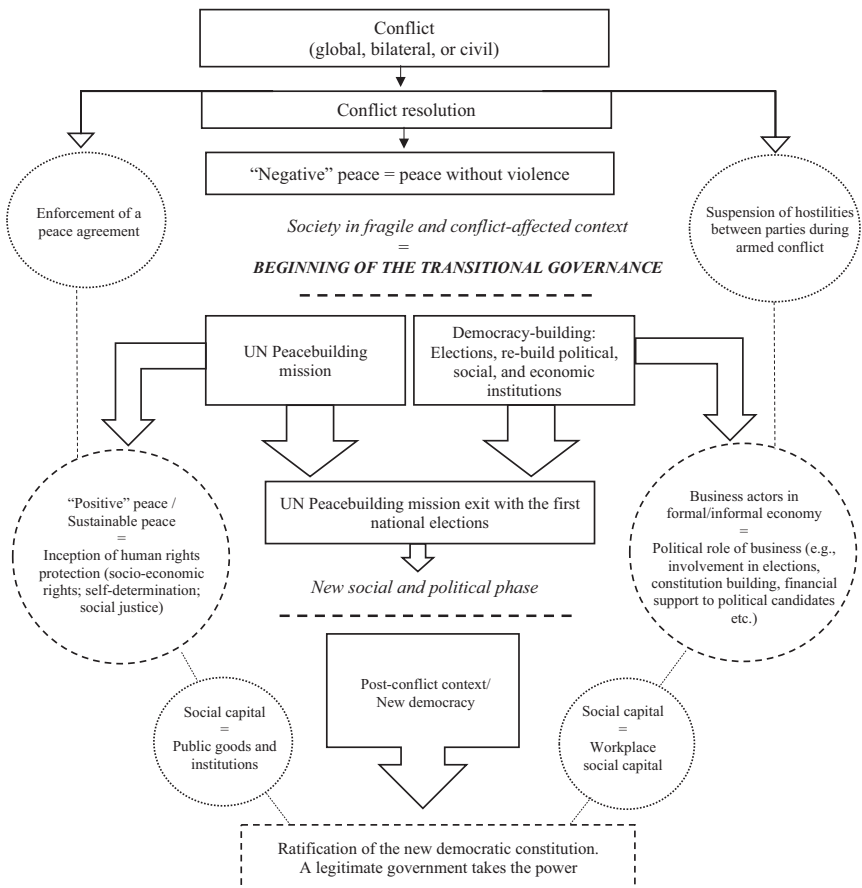


Figure 3.1 Puzzling a complex business responsibility towards peace and democracy.

populations (i.e. logistics) or as “beneficiaries” seeking to take advantage of local institutional fragility and conflict (i.e. low wages and exploitation of labour). It is worth noting that these are complex and unstable processes and that evaluating business responsibility is thus methodologically difficult. Yet if we are to assess the contributions of business operations to achieving the objectives of peace and democracy, we must critically examine the political role of business in contemporary societies. Nonetheless, expanding our perspective in this manner enables us to develop a critical view of the role of business in transformative processes, such as peace- and democracy-building, while simultaneously exploring how to achieve sustainable peace by integrating a business perspective.

3.2 The Rationale Behind Selecting the Three Case Studies

Within the framework of this book, the umbrella term “fragile and conflict-affected setting” refers to those countries with the most complex development problems in the world. The various dimensions of state fragility broadly encompass aspects of security, economic and social development, and political representation and governance. There is no clear boundary that separates fragile states from the global economy. Researchers recognise business as a key agent in contexts of fragility and crisis, typically focusing on the economic contribution made by businesses to revitalising war-torn economies and generating a peace dividend through employment creation, disaster recovery, and conflict prevention.

Those fragile and conflict-affected settings that are taken into account in this study, particularly Myanmar and Zimbabwe, rarely offer fertile ground for an effective political order to flourish, which includes stability, government effectiveness, and democratic legitimacy. Nonetheless, Myanmar and Zimbabwe have fundamentally different profiles. According to the 2023 World Bank classification of fragile and conflict-affected countries, Myanmar is considered a conflict zone. It has a long history of direct military rule that is intertwined with multiple, protracted conflicts, especially between ethnic armed organisations and the military. The peace process that started in the early 2010s and was accompanied by social and economic reforms has been characterised by illiberal strategies and the complementary use of coercion and co-optation. The idea of an inherently “geographical peace” resonates in a number of territorial and scalar strategies that are used in myriad ways to contain armed resistance. Zimbabwe, by contrast, has remained mired in post-conflict peacebuilding ever since its independence in 1980. These peacebuilding efforts largely neglected the existence of an established system of customary courts with a long history of addressing conflict situations at the community level in pre- and post-colonial Zimbabwe. Despite the creation of peace committees as a contribution to conflict management

and post-conflict peacebuilding, sustainable peace remains a mirage. Both Myanmar and Zimbabwe face significant obstacles in consolidating legitimate governance and the complex challenge of implementing sustainable peace. In Myanmar, the democratic transition has led to endless political turmoil. In Zimbabwe, the political arena is a continuum of social injustice perpetrated by one group of individuals against another. While the two countries share experiences of both interstate and intra-state conflicts, they significantly diverge with regard to state capacity, economic development, and nation-building. Common post-colonial dilemmas have fuelled ethnic tensions within civil society, resulting in inter-ethnic economic rivalry, polarised party politics, and segregated neighbourhoods that contribute to ethnic violence. Zimbabwe has increasingly become a patrimonial and predatory state, which has informed how the ruling elites have negotiated with both local and international business. At the same time, the political economy of Myanmar cannot be disentangled from militarily centralised despotism: although SMEs make up the vast majority of businesses in Myanmar, the military has increased its economic influence over the years through military-owned and crony companies, in the context of a more open economy, the exploitation of rich natural resources, and the inflow of foreign capital from China, Thailand, and other Asian countries. Zimbabwe, for its part, was poised to become a significant force in African mining. Its competitive mineral resources, well-maintained infrastructure, and skilled workforce have attracted considerable interest from new foreign investors over the last decades. However, the mining sector has also adversely affected community livelihoods and human rights in mining districts such as Hwange, Kadoma, Shurugwi, and Bindura. These effects have led to degradation and ecological costs.

Given this profound social and political fragmentation, these two countries provide fitting case studies to understand the conditions under which business can influence peace- and democracy-building processes. While the analysis conducted in this study does not include a systematic examination of major peacebuilding operations in Myanmar and Zimbabwe, the institutional background is instrumental to understanding the major political and socio-economic responsibilities of business in such fragile and conflict-affected settings. Moreover, I do not explore peace- and democracy-building from the perspective of international development agencies but focus instead on different types of business initiatives connected to these complex processes, including the management of business operations, contributions to addressing development and social issues, and influence at the level of policymaking and state-building. Concretely, I begin by exploring democracy-building as a management practice. The political role of business is thus studied in light of different social roles, which are theorised in the discussion of PCSR. The two empirical case studies, Myanmar and Zimbabwe, will then be taken as

a starting point for further research at the intersection of B4P, PCSR, and BHR research. In the case of Myanmar, I will investigate the responsibility of SMEs when it comes to supporting peace- and democracy-related objectives in the context of the post-2021 military coup. Findings will contribute to bridging the divide between scholarship in B4P and PCSR research. In the case of Zimbabwe, by contrast, the mining industry—understood here as a composite mosaic that is closely linked to broader, shifting dynamics of regional cross-border investment, political power, and state policy—will be used to study perceptions of peace and human rights among employees of MNCs and SMEs. The resulting insights will contribute to bridging the divide between scholarship in BHR and B4P.

Furthermore, I decided to include the case of the WTO. The increasing presence of fragile and conflict-affected countries in WTO decision-making processes raises numerous questions on how the WTO Accessions can positively contribute to peacebuilding and conflict prevention in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Several important questions remain open: What is the role of the WTO in sustaining peace among its Members in fragile and conflict-affected settings? What are the effects arising from the WTO Accessions on fragile and conflict-affected countries? While limited research has addressed these relevant questions, emerging research has underscored the opportunities arising from the WTO Accessions for countries afflicted by conflicts. By examining the impact of trade and development policies on these countries, I look at the mutual relationship between the eight bases of the culture of peace and WTO provisions and discuss four ways for supporting peace-projects in the multilateral trading system.

3.2.1 Why Explore How Businesses Contribute to Peace and Democracy

Researchers are still attempting to articulate what it means to make a theoretical contribution from a management perspective. Broadly speaking, theorists must convince others that their propositions make sense, if they hope to have an impact on research practice. While originality can be conceptualised in terms of advancing our understanding either incrementally or through some form of revelation, utility can be subdivided into practical utility and scientific utility. This study is innovative on the level of both originality and utility. By applying a pragmatist approach to theory building—pragmatism sees theory as a tool for doing things better in the world—this study examines the intersection between B4P, PCSR, and BHR theories, exploring a wide range of business practices as they relate to critical social goals. First, from an ethical and practical foundation, it discusses the positive duties of business to promote peace, democracy, and human rights. Second, it contributes to evaluating the concrete applications of new or revised ways of thinking about business responsibility, linking core management and organisational

concepts with micro-level, bottom-up, emergent phenomena which arise when individuals interact with each other. Thus, the focus on practice makes it possible to shift theory building in management science away from insular conversations between academics towards practice-relevant research. In doing so, this book expands on crucial questions which may prove illuminating for the management profession, while presenting opportunities to have a greater theoretical impact in the three academic disciplines. From a B4P perspective, the study seeks to contribute to the development of “Business for Peace” theories by identifying the potential implications of businesses’ actions on factors relating to peace, which might encourage firms to act with a view to maximising positive spillovers and minimising negative spillovers. It thus makes a contribution to further developing the notion of sustainable peace in terms of inclusive processes, including democracy promotion, transparent government, poverty eradication, sustainable development, and the rule of law. Furthermore, the book advances the exploration of peace—including its geopolitical dimensions (see Box 4 on Geopolitics in Management Research)—while strengthening PCSR theories by deepening our understanding of socio-political uncertainty and potential business responses from management, business ethics, and policymaking perspectives. This study also opens a broader perspective on the merits of the democratisation of corporate governance, in a period when current events and broader geopolitical, social, and economic trends appear to point towards the importance of future PCSR theories examining the implications of the political role of business in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Finally, human rights have come to play a prominent role in debates about the responsibilities of business. While, in recent years, the field of BHR has seen strong conceptual and normative scholarship, engagements with empirical analysis have so far been relatively scarce. In order to address this gap, this study aims to apply a BHR lens to political democracy, as well as to human rights in the mining industry and in fragile and conflict-affected settings, an approach that may enrich our perspective on important global business challenges. It thus contributes to shedding light on the promise of human rights to help make the responsibilities of business towards society more concrete, in addition to emphasising the importance of attaining certain human-rights goals, despite a lack of immediate economic returns (see *humanising business*¹⁶).

3.3 Decisions That Matter: Research Perspective and Methodological Approach

The modern world is more interconnected than ever before. Instead of discrete national industries and economies, businesses are integrated in global markets. Meanwhile, the greatest dangers to international peace arise not only from conventional interstate hostility but also from non-state

terrorist organisations and internecine conflict within regions. Contemporary dilemmas involving nation-states reflect the systematic decline of political institutions with an adverse effect on democratic stability. The rise of economic inequality, which reinforces a tremendous divide between those who have benefited from the globalisation, digitalisation, and automation of the economy and those who feel left behind, underscores the urgency of a broader analysis of peace- and democracy-building. The exploration of the meaning and applications of this complex processes in the face of increasing globalisation serves three main objectives: first, to contribute to the research agenda in the B4P and PCSR literature; second, to “operationalise” the concepts of peace and democracy with the aim of responding to recurring criticism on the limited practicability of business ethics; and, finally, to contribute to ethical decision-making in business contexts including human rights protection.

This book addresses the complexity of peace- and democracy-building processes from a management perspective. Guided by the question of whether and why business has a responsibility to promote peace, democracy, and human rights, it undertakes an in-depth analysis of how business affects these processes by addressing the following overarching research questions: Why does business have a responsibility to promote peace and democratic developments? What factors influence the decision of a business to promote peace and democratic development? And what are the spillovers of business activities with regard to peace and democracy?

Disciplinary boundaries are often artificial and drawing on various disciplines in a single study can contribute to breaking down these barriers. By adopting a multidisciplinary approach, this study combines insights from the fields of management, political science, organisation studies, and business ethics. Moreover, analysing the responsibility of business towards peace and democracy from various perspectives helps us not only to better grasp the complexity of the phenomenon but also to think outside the box when it comes to critical interdisciplinary debates about the political responsibility of business in contemporary societies, as well as business’s peace-making potential and accountability for human rights. This study correspondingly applies a multilevel research model, combining an organisational level of analysis with micro-level research. Organisational level investigation employs business practice and policies as the unit of analysis. At the organisational level, business practice and policies are taken as the units of analysis, in order to assess organisational outcomes and examine whether businesses are responsible for peace and democracy, as well as how such responsibilities can be fulfilled. Conversely, the micro-level analysis is rooted in psychology, aiming to understand the thoughts, feelings, and actions of individuals within a systemic context. While micro-level scholars have often been viewed as being “unable or simply disinclined to see the forest for the

trees,” undertaking research at this level makes it possible to intensify and stimulate conversations that have a social impact, as well as capture new perspectives on important problems or phenomena, such as the responsibility of business in relation to peace and democracy. In short, multilevel research is one way to promote the development of a more expansive management paradigm for conceptualising organisational systems. It can thus connect the dots between and foster a much-needed synthesis of B4P and PCSR research by making explicit the links between constructs that were previously disconnected.

Investigating complex business dynamics renders it necessary to consider how businesses frame peace, democracy, and human rights. Grounded theory is an inductive general research method that can be systematically applied to qualitative data to arrive at a conceptual core category. It involves “the systematic generation of theory from data acquired by a rigorous research method.” Thus, it is a theory which demonstrates the validity of its theory-generating logic and is particularly suitable for its systemic approach to qualitative data analysis and interpretation. Qualitative methods are uniquely suitable for comprehending and explaining complicated dynamics within society. The need for qualitative studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena as they occur. With a changing landscape in business and society, as well as epochal challenges—such as the need to uphold justice and human rights in GVCs, address concerns of sustainability, and realise the potential of new business models to tackle global poverty and income inequality—qualitative research makes it possible to explain individual, organisational, social, and political phenomena. As such, this qualitative approach is an appropriate method for developing a unique research perspective on the complex socio-political context of peace, business, and human rights and interpreting a business-centred understanding of peace and democracy.

The nascent tendencies and ambitions within the business community for implementing new structures and practices capable of harnessing the capacity of business for service in the cause of peace and democracy require B4P, PCSR, and BHR researchers not only to broaden their horizons and explain the economic opportunity of peace and democracy as an antidote to conflict and alienation, but also to reinforce conceptualisations of a responsible role of business in relation to society. This research addresses these concerns and combines conceptual analysis and empirical work. From a conceptual standpoint, it brings to the surface the theoretical underpinnings of the debate around the political role of business and other approaches to PCSR. From an empirical standpoint, several contributions to this study examine, in practice, human rights at the individual level—a bottom-up approach seeking to empower local stakeholders and communities—and other forms of corporate accountability.

First, the prevailing understanding of peace, democracy, and human rights in the practices of business is taken into consideration. A business-centric understanding of peace, democracy and human rights requires investigation of the political environment that incentivises or disincentivises businesses to undertake action. The factors and motivations for discussing the political role of business are thus interpreted progressively. This analysis may make it possible to challenge the status quo in terms of economic and social rights and the actual accountability of corporations. A qualitative investigation of business actions in a context of military rule may contribute to generating holistic descriptions, capturing varying perspectives, and identifying micro-patterns on the responsibility of business in supporting democratic developments and providing public goods such as the protection of human rights. Clarifying the range of business-related factors that enable the peace- and democracy-building process could therefore enrich research on peace settlement in post-conflict countries and help expand policymaking efforts and democratic political practices (e.g. especially during a transitional governance period).

Second, integrating peace and democracy from a business perspective also requires an understanding of the meanings that businesses attribute to those concepts. The diversity that is intrinsic in business—a diversity of people but also perspectives and values—not only triggers different meanings, but also shapes different emotions such as emotional awareness, emotional unpacking, and emotional (dis)engagement. Sensemaking, as the process through which individuals and groups attempt to explain novel, unexpected, or confusing events, helps to spell out those meanings and feelings. Thus, a sensemaking analysis on peace and human rights may capture the rich diversity of explanations, discussions, and beliefs around these concepts (refer to the Human Behavior School mentioned earlier; this approach, based on psychology and social psychology, was applied in the Zimbabwe case study. This “individual” interpretation of the meaning of peace and democracy is reflected by calls for clarifications of data at the community and individual level with respect to business and human rights as well as business and peace).

3.4 Structure of the Book

The book is organised in nine chapters and divided into three main parts. Chapter 1 serves to establish the coherence of the study and the focus of the discussion on peace, democracy, and human rights in a business context. In Chapter 2, I present the background of business’s role in global governance from different angles, including recent research in the fields of B4P, PCSR, and BHR. I then discuss the interlinkages among these academic disciplines with a view to capturing the complexity of peace- and democracy-building processes from a business perspective. Chapter 3 narrows down the discussion

to the case studies embedded in fragile and conflict-affected settings, namely Myanmar and Zimbabwe, before outlining the methodological approach used here and its theoretical impact.

Chapter 4 then explores the conceptual underpinnings of the political role of business, with an emphasis on democracy-building, while also incorporating insights on the contribution of deliberative democracy for (re)conceptualising the growing role of PCSR responses in various political contexts. The theoretical framework proposed here represents an attempt to expand the scope of theories in PCSR scholarship and to answer the research question: Why does business engage in democracy-building? By detailing the prerequisites and motivations for discussing democracy-building as a management practice, this chapter explains how businesses can enhance their legitimacy in the political arena by engaging in pro-democracy activities at different levels, whether internally, that is, within the company itself, or externally, that is, in society at large.

Chapter 5 explores the factors that influence the decision of small businesses to engage in promoting sustainable peace. Sustainable peace, a long and complex process that includes critical elements such as human rights, democracy, and justice, is explored through a case study of Myanmar. This chapter provides initial insights into the critical management decisions faced by SME managers in a setting characterised by fragility and conflict. This analysis presents unique findings concerning decision-making by SMEs with regard not only to taking an active role in the political arena and therefore addressing governance gaps, but also to establishing workplace democracy procedures in their business. The chapter then reflects on different PCSR activities engaged in by SME managers and makes a contribution to reducing the academic divide between B4P and PCSR research. Applying a PCSR lens to SME behaviour makes it possible to capture the “political” turn of B4P and raise new questions about the relationship between SMEs, sustainable peace, and democracy.

In Chapter 6, the focus is on the implications of business activities for peace and human rights. Drawing on B4P and BHR research, it highlights the social spillovers of business on definitions and feelings related to human rights and peace. Employees in the mining industry in Zimbabwe reveal that these concepts have economic, psychological, and geopolitical implications. The findings arrived at here lay the foundation for an interpretation of peace and human rights that emphasises the importance of considering the individual level in B4P and BHR research, which is currently limited in scope. This chapter therefore contributes to recent efforts in B4P and BHR to explore how businesses can pursue the goals of peace and human rights in a context of social fragility.

The third case study seeks to examine the impact of trade regulations on maintaining peace and avoiding international and civil conflicts. Chapter 7

outlines that multilateral trade institutions, such as the WTO, are fundamental to understanding the linkages between the establishment of a peaceful order and economic prosperity. By examining the increasing presence of fragile and conflict-affected countries in WTO decision-making processes, the chapter raises numerous questions on how the WTO accession mechanism can positively contribute to peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Overall, it contributes to the literature on Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) and their effects on economic interdependence and political stability. This interdependence may be a necessary condition for peace to flourish, but it may also be insufficient, as its full impact on political preferences may require specific domestic institutions and a well-functioning international system. The chapter further discusses that PTAs, characterised by deep regional integration, are more effective in fostering peace among WTO Members; finally, it provides a set of recommendations to strengthen peace in the context of regional integration.

Chapters 8 and 9 review the key findings of this study and discuss its theoretical and managerial implications for the future practice and study of the complex relationship between peace, business, democracy, and human rights. It reflects on how peace, democracy, and human rights are issues of concern to society as a whole. Business shares its responsibility with other stakeholders, such as international organisations and governments, to engage in participatory processes to ensure their realisation. This requires managers, especially those operating in fragile and conflict-affected settings, not only to develop specific competences with regard to peacebuilding, but also to acquire a certain geopolitical expertise. The bulk of the conclusion is devoted to discussing how these responsibilities incumbent on business could be investigated in greater depth, in line with the three principles, including the principle of assistance, the principle of limited scope, and the principle of accountability. Chapter 9 also examines the application of social capital within societies experiencing conflict and geopolitical tensions. Additionally, it is noted that researchers may assess the extent to which businesses are responsible for implementing peace- and democracy-building practices, as well as defining the limits of such interventions.

Box 4 Integrating Geopolitics in Management Research

Geopolitical reasoning dates back to ancient Greece. Aristotle derived the respective political systems of the Greek city-states and their neighbouring empires and tribes from climatic conditions. Similar ideas were prominent in France during the Renaissance and Kant also linked presumed characteristics of people to climatic factors.

Geopolitics is broadly defined as the area of study that discusses anthropo-geographical conditions which shape politics in international relations. In political science, definitions of geopolitics analyse how political decisions are influenced by geographic factors, focusing on how nation-states adapt their international behaviour to preserve or change their power status in relation to specific territories. Such a definition integrates power struggles, regional dominance and the strategic value of regions. However, discussions around geopolitics are sometimes subject to misinterpretation and concept overstressing due to the inherent complexity of global affairs. Management researchers have used this geopolitics' perspective by focusing on the discussion of how geography shapes the politics of interstate relations at a country level, creating different structural and relational power dynamics, which may unlock a more relational type of political risk and uncertainty around MNE investment decisions. As businesses recognise the importance of managing the effects of growing geopolitical tensions, they increasingly seek guidance from trained professionals. They begin by identifying potential global friction points, often relying on insights from former government officials and experienced analysts. Next, companies determine which issues directly impact their operations and proceed to plan how shifts in the geopolitical climate might influence their business strategies. Consequently, research management is paying closer attention to the evolving role of "geopolitical advisors." Boards of directors, senior leaders, government affairs teams, line managers, and cross-functional groups all contribute to the organisational changes needed to both assess geopolitical risks and capitalise on opportunities created by home-host country relationships and political expertise. Furthermore, in the last decade, geopolitical—both long-term geopolitical dynamics of continuity and short-term geopolitical events—has emerged as critically impacting on organisational strategy, structure, and decision-making. The increasing political volatility, protectionist policies, armed conflicts, and the reconfiguration of global economic power dynamics are actively reshaping the managerial landscape, with businesses enhancing risk management practices to mitigate potential disruptions to supply chains, market access, and capital flows.

I previously introduced how the "technological revolution" is another space of conflict, but it can also stimulate peacebuilding avenues. For instance, geopolitical contestation can transform conflict resolution, particularly in areas like AI, 5G, and cybersecurity. Managers thus should consider the commercial viability of technologies and

the political implications of sourcing, regulation, and data sovereignty. At the same time, management researchers are increasingly examining geopolitical factors and their effect on global business to help firms and governments to navigate trade shocks and uncertainty (see to the 2025 call of papers *Geopolitical Trends and Their Impact on Business Management* in the Management Decision Journal). The new areas of research include the following topics:

- a. Methodological frameworks linking geopolitical trends to managerial approaches and outcomes.
 - b. The impact of geopolitical risk and its analysis on strategic decision-making.
 - c. The role of geopolitical literacy in dealing with global challenges from managerial viewpoint.
 - d. Management direct responses to trade wars, tariffs, transportation disruption, and protectionism.
 - e. Sector-specific impacts, particularly in energy, defence, cybersecurity, and tech with geopolitical relevance.
 - f. Company's leadership behaviour in politically unstable and restrictive environments.
 - g. How multinational companies navigate global political dynamics and economic cooperation.
 - h. Talent management and cross-border workforce challenges amid geopolitical shifts.
 - i. The influence of international policy, regulation, and diplomacy on corporate strategy.
 - j. Scenario planning, forecasting, and risk assessment tools in volatile environments.
- Transportation corridors and their vulnerabilities.

Notes

- 1 See Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The end of history and the last man*. The Free Press. <https://pages.ucsd.edu/~bslantchev/courses/pdf/Fukuyama%20-%20End%20of%20History.pdf>
- 2 For critical views on the end of the Cold War, read: Eden, L. (1993). Review of the end of U.S. cold war history? A review essay, by Melvyn P. Leffler. *International Security*, 18(1). www.jstor.org/stable/2539036 For more insights on the Post-Cold War geopolitical order, read: Huntington, S. P. (1996). *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order*. Simon and Schuster. www.beyondintractability.org/bksum/huntington-clash#:~:text=and%20Schuster%2C%201996.-,The%20Clash%20of%20Civilizations%20and%20the%20Remaking%20of%20World%20Order,found%20within%20the%20cultural%20boundaries. See

- also “An Agenda for Peace” UN Report by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In the Report the Former Secretary-General highlights that globalization and nationalism need not be viewed as opposing trends, doomed to spur each other on to extremes of reaction. The healthy globalization of contemporary life requires in the first instance solid identities and fundamental freedoms. Thus, respect for democratic principles at all levels of social existence is crucial: in communities, within States and within the community of States “Our constant duty should be to maintain the integrity of each while finding a balanced design for all.” Read: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/145749?ln=en&cv=pdf>
- 3 In Karp, D. J. (2023). Business and human rights in a changing world order: Beyond the ethics of disembedded liberalism. *Business and Human Rights Journal*, 8(2), 135–150. www.cambridge.org/core/journals/business-and-human-rights-journal/article/business-and-human-rights-in-a-changing-world-order-beyond-the-ethics-of-disembedded-liberalism/907C211549F8AD34573677B-4409DA22A
- 4 A/61/901-S/2007/269: www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF-CF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/PBC%20S2007%20269.pdf
- 5 See the article of the TIME: <https://time.com/3918857/george-clooney-south-sudan/>
- 6 See *Peacekeeping operations fact sheet*. https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/peacekeeping_fact_sheet_english_december_2024.pdf
- 7 See Joseph, J. (2018). *Varieties of resilience: Studies in governmentality*. Cambridge University Press.
- 8 Ungar, M. (2018). Systemic resilience: Principles and processes for a science of change in contexts of adversity. *Ecology and Society*, 23(4), 34.
- 9 The Management Organization Review ‘Forum on Resilience’ was kicked off by the editors’ perspective on the lingering new normal (see Välikangas & Lewin, 2020). The forum reported that some companies have demonstrated resilience capabilities in quickly seizing opportunities even when faced with what initially looked like the end of business. Such determined agility represented, for example, improvising an emergent-opportunity-fitting strategy or it may have been manifested by government action (e.g., China, New Zealand, and Finland). More insights are available here: www.cambridge.org/core/journals/management-and-organization-review/article/resilience-forum-a-lingering-conclusion/12030900AD7F066AAA8639EA1DFCC785
- 10 See Kenney, M., & Zysman, J. (2020). COVID-19 and the increasing centrality and power of platforms in China, the US, and beyond. *Management and Organization Review*, 16(4), 747–752.
- 11 Cohn, M. A., Fredrickson, B. L., Brown, S. L., Mikels, J. A., & Conway, A. M. (2009). Happiness unpacked: Positive emotions increase life satisfaction by building resilience. *Emotion*, 9(3), 361.
- 12 See the “National Strategy for Social Connection Act” (S. 2350), which was introduced in July 2023. The bill has been introduced in the Senate but has not been passed into law: [www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/2350/text#:~:text=Introduced%20in%20Senate%20\(07/18,its%20people%20into%20a%20community](http://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/2350/text#:~:text=Introduced%20in%20Senate%20(07/18,its%20people%20into%20a%20community)
- 13 Hanson, R., Wolman, H., Connolly, D., & Pearson, K. (2006). *Corporate citizenship and urban problem solving: The changing civic role of business leaders in American cities*. The Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, pp. 1–38. www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/20060901_corpcitizenship.pdf

- 14 See www.uncdf.org/article/6620/digitalization-of-village-savings-and-loans-associations-vslas-in-uganda
- 15 Available at: www.theguardian.com/law/2022/dec/08/socioeconomic-rights-deserve-legal-protection#:~:text=Socioeconomic%20rights%20are%20the%20material%20conditions%20of,are%20absent%20from%20existing%20domestic%20legislative%20arrangements
- 16 Many scholars and practitioners now agree that businesses should respect human rights, but there is less agreement on the reasons why. Deva identifies two main arguments: one based on society's expectations, which supports the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and another based on the benefits businesses might gain from respecting human rights. He argues that companies have a duty to respect human rights simply because they have the capacity to violate them. Fulfilling this responsibility would mean humanizing business, thus, rethinking the fundamental role of business, making significant changes to corporate laws, and adjusting what shareholders expect from companies. See Deva, S. (2022). Human rights and humanizing business. In M. Dion, R. E. Freeman, & S. D. Dmytriyev (Eds.), *Humanizing Business. Issues in Business Ethics*, 53. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-72204-3_11#citeas

4 The Storm of Building Democracy

4.1 The Unexplored Field of Democracy-Building and PCSR

In recent decades, management scholars have been continuously (re)defining and expanding the role and responsibilities of business, including in the sphere of economic, legal, social, ethical, environmental, and philanthropic responsibilities. One of the most recent additions to the growing repertoire of responsibilities assigned to business is PCSR, which encompasses corporate citizenship, a political conception of corporate responsibility, and corporations as quasi-governmental institutions.

Generally speaking, PCSR refers to the political role that business has taken on, which includes, for example, providing goods and services—such as health and education—that have traditionally been under state authority, engaging in self-regulation by means of new forms of global governance, and influencing regulation and governance via lobbying or other political channels. Given the wide range of activities it encompasses, no unified definition of PCSR can be given. However, PCSR scholars stress that businesses face growing expectations with regard to their “explicit participation in processes of political will formation,” and by extension in political and democratic processes more generally.

While existing scholarship on PCSR has insisted that businesses should participate in democratic processes, it has largely remained silent on what this participation would look like in practice. As a corollary of this, it has also not addressed the explicit role that business can play in *democracy-building*. However, democracy is a key issue for a number of reasons: first, PCSR builds on the foundation of deliberative democracy; second, democracy is seen as a superior form of governance; third, democracy has positive effects on the economy.

Given this backdrop, I decided to explore the role of business as a force for good in virtue of its contribution to democracy-building. I therefore develop a theoretical framework that helps explain the role of positive research in the implementation of a firm’s responsibility to society. By

“positive,” I mean research that uses social science methods in an attempt to provide justification for normative guidance. For example, some researchers have used their own positive CSR research to justify their normative conclusions about how managers should act. While acknowledging the limitations of such positive approaches, I suggest that positive theorising about PCSR displays greater applicability on both the practical and critical levels when it comes to discussing how firms can positively impact not just shareholders or stakeholders, but also the civil, political, and social rights of citizens and communities. Drawing on this framework, I then identify a number of implications for management theory and practice, as well as offering suggestions for future research on a positive business role in the implementation of CSR principles.

Theoretical and empirical research emphasises the relationship between business and democracy-building. For instance, business might exert significant influence on the democracy-building process, either via business associations or through other wider networks of private actors engaging in politics. Democracy-building is a process of crafting specific political institutions that shape democracy’s characteristics and consolidate the democratic regime. Democracy-building often occurs in two phases, as discussed by Fukuyama (2004)¹: The first phase consists of stabilising the country by providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, rebuilding infrastructure, and jumpstarting the economy, often in concert with other nation-states or international organisations, such as the United Nations. The second phase consists of creating self-sustaining political and economic institutions that will ultimately permit democratic governance and the economy to flourish. In my analysis, the focus lies on the contribution made by business to democracy-building in the second phase, since it encompasses long-term changes and the establishment of democracy and democratic values. My assumption is that business can leverage gradual democratic reforms and contribute to building a prosperous market economy by promoting democratic values. Evidently, business can also hinder democracy (see Royal Dutch Shell in Nigeria in the mid-1990s and its links to the extrajudicial execution of human-rights activist Ken Saro-Wiwa²). However, the recent decision by businesses such as IKEA or Volkswagen to leave Russia and to speak up for democratic values signals that businesses understand that their political responsibilities extend to helping build and maintain democracies.³

In elaborating this theoretical framework, the objective was to outline how business can contribute to democracy-building by applying political science theories of democratisation.⁴ While political scientists and legal scholars clearly acknowledge the increased importance of non-state actors and private social and environmental regulation in global governance, the existing scholarship on positive PCSR suffers from the lack of involvement of political

scientists. Appeals for future PCSR research that integrates political science theories with the construction of multilevel frameworks present these frameworks as combining different levels of analysis, by embedding the role of firms in broader, macro-level changes in global governance, identifying the strategic organisational factors that influence the decision-making process that leads to firms becoming active in democracy-building at the meso-level, and analysing the actions of individual firms at the micro level. In order to develop a normatively grounded theoretical framework, I must first take a step back and examine both the prerequisites of democracy-building (i.e. economic and social development, the international community, and civil society) and the instrumental, relational, and moral motivations for businesses to engage in democracy-building. Both the prerequisites and the motivations have an influence on democracy-building practices. In the framework, I further differentiate between internally focused and externally focused democracy-building management practices, although both types of practices can ultimately contribute to democracy-building. The expectation is that the decision on the part of business to become involved in democracy-building has practical implications for governmental decision-making, policymakers, employees, internal company policies, and relevant stakeholders both inside and outside business. Figure 4.1 provides a succinct overview of the framework and discussion. The left side of Figure 4.1 (prerequisites and motivations) answers the question of *why* businesses engage in democracy-building, whereas the right side of the framework outlines *how* businesses engage in democracy-building.

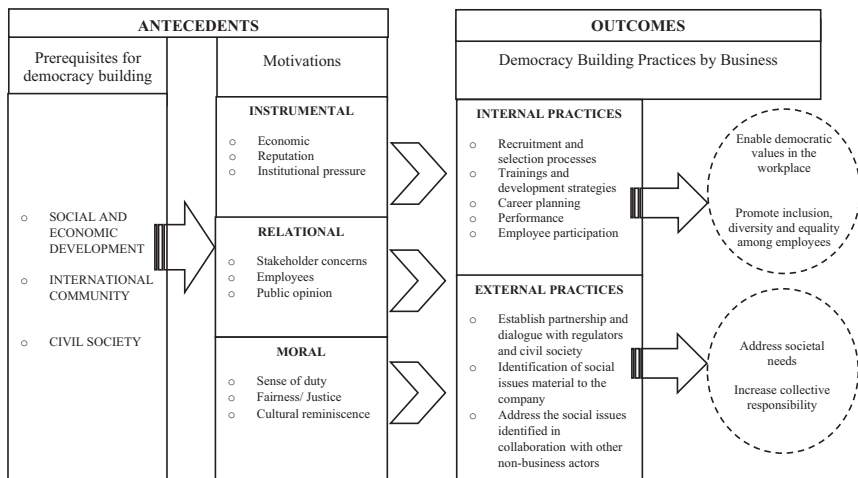


Figure 4.1 Democracy-building as a management practice.

4.1.1 *Prerequisites of Democracy-Building*

The prerequisites of democracy-building can be defined as those contextual conditions that encourage businesses to engage in democracy-building. These conditions include: economic and social development, the international community, and (local) civil society. The stage of a country's economic and social development provides businesses with incentives and opportunities to engage in democracy-building practices. The international community (i.e. international organisations, such as the UN and OECD; see Chapter 3) can put pressure on businesses to support democratic development. Finally, (local) civil society actors raise awareness around different issues, which can then be used either to incentivise or to pressure businesses to engage in democracy-building. In the following, I examine each of these prerequisites in more detail.

Economic and Social Development

Management scholars and policymakers have studied how economic and social development can lead to the emergence of democracy. Evidence confirms a strong positive relationship between democracy and socio-economic development. For instance, Lipset (1959)⁵ discusses how development leads to democracy because it brings about certain sociocultural changes that shape human actions. Higher levels of economic and social development contribute to the creation of stable (and lasting) democracies. This is because economic and social development promotes the welfare of the community with regard to social needs, education, health services, housing, culture, and religion. Moreover, economic and social development enhances the ability of community members to relate to one another, as well as to promote leadership and community organisation skills. In general, the economic and social development status provides an incentive for businesses to enter a nation-state or continue operating in it. Businesses depend on economic opportunity and infrastructure.⁶ At the same time, the fact that economic and social development contributes to democratic development provides businesses with an incentive to further contribute to the economic and social development. Democracies are most conducive to economic development as democratic processes, and the exercise of civil liberties and political rights produce social conditions that are more favourable to economic growth than other types of government. For instance, democracies tend to (i) privatise state-owned companies and (ii) protect individual property rights. While democratic theory considers economic rights theoretically uncertain and, thus, difficult to define them, the equal right to property dramatically increased individual freedom by contributing to the eradication of feudalism and master-servant relations in many countries. In practice, the economic and social development is one of the fundamental prerequisites

for democracies which strive to protect all their citizens against poverty and gross inequality; to ensure that they are employed and secure against the common threats of old age, illness, and disability; and to ensure that they are socially recognised members of the community and polity.

International Community

What makes a community? What binds it together? According to Article 53 of the Vienna Convention, the international community of nation-states as a whole gives a voice and substance to public-order norms. For some, what ties up a community of nation-states is faith, while for others it is the defence of an ideal, such as democracy. For present purposes, I adopt the broadest definition of international community, according to which nation-states share a vision of a better world for all human beings, as set out, for example, in the founding charter of the UN. They share, for instance, a sense of common vulnerability in the face of global warming and the threat posed by the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Alongside the framework of international law, treaties, and human-rights conventions, there also exists a sense of shared opportunity, which is why we create common markets and joint institutions, like the WTO. Thus, the involvement of multilateral institutions, such as the UN, OECD, or ILO, in the affairs of nation-states sends an important signal to business that international standards will be followed, or at least taken into account. For instance, in peace-making, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding contexts, the international community can consolidate a democratic culture and provide assistance in promoting human development, by creating political parties, assisting with national elections, enhancing accountability and transparency for decision-makers, and improving human-rights protections.

Developed democracies usually bind themselves to multilateral organisations and agreements, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights⁷ or the Paris Agreement on climate change⁸ in order to (a) reinforce democratic institutions and processes, and (b) escape from international isolation. The approach to democracy-building employed by multilateral institutions is characterised by a focus on the political and economic dimensions. Collaborations between businesses and international organisations for the purpose of protecting democracy have acquired significant relevance in UN multi-stakeholder initiatives. These initiatives have been described in terms of a universe of collaborative networks, in which the expertise, skills, and financial means of non-profit and for-profit organisations are pooled together. Business participation in multi-stakeholder initiatives, such as the UN Global Compact (UNGC), promises to enhance democracy by multiplying and spreading the benefits of global economic development through voluntary corporate policies and actions. Of the various PCSR

initiatives that have emerged in recent times, it was arguably the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) that contributed to the increasing importance of democracy-building by non-state actors. With more than one hundred projects in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, UNDEF engages with a wide range of issues, including rule of law, human rights, and entrepreneurial empowerment in at-risk democracies, which involves training young entrepreneurs in soft skills, leadership, and participatory democracy.

Civil society

Civil society is defined by the basic democratic freedom to associate, which constitutes participative democracy. Civil society in all its forms plays a decisive role in overcoming obstacles in the political world and challenging how rules, norms, and laws are established for those in the system who are powerless, marginalised, and vulnerable. Civil society can therefore represent a plethora of different interests and support a variety of issues. As such, they raise awareness as well as call for action for businesses to support their causes. Thus, it might be their campaigns or actions that provide businesses with opportunities or the pressure to engage in democracy building activities. For instance, civil society actors might provide businesses with an opportunity to work together on the promotion of democracy. Yet, the success of such collaborations depends on whether the two parties can reach a common understanding on democratic beliefs and values, and on the right set of activities to support democracy building.

Civil society in all its forms is decisive in the reduction of political, civic, and socio-economic inequalities and, therefore, important for democracies. For instance, social movements within civil society focused on ecology, women's rights, disability equality, ethnic rights, gay rights, and many other minority rights issues open a new site for democratic practice and redraw collective boundaries, creating and redefining the political arena. The revolutions in Eastern Europe and the Arab Spring demonstrate that seemingly minor protests can escalate to the point where established regimes are toppled. Increasingly, arguments are being made that democracy-building and civil-society aid are beginning to be used as cynical tools, just like human rights were during the Cold War, when, for example, human-rights violations by Brazil's military government or in Pinochet's Chile were ignored, because these regimes were anti-Communist and thus part of the "free world." Today, the double standards involved in supporting "friendly tyrants"—for instance, in the Middle East—as well as claims about extraordinary renditions, are compromising democracy-promotion efforts and feeding into an emerging backlash against civil society and democracy-building.

In summary, economic and social development, the international community, and civil society represent three prerequisites that can incentivise

businesses to contribute to democracy-building. At the same time, businesses might have their own internal reasons for engaging in democracy, which will be discussed in the following section.

4.1.2 Motivations for Democracy-Building Practices

Many prominent theoretical models identify three main motivations, namely instrumental, relational, and moral, that come into play when businesses are pressured either to engage in corporate social responsibility behaviours or to engage in responsible behaviour of their own initiative. We have adopted these categories and applied them in the context of democracy-building. They can be defined as follows:

Instrumental Motivation

Instrumental motivation is concerned with one's own interest, in the sense that an actor asks of any given action: "What is in it for me?" In a business context, the specific question would be: "Is this in the best (financial) interest of the business?" The famous business case for CSR and associated literature is a good example of this type of motivation. From this perspective, all business actions, whether responsible or irresponsible, including contributions to democracy-building, are regarded as strategic tools to achieve certain business objectives, such as wealth creation, competitive advantage, or a good reputation.

Relational Motivation

Relational motivation, by contrast, is concerned with the needs, wants, and rights of stakeholders. From this perspective, the final objective is to cultivate good stakeholder relationships, a consideration that drives the decision-making process and thus determines how the business ultimately behaves. A stakeholder management approach to democracy-building would therefore try to integrate stakeholder groups into managerial decision-making. A business driven by relational motivation will engage in democracy-building out of a concern for its relationship with its stakeholders and will thus aim to support (or if necessary, protect) them. The line between instrumental and relational motivation is often fine. Naturally, if a business cares for its stakeholders and supports them through business deals that stakeholders perceive as fair and favourable, this can lead to reciprocity, with the business potentially enjoying legitimacy and a social licence to operate. That said, the *initial* reason why a business engages in a particular action can be driven by purely relational motivations, irrespective of any other favourable results.

Moral Motivation

Moral motivation reflects a concern with doing what is perceived to be ethically and morally right. In the context of business and democracy-building, this form of motivation applies when businesses engage in democracy-building activities because they see it as their duty to make a positive contribution to society. For instance, Jamali and Mirshak (2010)⁹ interviewed managers of companies operating in conflict-ridden areas and found that none of the companies had left, with most managers claiming that they had stayed in the country out of “a sense of responsibility vis-à-vis the country and its citizens.” Thus, moral motivation can be linked to a sense of duty and responsibility, but also to a desire to support values such as fairness and justice.

Previously, I outlined two key groups of drivers lying behind businesses’ engagement with democracy-building, namely contextual prerequisites and business motivations. These two elements are potentially complementary, since, for example, demands for democracy by the international community can give rise to moral motivations to support democracy-building, in addition to relational ones. Conversely, economic and social-development drivers can trigger instrumental motivations, as businesses take advantage of stable economic and social conditions. These interdependences between contextual prerequisites and business motivations have an effect on internal and external corporate democracy-building practices, which will be discussed in the following.

4.2 Democracy-Building Practices

The specific motivations that drive businesses to engage in democracy-building will have an impact on the kinds of practices they employ. I divide democracy-building practices into internally focused practices (i.e. targeting stakeholders within the business’ boundaries) and externally focused practices (i.e. targeting stakeholders who operate outside the business’ boundaries). Previous research has provided isolated examples of business practices relating to democracy more generally. For instance, businesses have joined forces and presented a united front in favour of democracy. However, businesses can also contribute to promoting democracy or democratic values by adopting specific human-resource policies, such as anti-discrimination policies, or by redesigning work to create better-paying jobs. I then delineate what such internal and external practices entail, with Table 4.1 summarising the differences between the two forms.

4.2.1 Internal Practices

Internal practices refer to practices that enable and promote democratic values and therefore foster a democratic mindset within the boundaries of the

Table 4.1 Forms of democracy-building actions by business

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Internal practices</i>	<i>External practices</i>
Context	Consists of management practices that enable democratic behaviours inside the company	Consists of management practices that enable democratic behaviours beyond company realms in society
Major Stakeholder Focus	Employees, business partners, suppliers	Local community/Society
Practices	Practices and procedures that introduce democratic examples/behaviours along: - o Recruitment and selection processes - o Training and development strategies - o Career planning - o Performance - o Employee participation	Practices and procedures that introduce democratic examples/behaviours along: - o Establish partnership and dialogue with regulators and civil society - o Identification of social issues relevant to the company - o Address the social issues identified in collaboration with other non-business actors

business itself. The key target of these practices includes primary stakeholders, such as employees, customers, community residents, business partners, and suppliers, who are crucial to the survival of the firm. Managing relationships with primary stakeholders can ensure more than just their continued participation in the business. It can also secure intangible, socially complex resources that may enhance the ability of businesses to foster long-term value creation. Ideal examples of this include cooperative and collaborative efforts that bring together businesses with suppliers and customers, as well as a system for rewarding managers/employees based on customer satisfaction or other measures of external reputation. For each of these target audiences, businesses can implement democracy-building practices. For instance, when it comes to employees, businesses can ensure that their recruitment and personnel selection are unbiased and rooted in fairness and justice. With regard to suppliers, researchers have noted the power asymmetries between firms and their suppliers and subcontractors. The sweatshop debate has shown that lead firms are in a powerful position to determine the terms and conditions of supply-chain contracts and, by extension, the working conditions along their supply chains. Young (2004)¹⁰ argues that employers are not only liable for the working conditions in sweatshops, but that they also have a responsibility to help rectify social injustices along the supply chain. Thus, supply-chain actors can use their market power to improve labour conditions among their business partners and suppliers. For instance, MNEs can draw upon substantial economic resources, management expertise, and technical knowledge to

assist their business partners in creating a respectful work environment. In a similar vein, businesses can encourage democratic values by establishing contractual requirements and taking action to monitor and enforce compliance with these requirements, threatening to withdraw in the event that case suppliers and/or business partners fail to meet them (see the UNGPs on Business and Human Rights¹¹). Positive effects on supply relations are most likely to occur when business measures aimed at promoting democratic values are backed up by adequate monitoring and penalty regimes from public and private regulations. While rules and regulations on their own do not mitigate supply-chain risks and disruptions, they provide a foundation for voicing critical understandings of democratic values. This type of engagement on the part of business, civil society, and institutions will likely consolidate pillars of democratic governance by reinforcing socio-political cohesion, reducing corruption, and transforming the role of non-state actors.

In general, a democratic-management approach can be applied to performance appraisals, incentive compensation, formal grievance procedures, information sharing, labour/management participation, and training. Many of these practices have already been implemented by businesses and, indeed, are legally required in many contexts. That said, the key difference lies in the way businesses explicitly speak up for democratic values and show how democratic values affect their policies. By means of internal democracy-building practices, businesses can show primary stakeholders how democracy can be applied within the boundaries of their business, thus normalising it. In the medium to long term, employees will come to regard democratic values and practices as normal and start to expect them in other contexts. As a result, any internal democracy-building practice will sooner or later have an impact outside the business, by normalising democratic values and practices.

4.2.2 External Practices

External democracy-building practices are targeted at stakeholders outside the boundaries of the business, in the first instance, local communities and society more generally. These practices aim to address societal needs and enhance collective responsibility. They also involve learning how to mobilise resources (e.g. votes, funds, and expertise) and put in place forms of political education and knowledge in specific communities and society at large. The profound political and social implications of the place of business in society are reflected in these practices. Society not only confers legitimacy on business because of its economic role, but also establishes a social contract with it, through which its behaviour is brought into conformity with social expectations and the public interest. This might have an impact on different external democracy-building practices in the medium or long term. Business responds to democratic demands issuing from society by

implementing different political measures aimed at deepening democratic participation and institutions. The skills or competencies fostered by external democracy-building practices include democratically advocating in favour of a particular issue, influencing the political process through established institutional means (e.g. voting), and joining political parties or organisations. Henderson in *Business Can't Take Democracy for Granted* (2021)¹² argues that business leaders can support democracy by publicly stating that they will not donate to candidates who continue to deny the results of an election and/or perpetuate unsubstantiated allegations of voter fraud. Although debates are taking place regarding structural changes in the financing and organisation of political campaigns and parties, in order to address the abuse of the political system by business, scholars have suggested that the social responsibilities of business ought to include engaging in voting and lobbying to promote the public interest. At the same time, they acknowledge that political action on the part of business can be undermined, when actors in democratic processes come to see politics as an arena for self-interested action untethered from ethical considerations. Nonetheless, recent public declarations by business leaders have gone beyond self-interested action to concentrate on legal and constitutional democratic reforms. The joint statement by more than 100 businesses, including Danone, Ericsson, IKEA, and Hapag-Lloyd, urging the European Union to adopt a legal proposal on mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence, as well as the letter signed by more than 250 businesses in the United States calling on Congress to pass a law expanding the Voting Rights Act's¹³ protections for minority voters, reveals the proliferation of external democracy-building practices. Such responsible practices are increasingly being used by businesses in different parts of the world. Following the recent military coup in Myanmar, 86 businesses and investors signed the "Investor Statement on Human Rights and Business Activities in Myanmar,"¹⁴ in which they recall the importance of businesses protecting democratic institutions. External democracy-building practices appear instrumental for expanding the boundaries of state—business relationships by adopting a critical attitude towards the nation state. Consequently, in well-established democracies, these practices tend to optimise the "quality" of democratic institutions, such as the social-security system, tax reform, and the judicial framework, while in weak democracies and authoritarian regimes, they lead to constitutional reforms and reforms of the party system and civil—military relations.

4.3 Reevaluating Democracy-Building Practices in PCSR Research

In order to develop a theoretical account of PCSR that is better suited to the context of democracy-building, I focused on PCSR theories and deliberative

democracy. PCSR calls on firms to implement and engage in processes and structures related to deliberative democracy, addressing governance gaps in cases where governments are unwilling or unable to do. Nonetheless, the assumption underlying this approach, namely that implementing PCSR in this way will enrich democratic processes in society, has been exposed and challenged. My own approach to PCSR focuses on business responsibility and democracy-building, which is a largely unexplored domain within PCSR theory. In discussing democracy-building as a management practice, I have highlighted the applicability of deliberative democracy to firms and correspondingly called for the separation of the economic activity of firms from the provision of public goods. I have developed a theoretical framework that represents a contribution to the literature on positive PCSR, an approach that has helped us to examine alternative ways in which firms can play a role in deliberative democracy. Although I presented the different elements of the theoretical framework (i.e. prerequisites, motivations, and practices) separately, they are evidently interconnected, giving it a certain dynamism.

I began by outlining a set of contextual prerequisites (i.e. economic and social development, the international community, and civil society) that represent fundamental conditions for firms to engage in democracy-building practices. PCSR was initially developed in reaction to major geopolitical changes in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The subsequent surge in global interconnectedness on the political, social, and economic level led to action increasingly being taken to support democracy-building through multilateral initiatives in many post-Soviet countries, as well as the Global South more generally (see the “Third Wave” of democratisation¹⁵). While this provides us with a valuable starting point for identifying these contextual prerequisites, I recognise that they may play different roles in shaping business democracy-building practices in different political contexts, namely in democratic, authoritarian, and hybrid regimes. An approach centred on “political regimes” thus enables us to better understand how our framework functions. My expectation is that firms in democratic political regimes will be more likely to cooperate with civil society and multilateral organisations, and thus adapt their PCSR strategy in a positive way in relation to external democracy-building. Conversely, in authoritarian and hybrid regimes, I expect that firms would face few constraints when attempting to engage in public deliberation and thus will compensate for the democratic deficit with an *internalising* global governance policy and the integration of democracy-building practices into their internal corporate governance structures. One example of such a mechanism is furnished by the recruitment firm Glowork, which has rolled out an extensive training and support programme for Saudi Arabian women who are looking for a job. This initiative explicitly responds to efforts to address high rates of female unemployment at the national level (see ILOSTAT, 2023), as well as Saudi Arabia’s Personal

Status Law,¹⁶ which perpetuates a male guardianship system and codifies discrimination against women in most aspects of family life. In turn, this approach raises a new issue of how the international community can start to “operationalise” business’ responsibility in relation to democracy-building, for instance, within the framework of the UN Guiding Principles. However, this would certainly bring up more questions posing further challenges to the background regulations that legitimise the PCSR activities of firms and the institutional conditions needed for deliberative democracy to flourish in nondemocratic contexts, such as equal political freedoms, equality before the law, economic justice, and procedural fairness.

Clearly, whether in a democratic or nondemocratic context, not all firms will choose to pursue a PCSR strategy. Some will maintain an indifferent or apolitical stance. For instance, following a horrifying school shooting in Parkland, Florida, Delta Airlines joined more than half a dozen major firms by eliminating a discount programme for National Rifle Association members and released a statement explaining that this decision reflected the airline’s neutrality in the current national debate over gun control. As this case shows, however, an apparent decision by a business to stay neutral in political issues may hide strategic decisions—relational and instrumental—that can be considered PCSR activity as well. As I discussed, when firms make the decision to engage in democracy-building practices, this can be influenced by three main motivations, namely instrumental, relational, and moral ones. In the context of weak economic and social development, the contribution to democracy-building made by business might be informed by instrumental motivations and self-interest. An example of this type of situation would be an oil company that guarantees the health and well-being of seafarers with the awareness of the possibility of reputational and regulatory risks involving pollution damages, financial losses, and penalties. While business concerns might not be directly associated with democracy-building, the consequences of ignoring the health and safety of seafarers increases the pressure to support democratic values. Businesses, for instance, can help strengthen the rule of law, thus advancing democracy-building through their core business operations, as well as through the products and services that they supply commercially that help close gaps in the rule of law, including those that assist directly with the process of making and implementing legislation, access to information, and the administration of and access to justice. Broadly speaking, firms that are driven by instrumental concerns will be more selective in their practices, choosing those that provide them with the highest benefit at the lowest cost. In contrast, firms that are driven by moral incentives will pay less attention to the cost-benefit analysis of their democracy-building practices but will instead recognise their moral duty to support democracy and orient their actions towards improving citizens’ sense of democracy. Arnold (2010)¹⁷ and Cragg (2012)¹⁸ discuss the deeper

moral dimension of corporate human-rights responsibility that goes beyond a mere legal or political duty. Seen through this moral lens, human rights correspond to what are widely recognised as existentially prior basic moral rights. This perspective can help to justify the moral association between business and democracy-building, in which democratic values, such as freedom, justice, equality, and political participation, take on a fundamental moral nature in virtue of which they matter independently and irrespective of their implementation or enforcement. The theoretical framework developed reflects the embedding (albeit partial) of normative PCSR thinking, whose aim is to enhance moral legitimacy (i.e. “to do the right thing”) in the face of a changing political landscape associated with the role played by business in national development initiatives.

I further posit that both the contextual prerequisites and the business motivations have an impact on the types of practices that firms engage in. Internal democracy-building practices promote democratic values and processes among employees, business partners, and suppliers. Business thus creates an environment conducive to democratic development within certain boundaries, for instance, by ensuring the fair treatment of labour, guaranteeing participation rights and transparency, and promoting workplace inclusivity (see ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work¹⁹). While it is known that the most commonly form of workplace democracy is associated with increasing the decision-making and management power of lower-level employees, I argue that enhancing democracy in the workplace also enhances civic engagement and political democracy, as well as affecting how workers view their work. Thus, employees, business partners, and suppliers who are exposed to a democratic way of working will start implementing and demanding it in other life contexts. For instance, if employees’ voices are heard and they are able to vote for their union representatives, then these same employees might start to believe more in their country’s electoral system and expect to be able to vote for their country’s president as well. As a result, I expect that demand for democracy will increase and expand outside business boundaries. This social “ripple effect” is particularly important for consolidating new democracies, as well as in contexts where democracy is at risk. There is thus an interdependence between internal and external practices of democracy-building. Firms which promote transparency, fairness, and justice on the internal level encourage their employees to expect the same democratic values elsewhere too, as well as to expect other businesses to promote these values externally as well. This is accomplished by encouraging employees to participate in voting and informing them about upcoming elections and other political events. External democracy-building practices recognise democracy as a priority for society, an attitude that we view as a consequence of the increasing politicisation of business. However, it also illustrates a proactive approach on

the part of businesses to reinforce democracy-building efforts. These efforts could take the form of responsible lobbying, although attempts to align PCSR with lobbying, that is, planned attempts to influence decisions made by legislators, have often failed. Nevertheless, lobbying is a largely legitimate activity in a democratic setting, which reflects freedom of opinion, enhances political participation, and can contribute to well-informed, balanced, and realistic policymaking. At the same time, lobbying also implies that wealthy firms without any democratic mandate attempt to directly influence democratically elected policymakers. This poses a dilemma for our account of external democracy-building practices, one that cannot be easily resolved. Some firms lobby proactively in order to promote human-rights policies (UN Forum on Business and Human Rights).²⁰ For instance, information and communication technology firms, such as Google, Microsoft, and Yahoo, founded the Global Network Initiative in 2008²¹ to urge governments to refrain from infringing on human rights, especially with regard to freedom of expression and privacy. In contrast, many other firms (i.e. in the extractive industry) are likely to face dilemmas when human-rights obligations clash with host-country traditions, for instance, in indigenous communities. This underlines the need to reach an agreement on responsible lobbying and, consequently, also to address democracy-building practices by business, in order to prevent misconduct, corruption, and other adverse consequences for communities. Finally, businesses can also decide to implement both kinds of practice—internal and external—at the same time and without making clear distinctions between them. This reflects an extension of the mutual interdependence between elements of the framework that we discussed earlier.

Democracy-building exhibits a variety of different aspects including economic liberalisation, the establishment of liberal institutions and human rights, and the orchestration of political competition. As democratisation proceeds, complexity arises with the emergence of various intermediary actors and forms. Business can certainly be considered one of these intermediary actors.

While I have provided clarifications about what businesses can do to encourage democratic developments, there is little empirical evidence concerning whether different measures undertaken by businesses promote democracy or undermine it. Mäkinen and Kourula in *Pluralism in Political Corporate Social Responsibility* (2012, p. 670)²² argue that combining theoretical frameworks from the mainstream CSR literature with “political theories and international business and comparative economics offers a more in-depth analysis of CSR in different institutional contexts.” Future empirical research and country-specific data could be used to enrich our framework. Moreover, while businesses can certainly enjoy legitimacy in the political arena and increase its respectability and reputation for

pro-democracy engagement, conflict dynamics among the motivations that drive businesses to implement democracy-building measures require special attention. Cross-country comparative studies can yield critical insights into these contingencies which affect PCSR in different institutional settings.

Another important avenue for future research is to examine whether and to what extent there might be differences between democracy-building by MNCs and SMEs. While theorising about positive PCSR can be significantly advanced by presuming that the managers of (Western) MNCs engage in PCSR activities for profit-focused reasons, as well as to promote their “core” business interests, their motivations for engaging in democracy-building practices may differ significantly from those of SMEs. In contrast to MNCs, SMEs might lack a global presence or the ability to easily exit conflict or post-conflict countries. As a result, SMEs may be more dependent on and invested in the economic, social, and democratic situation of their country or countries of operation. They might also be more socially embedded. Thus, SMEs are much more likely to be ethically rather than instrumentally motivated to engage in democracy-building practices.

Various strands of PCSR research would benefit from adopting a multi-disciplinary approach. For instance, one important area for future research is “Business and Human Rights,” given that democracy and human rights are both interpreted as social ends/needs by researchers in PCSR and BHR. The increasingly blurred boundary between mandatory business regulation and voluntary actions “beyond the law” in relation to democratic values and human rights has led to attempts to reassert a national state power (UN Guiding Principles²³; Global Business Initiative on Human Rights²⁴; Business Leaders Initiative on Human Rights²⁵; Heightened Human Rights Due Diligence for Business in Conflict-Affected Contexts: A Guide²⁶). Nation-states continue to be actors of considerable importance when it comes to the creation and maintenance of democracy-building and human-rights activities and initiatives at the national and global levels. Thus, democracy-building by business that is associated with human-rights practices can be very attractive to governmental institutions, as they can act as a substitute for government action, complement government initiatives, and legitimise government policies. In this context, I suggest expanding the research agenda for theory-informed PCSR research to include a reassessment of the role of the nation state in relation to democracy-building, human rights, and CSR policies, integrating the perspective of different stakeholders, such as NGOs, civil society, and multilateral institutions. In this way, we would (re-)emphasise the question of the purpose and mission of businesses in contemporary societies.

Furthermore, there is a need for a normative discussion about the role of business not only in building more democratic societies but also in building peace. One vexing challenge faced by PCSR scholars in the context of global peacebuilding and business development is how to articulate the impact of

business on peace policies in cases where peace is a *conditio sine qua non* for deliberative democracy to prosper. A growing number of nation-states are entering into a post-conflict era, and firms, as actors embedded in civil society, may be better placed to build peace than even international actors. Hence, while there is considerable room for corporate involvement in promoting peacebuilding practices, its normative desirability has not yet been addressed by PCSR theories. Consequently, the deliberative aspect of PCSR can benefit from the multidisciplinary character of “Business for Peace” scholarship, addressing important pragmatic questions about how enforcement or compliance is accomplished and how trust functions in peacebuilding situations from a business perspective.

This theoretical framework might lay the foundation for future research on the positive role of business in democracy-building that takes into account these and other aspects. I also consider it of critical importance to examine democracy-building practices associated with business from a broader perspective, one that considers both Western and non-Western business contexts. This is not only a clearly pressing practical concern in light of current geopolitical developments—that is, worsening conflict in the Middle East and Eastern Europe—but it is also of critical importance for further developing PCSR theories and identifying positive business responsibilities within global governance structures. PCSR scholars are uniquely positioned to understand the normative and descriptive nature of corporate responsibility in a way that goes beyond the macro focus characteristic of political scientists. It is therefore hoped that current geopolitical events can be seen as providing an impetus for PCSR researchers to expand their theories on the social and systemic contexts in which firms operate and thereby contribute to painting a new picture of business as embedded at the national and geopolitical levels.

Notes

- 1 In his masterpiece, Fukuyama have argued that liberty and equality, both political and economic – the state of affairs at the presumed “end of history” – produce a stable society in which man may be said to be, at last, completely satisfied? Or will the spiritual condition of this “last man” in history, deprived of outlets for his striving for mastery, inevitably lead him to plunge himself and the world back into the chaos and bloodshed of history? See Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The end of history and the last man*. Free Press.
- 2 See the Paine, L. S., & Moldoveanu, M. C. Royal Dutch/shell in Nigeria. *Harvard Business School*. www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/item.aspx?num=14320
- 3 See <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/mar/03/ikea-closes-all-stores-and-factories-in-russia-amid-exodus-of-western-firms>, and <https://som.yale.edu/story/2022/over-1000-companies-have-curtailed-operations-russia-some-remain>
- 4 For more insights on theories of democratization, see Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; Bridoux & Kurki, 2014; Fukuyama, 2005; Huntington, 1991.

- 5 In his work, Lipset investigates how the existence and the stability of democratic governments are central questions of political scientists. Such investigations become critical and urgent in contemporary societies where democratic values are constantly under attack. See Lipset, S. M. (1959). Some social requisites of democracy: Economic development and political legitimacy. *American Political Science Review*, (1), 69–105. www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-political-science-review/article/abs/some-social-requisites-of-democracy-economic-development-and-political-legitimacy1/26559429359F42D3E9B8BC82CA65546A
- For more insights about the “fragility” of democracy, Read: Henderson, R. M., Lepore, J., Ballou-Aares, D., & Vijayaraghavan, V. (2020). Democracy under attack. *Harvard Business Review*. https://store.hbr.org/product/democracy-under-attack/BG2002?srsId=AfmBOorgPpqwg0yvA6YHACkePlJSXzN8yX0eL_NSryq0L46vnAhEhEG_
- 6 Exceptions exist: Extractives industries often operate (and flourish) in corrupt countries (see Shell in Nigeria). Yet, these industries do not have much choice as they depend on the where oil, gas, or minerals reserves are located. Also, these industries receive significant criticism by the international community and civil society for their operations in such contexts.
- 7 This multilateral treaty entered into force in March 1976, in accordance with Article 49 Art and set fundamental civil and political rights for all human beings: All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. (Art.1) www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights
- 8 The Paris Agreement (2015) set a milestone in multilateral negotiations about climate change and in securing environmental human rights. The Agreement sets long-term goals to guide all nations to (a) substantially reduce global greenhouse gas emissions to hold global temperature increase to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change; (b) periodically assess the collective progress towards achieving the purpose of this agreement and its long-term goals; (c) provide financing to developing countries to mitigate climate change, strengthen resilience and enhance abilities to adapt to climate impacts. www.un.org/en/climatechange/paris-agreement
- 9 See Jamali, D., & Mirshak, R. (2010). Business-conflict linkages: Revisiting MNCs, CSR, and conflict. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 93, 443–464. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10551-009-0232-8#citeas>
- 10 See Young, I. (2004). Responsibility and global labor justice. *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 12, 365–388. <https://web.mit.edu/sgrp/2007/no1/YoungRGLJ.pdf>
- 11 The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights are a set of guidelines for States and companies to prevent, address and remedy human rights abuses committed in business operations. See www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinesshr_en.pdf
- 12 Henderson discusses about a bivalent role of business over US democratic institutions. In her work, she outlines that a shift on the purpose of companies in society may have a long-term effects on strengthening democracies. However, transforming the purpose of business will require not only changing corporate

- law, but also changing the metrics used to control and measure firms and the social norms that constrain and guide corporate behaviour; see <https://hbr.org/2021/01/business-cant-take-democracy-for-granted>
- 13 George Floyd, the symbol of America's racial reckoning, was murdered in 2020. After Floyd's murder, as many as 26 million people protested in 550 jurisdictions across the nation in the largest, most geographically widespread, and most diverse demonstrations in American history. The circumstances and causes of its death represents threats to the US democracy. These threats provide Congress the urgent justification to pass both comprehensive voting rights and transformational police legislation. Voting rights advocates have argued, amid unproven allegations of voter fraud, that Congress must pass the John R. Lewis Voting Rights (1965) Advancement Act and the For the People Act over the threat of a filibuster. In this request, business have played a crucial role in lobbying the US institutions with more than 150 companies urging the Federal Government to change the law and pass a voting reform act; see <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/elections/more-150-companies-back-update-voting-rights-act-n1273919>
- 14 See www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/investor-statement-on-human-rights-and-business-activities-in-myanmar/
- 15 See Huntington, S. P. (1991). *The third wave: Democratization in the late twentieth century*. University of Oklahoma Press.
- 16 The Personal Status Law in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia regulates matters related to marriage, engagement, divorce, custody, and mutual rights between spouses. It includes legal provisions related to family contracts, such as marriage contract conditions, divorce provisions, and regulations concerning lineage, alimony, and custody; see <https://fac.gov.sa/en/legislations-posts/personal-status-system/>
- 17 See Arnold, D. G. (2010). Transnational corporations and the duty to respect basic human rights. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 20(3), 371–399.
- 18 See Cragg, W. (2012). Ethics, enlightened self-interest, and the corporate responsibility to respect human rights: A critical look at the justificatory foundations of the UN framework. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 22(1), 9–36.
- 19 www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/ILO_1998_Declaration_EN.pdf
- 20 The theme of the 2025 UN Business and Human Rights Forum was “Accelerating action on business and human rights amidst crises and transformations”; sessions included working groups on accelerating actions about business and human rights amidst crises and transformations. More www.ohchr.org/en/events/sessions/2025/14th-united-nations-forum-business-and-human-rights
- 21 The Global Network Initiative (GNI) sets a standard for how technology companies should respect the freedom of expression and privacy rights of their users when addressing government requests and restrictions, and be accountable for the same. This multistakeholder platform is the outcome of technology companies, human rights and press freedom organizations, academics, and investors. For more insights, see <https://globalnetworkinitiative.org/>
- 22 See Mäkinen, J., & Kourula, A. (2012). Pluralism in political corporate social responsibility. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 22(4), 649–678.
- 23 The UN Guiding Principles are a set of 31 principles for governments and businesses to protect and to respect human rights in business operations. They are articulated along three pillars: the State duty to protect, the corporate responsibility to respect, and access to remedy; see www.business-humanrights.org/en/big-issues/governing-business-human-rights/un-guiding-principles/

24 See <https://gbihr.org/>

25 The Business Leaders Initiative on Human Rights (BLIHR) began in 2003 for an initial three year period to help developing a corporate response to human rights. It sets the objective of finding “practical ways of applying the aspirations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights within a business context and to inspire other businesses to do likewise”. For more insights, read the declaration www.un-ngls.org/GA/Gareth%20Llewellyn.pdf

26 These UNDP guidelines set business standards on how to meet business responsibilities to carry out a heightened version of human rights due diligence in fragile and conflict-affected areas. The guide is available here www.undp.org/publications/heightened-human-rights-due-diligence-business-conflict-affected-contexts-guide

Part 2

Decisions That Matter

Three Case Studies on Business
Responsibility Towards Peace and
Democracy



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5 Redefining Paths of Business and Sustainable Peace in the Myanmar Context

5.1 Small Businesses in Fragile Settings

Small businesses¹ in fragile and conflict-affected settings² tend, as the name suggests, to be of a modest size. This category includes a mixture of self-employed workers and “micro” enterprises with fewer than ten employees. On the global level, SMEs form the backbone of many economies, playing an instrumental role in reducing poverty and unemployment thanks to their tendency to hire those at the very bottom of the economic ladder. However, local SMEs can both foster sustainable peace and contribute to socially destructive outcomes in fragile and conflict-affected regions. After the catastrophic event of the atomic bomb in Japan at the end of the World War II, local and small businesses in Hiroshima were at the centre of social reconciliation and reconstruction process, restoring the national economy, attracting foreign investments to expand their business, and strategising their business plans to a comprehensive recovery that would potentially lead the country back on a track of sustainable development. The 2025 Hiroshima Declaration, adopted during the 2025 Hiroshima Business Forum for Global Peace, underscores the critical role of SMEs in sustaining sustainable development and peace. It states that

eighty years ago, Hiroshima suffered catastrophic devastation from the atomic bombing. During the city’s reconstruction, local businesses and industries played a vital role, driving the reconstruction of infrastructure, the rebuilding of homes, and the creation of jobs. These efforts were a driving force behind Hiroshima’s transformation from ruins to reconstruction . . . Hiroshima stands as a living testament to how the power of business can foster social stability. Hiroshima, symbolizing both a steadfast commitment to a world without nuclear weapons and a resilient spirit of recovery and hope for the future, is one of the most fitting forums for global dialogue on the future of peace and business.

The concept of sustainable peace, as it relates to SMEs, is framed in terms of community-level measures that can contribute to peacebuilding. These measures may have a political focus, thus leading us to study how business's engagement with society influences its ability to survive crises. This engagement can take the form of direct intervention, as in the case of SMEs that undertake conflict-prevention activities, or of support for conflict-reduction activities by other actors, such as post-conflict development projects in the private sector (see Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reconciliation³). That said, we have limited knowledge of the concrete actions undertaken by SMEs to build sustainable peace, as compared to those of large firms. There is even less knowledge about how the political context can influence SMEs to engage in political activities. This raises the question: Why do they choose to act in "political" ways and what are the implications of these activities for their employees and communities? The processes of building and maintaining peace are heavily influenced by governmental and political actors. As such, business activity alone cannot resolve violence and conflict, as peace requires a series of multileveled mechanisms to counteract the drivers of conflict that are present within society. Peace in its most simplistic form is understood as the absence of violence, "negative peace." However, peace becomes sustainable when democratic values such as social justice, participatory government formations, equality, and protection of human rights prosper in local communities and societies. Thus, considering peace as only the absence of conflict is often only transitory. Conceptions around peace do not stop with the absence or termination of conflict. They do not assume disagreements will vanish but rather that conflicts will be comparatively minor and resolved through existing institutions and political processes such that the outcome is regarded as legitimate. These might be democratic institutions and procedures within a state or negotiations and common rules between states.

Research has found that SMEs can be reluctant to adopt voluntary regulations, such as a code of conduct, CSR, and human-rights policies, and that they may be less responsive than MNCs to pressure from institutions and NGOs. Whereas MNCs typically possess highly formalised structures, hierarchies, and management policies, which reflect a functional division of labour, SME employees are more likely to be guided by company culture than by written or formally agreed rules. In SMEs, ethical behaviour is also more likely to be integrated with the personal moral beliefs of the owner-manager and employees, in contrast to the situation in MNCs, where ethical norms to some extent made explicit in formalised rules.

There is a small body of literature on SME experiences in industrialised countries and a very limited amount of literature in developing countries. However, in fragile and conflict-affected settings, SMEs account for the majority of business activities, underlining the importance of studying

them more closely. SMEs may have the greatest impact on local economies due to their access to local social networks; thus, local business leaders are uniquely positioned to transform conflict economies into peace economies. Nevertheless, SME managers in situations of conflict are also usually and understandably not too eager to become overtly visible, for their own political, reputational, and personal risk reasons. Hence, what remains unknown is how SME managers with limited economic resources can influence peace-building processes at multiple levels—considering preexisting power asymmetries (e.g. political scenario)—and promote sustainable peace.

Along these lines, researchers highlight that SME behaviour is often conceptualised in terms of the psychological characteristics of the entrepreneur or “owner-manager,” noting that SMEs tend to display a personalised style of management and a corresponding lack of formal management structures with specialised staff. These characteristics vary widely, depending on individual ethical behaviour and differing ownership structures, which may also influence the company’s approach to engagement with issues relating to peace and conflict. The most common form of SME is the owner-managed firm, in which a single individual both owns and manages the company, an arrangement which confers legitimacy on decisions about how to use company resources. This managerial discretion is also reflected in constant multi-tasking by SME managers, as they attempt to deal with the various pressing challenges that continuously arise, with one area of priority being employee well-being.

While SME managers are less likely to promote CSR activities and/or to sign up to CSR agreements, they tend to engage in these activities on an ad hoc basis—for instance, in reaction to extreme events, such as conflict, natural disasters, or political contingencies. The political background is one particularly critical factor that may influence the agenda of SME managers: SMEs are dependent on governmental institutions, insofar as political rules may affect their business operations, while governmental institutions are dependent on SMEs for wealth creation, especially in societies characterised by fragility and conflict. The interplay between these groups of actors is thus key to understanding how and why SME managers make the decision to engage in peacebuilding activities.

5.1.2 The Political Power of Business

In this case, I adopt a definition of sustainable peace which refers to a broad notion of peace that includes the key functions of democratic institutions, such as justice and the protection of basic human rights (ultimately, economic, social, and political rights). While this definition is consistent with a large part of B4P research focused on peace-enhancing behaviour by SMEs in fragile settings, it raises further questions about the broad spectrum of

SME activities in local communities, including political ones: Are SMEs appropriate actors when it comes to building sustainable peace? What kinds of political roles can SMEs take on in situations characterised by conflict and the absence of the rule of law?

PCSR scholarship emerged in order to explain the political role of business in response to social challenges, such as human rights, global warming, and deforestation. Businesses of all sizes increasingly operate in contexts where, due to the unwillingness or incapacity of the government, there is a partial or complete vacuum when it comes to regulatory and enforcement mechanisms for fostering socially and environmentally responsible business conduct. Such “regulatory gaps” have led civil-society actors to urge private businesses to assume quasi-governmental, “political” roles in collaboration with NGOs or other external parties. Quite a few SMEs engage in activities that can be characterised as political CSR. For instance, some establish semi-informal standards that are typically introduced by governments—such as promoting better working conditions and administering citizenship rights (e.g. by providing public/private goods). In contrast, PCSR can be also viewed by SME managers in GVCs as reflecting a neo-colonialist attitude on the part of Western MNCs, which continue to hold sway over critical resources by leveraging domestic institutional voids. Young (2006)⁴ notes that, by leveraging their “social connection” (i.e. embeddedness in civil society), SMEs can work together with civil-society organisations representing the interests of parties affected by potential injustices to address such criticisms. Cooperation can thus to some extent mitigate the “democratic deficit” that arises when private businesses take over quasi-governmental roles in fragile and conflict-affected settings. This approach can also be of critical importance when it comes to further exploring the political role that SMEs can play, and thus understanding whether they can contribute to building a sustainable peace that takes into account key notions from the field of PCSR.

B4P researchers have only recently begun to engage in theoretical discussions about how businesses can manage and assess their political role in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Despite this research being in its early stages, an analysis of PCSR behaviour in complex settings, such as Myanmar, may enable us to address specific questions concerning context and how it affects the political and socially responsive roles that, for instance, SMEs individually or collectively undertake to enhance societal benefits and reduce the causes of conflict. In order to integrate a political dimension into B4P research, I focus on two elements in Young’s (2006)⁵ framework for understanding PCSR and integrating it into the organisational practices and processes of SMEs: (i) engagement in PCSR in conjunction with external parties and (ii) the internal implementation of PCSR measures. This perspective allows me to understand the variety of activities that SMEs engage

in, both within the workplace and in local communities, with a view to building a sustainable peace. Within this context, my focus lies specifically on external and internal PCSR activities. External CSR reflects the extent to which an SME addresses PCSR together with other actors and in local communities. Conversely, I refer to internal PCSR when those activities are integrated into the organisational habits, routines, and operational practices of SMEs and are usually addressed to employees.

5.2 Why Myanmar as the Context of This Case?

I selected Myanmar as a case study because it allows us to explore the impact of the political setting on SMEs decision-making towards sustainable peace. As is well-known, Myanmar's ethno-linguistic diversity and complexity extends to intra-group dynamics with a dozen of ethno-linguistic subgroups consisting of Buddhists, Christians, animists and Muslims, living in urban, peri-urban and rural areas. The history of Myanmar can be described as one of extended internecine warfare between an autocratic leadership and groups with democratic aspirations. While the political discourse in the country was lively in the first half of the twentieth century, with people espousing various conceptions of democracy, during almost 50 years of military rule, the authorities severely curtailed public discourse and debate. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, Myanmar remained under tight military control. Sanctions imposed by Western powers, such as the European Union and the United States, were manifestly ineffective in promoting political change, and the people of Myanmar slipped further into poverty.

Nonetheless, a process of political and economic reform began in 2011. Renewed international pressure and the deteriorating economic and political situation opened the way for a slow process of democratic transition. After decades of insularity and low economic growth, the government led by the National League for Democracy (NLD) began implementing numerous economic reforms, which included substantive changes to banking, the exchange rate, trade, special economic zones, and natural-resource policies.⁶ However, the transition from direct military rule to a quasi-civilian government revealed not only the lack of institutionalised political practices and participatory norms, in addition to the ineffectiveness and corruption of civilian authorities, but also the military's enduring corporate cohesion. The civilian government existed within a legal complex captured by the military. This set of factors prepared the environment for the most recent military coup.

The 2021 military coup⁷ wiped out almost all the economic progress that had been made under civilian rule (the country's geostrategic location and rich resources had attracted enormous FDI inflows). As a result, about 40% of the population is living below the national poverty line, undoing

nearly a decade of progress on poverty reduction.⁸ Poorer households are disproportionately concentrated in agriculture, either as casual labourers or as smallholders. Myanmar is a predominantly rural country, with the agricultural sector employing 75% of the total population, while employment in manufacturing and services remains concentrated in Yangon district, which represents the national epicentre of economic growth. This fragmented economic landscape is also reflected in differing perceptions of what political constraints exist.⁹ In many parts of the country, the (pre-coup) situation was characterised by “negative peace,” in which explicit violence had mostly ceased, but the structural issues underlying the decades of conflict—namely, a mixed administration with non-state actors, such as civilian-military movements providing public services, such as health care and education—were left unresolved.

5.3 Research Design

This exploratory analysis employed a case study approach. Single case studies can raise concern about the validity, reliability, and generalizability of results. Nonetheless, the case study method is regarded as being most appropriate for exploratory research, especially, when the case represents an extreme or is so unique that a case-study investigator has no desire to generalise to any other cases. Broadly speaking, case studies lead to the elaboration of more robust theories, as they are firmly grounded in a range of empirical evidence. This research method is recommended when relatively little is known about the phenomenon being studied, as is the case with the contribution of SMEs to sustainable peace. The research design adopted a social-constructivist approach to qualitative cases, with the objective of investigating the social construction of reality and meaning.

5.3.1 *Sample and Data Collection*

I collected a convenience sample, due to the many constraints on conducting research in such a fragile and conflict-affected setting. While the dearth of statistical information on the thousands of SMEs in Myanmar prevented us from conducting a more rigorous randomly selected sampling, we took great care to meet three criteria: size (small vs. medium), diversity of industry, and location (metropolitan vs. non-metropolitan). The interviewees’ sample was based on the snowball sampling method, which is posited as an effective method of research in complex socio-political environments. The interviewees were selected based on recommendations from local sources and nongovernmental organisations in Myanmar. Local sources helped us to navigate cultural barriers and to engage businesses in our study. There

is inevitably a bias in the sample of SMEs, as rather than being selected at random, they were selected based on recommendations and their active participation in political activities.

Table 5.1 summarises the participant and company descriptors, including information about industry, size, business location, the interviewee's position within the organisation, and type of business. The final sample of 24 SMEs included four small companies with fewer than 10 employees, 17 medium-sized companies with 10–99 employees, and three medium-sized companies with 100–250 employees, giving an average of 55 employees per business. Interviews were mainly conducted with founders, majority shareholders, and directors. The majority of the SMEs we selected were located in the district of Yangon, while seven were based in the agricultural region of the Shan State, one was located in the Bago Region, one in the Karenni State, and one in the Chin State. Two media and communication agencies were included in our sample, with the purpose of revealing the effects of politics on freedom of expression and its consequences for business. A financial/banking business was also integrated into our study to give a broader overview of the crisis in the banking sector reported by many of our interviewees. Furthermore, the director of a human-rights NGO and a trade-union specialist helped us navigate both national industrial policies and linkages between politics and business.

I conducted two rounds of data collection, resulting in a total of 26 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with SME managers and NGOs from March 2021 to July 2022. During the interviews, we were especially interested in learning whether and how the political context influenced SMEs' decision-making about engaging in PCSR activities, as well as what kinds of PCSR activities contributed to building sustainable peace. An interview guide was prepared ahead of the data collection. However, this guide was slightly adapted for each participant. For instance, all participants were asked questions about the recent military coup and the role of business in peace and democratic developments, while only international experts were asked to provide a broader analysis of the linkages between business and politics. In the course of several long conversations with local sources in Myanmar, I decided to ask each participant about their preferred interview format. Five of the interviews were conducted in Burmese, with the questions being formulated in English by the author and subsequently translated into Burmese. Responses were first translated into English by a Myanmar-based translator and subsequently sent to the authors via email. The remaining interviews were conducted by the author in English via videoconference and lasted 30–40 min, except for one interview which was conducted solely via email.

Table 5.1 Sample characteristics by industry, size, business location, organisation position, and type of business

<i>Business/ participant</i>	<i>Industry/type of organisation</i>	<i>Number of employees</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Business location</i>	<i>Level of individual spoken with</i>	<i>For profit?</i>
Business 1	Agriculture	40	Medium	Shan State	Managing Director	Yes
Business 2	Agriculture	20	Medium	Shan State and Yangon Region	Co-Founder and Director	Yes
Business 3	Agriculture	From 10 to 30	Medium	Shan State	Founder and Director	Yes
Business 4	Agriculture	58	Medium	Shan State	CEO	Yes
Business 5	Agriculture	4	Small	Yangon Region, Shan State and the United States	Founder and CEO	Yes
Business 6	Agriculture	20	Medium	Shan State	Director	Yes
Business 7	Agriculture	11	Medium	Yangon Region	Chief Executive Officer	Yes
Business 8	Agriculture	From 10 to 12	Medium	Yangon Region	Co-Founder and Director	Yes
Business 9	Agriculture	20	Medium	Bago Township Bago Region	Director	Yes
Business 10	Agriculture	From 40 to 75	Medium	Karenni State	Co-Founder and Managing Director	Yes
Business 11	Agriculture	7	Small	Yangon Region	CEO	Yes
Business 12	Agriculture	20	Medium	Yangon Region and Shan State	Head of Direct Sales	Hybrid
Business 13	Banking	11	Medium	Yangon Region	Founder and Director	Hybrid
Business 14	Technology	10	Medium	Yangon Region	Co-Founder and Managing Director	Yes
Business 15	Manufacture/Handcraft	15	Medium	Yangon Region	Co-Founder and Managing Director	Hybrid
Business 16	Manufacture/Shoes	250	Medium	Yangon Region	Director	Yes
Business 17	Manufacture/Handcraft	5	Small	Yangon Region	Co-Founder and Managing Director	Yes

(Continued)

Table 5.1 (Continued)

<i>Business/ participant</i>	<i>Industry/type of organisation</i>	<i>Number of employees</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Business location</i>	<i>Level of individual spoken with</i>	<i>For profit?</i>
Business 18	Media and Communication	50	Medium	Yangon Region	Director	Yes
Business 19	Media and Communication	250	Medium	Yangon Region	Co-Founder and Managing Director	Yes
Business 20	Textile	100	Medium	Yangon Region	Sales Manager	Yes
Business 21	Textile	65	Medium	Yangon Region	Director	Yes
Business 22	Textile	10	Medium	Chin State	Director	Yes
Business 23	Textile	75	Medium	Yangon Region	Business Development Officer	Yes
Business 24	Textile	5	Small	Yangon Region	Quality Controller	Yes
NA	NGO Human Rights and Responsible Business	5	NA	Yangon Region	Director	No
NA	NGO Industrial Relations and Trade Unions	20	NA	Geneva, Switzerland	Director, Organising and Campaigns	No

5.3.2 *Data Analysis*

I used an inductive approach to analysing the data. The purpose of inductive analysis is to dig into the data, to understand the themes present, and to extract findings in order to answer the research questions. Given the complexity of politically sensitive issues in a country under military rule, an inductive analysis allowed us to carry out a constant comparative analysis among the responses and in vivo coding. In vivo coding can be especially helpful for honouring the voices of participants from a particular culture and offering a sense of nuanced meaning that other forms of coding might not allow. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and anonymised to protect the interviewees. In vivo codes were initially formulated using the participants' own words. Line-by-line analysis of the interview transcripts allowed the extraction of SME activities, thus highlighting the most important sentences, thoughts, and expressions related to sustainable peace. A set of 75 first-order codes emerged. Subsequently, in vivo codes were grouped together and reviewed; eight pattern codes were developed into five second-order themes. Once themes had been identified and compared, the elaboration of two main thematic networks, namely, "SMEs and external PCSR activities" and "SMEs and internal PCSR activities," helped us to analyse the meaning of the texts, explore the themes that emerged from them, and identify recurring patterns. The final set of codes and the thematic networks that emerged from the data analysis are provided in Table 5.2. Quotes are used to illustrate key research findings.

Table 5.2 Thematic networks and codes

<i>Thematic networks</i>	<i>Pattern codes</i>	<i>Participants cited</i>
Thematic network 1. SMEs and external PCSR activities	C1. Micro-credit schemes for employees and community members	All P1, P3, P4, P13, P16, P17, P24
	C2. Public pro-democracy engagement and financial contribution to pro-democracy political parties	P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P23
	C3. Job creation	All P15, P16, P17, P18, P19
	C4. Inclusion of minorities groups	
Thematic network 2. SMEs and internal PCSR activities	C5. Capacity building for employees	P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P18, P19, P22
	C6. Psychological empowerment for employees	P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P18, P19, P20, P23
	C7. Enforcement of anti-discrimination policies	
	C8. Free political debate among executives and employees linked to democracy building	P6, P7, P8, P9, P11, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P19, P20, P23, P24

5.4 Findings Discussion

5.4.1 *External Political CSR Activities Implemented by Small Businesses*

External PCSR activities by SMEs took different forms. Protest movements in the country were described as affecting people's sense of safety, long-term business plans, and investments. Nevertheless, human-rights violations also contributed to enhancing several participants' public democracy-building behaviours (P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P14, P16, P17, P19, P23). Peace and democracy support included consultations, producing policy brief, lobbying, and providing financial resources to pro-democracy parties such as the National Unity Government (NUG) and People's Defence Force of Myanmar (PDF) (P14, P16, P18, P19, P23). Additional forms of engagement included the use of business wealth such as transport facilities and communication to assist pro-democracy movements. Financial and logistical support anchored in the long-standing history of the conflict and was broadly motivated by political and ideological factors. One SME manager observed:

"I am in touch with many politicians and activists that are involved with the armed resistance and civilian opposition . . . I contributed with raising funds to help them with the equipment for protesters."

(Participant 14)

Moreover,

This is a family business. We produce twenty-two models of shoes . . . I support a lot NUG. Part of our productions is donated to the pro-democratic civil resistance. . . . They need clothes, shoes, everything. I can give them my shoes . . . One day, the military found out that I was supporting the democratic movement . . . I am now on the blacklist of the government. The military came to my parents' house . . . I am currently living in Australia.

(Participant 16)

The rational choice by SME managers to become active in the political arena was embedded in a high degree of self-awareness. Leadership emerged across multiple dimensions often balancing competing demands (e.g. strategic, administrative, or operative outcomes). Priorities were given to influence political preferences, but, more general, peace trajectories, "I got to push my employees to vote during the 2020 elections . . . I said like, this is your very first chance to vote. This is your great opportunity. I don't mind whoever you want to vote or trust but go and vote" (Participant 19).

Trust was perceived as a crucial component of this leadership role and involved interpersonal and interorganisational relationships. Young

employees were encouraged by SME managers to cultivate democratic values and extend their knowledge and application of them:

We [as employer] try to influence young people because we know that for older generations it is very difficult to change. Sometimes they [younger generations] cannot really talk about something special like democracy. We help our junior employees to talk about the current political development and democracy. We want democracy because we desire peace and happiness for our community.

(Participant 8)

While a large part of SME managers emphasised a proactive role in supporting peace and democracy, political engagement also introduced questions of “neutralizing” business role in issue-related to politics, peace, and democracy (P2, P12, P18, P21). The value of neutrality was linked to a certain degree of pragmatism which pertains to business. In particular, it was detailed:

We work with farmers that are pro-democracy and others who are pro-military. To respect our principle of neutrality, we were forced to change the colour of our uniforms. They used to be green, the colour of the military. We also changed the colour of our logo which was red. Usually, red reminds to pro-democracy parties. . . . It is very complex to stay neutral.

(Participant 12)

5.4.2 Internal Political CSR Activities Implemented by Small Businesses

Human Rights Protection

Social and economic insecurity increased questions of human rights protection among all SME managers interviewed. In situations of political turbulence, SME managers faced important management decisions in balancing business priorities and the protection of employees. Diversity management initiatives such as training programmes to reduce stereotyping of minority employee groups were implemented with an impact on emancipatory objectives of freedom and equality (P24, P7). Anti-discrimination policies were addressed as a way for sustaining peacebuilding actions and to reduce poverty and marginalisation among vulnerable and minority groups. Social cohesion and the integration of disadvantaged groups was considered an asset for several managers (P1, P3, P4, P7, P8, P10, P12, P15, P17, P22). Ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity were noted as salient characteristics

of the country. However, this multiculturalism was also associated with difficulties in protecting human rights in the workplace. The existence of rising anti-Muslim sentiment was framed as an opportunity to reinforce an affective business commitment against actions to contain human rights:

“We are like different ethnic groups in our team. We have different team members and then we collaborate with farms that are in areas with Muslims. We hired Muslims in our team and work with Muslims . . . We try to be like welcoming; we also try to encourage our team to be more open minded. Some of them, they have very bad stereotypes about Muslims, but then, when we work together, they understand that these [stereotypes] are actually not true.”

(Participant 8)

The integration of the principle of non-discrimination and its transformation into a more general obligation of equal treatment towards employees was identified as one of the most pressing challenges. The extent to which hiring employees from minority groups contributes to promoting human rights also emerged in forms of recruitment actions, “we don’t allow discriminatory actions either for religions or gender In my business we also hired in between genders . . . This is our way to build freedom” (Participant 19). In general, strategies and proposals to address political instability were promoted to correct the limitations of the integrationist positions of the military role by offering intermediate paths towards the protection of human rights. For instance, it was noted:

When you live in poverty, there cannot be peace. If there is no peace, then we cannot talk about democracy. Now, human rights are not protected . . . for me human rights are education, access to internet, having electricity and more Despite such difficult context, we have a school for our employees, they learn issues on food security. We have our own electricity and employees can stay in our spaces . . . I believe we should build our own democracy but if there is no peace, we cannot build democracy.

(Participant 12)

Capacity Building for Junior Employees

Capacity building was particularly important for SME managers. Increasing positive attributes for promoting employee-based developmental opportunities had several implications in terms of peacebuilding efforts. Business objectives, rules, structures, and procedures were adapted to the expectations and needs of junior employees with the consequence of reinforcing

employee strengths, self-efficacy, and resilience (P8, P4, P14, P16, P18). The CEO of a tea company stressed:

We have specific trainings and capacity-building programs for our junior female employees. For instance, capacity-building trainings for young farmers on environmental issues, human rights, woman empowerment, and child labour.

(Participant 4)

Access to training sessions and learning opportunities was listed as a crucial priority for providing opportunities to rebuild social relation (see “community building” initiatives to make disadvantaged neighbourhoods more supportive environments for children, youth, and their families) and overcome peace-breaking dynamics. Psychological employee empowerment in terms of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact was framed as a long-lasting effect of managerial and organisational effectiveness. Instead, education for employees was discussed as recognising the equality of individuals; developing pedagogical strategies within the workplace; and building skills and new innovative ways for collaborative work.

Micro-Credit Schemes and Financial Assistance

Relatively low levels of financial development and weak contract enforceability contributed to negatively influence the economic growth of SMEs interviewed. Credit-constraints and liquidity trap dynamics had major impact. More generally, changing workforce demographics and structural changes in the economy after the 2021 coup influenced organisational decision-making where much attention was given to assist employee management of work—life responsibilities. (P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P23, P21). By promoting micro-credit policies, a large part of SME managers tried to redistribute income inequality. Assistance to low-income families within local communities increased and took forms of broader involvement such as:

I pay for them [farmers] all social costs, for instance, living expenses, houses, machines, food for animals, loans. I borrow money to my farmers for their cultivations, but also if they have a wedding or other ceremonies, I advance the money to them.

(Participant 1)

Minimum wage levels and payment of bonuses acquired a multidimensional construct encompassing humanitarian crises, increasing food prices, decreased access to water and electricity. Despite the complexity of conflict landscapes and economic challenges, one SME manager reported:

What I am trying to do now is to pay extra-money and bonuses . . . Many of our employees are very good skilled. . . . They know the situation in

the factory. So, whenever we ask them to come over for work at night, they do it. We are facing enormous challenges with electricity. At the end of the month, I work with my factory managers and try to pay bonuses for the extra work.

(Participant 16)

5.5 New Ways to Frame the Role of Small Businesses in Building Peace

It is determined that SMEs can contribute to sustainable peace efforts by engaging in internal and external PCSR activities. Figure 5.1 depicts the business dynamics observed in this case in greater detail. Findings provide new insights into the B4P field, and the role SMEs assume in relation to building sustainable peace. First, peace and democracy were perceived as a common goal for SME managers. The case reveals that SME managers raised public awareness among employees and local communities on political developments and thus increased efforts to establish pre-war peace—the pre-civil war political institutions of the country. Public PCSR activities of pro-democracy were concerned with short-term measures against political instability; they addressed three categories of individuals: (1) the electorate as a general group, and the party supporters or voters, as specific groups of beneficiaries; (2) party organisations including members or local leaders acting as intermediaries between the electorate; and (3) political leaders or parties. Overall, the findings in this case contributed to applying a political lens to previous B4P research and shed light on linkages at the nexus of PCSR and B4P by raising new questions: What does sustainable peace entail? Is peace apolitical? Can PCSR be linked to peacebuilding processes?

Second, the political dimension of these findings demonstrated the need to go beyond a minimalistic conception of peace in order to arrive at a more nuanced understanding that takes into account important questions about the role of SMEs in building democratic societies and thereby ensuring a lasting peace. While political instability aimed at circumventing the exercise of democracy, SMEs adopted external and internal PCSR actions in order to deliberate and resolve disputes within local communities and/or workspaces. Political criticism pushed SME managers to exercise new, improvised, political functions related to the welfare state including the provision of financial support to a broader family network. As such, this case contributes to expanding the spectrum of PCSR activities undertaken by SMEs. Furthermore, insights reveal the *social contribution* made by SMEs in fragile and conflict-affected environments. Researchers have noted that small businesses often make informal social contributions to their communities, for instance, as our study points out, through a mechanism of localised wealth-sharing that can include infrastructure contributions or direct support for those affected by conflict—all of which advance economic equality—as well as by providing education services to fill the institutional gaps created by ongoing political instability and conflict.

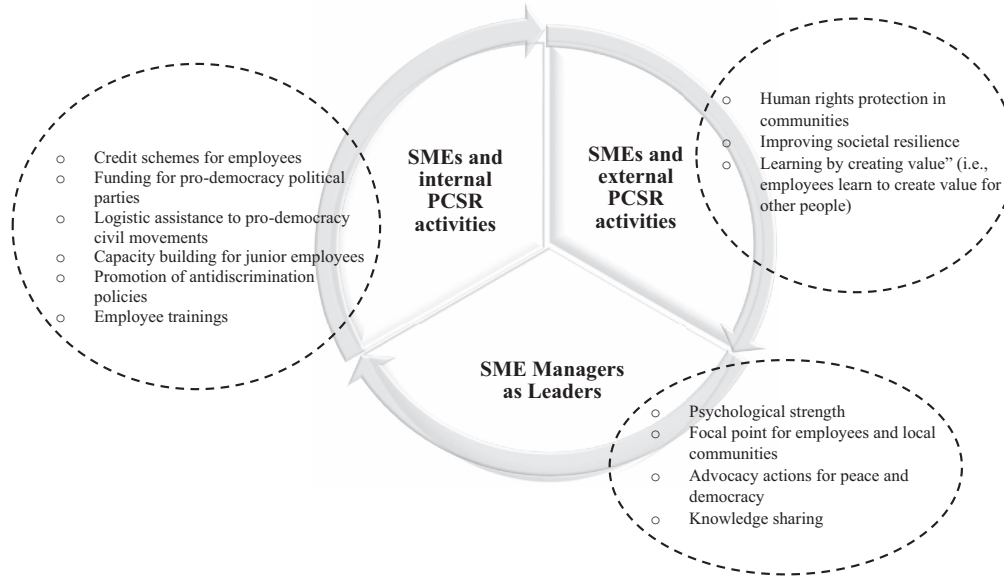


Figure 5.1 Small businesses acting in a fragile setting.

The findings also shed light on how SMEs understand respect and address the problem of weighting—that is the importance attributed to considerations of respect for human rights. This case contributes to framing the responsibility of SMEs for respecting human rights not as an aspirational goal *per se*, but as a constraint or principle of action upon which one should act. From this perspective, the findings highlight how employee “protection” integrates the practice of intervening in anti-discrimination and safety policies. Despite the lack of appropriate measures, SMEs contributed to the realisation of human rights promotions by making also human rights violations visible. In order to reinforce this argument, the case uses the tools developed by PCSR theories to show that SME managers have a real impact on changing behaviour and protecting human rights. The findings thus provide new insights on the gap in conceptualisation of humans as rights-bearing persons and as economic actors.

Finally, insights drawn from the literature on SMEs operating in more explicitly conflict-prone and socially divided environments—in particular, conflict-sensitive business practices, business and peace, and business and human rights—underline that SMEs’ interactions with their key stakeholders may impact outcomes on the level of society as a whole, including the risk of conflict between identity groups. Particularly in the presence of horizontal inequalities, the choices made by SME managers about how to structure their relationships with their stakeholders affect the broader network of relationships among identity groups with which stakeholders are primarily affiliated.

5.5.1 *Managers at the Front-line*

The findings in this case have also several implications for business managers and practitioners in the B4P and PCSR field. While the term “leader” does not even exist in a number of rural cultures, the findings reinforce the idea of good business leadership in communities. Good business leaders are defined as those with the ability to search for ways that create shared and new images responsive to the hopes and fears created by the environment. This critical function was embodied by SME managers in this study who increased educational experience for junior employees, acquired self-awareness (i.e. how they were perceived by team members), and provided public and private goods. The psychological strength of SME managers emerged as a form of engagement (e.g. involvement, commitment, attachment, and mood) and performance construct (e.g. either effort or observable behaviour, including prosocial and organisational citizenship behaviour). Based on these findings, future B4P and PCSR research could focus on investigating business leaders in promoting peace and democracy objectives not only in fragile and conflict-affected zones, but also in Western societies.

Moreover, the findings indicate that human rights were highly linked with sustainable peace. While a socio-economic definition of human rights emerged prevalently among SMEs, social rights and social inclusion were also associated with efforts by SME managers to protect the work environment from political instabilities. In fragile and conflict-affected settings, social inclusion can be seen as a component of social reconstruction. As such, a lack of an effective voice on principles of inclusion and human rights was addressed as jeopardising the national identity and damaging social cohesion in communities. Against this background, these findings revealed that SME managers were able to develop inclusive workspaces and build trust among disadvantaged groups in local communities by providing a way out of poverty and marginalisation. The issues of minorities also emerged as a primary concern in security matters. In this sense, starting from a dominant human rights or group protection paradigm (see the Rohingya crisis), future research can explore the key role of SME managers in contributing to establishing frameworks to promote the peaceful coexistence of distinct communities—differentiated traditionally by religious and ethno-cultural traits—within the same community.

Finally, another line of enquiry may be to focus on SME responses to increasing social demands. Insights in this case show that SME managers are often both the driver and implementer of sustainable peace. While they relied on dialogue strategies, the managers in this study attempted to learn from new situations, including political constraints. They demonstrated their personal values through the exercise of managerial discretion: Their autonomy was reflected in their responsibility for directing and redirecting PCSR activities towards sustainable peace, by moulding the company culture on the basis of these personal values and beliefs. This observation further reinforces that operating in a responsible way requires SME managers and employees to act in accordance with certain values and norms. As a result, future empirical research at the nexus of B4P and PCSR could investigate the increasingly blurry boundary between, on one hand, mandatory regulation and, on the other, voluntary PCSR interventions that lie “beyond the law.” This would make it possible to obtain more insights into the ultimate responsibility of SME managers when it comes to setting the company’s vision and principles.

By drawing on rich and original qualitative empirical data, the findings point out that B4P and PCSR research may have a common ground. The close link which was highlighted by the findings in this case between peace and democracy indicates that the type of political system is one of the principal explanatory variables that ensures peace in the long term. Hence, understanding the nature of the pre-conflict political settlements and the “power-structure” within a country may be crucial in order to advance research on B4P. The case highlighted that SME managers perceive a direct

responsibility towards sustainable peace, but this commitment often was associated with informal strategies and framed in terms of self-preservation, “instinct,” and “instinctive.” While these SME behaviours align with the role generally discussed in B4P and PCSR field, the political element emerged in the findings contributed to the debate on the barriers that B4P scholars will need to address for providing an answer to the question where important business decisions originate. As we have seen, community-level change that takes place in conflict settings requires sometimes business to overcome a lack of public morality. The insights contradict the general assumption that most SMEs are involved in struggle for survival and can therefore not afford morality. By contrast, an immoral political context induced SME managers to develop proactive PCSR actions within the boundaries of the workplace or in local communities.

The main limitation of this case—as is common in fragile and conflict-affected settings—remains access to data, with the findings resting wholly on a context-laden case study of a single country. A lack of data at both the community and individual levels is one of the central reasons for the lack of a sound empirical foundation when it comes to the role of SMEs in fragile and conflict-affected settings. The political climate in the country affected our interview techniques, as well as the ethical dilemmas that we encountered. As noted earlier, the SMEs included in this study were sought out through recommendations and referrals by target organisations. As a result, participant selection was carried out using the process for “extreme/deviant cases,” which are useful for obtaining information about unusual situations and serve as the main source for theory development, because they point towards new concepts, variables, and causal mechanisms. While this technique may have been appropriate given the subject of the study—that is, a fragile and conflict-affected setting—it might nonetheless restrict the broader applicability of its findings. An additional limitation is that five interviews were conducted by a bilingual translator (Burmese/English). While the qualitative data thus obtained may suffer from “triple subjectivity,” because it was filtered through the translator’s contextual experience (and hence subjective positioning), before being interpreted by the researcher, this approach also had certain advantages. The presence of the translator helped me to gain the trust of the participants, which in turn encouraged them to introduce me to other participants including a few SME owners displaced in Australia and Thailand. Moreover, I took great care to recheck the process and ensure that meaning had been correctly assigned from the original material into the target language. That said, defining successful sustainable peace practices among SMEs in Myanmar remains difficult, as the concept of “sustainable peace” is ambiguous and context specific. Geographic and ethnic diversity often complicate our understanding of how sustainable peace may be perceived by business in contexts in which needs

can vary dramatically from region to region. This issue is reflected in our sample, since the accounts of sustainable peace and the implementation of peacebuilding initiatives by businesses given by participants based in metropolitan areas differed from those given by participants based in rural areas. These divergences primarily affected: the definition of sustainable peace and explanations of political instability connected to inter-ethnic relationships, as well as the marginalisation of minorities; the use of violence by some groups to affect electoral outcomes; and the intensification of tensions between cultural groups who form political parties along ethnic and religious lines. Finally, this case determined that SMEs were successful in implementing peacebuilding initiatives within local communities at the village and family level, but that such practices rarely had an impact on the national level. While this may constitute a limitation of this study, it also represents a contribution to ongoing debates about how businesses can formalise local development and community building, framed as concrete activities aimed at building sustainable peace.

Notes

- 1 No single definition of SMEs exists (see Chapter 1) because governments, international organizations, and business associations represent different economic and political interests and goals that require language and structural differences in terminology. In this case, “SMEs” are defined as registered entities having no more than 250 employees based on the official definition of SMEs by the European Commission (Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003 concerning the definition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises).
- 2 The umbrella term “fragile and conflict-affected setting” refers in this case to those countries with characteristics that substantially impair their economic and social performance. These include weak governance, limited administrative capacity, chronic humanitarian crises, persistent social tensions, and often, violence or the legacy of armed conflict and civil war (IMF, 2022).
- 3 This process lays the groundwork for safeguarding and sustaining the communities to which these individuals return, while building capacity for long-term peace, security, and development. More insights can be found here: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/776831468324547527/pdf/514150NWP0D-DR0no01190Box342027B01PUBLIC1.pdf>
- 4 See Young, I. (2006). Responsibility and global justice: A social connection model. *Social Philosophy & Policy*, 23, 102–130. www.cambridge.org/core/journals/social-philosophy-and-policy/article/abs/responsibility-and-global-justice-a-social-connection-model/9308EE478561C7CE31E1F5A8F26CBE04
- 5 Young, I. (2006). Responsibility and global justice: A social connection model. *Social Philosophy & Policy*, 23, 102–130.
- 6 “The Myanmar – Diagnostic Trade Integration Study (DTIS): Opening for business” was prepared by the World Bank with the objective (a) to assist the government in mainstreaming trade and competitiveness in the country’s overall development strategy; (b) to provide a diagnostic and analytical tool to prioritize and sequence key reforms in the area of trade and competitiveness; and (c) to

provide a platform for development partners to coordinate action and align trade related assistance with government priorities. It can be downloaded here <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/899541467002864601/main-report>

- 7 For recent developments about the impact of the 2021 military coup, see www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/jan/31/myanmar-military-coup-anniversary and www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/military-coup-myanmar_en
- 8 Economic Activity in Myanmar to Remain at Low Levels, with the Overall Outlook Bleak. World Bank assessment after the 2021 military coup: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/myanmar/publication/myanmar-economic-monitor-january-2022-economic-activity-in-myanmar-to-remain-at-low-levels-with-the-overall-outlook-blea>
- 9 Myanmar profile www.worldbank.org/en/country/myanmar/overview, and www.adb.org/where-we-work/myanmar/economy

6 Employee Sensemaking of Human Rights and Peace

6.1 Human Rights and Peace in Zimbabwe

Since achieving independence, Zimbabwe's political and economic history has been complicated and sometimes undermined efforts to build a meaningful and sustainable peace. A former British colony, originally known as Rhodesia, Zimbabwe gained independence at the end of the Rhodesian Civil War in 1980. Elections that same year led to Robert Mugabe being installed as prime minister, and his party, the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), remained in power for over two decades. By means of stories, ceremonies, and memorials, Mugabe, a nationalist leader, presented himself as the embodiment of anti-colonialism, while the ZANU-PF established a militarised version of an electoral authoritarian regime. During the Gukurahundi massacres (1982–1987), military operations against dissidents and about 20,000 civilians were killed.¹

Although international opposition to Mugabe's increasingly autocratic rule remained muted until 1994, due to the need to display solidarity against apartheid in South Africa, international pressure on Mugabe intensified dramatically when leaders from the Southern African Development Community called for free and fair elections in the country. Zimbabwe's subsequent involvement in the Congolese Civil War, which erupted in August 1998, further weakened the Mugabe regime, draining its resources, damaging the economy, and fostering discontent. Subsequently, the European Union, the United States, and the United Kingdom imposed targeted sanctions in response to perceived human-rights violations,² as well as government policies and actions that infringed on democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human and property rights.³ The 1998–2008 crisis began with rising unemployment, stagnating salaries, and worsening living standards in rural areas. As the ZANU-PF increasingly failed to meet citizens' expectations, a new opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), emerged from the labour movement and civil society.⁴

Following its electoral victory in 2008, the MDC was kept in check by state-led repression and surveillance that limited its ability to organise in rural areas and conduct political campaigns. However, as the power of the ZANU-PF eroded further in 2012, a new constitution was drafted and steps were taken to implement the Global Political Agreement (GPA), which had created a power-sharing coalition between the ZANU-PF and the MDC in the wake of the 2008 elections. In July 2012, in response to the implementation of the GPA, the EU announced the immediate suspension of restrictions on development assistance, further pledging to suspend all other restrictive measures in the event that a credible and peaceful referendum was held on a new constitution. Although the MDC hoped that this period of stability would lead to a peaceful democratic transition, the power-sharing arrangement was used by the ZANU-PF to buy time to reorganise its party structures and rebuild its constituency through political patronage, a strategy that enabled it to win the 2013 elections. In 2013, the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) and the National Peace and Reconciliation Act were established, with the objective of supporting the transition from a conflict-marked past to a peaceful future. The political settlement included a policy of national reconciliation that addressed how former colonisers and the colonised might live together—a problem whose roots go back to the identities created by racial classifications imposed during Rhodesia's colonial era.⁵ As such, there was an expectation that national reconciliation would be achieved through a more equitable redistribution of goods and services, as well as the inclusion of minorities. However, in the post-Mugabe era, Zimbabwe has been characterised by structural violence and interethnic-civil conflict (see the case of Chipinge district⁶). In this context, the extensive local networks to promote human rights and build sustainable peace in the country have revealed one of the major challenges of Zimbabwe's ongoing nation-building project, namely how to develop a national identity in light of the country's complicated and contested precolonial, colonial, and post-colonial history.

Efforts on the part of civil society to tackle political violence in the wake of the covert military coup that installed the current president, Emmerson Mnangagwa, have reinforced the role of nationwide peacebuilding activities by actors such as the Peacebuilding Network of Zimbabwe (PBNZ), a network of 19 local organisations involved in community peacebuilding across the country.⁷ Focusing on a wide range of issues, including human rights, gender, youth, the environment, ecological land use, peace and justice, trauma healing, and reconciliation, the PBNZ promotes contextually driven action, with a view to fostering collective responsibility and ownership in order to address shared problems, an approach that may ultimately boost social resilience and collective action. While Zimbabwe continues to be characterised by extreme poverty⁸ and while the recent Cyber and Data

Protection Act of 2021 has further undermined the Zimbabweans' rights, including those of civil-society groups and human-rights activists,⁹ peace-building initiatives, such as the establishment of peace committees by local communities, illustrate the agency, self-reliance, and resilience displayed not only in specific villages, but also across the country, as the villagers collectively organise, engage with, and take responsibility for their own peace and development challenges. This further demonstrates that the road to national peace necessarily runs through conflict transformation and social change.

6.2 Sensemaking Explained

Sensemaking, as the process through which individuals and groups attempt to explain novel, unexpected, or confusing events, has become a key topic in the study of how employees understand and interpret their complex and ambiguous environment. The ability of organisational actors to make sense of events or issues has been linked to strategic change and decision-making, organisational safety and reliability, and newcomer socialisation and identification. The phenomenon of sensemaking can be conceptualised at the individual level or the collective level, as an interface process between what is happening in the organisation and what is happening in its environment. In this case, I focused on sensemaking by individuals within organisations, rather than by groups or organisations, due to the complexity of the research environment. I considered sensemaking to begin when an event causes a previously coherent representation to break down to the point that new cues can no longer be integrated into it. I thus viewed sensemaking as necessitating the construction of a new account, that is, a situation that is comprehended explicitly in words and that serves as a springboard to action. This definition served to bind my analysis.¹⁰

In line with Weick's (1995, p. 86)¹¹ account of sensemaking as a cognitive process that involves creating an understanding of change, we were interested in identifying how our respondents reflect on human rights and peace rather than in exploring how they *intentionally* attempt to influence the sensemaking of others in relation to these two concepts, which would correspond to a "sensegiving" perspective. While I acknowledge that "sensemaking and sensegiving are two sides of the same coin,"¹² I nonetheless maintain a distinction between them, viewing them as separate processes: one relating to efforts to understand how people think (sensemaking) and the other relating to how people attempt to influence the meaning construction of others through persuasion (sensegiving). In line with this approach, I focused on "one side of the coin" (sensemaking), which made it possible for us to analyse deliberative efforts by respondents to make sense of events related to human rights and peace, which is the specific objective of this study.

6.2.1 Research Design

A qualitative, interpretative research design was adopted to explore how respondents understand human rights and peace in business practice. Qualitative research pays considerable attention to the variety of ways in which people from different social and cultural backgrounds make sense of the world in which they live, give meaning to it, establish relationships within that world and, thereby, construct social reality. I sought to generate understanding “from the inside, in context,” through “attention to detail and complexity.” In line with an “empathic” interpretation of qualitative data which is concerned with *how* rather than why something is experienced and presented. Thus, I paid attention to elaborate and amplify the meanings of BHR and B4P to establish connections between their various attributes and noticing patterns.

6.2.2 Sample and Data Collection

The study explored the awareness and understanding of human rights and peace displayed by mining employees, as well as the practical steps (if any) their companies had taken to engage in building human rights and peace and any perceived needs these companies had for support and guidance on the topic. The companies were recruited through a strategic and snowball sampling method.¹³ Based on prior contacts with the Zimbabwe Diamond Allied Minerals Workers Union (ZDAMWU), I attempted to select companies in regions/areas such as Insiza, Umzingwani, and Kadoma that, while not necessarily representative of Zimbabwe as a whole, are mining districts where social conflict is particularly present. The extractive industry represents a unique context to understand business responsibility towards employees and local communities. Mining companies and their operations have an impact on ecosystems and peoples who fall outside the mine’s perimeter. In remote areas inhabited by poor and marginalised communities mining companies often operate as a *de facto* government.

As Table 6.1 shows, a range of different mining industries were represented, from gold and platinum to lithium and coal. The companies were generally large and successful multinational corporations (MNCs): six companies had 10,000–63,000 employees, nine had 1,500–10,000 employees, while the remaining companies had 200–900 employees, with the exception of one artisanal gold mine that employed 68 people. Six of these companies are managed and owned by local investors, while the others are foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows from MNCs headquartered in Australia, China, Canada, India, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. In order to assess the human-rights policies of these companies, a range of secondary data were collected as well, including annual reports (corporate social responsibility), website content, environmental ethical protocols (code of

Table 6.1 Overview of mining companies included in the study and respondents

<i>Sector/ Company</i>	<i>Number of employees</i>	<i>Investors</i>	<i>Human Rights policies</i>	<i>Position/title</i>	<i>Gender</i>
Platinum	63'000	Australia	Yes	Project Manager	Male
Gold, Coal, Copper, Nickel	45'000	United Kingdom/ South Africa/	Yes	Quality Manager	Female
Gold	21'000	South Africa	Partial	Laboratory Assistant	Male
Gold	10'000	United Kingdom/ South Africa	Yes	Safety Officer	Male
Gold	10'000	Canada	Yes	Administrative Officer in the Safety Department	Female
Gold	10'000	Canada	Yes	Mechanical Maintenance	Male
Platinum	9'000	Zimbabwe/South Africa	Partial	Energy Operator	Female
Asbestos	6'000	Australia/South Africa India/ Zimbabwe	Partial	Data Manager	Female
Lithium, Nickel, and Gold	5'000	Australia/South Africa/India/ Zimbabwe	Partial	Assistant Manufacture of Oxygen	Female
Lithium, Nickel, and Gold	5'000	Australia/South Africa/India/ Zimbabwe	Partial	Assistant for Chemical Elaboration	Male
Platinum	3'5000–5'000	Zimbabwe	Partial	General Service Officer	Male
Coal	2'167	United Kingdom/ Zimbabwe	Partial	Controller	Male
Coal	2'167	Zimbabwe/South Africa	Partial	Maintenance Controller	Male
Coal	2'167	Zimbabwe/South Africa	Partial	Forecourt Attendant	Female
Lithium	1'500	China	Partial	Laboratory Technician	Male
Coal and Gas	900	China	No	Gas Valve Operator	Female
Gold	850	Canada	Partial	Clerk	Male
Lithium	800	China	No	Civil Engineer	Male
Lithium	800	China	No	Workshop Instructor	Male
Gold	700–800	Zimbabwe— state-owned company	No	Mining Blast- ing License Holder	Male
Gold	700	Zimbabwe	Partial	Fitter in Turner	Male
Diamond	350	China	Partial	Engineer	Male
Gold	300	Zimbabwe	No	Plant Operator	Male

(Continued)

Table 6.1 (Continued)

<i>Sector/ Company</i>	<i>Number of employees</i>	<i>Investors</i>	<i>Human Rights policies</i>	<i>Position/title</i>	<i>Gender</i>
Gold	250	Canada	No	Maintenance Officer	Male
Gold	230	Zimbabwe	Yes	Miner	Male
Gold	200	Zimbabwe	Partial	General Support	Female
Gold	68	Zimbabwe	No	Administrator	Male
Governmental Officer	50	Zimbabwe	NA	Mining Engineer	Male
President of a Trade Union	5	NA	NA	General Secretary	Male
NGO Officer	20	NA	NA	Social Worker	Male

conducts), and testimonies by participants. Of the companies examined, six had dedicated people, teams, and/or departments responsible for managing ethical and social commitments, including specific human-rights policies, while 14 only partial fulfilled commitments towards human-rights policies, such as the right to free assembly for employees and training on safety issues. Finally, seven had no specific code of conduct, corporate social responsibility department, or human-rights policies, but rather imposed a “closed-door” policy, with no possibility for employees to join a union or go on strike. Given the highly sensitive nature of this study—especially when it comes to experiences and perceptions about human-rights violations and infringements of peace by business operations in local communities, which were two of the key areas addressed in our research—we attempted to anonymise our dataset and thus protect the identities of our respondents (see Table 6.1).

Thirty semi-structured interviews with all-local (i.e. Zimbabwe nationals) business managers, employees, union representatives, and NGO representatives were conducted to explore the meanings that employees in the mining industry attribute to human rights and peace. The titles and professional backgrounds of respondents differed considerably, with the majority being considered “white-collar workers,” including administrative clerks, engineers, and technicians—only six did manual work, as controllers, miners, and forecourt attendants. Nine of the respondents were women and 21 were men, a discrepancy that reflects the structural barriers still faced by women in mining.

The data collection was intensive, with semi-structured interviews conducted via video conference from November 2022 to January 2023. Semi-structured interviews were particularly suitable for allowing the

respondents to engage in stream-of-consciousness reflections and to provide rich descriptive data on their perceptions of human rights and peace. The majority of interviews were conducted during the respondents' working hours and lasted 20–60 minutes. Our interview procedure was informal and designed to encourage meaning-making by narrative recounting, rather than the more categorical responses that are typically obtained in standard interviews. Informal interviews offered spontaneous opportunities to investigate employees' sensemaking processes in relation to human rights and peace. All the interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. An overall interview guide was prepared, including open-ended questions about human rights and peace. Each interview focused on the experience of employees within the workplace, starting with an introduction that focused on their organisational role and the developments they have observed in the mining industry in recent years, with the increase in FDI inflows. This point was particularly important for understanding the impact of foreign investors on local communities and whether this enhanced human rights and peace or had the opposite effect. I then asked the respondents about the meaning of human rights and peace. This set of questions aimed to encourage sensemaking in relation to the social constructs linked to the concepts of peace and human rights. The scope was expanded to include how human rights were interpreted within the work environment and whether the company promoted relevant human rights policies. Questions concerning the meaning of peace delved into the respondents' personal beliefs, as well as their peace-enhancing aspirations for the country.

6.2.3 *Data Analysis*

The data analysis process was conducted in a number of stages and adopted a narrative approach to sensemaking for several reasons. First, narratives provide a fundamental medium for capturing the everyday character of organisational knowledge in business. Second, narratives are deeply linked to sensemaking. They represent ways of talking about organisations and thereby reflect shared and widespread perceptions of organising. Third, narratives point to the semantic dimension of organisational knowledge. They reflect the ambiguity of language and, accordingly, highlight the contested and controversial nature of knowledge creation processes. Thus, this approach permitted me to understand how human rights and peace narratives are embedded not only in social contexts but also in geographical locations.

With the aim of establishing a certain order in the dataset, I began by transcribing the interviews in full. We then read the transcriptions and made notes and brief summaries of each interview, highlighting keywords. Three overarching questions I used as lodestars during the coding stages: "What

is going on here?” “What is this about?” and “How is this experienced?” The initial coding, which derived from an open-ended process, was conducted manually and produced an abundance of codes within many different thematic areas connected to human rights and peace: 145 initial codes emerged at an early stage. Then, MAXQDA software was used to facilitate the coding analysis. As I proceeded, codes were merged as recurring similarities. In this phase, I paid particular attention to clarify, simplify, and better understand the code structure. As I inductively developed first-order codes, I noticed that the respondents linked human rights and peace to several macro-social issues, such as politics, workplace justice, inequality, and ethical standards. I noticed that these patterns were persistent in the data and considered them meta-narratives. Respondents expressed their emotions about human-rights abuses in the workplace in narrative form and used metaphors to describe images of peace and the abuse of power by executives in their companies. Conversely, positive images of responsible leadership in the companies were associated with self-development, improvement, and aspirations for the future. The framing effects of the metaphors used and the stories told helped me to assess the ways in which respondents made sense of human rights and peace.

During the second cycle coding processes, I sought to capture the essence of and evocative attributes assigned to human rights and peace by the respondents. As I proceeded, a second sequence of 14 conceptual codes emerged. At this stage, I observed that the patterns of meta-narratives had become clearer and more conspicuous, with respondents systematically referring to three main sensemaking narratives: emotional, power, and common beliefs (see Tables 6.2–6.4). Emotional sensemaking emerged in the form of hedonic valence, which is how positive/pleasant or negative/unpleasant the emotion is. Power sensemaking was articulated as trying to reflect on how the power is expressed and influences others. Finally, common-sensemaking was often portrayed as shared consensus and collective beliefs. Subsequently, I gave those second-order codes phrasal descriptions to stabilise the streamlining of experience.

These sensemaking narratives conveyed both emotions and experiences undergone by the employees in relation to human rights and peace. Once I had developed second-order conceptual codes, I paid particular attention to existing themes that “leapt out” across these narratives, because of their relevance to a new domain related to the respondents’ understanding on human rights and peace. Accordingly, I amalgamated the second-order conceptual codes, which resulted in the emergence of seven conceptual themes reflecting distinctive domains. The following second-order conceptual themes emerged: “feeling isolated and exploited,” “feeling the experience of opportunity,” “the power (i.e. the Government) is indifferent,” “abuse of power,” “responsible leadership,” “common beliefs about the

Table 6.2 Emotional sensemaking narratives

<i>Second-order codes</i>	<i>Indicative quotes</i>
Feeling abused and undermined	“You can be underground for 24 hours. Without taking a break, without taking food, without even water to drink” (Maintenance Officer) “I think I’m also a victim of human rights violations” (Miner) “You find workers working with the dangerous chemicals, dangerous liquids without wearing gloves, without the proper respiratory system” (Plant Operator)
Feeling my company is doing nothing for me and my community/country	“They are not doing anything for the community, at least they can build a school for the community or build the roads because they are damaging our roads” (Gas Valve Operator) “I think the company will do more by employing more people on our community and building more infrastructures” (Data Manager) “Accommodation? They are just building a one room accommodation. This is not enough for a family of four or six” (Laboratory Technician) “I still remember, the communities wanted to embark on strike” (Laboratory Assistant)
Feeling I need to fight to express myself	“People should fight for their rights” (Workshop Instructor) “For women in mining, it’s really tough. Some are brave enough to raise those issues” (Energy Operator) “The Labor Act is generally strong in some way. It allows us to fight for the workers’ rights” (General Secretary)
Feeling my company should do more for contributing to peace and human rights in my country	“It is only verbally creating peace, but failing to meet the regulated standards, it is not creating any peace” (General Service Officer) “They talk about human rights on the paper. It’s on the paper” (Assistant Manufacture of Oxygen)
Feeling I can sustain my family with my job	“We work every time and again so that we can have something at the end of the day for our kids” (General Support)

Table 6.3 Power sensemaking narratives

<i>Second-order codes</i>	<i>Indicative quotes</i>
Corruption of the government	“There is a lot of corruption in the government. Officials are actually getting money from foreigner investors, and they don’t do their work” (Mining Engineer) “There is a sort of black management. They will try to protect the CEOs” (Laboratory Technician)
Post-colonialism vs. contemporary times	“The mining sector is totally gone due to the invasion” (Forecourt Attendant) “Multinational companies and fully established mining companies ensure that human rights issues are addressed in their companies, unlike in the small-scale mining and Asian managed companies” (Project Manager)

(Continued)

Table 6.3 (Continued)

<i>Second-order codes</i>	<i>Indicative quotes</i>
Closed-door policy system	“When you try to pursue your concerns or challenges, you might become a target” (General Service Officer) “The real problem is that these guys no longer respect the law, so they don’t really have an open-door policy” (Maintenance Officer)
Patriarchal system	“Men are the people who supposed to go underground, not ladies. I am the first woman operating underground” (Energy Operator) “Having only a single woman working out of all these men is kind of unfair” (Miner) “We are saying gender equality, but why is it that we still have got 2% of women in our organization?” (Safety Officer) “As I see, women are not treated fairly because we are not being given higher positions yet” (Administrative Officer in the Safety Department)
Openness to improve a company culture that respects my rights	“We had a specific strategy during the era of HIV and AIDS. We avoided that miners could take advantages of poor woman in the local community” (Quality Manager) “The company started being involved in corporate social responsibility some three years ago” (Mechanical Maintainer) “They do activities like campaign against gender-based violence and sexual harassment” (Assistant Manufacture of Oxygen)

Table 6.4 Common beliefs narratives

<i>Second-order codes</i>	<i>Indicative quotes</i>
Women in mining are at risk of physical abuses	“They are treated like mistresses by the bosses” (Gas Valve Operator) “We do work with men. So sometimes they use sexual abuse language” (General Support)
Business aims only to make profits	“As much as the employer tried to only maximize the profits, there will be no respect for human rights” (General Service Officer) “You realize that they consider more profit maximization than the safety and protection of workers” (Miner)
Peace is when you are free to express yourself, when you can talk without any fear	“Peace is just freedom from privileges” (Laboratory Technician) “Peace has to do with free from oppression” (Workshop Instructor) “Peace is about freedom of expression, freedom of movement” (Engineer) “You have to be free whenever you are living your own. Peace is when you’ll be free. You don’t have any fear” (General Support)
Human rights are basic needs	“I think human rights are important for everyone” (Mechanical Maintainer) “When it comes to other rights, everyone has got a right to work even who has a disability” (Fitter in Turner) “Right to a place and to have enough food. Right to have a good shelter; the right to have a good health and educational facilities” (Mining Blasting License Holder)

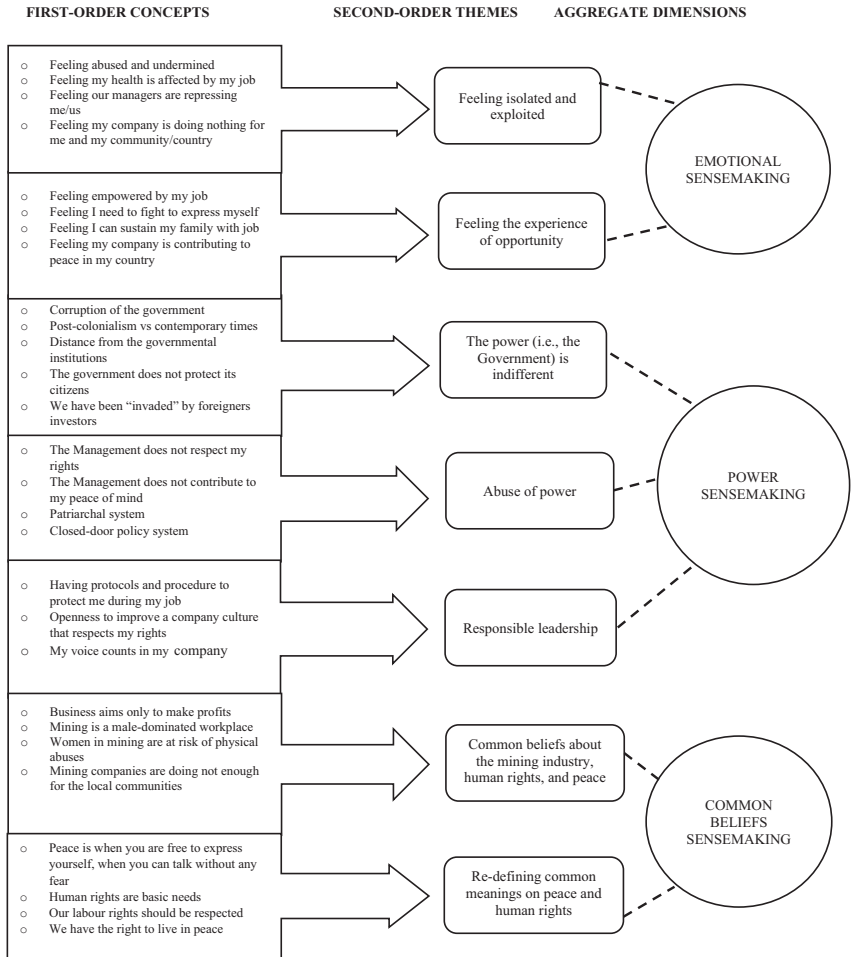


Figure 6.1 Coding structure.

mining industry, human rights, and peace,” and “redefining common meanings on peace and human rights.” At a subsequent stage, I integrated the second-order conceptual themes into three theoretical aggregate themes. This enabled me to inductively develop a conceptual framework linking the concepts that emerged from the data. The three aggregate dimensions were labelled as “emotional sensemaking,” “power sensemaking,” and “common beliefs sensemaking.” The coding structure integrating first-order and second-order analysis is illustrated in Figure 6.1.

6.3 Findings

The findings are presented using the three sensemaking narratives previously introduced: “emotional sensemaking,” “power sensemaking,” and “common beliefs sensemaking.”

6.3.1 *Emotional Sensemaking*

6.3.1.1 *Feeling Isolated and Exploited*

The majority of our respondents expressed emotions of frustration and desolation towards human rights and peace. However, these emotions were more prominent when describing forms of human rights abuses concerning the delay in the payment of salaries, and a work environment causing mental and physical issues. Respondents often used expressions of self-consciousness (“*I am uncomfortable*”; “*I am nervous*”) to describe the perpetration of abuses. They reported how devalued and angry they felt in their company but also mentioned resentment towards government institutions unable to protect their rights and create peace.

While resentment and anger significantly shaped respondents’ words, a different set of emotions captured feelings of isolation while describing human rights. Alienation, reflected as a condition of low integration in the work environment and society, was expressed by a large number of respondents. These emotions emerged as alienation from the company and from society:

If you are one person who knows their rights, you then become targeted, and they put you in isolation. You are targeted and eventually dismissed.
(Mechanical Maintenance)

I feel . . . alone sometimes. Even if the employer is abusing you and you go and want to mitigate this approach, the courts, the statutory bodies will not help you because it takes very long. It may take five years. Employers take advantage of that.

(Mechanical Maintenance)

6.3.1.2 *Feeling the Experience of Opportunity*

While respondents shared their negative emotions of alienation, some expressed positive emotions linked to the opportunity to enhance peace and human rights due to commitments of their companies. Those who leveraged these emotions positively constructed distinctive interpretations of the workplace as a way of advancing themselves and their local communities.

Interpretations of opportunity were significantly linked to the individuals' overall emotional experience within the company. Individuals who had internal opportunities to support human rights felt inspired and enthusiastic about their workplaces:

I feel so inspired by my company and colleagues . . . When you join this organization, you will actually undergo trainings on how you respect human rights . . . The company is also giving employees the freedom to join a trade union and their representatives.

(Quality Manager)

I am privileged because my company has a human rights policy . . . [that] was co-created by the management and the employees. I train colleagues to protect everyone from racial discrimination. I try to bring international standards in my company that probably in a country like Zimbabwe are not taken into consideration.

(Safety Officer)

Opportunity narratives explaining the role of companies in enhancing peace shifted from a pure enthusiastic language to a broader explanation of strategic acts and behaviours (“*the company plans*” and “*in the near future things will change because there is a new business plan*”). These examples included actions by businesses to increase peace and development in local communities through a number of activities such as developing infrastructure, guaranteeing security to employees and communities, controlling criminality and violence within and outside the mine, providing clean water, electricity, and job opportunities.

6.3.2 *Power Sensemaking*

6.3.2.1 *The Power (i.e., the Government) Is Indifferent*

Power played a prominent role in interpreting sensemaking narratives towards human rights and peace. Different interpretations of power were used to discuss the two concepts. An “indifferent” power (i.e. government) was explained by respondents as one of the factors contributing to the erosion of human rights in the work environment. Post-colonialism was emphasised in that, in the near past, the right to safety, the freedom of speech, and the right to decent work were more important for mining companies investing in the country: “*The British who left our country had better labour standards*” (Assistant Manufacture of Oxygen).

On the contrary, the consequences of an indifferent government (symbolising power) towards peace were understood as affecting a true and lasting

peace. Respondents observed that the fragility of governmental institutions in regulating the extractive industry contributed to increased forms of peace without “meaning” (e.g. “*peace on the paper*” and “*imaginary peace*”), affecting ultimately the national identity.

6.3.2.2 Abuse of Power Versus Responsible Leadership

Drawing on an “indifferent power,” respondents argued that an abusive use of power by business affected human rights and peace. While forms of abusive power towards human rights were significantly linked to emotions in the work environment (see above), narratives on peace and abusive power were linked to local communities. Interpretations of these forms of power were discussed as sources of conflict within local communities, identified as scarcity, inequality, distributive injustice, and insecurity.

In contrast to these narratives, some respondents still referred to a responsible use of power. While human rights and peace remained two separate concepts in the narratives of abusive power, convergent perspectives emerged when interpreting a responsible use of power by business. The relationship between human rights and peace was found as mutually constitutive in this narrative. Spillovers were recognised as the two concepts were associated with values contributing to generate rules to minimise conflict and facilitate coexistence in the workplace and local communities.

From a human rights perspective, meanings of responsible leadership were interpreted as evaluating others in the workplace: “I am a role model for other young women in my company; the work that [I] do can speak for [myself] and change the mindset of people” (Quality Manager).

In terms of peace commitment, it was observed that a responsible leadership sought to generate welfare outside the mine’s perimeter. Peace was often discussed as corporate social responsibility activities (e.g. building schools and developing infrastructure). Rational calculations associated with collective security and the economic benefits of peace were seen as incentives for building peace by companies. Even though peace appeared important for respondents, it was also noted that the issue of enhancing peace was often overlooked by companies in the mining industry:

“Leadership when it comes to peace is something that is very important to me. Peace brings growth amongst us as human beings and it brings unity. I think as organizations, we can do more to help growing a culture of peace. I need to learn more in my role as a facilitator. However, I helped to create in our company a platform where employees come together, and we try to create smooth relationships between the employees, the community, and the management.”

(Safety Officer)

6.3.3 *Common Beliefs Sensemaking*

6.3.3.1 *Redefining Common Meanings of Human Rights and Peace*

Once emotional and power sensemaking narratives were interpreted, we sought for sensemaking narratives about the meanings of human rights and peace and how these meanings were re-shaped by respondents. In doing so, we interpreted respondents' common beliefs on human rights and peace and the language used to discuss these two concepts. Interpretations of these narratives were grounded in normative and conceptual considerations on how to integrate human rights into peace. This approach was discussed by a large part of respondents as the kind of "peace" that is worth pursuing. As such, arguments were introduced for discussing peace as a universal value. Specifically, peace and human rights interpretations were understood as a move from a purely negative (i.e. absence of violence) to a positive understanding of peace suggesting that the relation between human rights and peace is about an empirical question, but also a conceptual issue.

Peace was often defined as a psychological status ("*peace of the mind*"), a geopolitical condition, and a political process. Instead, human rights were defined as vital needs often linked to labour rights and the right to decent work. The meanings associated with the definitions of human rights and peace were varied, but three main convergent understandings emerged concerning the private sphere, regulations and politics, and employees and the workplace:

I think human rights belong to the right to live, having a life that is respected by others and not hurt by anyone.

(Administrator)

I believe peace comes from within a human being. It is not a status whereby people are forced to keep quiet. People may be quiet, but until it is fully inside, I think peace is a state of tranquillity, psychologically and physically.

(Mechanical Maintenance)

Human rights are the rights that are conferred to all man. I think they are recognized by the Universal Declaration of Rights, this was made by the United Nations. Human rights would be these sets of rules and regulations that cannot be taken away from anyone.

(Maintenance Officer)

I think peace is quite multifaceted. I think in terms of politics, peace is when you can choose a party or political party without being discriminated. Then socially, I think peace is where children, families, and societies

are able to express themselves in terms of religions without being judged by anyone, and, of course, the economic peace is when you are able to access funds, especially for young people.

(Miner)

Peace is when my employer will change the mindset and not manipulate its employees. A new mindset should drive a change for us and bring prosperity in my community.

(Controller)

The language, as a strong symbol of group identity, is a locus of disagreement (Joseph, 2009). Linguistic tensions emerged at two levels. First, when respondents tried to associate human rights with cultural diversity, inequalities, and gender critiques. Examples of these associations emerged as cultural diversity, inequalities, and gender critiques:

Most of the managers are from the Shona ethnic group. They do not understand human rights at all. They practice nepotism and employ only relatives and people speaking their language. . . . There's no room for negotiation. There is no democracy!

(Mechanical Maintenance)

Human rights are insignificant until there are inequalities between local communities and who is receiving the profits from the mines. Like politicians, entrepreneurs, American governments, and the Europeans, they all take the benefit from us!

(Maintenance Officer)

Listen I am a woman: when we are having our menstrual cycles, it becomes a challenge. There are no showers and no change rooms for us. We are not given sanitary pads; they are given us tissues to use in our trainings! Do you think these are human rights?

(Assistant Manufacture of Oxygen)

Second, stress and tension were also perceived when respondents developed their meanings of peace by using a "political language." Politics was interpreted as significantly affecting individuals' language and ultimately impacting the definition of human rights and peace. For instance, socialist terminologies such as "*comrade*" were used by respondents to emphasise unity and shared beliefs among employees of the mining industry on political mechanisms and peace:

My comrades and I believe that business and government do not put the needs of the African countries at the centre of their policy for building

peace. Investors in Zimbabwe they should basically change their mind and put at the centre of their operation not only profits. . . . I think you have the right to grow as employee and to increase your knowledge on your rights.

(Maintenance Officer)

A paradox was introduced when discussing developments of peace and politics. The paradox was not exclusively about accusing the government, but raised factual beliefs on politics and peace:

These days there is enough peace. There is enough peace because it seems there is democracy. But the democracy which we are currently facing is the one of the dictator Muammar al-Qaddafi, which they said protest as much as you want, shout as much as you want, but as long as you do it in the comfort of your own zone between and under your roof, we do not give a damn! This is the kind of peace which we have.

(General Service Officer)

While respondents often provided less consistent and efficient actions to respond to the issue of human rights and peace, a large number of valuable ideas were discussed around common beliefs of human rights and peace with merged similar meanings. Table 6.5 illustrates the predominance of convergent meanings of human rights and peace identified in the three sensemaking narratives.

Table 6.5 Redefining meanings of human rights and peace in the three sensemaking narratives

		<i>Human rights and peace meanings</i>	<i>Human rights and peace relationship</i>
<i>Emotions</i>	Isolation	≠	Divergent meanings + outcome
	Opportunity	≈	Integrated meanings + outcome
<i>Power</i>	Indifferent power	≠	Divergent meanings + outcome
	Abusive power	≠	Divergent meanings + outcome
	Sustainable leadership	≈	Integrated meanings + outcome
<i>Common Beliefs</i>	Concerning the private sphere	≈	Integrated meanings
	Associated with politics, regulations, and laws	≈	Integrated meanings
	Concerning the employees and the workplace	≈	Integrated meanings

6.4 Reimagining Peace and Human Rights

The findings of this case contribute to the BHR and B4P scholarship in several ways. First, I complement existing BHR and B4P literature by providing insights into how employees understand human rights and peace. B4P and BHR scholars for long have discussed around definitions of human rights and peace from a broad perspective of executives in large multinational companies headquartered in developed countries. Little research has been conducted to investigate how human rights and peace are understood from an employee perspective within these companies. The findings of this study enlarge the understanding of human rights and peace by examining employee perception. Notions of peace among our participants showed a psychological, geopolitical, and political dimension. Reflections on peace started with the consideration that health and peace are related. While health researchers have produced an important body of research describing how inequities in power, money, and resources arising from the economic, political, and social systems result in unfair distribution of health across the life course, this dimension has not been included in B4P research yet. However, it was noted that peace is a sort of consequential process that starts within the human being and concludes by building peace in society. This case highlighted the interpretation of human rights and peace at the individual level, which emphasises the importance of considering the individual level in B4P and BHR scholarship, which is currently limited. The geopolitical dimension of peace that emerged in our findings included reflections on issues of equity, justice, deprivation of human rights, and political development. Political developments framed as “utopia” versus “reality” were associated with the ethics of governmental institutions and the role played by business in this context. Shifting perspective on employees, had also an impact on the definition of human rights. What the findings reveal is that the knowledge of human rights was significantly affected by the economic globalisation. As discussed by Pikalo (2007),¹⁴ economic globalisation does not deliver the benefits of development equally to all; there is a persistent need for regulations that would harness global markets and compensate for the asymmetrical costs and benefits of economic globalisation. The urgent need for making real regulations on human rights was perceived by many of the respondents. Human rights framed as mainly labour rights brought respondents constantly to ask themselves: Am I paid for overtime work? If I become pregnant, am I subject to dismissal? International standards and domestic law prohibit this? Can union members and union organisers help me? To what extent are labour rights outcomes in my company the result of factors related to the production rather than to the domestic policies and the local economy?

Second, the findings provide insights on the relationship between BHR and B4P. In this respect, I found that in the three sensemaking narratives emerged a prevailing assumption that human rights and peace are necessary to each other. The starting point was to examine the role of emotions in triggering and shaping the sensemaking process. Emotions and cognitive states revealed that perceptions of human rights and peace were influenced by past experiences and learnings that encouraged various perspectives about the two concepts. Power sensemaking narratives expanded the social dimension of human rights and peace in the work environment and local communities. Common beliefs sensemaking narratives facilitated the exploration of the taken-for-granted notions of human rights and peace. Our findings reinforce the interdependence rather than a conceptual separation of human rights and peace in these three sensemaking narratives.

Third, the findings corroborate, but also extend the commercial benefits associated to building peace. While the benefits for business over economic recovery and peace dividends have been widely discussed in the B4P literature, the findings in the case reveal that the economic ground alone was not a sufficient condition for companies to build peace in local communities in the long term. Respondents struggled to articulate peace-related programmes by business but recognised the need for mining companies to mobilise financial resources and gradually involve local stakeholders in making decisions and executing initiatives over peace.

Fourth, the findings shed light on the emotional component of human rights abuses. While BHR has pushed effectively for legislative reforms globally to tackle the problem of businesses violating or failing to respect human rights globally, emotions related to human rights abuses have been investigated less by BHR scholars. The condition of alienation, which triggered emotions of desolation and frustration, especially for women within our sample, calls for more research on the dynamics among human rights, peace, local community, and gender equality. In this sense, B4P and BHR scholars can combine efforts at examining both human rights and peace from a gender perspective.

Finally, this case provides insights of the language that employees use to interpret human rights and peace. Linguistically fragmented countries such as Zimbabwe are at risk of disparities observed at the level of development and prestige granted to the languages. This tendency of linguistic diversity as generating ethnic conflict but also conflict between locals and foreign investors was confirmed by the findings. In the three sensemaking narratives, the language to discuss human rights often reported a sense of antagonism between the minority elite (represented by executives in the company and governmental institutions) and employees. This antagonism resulted also in affecting the communication of human rights at two levels, namely, employees introduced forms of post-colonialism language to mark that the new elite (foreign investors) were ignorant about human rights, and

employees used a strong language to discuss human rights abuses by the elite (executives in the companies and foreign investors). Linguistic diversity concerning peace were viewed as jeopardising efforts to build a unified nation and foster lasting peace.

To conclude, in many mining projects, human rights are often not identified, understood, or respected, and peace is put at risk. Discussing businesses as human rights and/or peace builders requires a continued investigation of corporate engagement from different perspectives (e.g. local communities, managerial practices, investments, and politics). I recognise the need to increase joint research with the objective of mitigating conflict and insecurity caused by business' own activities. More qualitative data and case studies on business, government, human rights, and peace are needed to gain a deeper understanding on how businesses alone or with other actors can act responsibly when operating in conflict or post-conflict settings. Conflict has economic, legal, psychological, and other disciplinary dimensions. It manifests itself at different levels between individuals, between states, in industry and across all these levels. As this case emphasises, the government and its institutions have a potential impact in addressing the risk of business involvement in human rights abuses and in amplifying the fragility of peace. To minimise the negative impact of business activity requires new forms of public-private cooperation and partnerships with new forms of mutual accountability. In a similar vein, future research could explore how organisations can include explicit peace-related policies. In this regard, is already further advanced as many companies, including some from our sample, have explicit human rights policies included in their code of conduct. Here, the B4P scholarship might leverage what has been studied so far in the BHR scholarship to "operationalise" the concept of peace. BHR scholars can certainly help B4P scholars and provide the needed context for these developments.

Notes

- 1 For insights about the legacy of Mugabe's government in Zimbabwe, read: Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J., & Ruhanya, P. (2020). *The history and political transition of Zimbabwe*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://searchworks-lb.stanford.edu/view/13777442>
- 2 See Kwashirai, V. C. (2023). *Election violence in Zimbabwe: Human rights, politics and power*. Cambridge University Press. www.cambridge.org/core/books/election-violence-in-zimbabwe/FE079C46754D9F31DB5E3D5CE7AC4B38; Ranger, N. M. T. (2003). *The Historical dimensions of democracy and human rights in Zimbabwe. Vol. 2: Nationalism, democracy and human rights*. University of Zimbabwe Press. www.cambridge.org/core/journals/african-studies-review/article/abs/terence-ranger-the-historical-dimensions-of-democracy-and-human-rights-in-zimbabwe-volume-2-nationalism-democracy-and-human-rights-harare-university-of-zimbabwe-press-2003-distributed-by-african-books-collective-ltd-the-jam-factory-27-park-end-st-oxford-ox1-1hu-196-pp-select-bibliography-index-2995-paper/435734B4620DB4F98A50864EEA2A03A3

- 3 Overview of the sanctions imposed to Zimbabwe in the last decades www.state.gov/zimbabwe-sanctions
- 4 See Kwashirai, V. C. (2023). The movement for democratic change was number one enemy in 2000. In *Election violence in Zimbabwe: Human rights, politics and power*. Cambridge University Press. www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/election-violence-in-zimbabwe/movement-for-democratic-change-was-number-one-enemy-in-2000/2CB944ACBCDB63C2311FDAB85ACD8037
- 5 See Dzinesa, G. A. (2022). The Zimbabwe peace and reconciliation commission: Towards an integrated national infrastructure for peace? *African Security Review*, 31(3), 261–281. www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10246029.2022.2086475
- 6 This area of the country has been particularly characterized by structural violence and civil conflict. In particular, the violence was involving physical, economical and emotional abuse More insights about the Chipinge District case are discussed in Musanga, T. (2022). Zimbabwe's post-2000 land reform programme, inter-ethnic hierarchies among 'Black Zimbabweans' and the potential of resource conflict: The case of Chipinge District. *African Identities*, 22(2), 388–400. www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14725843.2022.2032591
- 7 *Final evaluation of the "building trust and confidence in Zimbabwe's transition" project (2019–2021)*. UNICEF. https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org/peacebuilding/files/documents/pbf_irf-301_final_evaluation_report_pbf.pdf; see *Zimbabwe United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework 2022–2026*. www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-04/UNDP-ZWE-UNSDCF_2022-2026%20.pdf
- 8 The "Macro Poverty Outlook for Zimbabwe: April 2022 – Datasheet" of the World Bank outlines an economic country profile with a stable poverty rate and macroeconomic challenges on growth, poverty reduction and macroeconomic stability. <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099921004282230248>
- 9 Human rights watch Zimbabwe. www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/zimbabwe
- 10 As discussed in the chapter, sensemaking is a process in which the creation of reality is an ongoing accomplishment that takes form when people make retrospective sense of the situations in which they find themselves. It may shapes organizational structure and behaviour. For more insights, see the seminal work of Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Sage.
- 11 Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Sage.
- 12 See Rouleau, L. (2005). Micro-practices of strategic sensemaking and sensegiving: How middle managers interpret and sell change every day. *Journal of Management Studies*, 42, 1412–1441.
- 13 See Noy, C. (2008). Sampling knowledge: The hermeneutics of snowball sampling in qualitative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11(4), 327–344. www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13645570701401305
- 14 Pikalo discusses in his work the intersection among economics, peace, and human rights. Such inter-relationship becomes important when re-formulating peace- and democracy-building policies and goals. See Pikalo, J. (2007). Economic globalisation, globalist stories of the state, and human rights. In W. Benedek, K. De Feyter, & F. Marrella (Eds.), *Economic globalisation and human rights: ETUC studies on human rights and democratization* (European Inter-University Centre for Human Rights and Democratisation, pp. 17–38). Cambridge University Press. <https://resolve.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/economic-globalisation-and-human-rights/economic-globalisation-globalist-stories-of-the-state-and-human-rights/FBDCC9C301879C25622602EE026D28CB>

7 *Do Ut Des?* Assessing the Impact of WTO Accessions on Fragile States

7.1 Trade Within the Context of Kantian Peace Theory

The notion that trade fosters peace is a cornerstone of classical-liberal thought, tracing its origins to the first century. This concept evolved alongside the development of Mercantilism in the eighteenth century, during which state control over trade was emphasised to bolster national wealth. Although Mercantilism remains controversial, it underscored how commercial interdependence can align states' interests and diminish the likelihood of conflict. Trade's reciprocal influence illustrates the dynamic international outlook within mercantilist doctrine. Scholars such as Cobden (1868, 1870)¹ and Schumpeter (1919, 1951)² in the classical trade theory offer important insights into how international commerce shapes the domestic politics of war. Writing within the tradition of classical trade theory, they offer significant insights into the complex relationship between international commerce and domestic political dynamics related to war. They analyse how international conflicts are linked with domestic distributional outcomes of commercial policies, elucidating mechanisms by which trade can promote peace. The removal of protectionist policies strengthens societal groups opposed to war and restricts governments' abilities to shift war-related costs onto non-coalition groups. This interdependence, rooted in Kant's vision of perpetual international peace, frames peace as a construct requiring deliberate institutionalisation. Kant identifies three pillars: the republican constitution or representative democracy (constraining autocracy through representative governance), the commercial spirit (where economic ties foster accommodation over conflict), and international law or organisations (grounded in respect for the rights of all citizens and republics). This framework has significantly shaped policy discourse, particularly after the Cold War and post-9/11 era. As Kant observes, peace is not the natural condition among nations—rather, it must be actively constructed through legal and institutional means. Scholars commonly interpret the “spirit of commerce” as necessitating the removal of economic barriers and the

equalisation of trade conditions worldwide. Such principles have informed support for free trade agreements, reinforcing evidence that robust bilateral trade can sharply reduce the probability of bilateral conflicts. However, empirical research also indicates that while bilateral trade increases the opportunity cost of war and thus deters it, multilateral openness may encourage local wars even as it discourages global conflicts. Kant's assertion that international trade underpins world peace found strong resonance among the architects of GATT following World War II. While no direct evidence links GATT's founders to Kant's writings, their alignment with his views on commerce as a deterrent to conflict is apparent. Contemporary scholars often regard institutions such as the United Nations, European Parliament, and International Court of Justice as early embodiments of the Kantian peace model. The establishment of the WTO in 1995 marked a new era of globalisation; since the fall of the Berlin Wall, capitalism has faced little substantive opposition on the international stage, and multiple rounds of trade liberalisations have expanded membership and increased global trade.³ In a globalised economy, the emphasis was on the importance of MNCs and the cross-border value chains they cultivate and sustain. This influence of GVCs on trade policy outcomes at the international level is significant in shaping PTAs. Trade policy outcomes across industries thus tend to be in line with MNC preferences. And, a growing number of PTAs with hard standards now regulate state compliance with international human rights principles, with considerable potential to influence business' behaviours. Indeed, these agreements are designed to enforce voluntary commitments to coordinate market policies at a transnational level. PTAs also exert influence through coercion when they enforce strict standards: they assign to nation states a mandate to uphold specific human rights, and they provide the pecuniary advantages and institutional frameworks needed to reward and punish members' behaviour. PTAs coexist with WTO agreements, and their recommendations for the liberalisation of trade in goods and services are arranged vertically, allowing nation states to voluntarily accomplish market liberalisation at the national level. Since 1947, trade liberalisation has advanced through multiple rounds of extended negotiations. The GATT/WTO is frequently mentioned as a leading example of an effective international institution. Since its inception, the number of GATT/WTO members has increased significantly, contributing to substantial growth in global trade.⁴ Studies regarding trade's role in international organisations contend that both market access and institutional frameworks contribute to reducing dyadic conflicts and sustaining peace. Nevertheless, the interplay between peace, WTO accession, and the circumstances of fragile or conflict-affected countries remains understudied, lending continued relevance to initiatives like the Trade for Peace Programme. A substantial body of empirical work finds that as international commerce expands, the incentive for conflict

diminishes, given that war becomes an increasingly costly and inefficient path to economic growth. Critics of the WTO frequently highlight its perceived insensitivity to non-trade issues—such as environmental protection, labour standards, human rights, and peace itself. Conditioning market access on adherence to such norms would likely encounter resistance from many WTO Members due to the absence of global consensus on deploying trade measures in pursuit of peace. However, if Members were to revoke trade concessions in response to bilateral hostilities, the resulting economic costs could serve as a powerful deterrent to conflict. Therefore, encouraging Member States to leverage trade for peacebuilding could yield meaningful benefits, particularly for fragile and conflict-affected Members of the WTO.

7.2 Niche Perspectives on WTO Accessions

Joining the WTO involves not only opening markets but also making wider structural reforms that extend beyond tariffs, covering fiscal, monetary, and regulatory policies.⁵ Key principles of WTO agreements include transparency, non-discrimination, and stable market access. The organisation aims to foster commercial stability by ensuring countries' exports have greater and more secure access to global markets, providing dispute resolution mechanisms, and promoting disciplined economic policy. In contrast, the original GATT paid less attention to issues faced by developing countries or those emerging from conflict. Initially, only industrialised nations played major roles in trade negotiations, but with the launch of the Uruguay Round and the creation of the WTO, developing countries became active participants. This shift led to simplified accession processes designed to speed up negotiations.⁶ For example, in 2004, the WTO Appellate Body supported India, allowing for some differential treatment of developing countries based on their specific development, financial, and trade circumstances.⁷ WTO accession for LDCs now includes special and differential treatment, transition periods for fulfilling obligations, and technical assistance. Examples include the EU's measures for former colonies under the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) programme,⁸ its Everything But Arms (EBA)⁹ agreement for least developed nations, the US African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA),¹⁰ and the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI).¹¹ "Special-incentive arrangements" offer additional benefits to eligible countries, including labour initiatives for those meeting ILO conventions on forced labour, collective bargaining, non-discrimination, and child labour, as well as environmental incentives for nations managing tropical forests sustainably. An environmental incentive framework is also implemented for goods produced in countries with tropical forests, provided these countries can demonstrate compliance with international standards for sustainable forest management. For further details on business practices and human rights approaches to

climate change, refer to Box 5 in Chapter 8. As LDCs increased their participation in the WTO, fragile and conflict-affected nations also became more involved in the global trading system. The g7+ WTO Accessions Group, launched at the 11th Ministerial Conference, was created to provide targeted support and tailored assistance for these states during and after their WTO accession process, as outlined in their Ministerial Declaration.¹²

7.2.1 Peace and Regional Trade Integration

Understanding what defines a fragile country is essential for analysing how these WTO Members engage in negotiations on international trade agreements and work towards regional integration and poverty reduction. Various international organisations—including the World Bank,¹³ IMF,¹⁴ OECD,¹⁵ Fund for Peace,¹⁶ and Asian Development Bank¹⁷—as well as academic institutions like Carlton University,¹⁸ have created lists of fragile countries. However, there is no universally accepted definition of “fragile countries” or “fragility” (see World Development Report, 2011¹⁹). Generally, fragile states are described as those facing economic and social difficulties such as high mortality rates, widespread poverty, slow economic growth, population displacement, human and capital flight, infrastructure damage, and a high likelihood of renewed conflict. The g7+ Fragility Spectrum evaluates progress towards five peacebuilding and state-building objectives, each measured across five stages from crisis to resilience. For example, regarding inclusive politics, the spectrum uses 35 indicators that assess political structures, processes, and social relationships. Many African nations joined the WTO in the mid-1990s but continue to experience significant institutional and social fragility. Numerous g7+ WTO Members seek to overcome issues related to economic and institutional weaknesses by pursuing regional economic integration with other Members and non-WTO Members, aiming to enhance industrial development (see UNCTAD, 2007).²⁰ Several peace agreements rely on regional political dialogue to help integrate g7+ WTO Members into the trading system. Regional trade agreements (RTAs), such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the 2018 African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA),²¹ can influence peace processes—positively or negatively—in fragile countries’ efforts to join the WTO system, especially during times of conflict. Factors like geopolitical tensions, uncertain trade policies, and rising conflicts contribute to the ongoing increase in regional trade initiatives. RTAs are treaties that address shared interests among signatories within a specific region. While RTAs might hinder global trade liberalisation, they also serve as alternative pathways when progress at the multilateral level stalls, making any move towards trade liberalisation beneficial regardless of its origin. In practice, these regional agreements go beyond reducing trade

barriers between nation state parties. For example, many include environmental objectives. Approximately 87% of the 775 RTAs that were signed between 1947 and 2021 have at least one environmental-related clause (see OECD 2023 work on Regional Trade Agreements and the environment²²). Similarly, these agreements included social and gender equality objectives. The Maastricht Treaty of the European Union included a provision recognising “equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work” (see Article 2.1). EU Member States also committed to “ensure equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work” (see Article 6.1). Additionally, the Treaty encourages state parties to enact policies that benefit women in order to address obstacles in their professional careers or to facilitate their access to vocational activities.

7.2.2 *Connecting the Foundations of Peace, Culture, and Trade*

Regional trade integration has much to bring to the development of policies that support peace. These efforts not only contribute to the area of peace-keeping and peacebuilding, but also sensitise governments and intergovernmental agencies on the role of trade for sustaining a culture of peace in the WTO system. The culture of peace promotes the education for peace. This includes the education for a peaceful resolution of conflict and maintaining peace; sustainable development (viewed as involving the eradication of poverty, the reduction of inequalities, and environmental sustainability); human rights; gender equality; democratic participation; understanding, tolerance, and solidarity (among peoples, vulnerable groups, and migrants within the nation, and among nations); participatory communication and the free flow of information; and international peace and security (including disarmament and various positive initiatives). The idea of a “stable peace” involves not only stability and security but also opportunities to escape poverty, exploitation, and injustice, and this concept is embodied in the eight foundations of the culture of peace. Building these eight foundations after conflict isn’t an easy task—it demands significant efforts to encourage society to value peace, tolerance, and mediation, as not all cultures naturally accept these ideals. The United Nations plays a key role by providing a framework that offers shared meaning and collective understanding. Article 9 of the Declaration on a Culture of Peace²³ emphasises the UN’s responsibility to promote and strengthen a global culture of peace. The Declaration also highlights the need for international cooperation to support economic and social development, particularly in developing countries. The document suggests that how nations choose their government styles, diplomatic strategies, and cultural values is influenced by these peace-related concepts. Using the foundations of a culture of peace helps investigate how membership in organisations

like the WTO affects global peace. First, these values relate to ways societies peacefully resolve conflicts. Second, they reflect important cultural differences between countries, offering insight into how similarities or differences among WTO members can affect peaceful cooperation. When nations share similar views on peace, they are less likely to experience conflict and more likely to collaborate. However, differing cultural attitudes towards peace can hinder dispute resolution, such as when designing mechanisms for settling disagreements in regional trade agreements.

Pathways to peace within the WTO are primarily action-oriented or result-driven. Each phase of advancing peace in the WTO necessitates robust capacities for security and order, which underscores the distinction among various institutional frameworks. This distinction holds particular significance for Members from fragile and conflict-affected countries, such as those participating in technical assistance and Aid for Trade initiatives²⁴). Table 7.1 illustrates the reciprocal relationship between the eight foundations of a culture of peace and WTO procedures, framing this interconnection as a “*do ut des*” system characterised by mutual obligations, exchange, and developmental patterns with notable impacts on fragile and conflict-affected nations.

Comprehensive analysis suggests that WTO peace values are complementary, dynamic, and interdependent frameworks that both shape and reflect each other. For example, poverty eradication and the promotion of tolerance and solidarity are inextricably linked to women’s economic empowerment and gender equality. Human rights and WTO rules in fact are based on shared values, such as individual freedom and responsibility, non-discrimination, rule of law, and welfare through peaceful cooperation among individuals and nation states. The UN General Assembly has called upon the WTO to support governmental initiatives and develop complementary programmes to help countries achieve full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action²⁵ to protect women’s rights.

The influence of peace within fragile and conflict-affected WTO Members is achieved through global strategies delivering local effects; refer to the section Fragility, Regional Trade Integration, and Peace for practical insights into the role of regional trade agreements in promoting peace in the WTO context. The multilateral trading system offers mechanisms that allow national institutions to constrain minority interests by adhering to multilateral rules and practices designed to serve broad public interests. Public goods developed to sustain peace and order—through legal structures, development initiatives, and legitimacy at both local and global levels—are anchored in both practical and normative foundations. Connections between peace and the WTO are evident in political, social, legal, and economic reforms. Sustainable transformation and long-term stability are fostered through economic growth and increased participation in the multilateral trading system. Economic incentives include Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status, tariff reductions, direct procurement, and subsidies for exports and

imports. Enhancing legal capacities and utilising the Trade Policy Review Mechanism (TPRM) directly contribute to domestic development goals tied to peace and stability. At the societal level, WTO agreements such as the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) and the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement advance key standards in food safety, corporate social responsibility, and environmental protection. These agreements might suggest that the world of trade is not limited only to the law of the WTO. As the multiplicity of actors engage in trade policy work with government partners as part of their diplomatic role, they shape standards across institutions, whether public, private, national, or international. In particular, the TBT Agreement would encourage Members to consider the use of standards to support policies aimed towards sustainable development.

While multilateralism is often considered the optimal strategy for maximising trade benefits according to economic theory, in practice within the WTO, regionalism tends to be the preferred policy. Much of contemporary regionalism—especially in Africa, Asia, and Latin America—has emerged as a reaction to both the influence of the WTO and the forces of globalisation. RTAs can introduce distortions or be crafted by powerful regional actors to take advantage of weaker neighbouring countries. In such scenarios, WTO rules and frameworks can promote fairer regional relations by upholding principles that foster a culture of peace (see Table 7.1), potentially offering new approaches to peace by helping countries move from instability towards social and economic progress. This occurs through mechanisms like political engagement, partnership-building, outreach, public dialogue, research, and capacity development.

The shift towards “realist” multilateralism is evident in global developments, even among democratic Western nations. For example, during his first term, President Trump reduced US participation in multilateral initiatives by pulling out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and downgrading NAFTA. Another instance is the UK’s exit from the European Union, which had long been a prominent model of regional cooperation and peacebuilding (see also the US and UK’s revised strategies after Iraq, and their pursuit of UN approval in Libya and Syria). Tensions also surfaced in NATO’s relationship with Turkey over the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza. This trend extends beyond Western nations to developing economies like Venezuela and Hungary, where security agendas diverge from liberal ideals, and regionalism becomes intertwined with strict strategies for maintaining power (for further discussion, see Debré, 2021; Södebaum & Spandler, 2023).²⁶ However, this perspective is not universally held among countries in the Global South, where recent developments towards increased regional autonomy and representation have been viewed as a source of empowerment. For instance, at the WTO’s 13th Ministerial Conference held in 2024 in Abu Dhabi, Global South Members negotiated enhanced provisions for Special & Differential Treatment, meaningful progress on Public Stockholding for food security, and addressed issues related to fisheries subsidies).²⁷

Table 7.1 Pathways of peace in the WTO framework

How does the wto accession enhance peace for fragile and conflict-affected members?

Eight bases of the culture of peace

WTO provisions

*Education for the peaceful
resolution of conflict and
maintaining peace*

- Pacific resolution of trade disputes. The WTO Dispute Settlement Body enhances multilateral trade liberalisation by enforcing the removal of trade restrictive measures (Annex 2 Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes²⁸)
- Principle of reciprocity²⁹: WTO Members are expected to make similar efforts in undertaking concessions, considering their levels of development and importance in world trade.
- Induce international cooperation among Members.
- Conduct of “track one” and “track two” diplomacy.

*Sustainable development (eradication of
poverty, the reduction of inequalities,
and environmental sustainability)*

- Enjoy Preferential Trade Arrangements (PTAs)³⁰ (see Duty-Free and Quota-Free,³¹ Rules of Origin³² scheme).
 - Facilitate new market access/export.
 - Protect existing market access.
 - Access to technical assistance and capacity building trainings.
 - Improve the domestic supply response.
 - Structural domestic reforms.
 - a. Diversify exports and enhance country’s competitiveness.
 - b. Development of new technology/infrastructure/development standards.
 - Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE).³³ The mandate of the Committee is to identify and understand the linkages between trade and the environment with the objective to support a sustainable development.
 - a. The initiative, “Trade and Environmental Sustainability,” was launched to advance the work on the impact of trade on the environment.
-

(Continued)

Table 7.1 (Continued)

How does the wto accession enhance peace for fragile and conflict-affected members?

Eight bases of the culture of peace

WTO provisions

Human rights

- Policymakers and activists have been debating the relationship between expanded trade, trade agreements, and particular human rights. Several countries from Europe, the United States and Canada tried to broaden the GATT's limited language on labour rights from 1948 to 1994. However, policymakers of numerous developing countries often argued that these labour standards comprised *de facto* trade barriers.
- The WTO does not have any human rights or democracy criteria for membership. But most of the members and Observer Governments have signed or ratified the two UN Covenants on Human Rights ("International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: 1753" (1976) and the "International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: 1753" (1966)³⁴). Furthermore the Singapore Declaration³⁵ went on to affirm the WTO's commitment to core labour standards, which it found fell under the U.N.'s
- International Labour Organization (ILO) jurisdiction.
- WTO obligations have objectives such as food security, food safety, rural development, and environmental protection. The SPS Agreement³⁶ sets out, for instance, the basic rules for food safety and animal and plant health standards. Recently, Members adopted the Report of the Fifth Review of the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures.
- The Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health.³⁷ "Paragraph 6 System" grants poor countries additional flexibility under the TRIPS Agreement to gain access to affordable medicines. Efforts by the WTO focus on reinforcing the right to health, especially in less developed countries.

Equality between women and men

- The WTO plays an active role on promoting the role of woman in trade. In 2017, WTO Members and government observers agreed to support the Buenos Aires Declaration on Women and Trade,³⁸ which seeks to remove barriers to, and foster, women's economic empowerment.
- An informal working group on Trade and Gender was established in September 2020.
- The first world trade congress on gender was held in 2022.

Democratic participation

- Decisions in the WTO are taken by consensus (Article IX GATT/WTO³⁹) and reflect the outcome of negotiations among WTO Members. This decision-making process based on debate and negotiations may have a side-effect on countries by introducing domestic reforms based on the principle of representation, participation, and legitimacy.

(Continued)

Table 7.1 (Continued)

*How does the wto accession enhance peace for fragile and conflict-affected members?**Eight bases of the culture of peace**WTO provisions**Understanding, tolerance, and solidarity*

- Historical, cultural, and geographical links built up over many years have created networks of solidarity and friendship among WTO Members (see the WTO least developed countries group, the WTO Members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), the WTO ASEAN Members, and the g7+ WTO Accession Group).
- The Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration (2005)⁴⁰ recognises the importance of Aid for Trade. Aid for Trade is about helping least developed countries to enhance the trade capacity and infrastructure they need to benefit from trade opening. The initiative builds solidarity by mobilising resources to address the trade-related constraints identified by developing and least developed countries.

Participatory communication and the free flow of information

- The primary instrument for ensuring transparency in the multilateral trading system is through the filing of notifications made by each Member and reviewed by the relevant bodies of the WTO. Using WTO mechanisms for transparency and surveillance allow Members to discuss and negotiate the incidence and logic of subsidies instead of filing disputes. The Secretariat provides, upon request, specific technical assistance activities to support Members to comply with national notification obligations and procedures.
- Trade Policy Review Body reviews Members' own trade policies and practices (WT/L/1014):
 - a. to increase the transparency and understanding of countries' trade policies and practices, through regular monitoring;
 - b. to improve the quality of public and intergovernmental debate on the issues;
 - c. to enable a multilateral assessment of the effects of policies on the world trading system.

International peace and security

- The function of the WTO is to provide a legal and institutional framework on the global scale and to protect the world market against disruptive demands for social justice and redistribution (Article XXI GATT/WTO⁴¹).
- The rapid increase of international trade is being the principal guarantee of peace and permanent international security.
- One of the objectives of the Doha Ministerial Conference⁴² was to increase greater security of market access (e.g. prohibition of discrimination against foreign services, outlawing agricultural export subsidies and placing tighter limits on the level of permitted tariffs and production subsidies).

7.3 The “*Do Ut Des*” Relationship

An in-depth understanding of the dominant narratives within war-torn societies is crucial for effectively assisting WTO Members that are fragile or affected by conflict in addressing poverty. Although trade is frequently characterised as a source of conflict in global and media discourse, the WTO holds a distinctive and advantageous position in promoting peace, particularly at the regional level. A primary objective of trade—reflected in the Kantian notion of the “commercial spirit”—is to establish frameworks that help prevent regional disputes from escalating into broader conflicts. The multilateral trading system should seek to redirect economic activity away from areas of conflict and foster a culture of peace. Promoting peace in fragile and conflict-affected environments involves substantial challenges, highlighting both its complexity and the significant potential for trade to support peacebuilding initiatives. It is essential for the WTO to demonstrate to stakeholders its capacity to advance a broader agenda, positioning trade as an integral component in the development of peaceful societies. Recent developments have equipped the WTO to play a more impactful role in peace processes by creating new opportunities and incentives. Nonetheless, it is vital to broaden and reinforce strategies and contexts for sustaining peace-oriented narratives—especially on a regional scale—through the implementation of robust trade policies. This case examines the normative and, at times, idealistic ambition of promoting peace through trade, and explores four approaches to supporting peace initiatives within the multilateral trading system:

1. Regional trade agreements and culture of peace

Several political and economic factors have driven the recent trend towards mega-regional agreements, such as the ratification of RCEP by 15 countries—Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam, Australia, China, Japan, Republic of Korea, and New Zealand—which collectively account for approximately 30% of global GDP. A key motivator is the influence of multinational corporations involved in global supply chains, which advocate for new agreement frameworks to address their specific interests. Conducting business in conflict-affected areas presents greater challenges compared to operations in stable environments, as evidenced by concerns among ASEAN Member States regarding the ongoing civil war in Myanmar. Research in Business and Peace indicates that ethical economic engagement, guided by the principle of “do no harm,” can help foster a culture of peace. Accordingly, scholars argue that by adhering to ethical practices, businesses may mitigate the adverse externalities associated with economic activity in conflict zones. However, most RTAs

cannot generate the cessation of violence nor prevent renewed violence. In turn, businesses and RTAs can encourage the transformation of society towards more peaceful ends and develop peacebuilding activities such as track-two diplomacy, cross-border trade, and conflict-risk analysis. For instance, numerous free trade agreements (FTAs) contain provisions imposing human rights-related obligations, particularly in the case of agreements between the European Union and LDCs (often former colonies). The concept of solidarity within trade-related legislation originates from the collective practices of individuals globally, who have leveraged organisational models such as mutual benefit societies, trusts, and cooperatives to consolidate their influence. For instance, in the early 2000s, the Ghanaian government implemented market reforms that empowered small-scale farmers by establishing participatory initiatives like farmer field schools and cooperatives, resulting in a 251% increase in agricultural cooperatives within six years. Similarly, Brazil supported agricultural collectives through policies requiring public schools to source a significant proportion of food for school meals from the solidarity economy sector.⁴³ Human rights provisions in FTAs and RTAs frequently include labour-related elements—such as those found in the International Labour Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, 86th Session, 37 ILM 1233, 1235, 1998—which hold substantial potential to enhance workers' rights, safeguard environmental protection, and initiate measures to defend vulnerable groups, including indigenous populations, against adverse effects of trade.⁴⁴ Ongoing discussions among WTO Members are essential to further reinforce human rights and labour standards, clarify the significance of fundamental rights, and assess their implications for international trade. Emphasising these aspects is crucial, as WTO processes significantly contribute to the legitimacy of democratic societies and can serve to strengthen democratic rights (see Table 7.1).⁴⁵

2. Maintain advantageous trading conditions and strengthen the political standing of LDCs.

LDCs encounter significant constraints in participating in global trade, with barriers manifesting in various forms. Their exports commonly experience elevated obstacles in both industrialised nations and other LDCs. For example, applied simple average tariffs for merchandise imports into industrial nations approximate 3%; however, for textiles and clothing and agricultural products—which constitute a considerable proportion of developing country exports—average tariffs rise to 8% and 27%, respectively. Tariffs imposed on imports by other developing countries are markedly higher, excluding agriculture. Additional barriers comprise limited connections between productive services, insufficient infrastructure, and outdated technology. Although special and differential treatment provisions

exist to address disparities in trade opportunities for LDCs, comprehensive implementation at the national level remains incomplete. WTO provisions for these countries frequently necessitate funding schemes and domestic resource mobilisation. While the WTO administers several technical assistance programmes and facilitates budgetary support through bilateral and multilateral donors, LDCs require supplementary assistance to improve trade performance. The predominant challenge lies in surpassing current preference frameworks and strengthening the political influence of LDCs within the international arena. Issues such as corruption, conflict, and societal fragmentation erode the credibility of these nations. Nonetheless, LDCs have increasingly engaged as a collective in the WTO's consensus-building processes, thereby shaping their own negotiating stances and enhancing global awareness of their concerns. The Cotonou Partnership Agreement is founded upon three pillars: politics, trade, and development, facilitating collaboration between the European Union and its Member States and a group of developing countries.⁴⁶ The principal aim of this Agreement is "to promote and expedite the economic, cultural and social development of the ACP States, with a view to contributing to peace and security and to promoting a stable and democratic environment." Notably, the Agreement establishes a clear connection between human rights and development, making adherence to human rights, democratic principles, and the rule of law fundamental components of the partnership.⁴⁷ The WTO should continue its efforts to support the political development of least developed countries—defined by participation, rationalisation, democratisation, and nation-building—while recognising the unique political histories of its Members. Furthermore, initiatives within the multilateral trading system should ensure that market access opportunities translate into tangible market entry for LDCs, exemplified by the EU funding scheme for LDCs administered by the Commission.⁴⁸

3. Develop tailored development models for WTO Members experiencing fragility and conflict.

The WTO is positioned to address war-related challenges by providing targeted and effective technical assistance to fragile and conflict-affected states, thereby strengthening governance capabilities, fostering institutional development, shaping policies and programmes, and facilitating economic transitions from conflict to peace. Nonetheless, several factors—including domestic social and political tensions, limited understanding of unique local contexts, insufficient legitimacy of governmental institutions, and restricted resources—may complicate efforts to transform the socio-political dynamics underlying conflicts. There is an ongoing request for the formulation of formal WTO protocols to address the specific needs of fragile and conflict-affected countries. Establishing robust procedures aimed at conflict prevention and peacebuilding

may assist these nations in balancing domestic and international trade alongside peace requirements. As members of the g7+ WTO Accessions Group become more integrated within the multilateral trading system, governments will be required to prioritise decision-making processes that foster peace, support reconstruction, and promote conflict mitigation. Promoting unity is particularly significant for reducing tension and violence among countries pursuing WTO membership, such as Somalia, Syria, Iraq, and South Sudan.⁴⁹ The WTO's measures to advance peace in fragile and conflict-affected countries should encompass structural harmonisation and nation-building strategies. These complex challenges underscore the importance of demonstrating the role of trade in achieving sustainable peace. By joining the multilateral trading system, fragile and conflict-affected countries should acknowledge not only the economic, political, and social advantages but also the capacity of trade to establish and secure peace domestically, as illustrated by Somalia's progress towards WTO accession.⁵⁰

4. Support a global diplomatic system to foster peace through trade

The WTO can play a key role in fostering multi-stakeholder diplomacy and helping governments and businesses reach consensus, especially in unstable or conflict-prone areas. With governments increasingly turning to unilateral measures like supply chain due diligence requirements or the implementation of human rights and peacebuilding measures, the potential of FTAs to be used as sites of economic diplomacy in the goal of sustainable development is highly relevant. For members enjoying relative peace, the institution supports efforts to strengthen a culture of peace with incentives that discourage conflict and help reduce tensions. Members facing conflict or working towards peace tend to have a broader understanding of what realistic peace involves. While domestic issues remain crucial for rebuilding peace, WTO members can encourage a new vision of peaceful coexistence—one based on mutual recognition, compromise, and respect for jointly agreed rules. As global economics change quickly, concerns over the “erosion of democracy” highlight the need for stronger international diplomacy focused on peace. The US–China trade war, which escalated in 2018, serves as a major example for testing theories about the relationship between trade and peace due to its magnitude and public impact. That year, the Trump administration imposed higher tariffs on selected Chinese goods; China responded with tariffs on over half of its American imports. This standoff drew attention because both nations are the largest trading partners and economies. The issue was politicised during the 2016 campaign and Trump's early presidency, as economic reforms in China slowed, the WTO lost influence, and China's trade surplus with the US soared. President Trump further politicised the dispute and solidified the partisan dimension of US–China relations.

More recently, the Black Sea Grain Initiative—backed by UNCTAD—highlighted the role of trade as a foreign policy tool when it helped secure shipments of grain and fertiliser from Ukrainian ports. Such developments show that trade can support the interests of various actors, whether aggressors, defenders, or peacemakers. For instance, disagreements over the Ukraine conflict do not necessarily signal the end of effective multilateralism in organisations like the EU or NATO; instead, they could mark a renewed focus on regional cooperation within a global framework, offering fresh approaches to collaboration. By using countries' economic leverage for political purposes, diplomatic efforts within the WTO should aim to align states' interests and build both moral and political consensus, ultimately promoting trade as an instrument for advancing peace.

The establishment of the WTO is primarily motivated by the goal of fostering a culture of peace through trade. However, relying on trade alone cannot compensate for shortcomings in global governance. Kant's political philosophy highlights the costs of severing trade ties and characterises the "spirit of commerce" as an incentive for peace among nations. Decisions made during the WTO trade liberalisation talks significantly affect vulnerable populations. Consequently, I contend that the WTO should not be seen as a mediator of international peace; rather, regionalism offers a practical path for promoting a peaceful culture within global trade, especially since trade rules can no longer overlook their profound effects on security, democracy, sustainable development, and human rights. While trade itself does not prevent conflicts or wars, lasting peace is essential for trade to thrive. Therefore, building a culture of peace—rooted in democratic values and human rights—necessitates a trade system that uses commerce as a diplomatic tool to advocate for peacebuilding, address differences between states, and help resolve interstate disputes. These discussions also introduce the evolving concept of trade diplomacy. On one side, the WTO serves as both a source of obligations and a platform for economic diplomacy, where countries negotiate international standards around democratic principles (see Table 7.1). An example is the transformational diplomacy approach introduced by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in 2006, which focuses on developing democratic nation-states capable of responsible actions within the international system.⁵¹ The WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies—largely supported by the United States—represents this new direction in diplomacy, especially as it concerns environmental and biodiversity protection (refer to "Making Peace with Nature" in the "Secretary-General's address at Columbia University: 'The State of the Planet'"⁵²). This agreement specifically bans subsidies for illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, as well as fishing over depleted stocks or in unregulated high seas. On the other side, FTAs are increasingly important tools for trade diplomacy aimed at sustainable

development, especially as governments adopt unilateral measures like supply chain due diligence or carbon border adjustments. Examples include the EU Regulation on Deforestation-free Products⁵³ and the US FOREST Act, both of which require businesses exporting certain commodities to these markets to prove their goods are deforestation-free and legally produced.⁵⁴ This necessitates mandatory due diligence, including precise geolocation and risk assessment. FTAs are appealing because they are generally more straightforward to agree upon and implement than multilateral or bilateral agreements. Nevertheless, although such unilateral sustainability requirements can sometimes be more effective than those found in FTAs, their impact depends heavily on leveraging market size. These policies, however, carry greater risks for international partners and businesses—particularly those from the least developed countries—who may face unfair disadvantages without sufficient consideration.

Notes

- 1 See Cobden, R. (1868). *The political writings of Richard Cobden* (Vols. 1–2). William Ridgway. Cobden, R. (1870). *Speeches on questions of public policy* (Vols. 1–2; Ed. J. Bright & J. E. T. Rogers). Macmillan and Co.
- 2 See Schumpeter, J. A. (1919/1951). The sociology of imperialism. In P. M. Sweezy (Ed.), *Imperialism and social classes* (Trans. H. Norden; pp. 1–130). Augustus M. Kelley, Inc.
- 3 The GATT went into effect in 1948 and was superseded by the World Trade Organization in 1995.
- 4 See for example: Ruggie, J. G. (1993). Territoriality and beyond: Problematising modernity in international relations. *International Organization*, 47(1), 139–174.
- 5 See WTO Accessions 2019 Annual Report by the Director-General. WT/ACC/36; WT/GC/207
- 6 See WT/L/508 and WT/L/508/Add. 1
- 7 See European Communities Conditions for the Granting of Tariff Preferences to Developing Countries, WT/DS246/AB/R (April 7, 2004)
- 8 The trade, aid and political agreement signed in Cotonou, Benin, in June 2000 between the 77 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States and the European Commission has set ambitious goals. The Agreement foresees Economic Partnership Agreements that will set up an entirely new framework for trade and investment flows between the EU and contracting ACP States. Under the Cotonou Agreement, trade preferences were granted unilaterally by the European Union. The rules of origin stipulated the conditions under which this preferential access was to be enjoyed by the beneficiary countries. For more insights, see https://taxation-customs.ec.europa.eu/countries-africa-caribbean-and-pacific-acp_en
- 9 The EBA scheme removes tariffs and quotas for all imports of goods (except arms and ammunition), coming into the EU from LDCs; see <https://trade.ec.europa.eu/access-to-markets/en/content/everything-arms-eba>
- 10 The scheme of preference, AGOA, provides eligible sub-Saharan African countries with duty-free access to the US market for over 1'800 products, in addition to the more than 5'000 products that are eligible for duty-free access under the

- Generalized System of Preferences program <https://ustr.gov/issue-areas/trade-development/preference-programs/african-growth-and-opportunity-act-agoa>
- 11 The CBI was launched in 1983 and was intended to facilitate the development of stable Caribbean Basin economies by providing beneficiary countries with duty-free access to the U.S. market for most goods. For more details, see <https://ustr.gov/issue-areas/trade-development/preference-programs/caribbean-basin-initiative-cbi>
 - 12 The Group includes eight Members, three least developed countries which recently acceded to the WTO, Afghanistan, Liberia, Yemen, and five acceding least developed countries, Comoros, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia, South Sudan, and Timor-Leste.
 - 13 The list of fragile and conflict-affected situations is released annually by the World Bank and aims to inform strategic and operational decision-making within the multilateral institution www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/classification-of-fragile-and-conflict-affected-situations
 - 14 The 2025 list of fragile and conflict-affected states is available here www.imf.org/en/-/media/files/publications/pp/2023/english/ppea2023010-s002.pdf
 - 15 The 2025 OECD report analyses the state of fragility in 2025, how it shapes global structural trends, current responses to it, and how it is perceived and tackled by the people most exposed to its impact. The publication can be downloaded here www.oecd.org/en/publications/2025/02/states-of-fragility-2025_c9080496.html
 - 16 *The fragile state index*. <https://fragilestatesindex.org/>
 - 17 Research resources are available here: www.adb.org/publications/fragile-conflict-affected-sids-approach-summary
 - 18 See <https://carleton.ca/cifp/failed-fragile-states/country-ranking-table/>, and <https://carleton.ca/cifp/failed-fragile-states/data-and-methodology/>
 - 19 The 2011 world development report looks across disciplines and experiences drawn from around the world to offer some ideas and practical recommendations on how to move beyond conflict and fragility and secure development. See <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/806531468161369474/world-development-report-2011-conflict-security-and-development-overview>
 - 20 See https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tdr2007_en.pdf
 - 21 The United Nations highlighted the need to set new approaches for establishing a lasting peace. In particular, trade can help prevent conflict and stabilize post-conflict areas. For instance, the report prepared by the United Nations Commission for Africa looks at how the AfCFTA can help with the “Triple Nexus” the Humanitarian, Development, and Peace (HDP) Nexus by promoting trade and economic integration for sustainable development, see [www.uneca.org/can-the-african-continental-free-trade-area-be-a-catalyst-for-the-triple-nexus-of-humanitarian%2C, The WTO also discussed the potential benefits of the AfCFTA in securing peace and security in the African continent](http://www.uneca.org/can-the-african-continental-free-trade-area-be-a-catalyst-for-the-triple-nexus-of-humanitarian%2C-The-WTO-also-discussed-the-potential-benefits-of-the-AfCFTA-in-securing-peace-and-security-in-the-African-continent).
See also- www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/pathways_sustainable_tfp_ch09_e.pdf
 - 22 See www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topics/policy-sub-issues/trade-and-environmental-sustainability/Policy-Perspectives-OECD-work-on-regional-trade-agreements-and-the-environment.pdf
 - 23 See <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/285677?ln=en&cv=pdf>
 - 24 For more insights about Aid for Trade programs, see www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/a4tatglance2024_e.pdf

- 25 See www.unwomen.org/en/articles/explainer/the-beijing-declaration-and-platform-for-action-at-30-and-why-that-matters-for-gender-equality#:~:text=The%20Beijing%20Declaration%20and%20Platform%20for%20Action%20is%20the%20world's,talk%2C%20as%20its%20name%20explains
- 26 Debré, M. J. (2021). The dark side of regionalism: How regional organizations help authoritarian regimes to boost survival. *Democratization*, 28(2), 394–413. www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13510347.2020.1823970. See also Spandler, K., & Söderbaum, F. (2023). Populist (de)legitimation of international organisations. *International Affairs*, 99(3), 1023–1041. <https://academic.oup.com/ia/article/99/3/1023/7147399>
- For critical views, see Fawcett, L. (2025). The changing regional faces of peace: Toward a new multilateralism? *Contemporary Security Policy*, 46(2), 372–401. www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13523260.2025.2460130#abstract
- 27 See WT/MIN(24)/36
- 28 Annex 2, Dispute Settlement Understanding www.wto.org/english/res_e/publications_e/ai17_e/dsu_e.htm
- 29 Staff Working Paper ERSD-2012-16. *Is there reciprocity in preferential trade agreements on services?* World Trade Organization, Economic Research and Statistics Division. www.wto.org/english/res_e/reser_e/ersd201216_e.pdf
- 30 See the Preferential Trade Arrangement database <https://ptadb.wto.org/?lang=1>
- 31 Ministerial Decision of 7 December 2013, see WT/MIN(13)/44, WT/L/919
- 32 WTO Agreement on Rules of Origin: www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/ro_e.htm
- 33 Trade-Related Climate Measures, Thematic Discussion, 10 October 2024, see JOB/TE/89/Rev.1
- 34 See www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights
- 35 Singapore WTO Ministerial 1996: Ministerial Declaration. WT/MIN(96)/DEC
- 36 Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. The legal text of the Agreement is available here www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/sps_e/spsagr_e.htm
- 37 Doha WTO Ministerial 2001: TRIPS. The legal text is available here WT/MIN(01)/DEC/2
- 38 See the Declaration www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/womenandtrade_e/buenosaires_declaration_e.htm
- 39 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT 1947). www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/gatt47_e.htm
- 40 WT/MIN(05)/DEC. 22 December 2005 Doha Work Programme.
- 41 ARTICLE XXI, security exceptions. www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/gatt_ai_e/art21_e.pdf
- 42 Doha WTO Ministerial 2001: Ministerial Declaration. WT/MIN(01)/DEC/1
- 43 See for instance *The right to food in the context of international trade law and policy*. <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n20/191/75/pdf/n2019175.pdf?OpenElement>
- 44 The Declaration is available here www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/ILO_1998_Declaration_EN.pdf

The objective of the Declaration is to reconcile the desire to stimulate national efforts to ensure that social progress follows policies of economic progress and the need to respect the diversity of circumstances, possibilities and preferences of individual countries. The multilateral agreement states, more importantly, that labour standards should not be used for protectionist trade purposes, and that nothing in this Declaration and its follow-up shall be invoked or otherwise used for such purpose.

- 45 See also Ibrahim, A. M. (2013). International trade and human rights: An unfinished debate. *German Law Journal*, 14(1), 321–337.
- 46 The countries included are: The ACP group was founded in 1975 with the signing of the Georgetown Agreement. The ACP group is composed of the following countries: Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Cook Islands, Cote d' Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, East Timor, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Micronesia, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, Niger, Nigeria, Niue Palau, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, St Kitts and Namor, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Uganda, Vanuatu, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Please note that Cuba is a member of the ACP Group but is not a signatory to the Cotonou agreement.
- 47 See Cotonou Agreement (note 1), Article 9. Article 9(3) makes good governance a fundamental element of the Agreement and any breach will attract the measures stipulated in Article 97.
- 48 See the EU Special Report 17/2025: www.eca.europa.eu/en/publications/sr-2025-17
- 49 For more insights on WTO Accession of fragile and conflict-affected countries, see www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/pathways_sustainable_tfp_ch01_e.pdf, and Iraq Back on Track: The Case for Expediting WTO Accession of “Fragile and Conflict Affected” (FCA) Countries: <https://scholarship.law.unc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2120&context=ncilj>
- 50 Somali's Working Party and the negotiations to the WTO www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/acc_e/a1_somalia_e.htm
- 51 See the remarks from question-and-answer Session, “Transformational Diplomacy” Secretary Condoleezza Rice, Georgetown University Washington, DC, January 18, 2006: <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/59306.htm>
- 52 António Guterres in the speech at the Columbia University remarks: “Making peace with nature is the defining task of the 21st century. It must be the top, top priority for everyone, everywhere.” www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statements/2020-12-02/secretary-generals-address-columbia-university-the-state-of-the-planet-scroll-down-for-language-versions
- 53 The new Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 on deforestation-free products https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/forests/deforestation/regulation-deforestation-free-products_en#:~:text=as%20forest%20degradation-,Background,the%20EUDR%20enters%20into%20application
- 54 S.3371-FOREST Act of 2023, 118th Congress (2023–2024) www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/3371/text



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Part 3

Exploring Innovative Approaches to Business Responsibility in Contemporary Societies



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8 Is Business Responsible for Peace and Democracy?

8.1 Peace, Business, and Democracy: Reflecting on the Outcomes

New opportunities and incentives have prepared businesses to become politically involved in contemporary societies. The perceptions and meanings of peace, democracy, and human rights developed by businesses are the product of complex social, political, and economic relationships. In this book, I shed light on the dynamics at the core of these unstable and complex relationships and show that the role of business in peace and democratic processes concerns ideological questions—Can business become responsible for peace and democracy?—that involve the public at large and require the business community to have an effective voice. However, the idea of promoting peace and democracy through business practices may be exposed to a twofold risk of instrumentalisation and commodification. Against this background, the overall discussion in this book seeks to contribute credible and accessible concepts for analysing difficult issues in business. It wider contributes to the debate in business and society research, in particular to B4P, PCSR, and BHR.

First, it provides new insights on the political role of business by applying a management lens to democracy-building (see Chapters 3 and 4). Political science theories of democratisation have been integrated into the PCSR debate on the growing role of corporations as global governance actors. By discussing democracy-building as a management practice, this analysis acknowledges and expands on past research in business ethics and management concerning the merits of the democratisation of corporate governance and organisational and workplace democracy. Nevertheless, the internal and external impact of democracy-building activities outlined in this theoretical framework contributes to reinforcing the idea in PCSR research of businesses as “multi-objective organisations.”

Second, insights in this book shed light on the “antagonism” between MNCs and SMEs in global governance. While large firms, especially

Western MNCs, are more likely to have greater reason to affect policy due to diverse and complex interests and their large economic stake, SMEs more likely have a strong interest in peace than MNCs. By prioritising the perspective of small enterprises, the findings in the two case studies show that SMEs have the closest links to local communities, providing subsistence and a specialised understanding of local context and have a greater interest in democracy-building than non-local actors because they are both more vulnerable to and more exposed to conflict risks (see Chapter 5). Instead, MNC became a term of abuse in leftist circles in a post-colonial country such as Zimbabwe (see Chapter 6). Broadly, qualitative findings in Chapter 5 not only substantiate the social notion of SMEs in the context of fragility and conflict, but also expand on insights relating to their role and incentives to building human rights and democracy.

Third, findings in this book contribute to outlining a nuanced understanding of peace (refer to Chapters 1 and 5–7). While B4P research has broadly emphasised the dichotomy between negative and positive peace, I outlined a much wider range of concepts belong to the notion of peace. For instance, the findings in the WTO case study attempt to achieve a more comprehensive view of peace by first considering what subjects it should include (e.g. including ideas of trade, commerce, stability, and security). As we have seen, political, economic, cultural, and social relationships are an integral part of the study of peace. The subject of peace in this book reflects the complexity of these relationships and integrates notions of security, both personal and national, values of democracy and human rights (see Chapters 4 and 6). In Chapter 6, notions of peace acquire a psychological, geopolitical, and political dimension, this chapter contributes to the overall aim of the thesis by expanding on the idea that peace and democracy entail values of human rights and self-determination (see “equi-primordial” or “co-original” in Habermas, 1998¹).

Fourth, in this book I address a central question about which global governance role should business take in relation to nation-states and international institutions such as the United Nations. By providing insights on the role of business in less developed countries that support peacebuilding efforts (see Chapter 7), I thus provide an account for further exploration of global corporate governance standards and the moral problems that corporations face when they operate in developing countries.

Fifth, this book contributes to delineating the context of peace, business, and democracy. Empirical analyses on B4P have focused on exploring the role of business primarily in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. The findings provide new insights on the role of business in Myanmar (see Chapter 5), and in a context of high political and institutional instability such as the mining sector in Zimbabwe (see Chapter 6). The political element, which emerged in the qualitative investigations of SMEs and

employees in the mining industry, poses new provocative questions on B4P, PCSR, and BHR research regarding the factors that influence the context of peace and democracy-building. In general, the findings also highlight a three-dimensional context that applies to the peace, business, and democracy framework. This context is linked on the one hand to the sphere of employees and the working environment and, on the other hand, relates to public and society at large. It also relates to multilateral agreements and institutions, such as the WTO. In Chapter 7, the element of multilateralism has emerged as facilitating the cooperation among nation states to peaceful negotiations and diplomacy, it also referred to as the “rules-based international order” or “rules-based multilateralism,” which shapes definitions and perception of peace and democratic values.

8.1.1 What Matters in Management Theories About Peace and Democracy?

The core contribution made by this book is to explore peace- and democracy-building from a business perspective. Defining business responsibilities in peace- and democracy-building has, however, become increasingly difficult—not least, as we discuss throughout the study, because of the constantly changing character of peace and democracy in both theory and practice. In order to address this challenge, this study brings together research from diverse domains of B4P, PCSR, and BHR scholarship with a view to establishing a certain degree of consensus about the instrumental mechanisms through which business activity can foster peace, democracy, and human rights.

First, workplace democracy results in a number of challenges for PCSR. Business has the managerial authority to facilitate beneficial cooperation with employees with different aims, and thereby political impact (see Chapter 4). However, the analysis in the Zimbabwe case has also indicated that questions of power, justice, and legitimacy underpin workplace democracy (see Chapter 6). A further implication on workplace democracy is posited by the size and vulnerability of business. While SMEs are better positioned to run according to democratic values in specific contexts (see the Myanmar Case in Chapter 5), the general proposition in workplace democracy entails that only large and robust corporations have the political legitimacy to sustain a transition to democratic governance. The principle of “too big to fail” commonly used in workplace democracy theories is denied by the employee sensemaking analysis in Chapter 6. While this becomes particularly relevant for effectively addressing issues in PCSR and for shifting the focus from a business-centric perspective to an individual-employee level, it also demonstrates that the perspective of small businesses has been largely neglected.

Second, while B4P identifies several peace-enhancing activities, it paradoxically highlights the uncertainty with which specific management practices can sustain peacebuilding efforts. Findings delineate a number of managerial directives towards peace and democracy, and, in turn, amplify the spectrum of peace- and democracy-building activities by business (refer to Chapters 2–5). The focus on managerial directives and manager-worker relationships makes a case for B4P to better understand the ability of business in providing public goods. Since the promotion of public goods is desirable in itself, adopting any conception of business that would achieve this end would also partially solve concerns surrounding the legitimacy of managerial directives towards peace and democracy.

Third, the inclusion of human rights in the analysis of the unstable relationship between peace, business, and democracy, pertains to an important political question with implications for PCSR, B4P, and BHR research. Findings have revealed that human rights may be understood as a standard of justice capable of conferring political legitimacy on, *inter alia*, political acts, movements, and political orders. The degree to which social conflicts are understood in human rights terms has raised an interesting empirical question in this thesis. It is also a question on which B4P, PCSR, and BHR share common ground: considering human rights as a standard of justice and giving positive or negative sanctions to existing social orders clearly shows how human rights can serve as focal points of political activity. For B4P, including human rights in business and peace research requires a rethinking of the concept of peace. Such reconceptualisation could potentially build on an existing internal movement in B4P. However, another possibility could involve building on existing empirical work connected to the role of human rights and justice considerations more broadly in peacebuilding.

Fourth, the study aims to make the broad fields of B4P and BHR more inclusive, by calling attention to the partial character of their understanding of the varied and fluctuating motives, incentives, and disincentives for businesses to engage in developmental efforts (see Chapters 4–6). Issues raised include how businesses balance tensions between human rights and other corporate goals, such as profitability or managing the political economy, and whether the differences in practice are best described in terms of geography (Western countries vs. fragile and conflict-affected settings) or other factors. While Chapter 6 maps out the terrain for a joint research agenda for scholars from both fields, the findings call for a more in-depth empirical analysis that, for instance, compares the “peacebuilding” and “human rights” performances of Western and non-Western businesses. The present inquiry produced rich empirical insights about the interface between BHR and B4P, which can assist us in theory building by expanding on the conceptual relationship between peace and human rights, as well as further considering an empirical question which remains largely unexamined in B4P about the

disjunction between justice and peace (see, e.g. theory building from case studies by Eisenhardt and Graebner).² In this book, I discuss that the idea of justice as a primary political responsibility in a democratic society has consequences for major political principles, as well as institutional structures of social cooperation that indirectly regulate the operations of business in society (see Chapter 4). As a result, the attempt to explore the background of justice across B4P, PCSR, and BHR may ultimately further underline the multidisciplinary nature of these academic fields and contribute to blurring the boundaries between them (see “Pluralism in PCSR” in Mäkinen & Kourula, 2012³).

Fifth, research on peace through trade argues that the institution of business may be able to contribute to sustainable peace—I previously specified that the definition of sustainable peace includes the establishment of democratic values, such as human rights—by creating economic development where poverty is a critical issue. While this assumption may be valid, in this book I have explained that many questions are still unexplored, including: How does trade promote peace? Businesses operating in LDC markets where poverty is pervasive are attempting to grapple with the negative impacts that poverty have on them (see Chapters 6 and 7). MNCs, for instance, often rely on employees living in poverty to perform roles in their value chains even though their ability to participate in formal commercial activities is suppressed by poverty.⁴ There are miners that sell their work and are may be displaced by large corporations that have acquired the land, wholesalers that act as intermediaries for suppliers, distributors of these goods in remote villages, employees in factories in many industry sectors, and customers. This book provides clarity about what we mean when we talk about trade and its impact on peace and human rights from a management lens. Establishing conceptual clarity in this area can allow us to consider in B4P and BHR research measurement strategies and consequently any empirical relationships between trade, peace and human rights. At the same time, it remains important not to misidentify or to elide peace and human rights. It is equally important to show how, why, and to what degree the peace and human rights are comparable, focusing on the direction, magnitude, and significance of the relationship with business. This empirical exercise becomes crucial for understanding the political challenge in trade policies of progressing peace and human rights to be closer to their legal ideal.⁵

Furthermore, B4P, PCSR, and BHR theories would benefit from extensively including the concept of poverty in their theorisation. As characterised by Sen (1999),⁶ poverty is not only about a lack of income, which sometimes is also referred to as consumption incapacity, but rather a condition in which a person is considered incapable of achieving, by herself, a basic level of capability, thus, people living in poverty who participate in business value chains may be dehydrated, malnourished, undereducated, fearful of violence,

and/or deprived of capital to make the necessary investments into assets required to efficiently perform their role in a value chain. Sen's understanding of poverty brings about intrapersonal evaluations of one's state of affairs based on multidimensional sources of deprivation.⁷ According to this view, business has a bivalent role: it can alleviate poverty, for instance, by including marginalised people in business cycles (refer to the Myanmar case study and the WTO case study), meanwhile, it can contribute to deepening poverty, increased income disparity, reinforcing social conflicts, environmental degradation and climate change, and creating precarious jobs (refer to the Zimbabwe case study). In practice, this should encourage B4P, PCSR, and BHR researchers to not only focus on the superficial symptoms of poverty but also explore how business can contribute to change unfair basic institutions, social norms and habits to sustainably reduce levels of deprivation in society. This is especially relevant for minority groups living in poverty and/or nation states afflicted by fragility and conflict, whose socially inferior positions are very prominent and who suffer from intersecting injustices.

The insights arrived at here emphasise the role of businesses as political institutions (refer to Chapters 3–6), whose responsibilities necessarily have a political dimension. While this may be critical for recent research in B4P, PCSR, and BHR, as well as for exploring how to build bridges between these academic disciplines, the findings also point to the broader need for businesses to embrace a more political understanding of their peace, democracy, and human-rights responsibility. These responsibilities cannot be restricted to the private conduct of the businesses in question and require minimum standards to serve as a floor for all companies. Insights presented in this book can be seen as a first attempt to move in this direction and may encourage scholars in these fields to expand their research in relation to public perceptions concerning the need for improved corporate accountability. This, in turn, could help actively influence and shape the discussion about what laws on business responsibility should ultimately look like.

8.1.2 Managers in Contemporary Societies

The notion of a crisis as a “critical moment” is interpreted in this book in terms of a period of extreme uncertainty which may force business to make decisions about exit strategies. In a globalised world, business managers seek to balance competing requirements, including reducing labour costs, generating profits, managing reputational risks, and filling political voids. Collective tragedies, such as the recent Myanmar coup and the collapse of a gold mine in Zimbabwe, force managers to redefine the boundaries of these contrasting interests and to re-think their roles and responsibilities, especially when they are operating in fragile and conflict-affected settings (for expanded views on the responsibility of managers in conflict zones see

also “15 Actions for Businesses Operating in Conflict Zones”).⁸ The book highlights that managers generally have three responses to addressing “crises” related to peace, democracy, and human rights: (1) remaining passive, (2) reacting positively/proactively, and (3) shaping public policy. In the first case, managers adopt a passive stance towards peace, democracy, and human rights: while they may show a certain interest in these values, they make no attempt to assume a leadership role in implementing them. A positive/proactive response (see Chapter 4), by contrast, involves integrating peace, democratic objectives, and human rights into daily business processes and operations (see also Chapters 5–7). In this way, managers demonstrate their personal values through the exercise of managerial discretion; they feel that their values are essential and a powerful driver of ethics and standards. Finally, business managers who strive to shape public policy on peace, democracy, and human rights develop relevant corporate political strategies with a view to achieving specific political objectives by challenging the status quo of governmental institutions (see Chapters 3 and 4). This also had as a result that many of the managers who participated in this study were viewed as external promoters of a “political” agenda in which they truly believed (see Chapter 5).

Business in fragile and conflict-affected settings clearly has a societal impact, whether for good or for ill. However, the precise meaning and relevance of this effect is still unclear. The study at the core of this book thus seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate about how managers can consciously create and sustain a culture that values moral integrity while benefiting both business and society. While this study’s aspirations may sound lofty, it is thoroughly grounded in cross-boundary research that is accessible to both scholars and business practitioners. From this perspective, it provides insights into an incomplete patchwork that frequently varies from country to country and industry to industry concerning the growing recognition of the influence wielded by business managers. It underscores that businesses need not only to build “geopolitical expertise” but also to train managers who can improve their ability to interpret and navigate the intersection between geopolitics and business. This would include, for instance, investigating the geopolitical impact (see the Box in Chapter 3) of achieving sustainable-development goals, and addressing cross-national diversity, equity and inclusion quests, such as the integration of refugees and migrant workers.

It is of particular importance that SME managers in fragile and conflict-affected settings who are confronted with increasingly unstable and volatile socio-economic contexts involving poor legal systems, arbitrary governmental policies, and inefficient regulation develop a set of key diversified competences that will enable them to profitably lead their businesses and adapt themselves to a set of challenges—political,

economic, and social—that they are not always adequately prepared to face. The question is thus: How can managers fulfil such responsibilities, or even perceive their existence? The insights gleaned in this study are intended to answer these questions, arguing that SME managers need to show strong leadership if values of peace, democracy, and human rights are to be promoted throughout the organisation and in local communities (see Chapters 4 and 5). The emphasis here is less on formalised managerial competencies and more on the motivational position of managers operating in fragile and conflict-affected settings. In this vein, it emerged that successful managers have responsibility not merely for a group of stakeholders, but for a human community, which shows that the social contribution made by managers is critical for securing peace and fostering harmony at the community level (see Chapters 3 and 4).

While the aspirational elements of managerial engagement in peace- and democracy-building continue to expand, this commitment has had little positive impact in those conflict-affected zones where it is most needed. The primary dilemma for most businesses lies in the fact that the most peace-positive business strategy in a region with institutional instability and conflict would often be simply to withdraw. At the same time, few businesses, especially SMEs, would consider that a viable business strategy. The principle of “do no harm” is also popular when putting in place conflict-sensitive business practices, but such guidance is insufficient in settings where business ecosystems must harm at least *some* people in order to operate. What is more, the literature on responsible global supply-chain management has failed to think carefully about local businesses as private regulators in global supply chains, focusing instead on large brands and retailers, despite the fact that GVCs not only cross territorial borders, but also transcend the boundaries of any particular business. While it is hoped that the present study may contribute to increasing awareness about the challenges faced by local small businesses, criticisms can be made concerning the problem of how to link the political dimension to peace—that is, how to integrate principles of democracy-building into GVCs. Although the study’s findings underscore that managers in fragile and conflict-affected settings often regard peace and democracy as intertwined aspirations, efforts are still needed to overcome much scepticism about managerial interests in pursuing democracy objectives. Further critical assessments of business responsibility for peace- and democracy-building processes can be promoted within, for instance, multi-stakeholder initiatives, such as the Business for Peace Network in the UNGC.⁹ In this context, the book’s findings may contribute to tackling new issues in specific areas, as well as calling attention to the value of personnel training, corporate culture, and codes of conduct as possible means to exercise a positive peace- and

democracy-oriented influence along supply chains. At the same time, an increasing number of private organisations and networks that promote a “development” business agenda also contain formal and informal components directed towards promoting business responsibility in fragile and conflict-affected settings. For example, although the Business and Human Rights Platform, encompassing both multilateral organisations, like the UN, and NGOs and activists groups, is more commonly associated with “naming and shaming” businesses, the insights presented in this book may also encourage the promotion of a “social good” mandate for business and calls to action to promote responsible economic growth—in relation to peace, democracy, and human rights—with the support of various business and human-rights bodies. A recent Deloitte study found that 93% of business leaders view companies as stewards of society. Additionally, 95% plan to invest more in social responsibility initiatives, with 59% allocating 1–5% of their revenues to such programmes.¹⁰ As demonstrated in the three case studies and in Chapter 4, comprehending the managerial motivations and leadership engagement in “social good” initiatives remains a complex undertaking. Despite the responsibilities of businesses may vary between organisations, their overarching objective aligns with promoting positive outcomes (e.g. peace and democracy) through adherence to the triple bottom line. This concept encourages managers to evaluate social and environmental effects alongside financial performance, rather than focusing exclusively on profit generation or the traditional “bottom line.” Applying the triple bottom line to managerial decision-making along profit, people and the planet, it determines any positive social impacts on peace and democracy to which business might be contributing (refer to Table 8.1). Managers can integrate peace and democratic policies into every facet of their business operations—including supply chains, business partners, and renewable energy usage—to generate profits by contributing to the “peace dividend,” in the form of higher long-run levels of capacity output. In 2023, the impact of violence on the global economy amounted to \$19.1 trillion. This is equivalent to 13.5% of global GDP (see Global Peace Index 2024, Institute for Economics & Peace). The economic impact of violence encompasses the combined effects of direct costs, such as those associated with the cost of violence to the victim, the perpetrator, and the government (e.g. law enforcement, the military, and medical care), and indirect costs, such as lost productivity and physical and physiological trauma to the victim. It also includes the multiplier effect, which consists of additional expenditure that improves the wider domestic economy, for instance, the additional financial gains that would result from investing in business development or education. When a nation state avoids the economic impact of violence, it realises a peace dividend—see the formula below.

Peace Dividend Formula

$$(\text{Economic Impact of Violence}) = [\text{direct cost (military expenses} \times \text{medical aid} \times \text{government expenditure}) + \text{indirect cost (productivity losses} \times \text{psychological costs of war)} + \text{multiplier effect (additional economical benefits)}]$$

$$\rightarrow \text{Peace Dividend} \neq \text{Economic Impact of Violence}$$

It would then follow that forms of international cooperation that succeeded in reducing tensions, and thus in lowering military spending, create a long-term economic benefit: “the ultimate peace dividend is the improvement in both quantifiable and non-quantifiable living standards that result from the alternative utilisation of military resources.”¹¹ With the end of a civil war and its major consequences in terms of the economic, social and human impact, the peace dividend in the political field results in pressure being exerted on the country’s opening up to democracy. These investments increasingly raised with the improvements of international security and the end of the Cold War and the more recent initiatives aimed at achieving a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. In other post-conflict situations, such as in Angola, investment in peace has positively impacted the employment rate, particularly in rural areas, naturally assuming the return of the populations or the social reintegration of the military, a greater agricultural production and improved access to social services (e.g. health and education).¹² The second pillar of the triple bottom line approach centres on managerial decision-making around people and the community. I decide here to examine how entrepreneurship initiatives become a powerful source of innovative solutions to society’s most intractable challenges related to peace and democracy, such as functional illiteracy and social injustice. Communities support through entrepreneurship shapes the entrepreneurial process, with communities may be involved in collective, group-based decision-making to align the ventures’ mission and help secure community support by generating a sense of ownership among the community members. Conversely, establishing formal partnerships between groups like New Zealand’s indigenous Māori community and international corporations such as Japan’s Nippon Suisan Kaisha (Nissui) can present distinct challenges. The Māori and Nissui formed an international joint venture through their shared ownership of Sealord Group Ltd., with Māori tribes collectively holding 50% of Sealord via a unified partnership, and the Japanese multinational company owning the other half. This collaboration highlights the necessity

for both parties to fully commit to the alliance and to each other—both in delivering high-quality products and in enhancing the well-being and opportunities available to the Māori minority.¹³ From a management research angle, analysing collaborations between foreign multinationals and local indigenous communities offers valuable insights into managerial decision-making and the nature of social relationships. The sociologist Granovetter in *The Strength of Weak Ties* emphasises the role of social networks in personal and professional spheres, measuring the strength of these connections by time spent, emotional depth, mutual trust, and reciprocal support.¹⁴ Understanding network dynamics provides a useful perspective on broader issues like social mobility, community organisation, and political structures. In the context of the Nippon Suisan Kaisha and Māori partnership, this network-based analysis reveals that New Zealand's commitment to democracy extends beyond ideals, ensuring that the rights of minorities like the Māori are upheld rather than overridden by majority interests, as reflected in legislation like the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975.¹⁵ Building on this, communities can be actively involved in the design and development of entrepreneurial ventures, thereby co-creating impact with managers (see the health crises during the COVID-19 pandemic). Community members can also be included in framing and designing social entrepreneurial ventures, which may enhance legitimacy and their ability to serve the social cause. However, entrepreneurs often face challenges of resource scarcity at the early stages of venture creation, which can be overcome in part by involving community members as volunteers and promoting long-term value with the enforcement of new business models that aim to cope with the social challenges of the SDGs (e.g. to strengthen maternal health, to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, to ensure environmental sustainability, and to develop global cooperation for development).¹⁶ Looking then at climate-change policies, for managers, climate-related risks can be understood in two general fields—physical risks and transition risks. Physical risks are associated with increased likelihood and severity of extreme weather events, sea-level rise, expansion and exacerbation of water stress, ecosystem change and biodiversity loss, while transition risks instead denote those corporate risks which are associated with regulatory, economic and societal changes undertaken to try and limit global warming, primarily through efforts to decarbonise economic and social activity. Corporate transition risks accordingly include the impact of regulation to stem emissions, shifts in market preferences and the impact of new technologies, to offer three examples. These transition risks, however, are mirrored by a wide range of corporate opportunities that come with decarbonisation, such as resource efficiency and new products and services. Businesses thus are forced to manage and seize an assemblage of physical and transition risks and opportunities. For example, if the target

of limiting warming to 1.5°C will be achieved through economic and societal transformation, global warming will still affect the climate system, exacerbating risks and stresses felt by peoples and companies around the world. Appropriately addressing climate change is one of today's major challenges for business as strategies to limit human-induced global warming and to adapt to the consequences of global climate change require international cooperation with multilateral organisations and NGOs. Laws and regulations can help raise awareness of climate issues among business investors (see Table 8.1) and reinforce democratic institutions by applying a human rights law approach¹⁷ (see Box 5 on COP30 and a Human Rights Approach to Climate-Change). These laws referred to climate legislation, for instance, by the US Securities and Exchange Commission, which issued a revised guidance in 2010 requiring managers to include information on “material risks” related to climate change¹⁸ in their financial reports, including both mitigation and adaptation aspects. And, the UK's Climate Change Act 2008¹⁹ requiring businesses, which are licensed, to undertake statutory functions on behalf of the government, such as infrastructure operators (e.g. airports, ports, and rail network) and some infrastructure-service providers (e.g. water and energy utilities), to submit climate risk assessments and adaptation reports to the government. Finally, voluntary actions by business, however, will make an impact only if strong climate policies are not forthcoming. Lederer (2012)²⁰ points out that voluntary offset markets have essentially operated “in the shadow of public regulation,” generating credits with the expectation that they will also be sold in compliance markets—which is one reason why the Chicago Climate Exchange shut down at the end of 2010, after the US climate legislation failed.

Managers in fact are confronted with institutional and policy reforms which should be addressed outside the economic sphere (see Table 8.1). This suggests an approach at a level much closer to existing practice, taking as given some features of economic institutions. The challenge that managers face is to ensure that the evaluation and guidance remains critical and meaningful. Furthermore, a second main challenge is represented by the demand to provide plausible justification for the role and responsibilities of business in relation to society, with special attention given to the value of pluralism in the context of a globalised economy.²¹

In this book, I have examined the application of a management framework to the study of the interrelationships among peace, business, and democracy. Findings, as we have discussed so far, highlight that businesses often face competing yet equally compelling incentives to support peace and democracy. Even when these values are pursued with genuine intent, advancing them within a business context necessitates further investigation through targeted research questions.

Table 8.1 Applying the triple bottom line to managerial decision-making on peace and democracy

Triple bottom line	Peace	Democracy
	PEACE DIVIDEND (OPENING THE MARKET FOR PEACE)	
PROFIT/ FINANCE	Long-term economic profits from reducing military expenses and allocating financial resources in peacebuilding projects (e.g. education and/or voting system).	Reduce social tensions through the provision of tangible, needed services, create incentives for non-violent behaviour and promoting democratic values (e.g. enforcing human rights policies). Financial resources by business can be devoted to establish a democratic system through free and fair elections. - o Acceleration of economic growth - o Reduced poverty rate - o Macroeconomic stabilisation and inclusive growth
PEOPLE/ COMMUNITY	ENTREPRENEURSHIP Entrepreneurial initiative can create a sense of community and contribute to collective learning, reinforced solidarity, and the ongoing negotiation of values and meanings about peace. - o A community-based approach can be crucial to address the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals²² - o Entrepreneurship is a social, human, financial, cultural, and natural capital	Over time, this fosters confidence in value-based opportunities. Entrepreneurship in communities is crucial for the development of solutions to global democratic challenges , such as health crises. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many businesses were involved in terms of preparedness and emergency response. Some businesses had played a crucial role in this situation because of the nature of their products or services, notably, capacity to produce life-saving products.
	COP30/MULTILATERAL AGREEMENTS ON CLIMATE	

(Continued)

Table 8.1 (Continued)

<i>Triple bottom line</i>	<i>Peace</i>	<i>Democracy</i>
PLANET/ ENVIRONMENT	Managers investing in climate-related policies may reduce the risk of conflicts as of the 90%²³ of the world's refugees originate from countries that are already impacted by the climate emergency. Banks and insurance companies already have in place many processes that can effectively supporting peacebuilding policies (e.g. integration of human rights due diligence into standard practice).²⁴ o Directing capital towards enabling the real economy to shift towards environmental sustainability while fostering societal resilience	New forms of democratic innovation are emerging as participatory climate governance, namely finding new ways to bring the voice and creativity of citizens into political decision making regarding climate policies and climate emergency. For instance, the Irish Climate Action Act (2021) provides the legal framework for citizens to make recommendations on the Act. It forces businesses to achieve a climate-neutral economy by 2050 and mandates a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. More recently, Ireland's 2022 Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss established a powerful public mandate for action which helped secure government support for a National Nature Restoration Plan and, indirectly, for the adoption of the EU Nature Restoration Law.²⁵ The Climate-Related Financial Risk Act, represents a "wake-up call" for MNC which requires certain companies doing business in California to disclose their climate-related financial risks and mitigation strategies every two years. This applies to public and private companies with over \$500 million in annual global revenue. Accordingly, businesses are required to report on their climate-related financial risks, using a framework like the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), outlining the measures they are taking to mitigate and adapt to those risks.²⁶

BOX 5. COP30 and A Human Rights Approach to Climate-Change

The UN COP30 takes place every year, and is the world's only multi-lateral decision-making forum on climate change, where nation-states negotiate climate-change policies and collective actions to address the pressing climate crisis (e.g. limiting the global temperature rise to 1.5° C and supporting vulnerable communities to adapt to the effects of climate change, and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050). COP30 brings together world leaders and negotiators from the member states of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to further global progress, with business leaders, young people, climate scientists, Indigenous Peoples, and civil society sharing insights and best practices to strengthen global, collective and inclusive climate action.

The 1992 UNFCCC, complemented by the 1997 Kyoto-Protocol, acknowledges “that change in the Earth’s climate and its adverse effects are a common concern of humankind” (1st preamble clause) and provides for a common international legal framework in order to stabilise “greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system” (Article 2 UNFCCC). In addition to these uniquely formulated treaty provisions, preexisting rules of international law—for example, rules of international environmental or human rights law as well as secondary rules with regard to State responsibility—frame the legal context of international climate change regulation. Under the human rights law, global warming is discussed as “potentially have implications for the full range of human rights” (Paragraph 20, January 15, 2009, OHCHR report), explicitly, the right to life, right to adequate food, right to health and right to housing as well as the right to self-determination. Additionally, the report emphasises that the effects of climate change will be felt most acutely by vulnerable groups such as women, children and indigenous peoples and that these groups are entitled to special protection in accordance with the principle of equality and non-discrimination (Paragraph 42). However, the UNFCCC does not clarify whether climate change can be qualified as a human rights violation that is legally attributable to nation-states. It stands to question whether contributing to climate change by emitting greenhouse gases—and thus contributing to the harmful consequences of global warming—constitutes a violation of human rights obligations and can be attributed to businesses.

The OHCHR identifies three obstacles to this argument: First, it would be “impossible to disentangle the complex causal relationships linking historical greenhouse gas emissions of a particular country with a specific climate change-related effect, let alone with the range of direct and indirect implications for human rights”; second, global warming would often be only “one of several contributing factors to climate change-related effects”; and third, harmful consequences of global warming would often be “projections about future impacts, whereas human rights violations are normally established after the harm has occurred” (Paragraph 70). However, there is an obligation for international cooperation and assistance in international law that also applies to the context of climate change (Paragraphs 84–85). This international obligation might be derived from Article 1, Paragraph 3, United Nations Charter as well as from Article 2, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Therefore, nation states are—also due to their knowledge on the human rights implications of global warming—obliged to work together and to “take steps through international assistance and co-operation, depending on the availability of resources, to facilitate fulfilment of human rights in other countries” (Paragraph 86).

The Paris Agreement (entered into force on November 4, 2016) is a legally binding multilateral treaty, which represents a durable framework guiding the global effort on climate change and global warming. It aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, including by:

- a. Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognising that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change;
- b. Increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production;
- c. Making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development.

The Agreement marked a turning point for businesses on global warming. Leading businesses such as Unilever, Citi, Natura &Co,

H&M Group, Holcim, GSK, Walmart, IKEA, Nestlé and L'Occitane joined Business for Nature and its partners Capitals Coalition, WBCSD (World Business Council for Sustainable Development) and the International Chamber of Commerce to actively advocate for setting ambitious standards for protecting, restoring, and conserving the environment. Overall, the Agreement creates greater opportunities, but also risks for business. It facilitates the transition from heavy carbon to green energy and lets open to larger markets for low carbon technologies and services (e.g. wind and solar power and zero-carbon electricity).

A proper implementation of the Agreement by businesses is also essential for the achievement of the UN SDGs (13 and 15).

One of the remarkable recent steps forward in international consensus among nation-states has been the adoption in 2015 at a UN General Assembly Summit of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. Its implications for business are also significant, as it maps out the wide range of areas where progress needs to be made globally (e.g. see Box 1 on Globalisation and CSR and Box 2 on the End of the Cold War), insisting that they are all integrated, indivisible, and must be addressed together.

The UN SDGs:

- Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation
- Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

- Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13. **Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts**
- Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15. **Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss**
- Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development

Notes

- 1 Habermas's claim that democracy and human rights are co-original and its implications for his international theory. A central argument in his theory, the co-originality thesis suggests that human rights and democracy are not only both fundamental and mutually supportive, but also 'equi-primordial' and internally related: Habermas, J. (1998). *Between facts and norms: Contributions to a discourse theory of law and democracy* (Trans. W. Rehg). The MIT Press.

For a critical review of Habermas's thesis: Schaffer, J. K. (2015). The co-originality of human rights and democracy in an international order. *International Theory*, 7(1), 96–124. www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-theory/article/cooriginality-of-human-rights-and-democracy-in-an-international-order/0680D78C0C964F680E004DE10D5799EB

- 2 In the paper, the authors states that central to building theory from case studies is replication logic. The theory building process occurs via recursive cycling among the case data, emerging theory, and later, extant literature. Although sometimes seen as "subjective," well-done theory building from cases is surprisingly "objective", because its close adherence to the data keeps researchers "honest". According to this, a major reason for the popularity and relevance of theory building from case studies is that it is one of the best (if not the best) of the bridges from rich qualitative evidence to mainstream deductive research.

The paper is available here [https://josephmahoneyweb.illinois.edu/BADM504_Fall%202019/Eisenhardt%20and%20Graebner%20\(2007\).pdf](https://josephmahoneyweb.illinois.edu/BADM504_Fall%202019/Eisenhardt%20and%20Graebner%20(2007).pdf)

- 3 The authors of this article review three key periods of PCSR literature – classic, instrumental, and new political CSR – and use the Rawlsian conceptualization of division of moral labour within political systems to describe each period's background political theories. They also provide a set of recommendations to develop pluralism in PCSR.

See the full text www.cambridge.org/core/journals/business-ethics-quarterly/article/abs/pluralism-in-political-corporate-social-responsibility/45C8225C05CD19AA3A8926092F181EFF

- 4 Insights about this connections are discussed: Williams, O. F. (2008). *Peace through commerce: Responsible corporate citizenship and the ideals of the United Nations global compact*. University of Notre Dame Press. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvpj74s0
- See also Porter, M. E., & Kramer, M. R. (2006). Strategy and society: The link between competitive advantage and corporate social responsibility. *Harvard Business Review*, 84(12), 78–92. <https://hbr.org/2006/12/strategy-and-society-the-link-between-competitive-advantage-and-corporate-social-responsibility>
- 5 Refer to the UN Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace, adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2016, which stresses that peace is a vital requirement for the promotion and protection of all human rights for all. Furthermore, Art. 1 of the Annex states” Everyone has the right to enjoy peace such that all human rights are promoted and protected and development is fully realized.” The document can be downloaded here: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/858594?v=pdf>
- 6 Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford University Press.
- 7 This refers to a minimum level of nutrition, education and standard of living indicator. For instance the world Bank has developed the Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs), which seek to analyse poverty by involving the poor in a survey. Instead of focusing on statistical information widely found in household surveys (closed question), PPA consultations consider poor peoples’ understanding of their conditions in a collective meeting: [https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/367261468285046345/can-the-poor-influence-policy-participatory-poverty-assessments-in-the-developing-world#:~:text=Search%20button-,Can%20the%20poor%20influence%20policy%20:%20participatory%20poverty,in%20the%20developing%20world%20\(English\)&text=See%20More-,Participatory%20Poverty%20Assessments%20\(PPAs\)%20use%20participatory%20research%20methods%20to%20understand,and%20project%20formulation%20and%20implementation.&text=Document%20also%20available%20in%20:,Spanish](https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/367261468285046345/can-the-poor-influence-policy-participatory-poverty-assessments-in-the-developing-world#:~:text=Search%20button-,Can%20the%20poor%20influence%20policy%20:%20participatory%20poverty,in%20the%20developing%20world%20(English)&text=See%20More-,Participatory%20Poverty%20Assessments%20(PPAs)%20use%20participatory%20research%20methods%20to%20understand,and%20project%20formulation%20and%20implementation.&text=Document%20also%20available%20in%20:,Spanish)
- 8 The UNGC has elaborated 15 actions for business with operations in conflict zones. These are:
 - (1) Conduct enhanced human rights due diligence, including conflict analysis to understand the interaction between company operations and conflict contexts. Then act plan and implement all activities to avoid negative impacts on conflict and maximize positive impacts on the organization, staff and society;
 - (2) align internal strategies, policies and operations with international frameworks – including the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact;
 - (3) ensure sufficient security protection for employees;
 - (4) understand, address and engage key drivers of conflict by working with existing peace operations, programmes and partnerships and supporting innovative ways to address conflict drivers;
 - (5) adopt hiring and workplace policies that cut across ethnic, religious or racial divides;
 - (6) develop policies on corruption and human rights issues;
 - (7) develop a rigorous supply chain management system to assess and monitor if and how suppliers obtain resources and raw materials;
 - (8) employ terms in contractual relationships that commit the other party to not doing business with any supplier participating in, funding or profiting from armed conflict;
 - (9) implement revenue transparency measures to decrease the potential for revenue capture and rent-seeking behavior, as well as the potential financing of armed conflict;
 - (10) undertake due diligence when hiring private or public security services;
 - (11) invest in training for staff around the issues of conflict resolution, consensus

- building and the facilitation of community meetings; (12) provide support to peace negotiations, good governance programmes, special courts and tribunals that support reconciliation within communities; (13) address community grievances and disputes constructively through dialogue and by developing grievance and dispute settlement mechanisms; (14) establish strategic social investment programmes as a component of local stakeholder engagement and consultation, and apply the same rigor in developing social investment strategies as in other aspects of business operations; (15) work in partnership with reputable third parties who hold relevant local expertise and skills, including conflict analysis, mediation and arbitration. See <https://unglobalcompact.org/compactjournal/15-actions-businesses-operating-conflict-zones>
- 9 See <https://unglobalcompact.org/take-action/action/peace>
 - 10 For more insights about the data collection in the study by Deloitte, see www.deloitte.com/global/en/about/story/impact/societal-impact-survey-deloitte-global.html
 - 11 Quoted from Gold, D. (2000). *Could we have done better? A retrospective on the 1990s peace dividend in the United States*. Paper presented at the Council on Foreign Relations Arms Trade Conference, Council on Foreign Relations, June 14. https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/book/markusen/gold.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com
 - 12 Vines, A. (1998). *Peace postponed, Angola since the Lusaka protocol*. Catholic Institute for International Relations.
 - 13 The Māori 50–50 partnership generally refers to a model for co-governance and power-sharing in New Zealand (Aotearoa) between the Crown (government) and the Māori. This concept applies to political and social discussions, and to the business environment (e.g., business partnerships).
 - 14 See Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360–1380. www.jstor.org/stable/2776392?seq=1
- Granovetter, M. (2018). *Getting a job: A study of contacts and careers*. University of Chicago Press.
- 15 The Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975 (as of 13 November 2025) is the founding document of New Zealand. As outlined in its Preamble, the Treaty was signed between representatives of the British Crown and Māori on 6 February 1840. It enabled subsequent migration to New Zealand and the establishment of government by the Crown.

The Preamble sets out the purpose of the Treaty: to protect Māori rights and taonga, keep peace and order, and establish government: www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1975/0114/latest/whole.html

The action plan to implement the Treaty is based on three pillars: (1) *Active protection*. Active protection requires the Crown to conduct itself honourably; use fair processes; and consult fully and, where appropriate, make decisions with people whose interests are to be protected. This principle also requires the Crown to make available EET services to Māori that seek to close inequitable gaps in employment outcomes with non-Māori. (2) *Options*. As a Treaty partner, Māori have the right to choose their social and cultural path. The Government's role is to provide, and properly resource, kaupapa Māori EET services. The Government must ensure that these services are culturally appropriate for Māori. (3) *Partnership*. For this Action Plan, partnership means working with iwi, hapū, whānau and Māori communities to govern, design, deliver and monitor services that seek to improve labour market outcomes for Māori. Māori must co-design services for Māori with the Crown. See <https://www.mbie.govt>.

- nz/business-and-employment/employment-and-skills/employment-strategy/maori-employment-action-plan
- 16 For more insights about a new and reinforced role of entrepreneurs in addressing the SDGs, see Akkus, Y., & Çaliyurt, K. (2022). The role of sustainable entrepreneurship in UN sustainable development goals: The case of TED talks. *Sustainability*, 14(13), 1–17.
 - 17 See the OHCHR. (2009, January 15). *UN Doc A/HRC/10/61 summary*. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/10/61#:~:text=of%20this%20report-,1,this%20broadening%20of%20the%20debate>
 - 18 Climate-related risks are defined by the Commission as these risks which that have materially impacted or are reasonably likely to have a material impact on the registrant, including on its strategy, results of operations, or financial condition. See www.sidley.com/en/insights/newsupdates/2024/03/sec-finalizes-climate-related-disclosure-rules-ushering-in-a-new-era
 - 19 The Climate Change Act 2008 states, “It is the duty of the Secretary of State to ensure that the net UK carbon account for the year 2050 is at least [F1100%] lower than the 1990 baseline.” See www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/contents
 - 20 Lederer, M. (2012). The practice of carbon markets. *Environmental Politics*, 21(4), 640–656.
 - 21 See for instance: Hsieh, N. (2017). The responsibilities and role of business in relation to society: Back to basics? *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 27(2), 293–314. www.cambridge.org/core/journals/business-ethics-quarterly/article/responsibilities-and-role-of-business-in-relation-to-society-back-to-basics/94D4E601E938206978D56B81E8E67432
 - 22 See the overview by the UNGC, “SDGs Explained to Business,” about how businesses – regardless of their industry and size – can contribute to the UN SDGs and can act in a responsible way to include the SDGs in their agenda: <https://unglobalcompact.org/sdgs/about>. See also Box 5 to know more about the SDGs.
 - 23 See <https://unfccc.int/news/conflict-and-climate>
 - 24 UNEP FI works with financial institutions to manage the risks and identify the opportunities linked to climate change. See the report www.unepfi.org/industries/banking/charting-a-new-climate/
 - 25 See additional resource on “Ireland’s Climate Action and Strategy” [www.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/767179/EPRS_BRI\(2024\)767179_EN.pdf](https://www.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/767179/EPRS_BRI(2024)767179_EN.pdf), and www.gov.ie/en/department-of-climate-energy-and-the-environment/publications/climate-action-plan-2021/
 - 26 See the legal text of the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240SB261

9 Searching for New Horizons

9.1 Rethinking Business Responsibility Through the Lens of the Three Hsieh Principles and Social Capitalism

The meaningful impact of management practices on peace and democracy discussed so far can help researchers and practitioners understand the multiple ways in which business can help foster peace and democracy. While we have seen that extensive research has addressed separate investigations of peace and business, business and democracy, and business and human rights, I looked at the complexity of this relationship, which offers an opportunity for further exploration. The qualitative approach that I have adopted allowed us a much deeper examination of this framework and revealed the complexities in terms of framing, meanings, and responsibility. It is hoped that the new insights provided so far will encourage more research, particularly qualitative research, on the extent and nature of this framework. Business looks at the international community which advances certain forms of institutional design to achieve the goals of effective and legitimate governance. However, peace and democracy pathways are dominated by socio-political transformations and fragility; the danger of conflict affects communities for decades and affects social relations, mental health, and prosperity. Peacebuilding efforts often require a domestic counterpart to help govern the country while embarking on the process of democracy-building. This approach, paradoxically, enables certain domestic elites to take power and re-establish authoritarian regimes. In a context of instability, conflict, and crisis, some businesses might have very high ethical values around treatment of employees, high standards of efficiency, and a strong notion of what constitutes morally responsible behaviours. The role of researchers demands perseverance and patience to investigate solutions to peace and democracy. This book is an attempt to open new ways of thinking about a number of challenges inherent to peace, business, and democracy. These challenges encompass uncertainties regarding the role of business in promoting peace and democracy. However, they also present opportunities to introduce

significant innovations, such as developing new research approaches that may be essential for addressing many of the global crises currently faced. It has been extensively noted that citizens' aspirations—including those of businesses—for enhanced general freedoms, increased economic opportunity, and greater respect for human rights contributed to the 2011 Arab Spring, which subsequently resulted in significant and, at times, violent instability across several countries.¹

Future research could investigate the responsibilities of business towards peace and democracy along the three principles delineated by Hsieh in *The Obligations of Transnational Corporations: Rawlsian Justice and the Duty of Assistance* (2004)²: the principle of assistance, the principle of limited scope, and the principle of accountability. The Principle of assistance outlines the circumstances in which businesses are required to support individuals residing in developing economies where they operate. The second principle, the Principle of limited scope, defines the extent and boundaries of such assistance expected from businesses. The third, the Principle of accountability, establishes that businesses must facilitate mechanisms allowing those impacted by corporate activities to challenge decisions related to these obligations. Accordingly, research in this area may first identify the specific conditions that compel business involvement in peace- and democracy-building initiatives. Second, it can articulate the limitations inherent in such assistance. Third, it should propose enforceable mechanisms that empower affected parties to contest breaches concerning peace and democratic standards arising from business operations. Considerations on the three principles are grounded on the Rawl's Account of the Law of Peoples³ that pertain to the inquiry into what obligations, if any, MNCs can have to people living in developing countries. This perspective first ensures that every member of society has their human rights protected; second, it requires a legal system capable of enforcing duties and obligations on everyone within society's territory; and third, it expects those managing the legal system to interpret laws according to a shared concept of justice. Although implementing Hsieh's principles appears more attainable in liberal democracies, it is significantly harder in nondemocratic states or areas experiencing conflict and instability. Usually, aid from stable societies is sent to the governments of countries that are facing difficulties. From this perspective, MNCs are often viewed as inappropriate channels for providing help in fragile or conflict-affected nations like Myanmar and Zimbabwe because they are not accountable to local communities. This concern arises partly from the significant influence MNCs have on decisions affecting workers and nearby residents (refer to the discussion about regionalism and trade agreements in Chapter 7 and Box 1). In addition, geographic distance can weaken a sense of community, possibly hindering peacebuilding (see Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3) and increasing social divides (see Chapter 6). The food industry, in particular,

is highly affected by religious customs—for instance, Hindus do not eat beef due to religious restrictions. Interestingly, eating beef has become a form of political resistance against Hindu fundamentalist groups.⁴ Evidence in fact suggests that restrictions on religious freedom are correlated with higher levels of social instability.⁵ A further example is the assertive business approach taken by dairy companies, who have exploited low European milk prices to expand rapidly into West Africa. Over recent years, these firms have nearly tripled exports to the region, sending milk powder produced by subsidised European farmers to be turned into liquid milk for West Africa's growing middle class. Between 2011 and 2016, EU milk powder exports to West Africa rose from 12'900 metric tons to 36'700 tons, with most going to Senegal, the Ivory Coast, Ghana, and Nigeria (European Commission, Parliamentary question—E-004188/2018). Companies like Danone, Arla, and FrieslandCampina have established processing plants for imported European milk in the region, making it difficult for local farmers to compete.⁶ Although domestic production has never fully met local demand, this “monopolistic” strategy has harmed the local industry. Adama Ibrahim Diallo, president of Burkina Faso's milk producers and mini-processors union, emphasised that “people who live from milk are struggling.”⁷ The situation suggests multinational corporations do not carry a direct duty of assistance; instead, mechanisms to empower affected parties could include meaningful consultations, recognising unions, or involving them in governance and market competition. Rawls notes, “the third guideline for carrying out the duty of assistance is that its aim is to help burdened societies manage their own affairs reasonably and rationally and eventually join the Society of well-ordered Peoples.” The challenge lies in the differing roles not only between MNCs and governments from well-ordered societies but also between MNCs and governments in burdened societies where these businesses operate. Assistance from well-ordered societies typically targets governments. However, as argued earlier, businesses can play a political role in fragile and conflict-affected societies (refer to Part 2 of this book). Given that the duty of assistance should focus on peace and democracy—including human rights—many governments in troubled societies lack accountability, often leaving businesses to fill governmental roles. Because the duty applies to all moral agents, which includes the managers of MNEs (see Lane, 2005),⁸ framing their responsibilities in terms of a duty not to harm avoids having to assume that corporations themselves are moral agents. Lichtenberg (2020) in *Negative Duties, Positive Duties, and the “New Harms”* spells out the normative and moral aspect of the duty not to harm principle, “a central question moral and political philosophers have asked in recent decades is whether well-off people have moral duties to aid those deprived of basic necessities and, if so, how extensive these duties are. . . . Although we have at most limited or imperfect duties to aid people, the argument goes, we have

strict or perfect duties not to harm them.”⁹ Discussing the responsibilities of MNEs and their managers in terms of a duty not to harm illustrates only one way to draw upon ordinary morality to frame the responsibilities of business in relation to society (see Lichtenberg: “no one disputes that people have duties not to harm others; these so-called negative duties are about as well established as any moral duties could be;” see also Hsieh, 2017).¹⁰ In terms of outcomes, for example, comprehensive qualitative data and case studies examining business, government, peace, and democracy are needed to better understand how businesses—alone or with others—can avoid the risk of harm in conflict or post-conflict environments by strengthening background institutions of society (e.g. education and system; democratic institutions; state financial system).

Beyond previously mentioned areas, additional research questions emerge: What challenges arise when implementing peace and democracy within organisations or workplaces? How do peace and democracy affect business leaders? Under what circumstances can businesses be considered actors in support of peace and democratic governance, addressing regulatory gaps for the common good? To begin exploring these questions, I introduce the concept of social capital. Social capital theory discusses that networking relationships provide value to actors (e.g. individuals, organisations, or communities) by allowing them to tap into the resources embedded in such relationships for their benefit. Coleman (1988)¹¹ notes that social capital facilitates the creation of human capital, while Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998)¹² argue that social capital promotes the development of new intellectual capital and that businesses that develop high levels of social capital are more likely to perform better than their competitors. Leanna and Van Buren (1999),¹³ instead, suggest that social capital enables an organisation to be flexible, manage collective action, and develop intellectual capital, which ultimately facilitates the creation of competitive advantage. Social capital theories have an extensive application within various psychological, political, and economic propositions—social capital as individual resource, which provides opportunities from micro-level institutionalised social relationships for an individual (see Coleman, 1990¹⁴); and social capital as “normative entity” or “structural resource” in macro-level social structure and/or culture (see Putnam, 1995, 2000¹⁵; Fukuyama, 1995). In contemporary societies, democratic nation-states and their institutions are consciously designed to plan and implement social capital through investing, for instance, in education and public safety. This approach can be applied at three levels: large-scale groups (like nation states), groups (such as communities), and individuals (e.g. employees). My goal is to develop a thorough understanding of how social capital impacts each of these levels, so I examine the relationship between business and social capital from the perspectives of nations, communities, and employees.¹⁶

Fukuyama, in his IMF working paper *Social Capital and Civil Society*,¹⁷ describes social capital as informal norms that facilitate cooperation among individuals. According to this view, trust, networks, and civil society—often linked with social capital—are actually side effects rather than the core components of social capital. Social capital plays a role in fostering the exchange of innovation between businesses, and concepts like networking, collaboration, and trust build upon this foundation. The effectiveness of open and collaborative innovation is largely attributed to social capital, which is recognised both as a public good and a tool for personal achievement, grounded in reciprocity and active participation.¹⁸ There are undoubtedly various forms, functions, and outcomes associated with social capital. For instance, with regard to regional development, social capital may contribute in bringing cohesion and/or collaboration within a group or across groups (e.g. with reference to entrepreneurship, researchers have attempted to explore the role of social capital in facilitating an entrepreneur's effort in securing individual advantages¹⁹). Managers may develop social capital through a variety of personal, social, and economic relationships with the community, which in turn can be used for the benefit of their organisations. These include the managers' personal and social relationships with suppliers, customers, competitors, trade or employee associations, government's political and bureaucratic institutions, and community organisations and institutions. The personal and social networks developed through relational embeddedness function as conduits for the transmission of information, resources, and opportunities that could be leveraged to a firm's advantage.²⁰ For instance, most of the managerial social capital developed in African economies is relational in nature because it is created as a result of the social relationships and interactions between managers of organisations and external entities. On the one hand, the managerial social capital from networking relationships with top managers of other firms and government officials is characterised by a high level of intimacy, reciprocal services, and emotional intensity (see Granovetter, 1985).²¹ On the other hand, the managerial social capital from networking relationships with a particular community through their leaders requires a more limited amount of time, intimacy, and emotional intensity invested in a relationship (see Granovetter, 1973).²² Similar to their Western counterparts, founders and executives of large multinational corporations frequently occupy positions characterised by a higher proportion of "structural holes," where the individual serves as the primary link among their contacts—essentially acting as a broker within the network. In contrast, managers in China typically experience greater constraints in their professional networks, resulting in fewer brokering relationships relative to those in the West. Notably, the correlation between success and the presence of structural holes is markedly stronger in China. Consequently, social capital in the form of brokerage is

both less prevalent and considerably more valuable in Eastern contexts (see Burt & Burzynska, 2017).²³

Previous discussions have provided valuable insights into how businesses in both Western contexts and fragile environments are simultaneously managing multiple and often overlapping crises. These range from unpredictable supply chains and escalating geopolitical tensions to extreme weather events, regulatory changes, and evolving industrial policies. Due to complex internal interconnections, disruptions that initially impact only a segment of the business can quickly propagate, resulting in significant damage. The capability of businesses to anticipate and manage such crises is referred to as *Business Resilience*. Forbes (October 2025) characterises business resilience as a pre-crisis investment, positioning it as the ability of organisations to survive, adapt successfully, and thrive amid high-impact, low-probability disturbances such as conflict, natural disasters, or terrorist attacks.²⁴ As noted in Chapter 3, resilience should not be viewed solely as an individual trait; rather, it is significantly supported by robust relationships and networks—collectively known as social capital. Psychologist George Vaillant, in *Aging Well* (2002), likens resilient individuals to “a twig with a fresh, green living core: when twisted out of shape, the twig bends but does not break, instead springing back and continuing to grow.”²⁵ Individuals cultivate resilience through various personal and professional interactions, which help recalibrate demands and adjust responses to challenges. Cultivating resilience, however, requires a systemic approach encompassing both strategic and operational perspectives. Resilience manifests as the capacity to withstand adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, and considerable stressors—including family or relationship issues, serious health problems, or workplace and financial pressures. Figuratively, a rock is more resilient than a glass vase. This means an object’s value is more resilient if it can withstand more evaluative change. Research suggests that up to 90% of people will encounter at least one major traumatic event in their lifetime (see Norris & Sloane, 2007).²⁶ This process of adaptation and resistance has proven particularly relevant in the aftermath of events such as the September 11, 2001, attack on the World Trade Center. In that context, the resilience demonstrated by affected businesses has become a defining moment in Western corporate history, underscoring the deep ties between business leadership and the values of democratic civil society. For instance, Sandler O’Neill and Partners—a small banking firm with offices on the 104th floor of Two World Trade Center—faced profound loss during the attack. With critical records destroyed and immense uncertainty prevailing, the firm prioritised the welfare of its employees and their families. Despite psychological trauma and severe financial strain, including the loss of a third of its working capital, Sandler O’Neill and Partners continued to pay the salaries of deceased employees until December 31, 2001, issued bonuses, and extended healthcare benefits

for five years post-attack. Additionally, they established an education fund for children who lost parents and provided psychological counselling for families and surviving employees for five years following the tragedy.²⁷ The idea of business resilience, thus, may be thought-provoking. Normally, the resilience we have in mind is primarily to be construed as a dimension with a specific category of human value. Nevertheless, resilience in the business context is rather a property that is frequently indirectly referred to when it comes to moral oughts. Business' value can change by transforming a bad objective into a good one; the degree of value can change, a valuable business objective can become even better (or less good). A business objective's worth might shift from, for example, an aesthetic (i.e. instrumental) value to a moral value, and the sort of business value can vary from, say, contributing valuable to finally valued.

Delving into this topic becomes even more complex when considering that the relationship between social capital and peace or democracy can be mutual and influenced by numerous other factors. In this context, I propose that businesses engaged in peace- and democracy-building processes can foster social cohesion through the development of horizontal social capital—meaning the growth of trust and civic involvement among similar or diverse groups (such as employees or local communities) after a conflict—and vertical social capital, which refers to interactions between the state, market, and civil society. This dual approach can help address social fragmentation and violent conflict during democratic transitions. Horizontal relationships exist among equals, while vertical ones involve parties with differing power or resources (see Figure 9.1). Management researchers may find new opportunities by studying communities where businesses contribute to economic growth and efficient governance, supported by strong civil engagement—citizens connected by solidarity, integrity, and participation. For example, in biotechnology start-ups, network formation and industry growth are significantly influenced by the development and maintenance of social capital. Businesses that are structurally more constrained cooperate with partners who can be firmly embedded in the historical network structure. Enduring inter-firm ties sustain the structure that facilitates new cooperation.²⁸ Galtung (1996)²⁹ highlights how vertical and horizontal social capital intersect with violence, defined by exclusion, inequality, and indignity (see Chapters 1 and 3). In many fragile, conflict-affected countries, unequal development—both in investment and in access to opportunities—has led to deep social divisions. As we have seen, the “paradox of globalisation” merges markets with values to drive growth, but also increases exclusion and marginalisation, widening the gap between rich and poor within and across societies, and intensifying factors that may lead to violent conflict. These issues are compounded by identity struggles in a rapidly evolving world, where traditional roles and institutions are challenged by advances in communication, market expansion, and rising expectations, even in remote areas. Market penetration's

CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

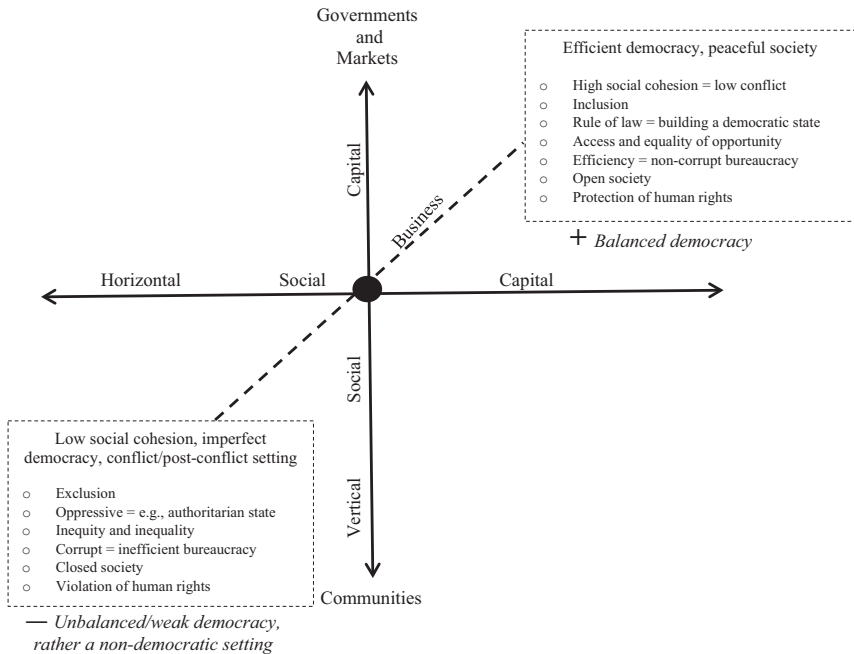


Figure 9.1 How business fosters social cohesion using both vertical and horizontal social capital.

impact grows as states weaken due to resource shortages, corruption, and the emergence of civil society, which can support or compete with government legitimacy. As a result, modern conflicts increasingly revolve around control of resources and power among social groups within states, rather than between nation states themselves (see Figure 9.1).

The conflict dynamics discussed earlier recur throughout this book; I have examined the unstable interplay between peace, business, and democracy within the context of fragile and conflict-affected states. While this focus aligns with prior empirical studies in B4P and PCSR, it also highlights several areas for further future research. For example, social cohesion can be assessed through the density and characteristics of organisations and networks—both vertical and horizontal—as well as the sense of commitment and responsibility community members feel towards these groups. Future research could refine and expand indicators and measurement tools for vertical and horizontal social capital tailored to the unique needs of war-affected societies. Existing frameworks by Fukuyama,³⁰ Putnam,³¹ and Coleman³² provide valuable metrics for assessing social cohesion and trust

fostered by businesses operating in fragile environments. Additional parameters may be developed, such as:

- The structure and organisation of assistance, mutual aid, and cooperation (including the shared use of essential resources such as water).
- The types, nature, and organisation of exchanges and interdependence between communities and businesses.
- Social protection, welfare systems, and collective responsibility.
- Channels and mechanisms for information exchange.
- The existence and purpose of (business) associations.
- Availability and effectiveness of infrastructure.

With new indicators, numerical measurement should facilitate comparison among the social capital of entrepreneurs which remains difficult to conduct using qualitative data, given its emphasis on subjective interpretation of reality. Various parameters which may be used for performing such comparison, for instance, would include the number of times an entrepreneur has received support. It may also include the extent to which these forms of social capital were beneficial for developing the business. Further research would be necessary for exploring the specific indicators for the identification of such social capital as well as procedures for the measurement of their impact.

Emerging research suggests that social capital within business organisations can play a significant role in mitigating the impact of organisational politics on employee performance. When employees perceive their workplace as political, many experience increased stress, which may negatively influence outcomes and productivity. While organisational politics is widely acknowledged as an inherent aspect of professional environments, minimising its adverse effects remains a priority. Social capital is instrumental in supporting employee well-being and performance: it encompasses good mental health (see Keyes, 2002, 2005³³) and serves as a buffer against the negative implications of perceived organisational politics.³⁴ Recognising this, Shell incorporated employee well-being into its organisational culture by signing the Global Business Collaboration for Better Workplace Mental Health pledge in 2023 (renamed MindForward Alliance Initiative as of July 2024). This initiative aims to advance workplace mental health through collaboration with committed multinational organisations and leaders. Wael Sawan, CEO of Shell, emphasised his commitment to fostering a workplace environment where employees can thrive, making positive mental health an ongoing priority throughout the company, “I am committed to ensuring a workplace culture that enables our greatest asset, our people, to thrive . . . I make a personal commitment, along with my Executive Committee, to make positive workplace mental health a priority that is part of our DNA and an ongoing conversation, across the organisation.” The MindForward

Alliance Leadership Pledge³⁵ represents a global public commitment to cultivating mentally healthy workplaces, impacting nearly 73% of employees worldwide. Notable business signatories include HSBC, Goldman Sachs, Deloitte, PWC, Bank of America, and BNP Paribas. The promotion of social capital within organisations correlates with strengthening the quality of interpersonal relationships among employees. Workplace social capital³⁶ develops through interactions: (a) among colleagues within teams, (b) across different teams, (c) between employees and direct supervisors, and (d) between staff and upper management. Social capital comprises structural, relational, and cognitive dimensions, encompassing connectedness, mutual trust, shared objectives, and common understanding. Initiatives like the MindForward Alliance are restructuring work environments to reduce stress and promote civility, emphasising managerial support for positive psychosocial climates—critical antecedents of employee well-being. These programmes encourage behaviours conducive to nutrition, healthy sleep, and mindfulness. In such contexts, organisations pursue policies that are both cost-effective and capable of garnering broad consensus, thereby enhancing social cohesion. Approaches to workplace “pacification” vary in their effectiveness regarding reform adoption. Employers may advocate for labour-friendly policies proactively, aligning with initiatives like the MindForward Alliance Leadership Pledge, and engage in strategic political interventions. Germany exemplifies a market economy model where social protection supports both employer and employee interests. Hall and Soskice, in *An Introduction to Varieties of Capitalism* (2001),³⁷ argued that Germany’s institutional structures foster complementarities that confer competitive advantages to businesses (“the German Model”). An alternative perspective posits that expectations for higher skills and productivity also drive social reform, particularly evident in Germany. The varieties of capitalism framework challenges assumptions inherent to traditional views of globalisation, highlighting that responses to similar challenges differ across economies and regions (see Knetter, 1989).³⁸ Consequently, Western democracies and countries in the Global South do not necessarily react identically. While lower-cost labour with adequate skill and productivity is attractive, firms also benefit from home-country institutions that enable unique intra- and inter-firm relationships, as evidenced by Germany’s emphasis on workplace social capital. Further illustration arises from Britain, Sweden, France, and Germany’s negotiations surrounding the Maastricht Treaty, where member states’ positions reflected efforts to balance national institutional infrastructures with EU industrial policy.³⁹ Britain’s approach to protect its liberal market economy diverged from the preferences of other EU members, demonstrating how nations seek to preserve distinctive institutional arrangements. In contrast, South Korea pursued both vertical and horizontal industrial policies throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Many South Korean workers face rigid schedules imposed by

employers, limiting autonomy and decision latitude, which can adversely affect job satisfaction and well-being (see Kim & Min, 2023; Lee & Green, 2025).⁴⁰ Unlike European labour markets—where collective bargaining and regulatory standards moderate disparities—Korea’s institutional design perpetuates differences. The emergence of chaebol conglomerates, supported by government resources and preferential access, enables them to offer superior conditions compared to SMEs (see Lee, 2023).⁴¹ Chaebols have expanded both horizontally and vertically, integrating new industries and consolidating ownership, often remaining under family control—as seen with Samsung Group’s succession strategy in the 1990s involving Samsung Everland. Trends in vertical integration have varied across sectors, increasing in vehicles and electronics but declining in accommodation and shipping, while collaborative arrangements have grown more prevalent. The technological sector’s hierarchical dynamics between the United States and Japan further underscore the evolving nature of global industry. International production and cross-border alliances highlight the significance of synergistic ownership advantages. The continual realignment of multinational corporations’ functions and boundaries reflects their need to integrate domestic policies, international environments, geopolitical strategies, economic objectives, industry characteristics, and societal frameworks. As discussed throughout this book, MNCs must adapt their industrial strategies and competitive positioning to align with the complex, multidimensional realities of contemporary global business. The changing interplay between the benefits of hierarchies and external markets for global transactions, along with the rise of new contractual frameworks, has resulted in regular adjustments to the roles and boundaries of corporations. MNCs which are adopting a global perspective on their strategies are increasingly aware that their industrial strategies and competitive positions need to correspond with an international context in line with the social and economic structures they operate within, and the nature of the industry (refer to the discussion regarding the interests of MNEs in the 1950s–1960s⁴² and 1980s⁴³).

Comparable studies of social cohesion and industrial policies can also be carried out in other Western liberal democracies. Additionally, qualitative studies and sensemaking approaches may deepen our understanding of the “great divide” between developed and LDCs, particularly regarding economic, political, and social dynamics. Comparative international analysis offers valuable opportunities to enhance understanding of both complicity in human rights violations and the dynamics of social capital. Employing mixed methods research is particularly advantageous for these areas, as it can effectively complement insights gained from qualitative studies.⁴⁴ It is essential to recognise that factors such as fragility, conflict, and violence may substantially impact data collection processes—particularly when gathering information on trust, security, and development priorities. Future investigations should encompass a broader spectrum of companies,

including transnational corporations, and incorporate considerations related to poverty alleviation, health rights, and food security. Although I have approached the relationship between peace, business, and democracy from a management standpoint, incorporating wider aspects of business ethics would enhance the depth and quality of the analysis (see “not only because it is ‘right,’ but also because it is effective” in Hosmer, 2000⁴⁵). Examining self-correlation bias—such as when more profitable companies are predisposed to adopt socially responsible practices—could provide new interpretative frameworks for the study’s nuanced findings and help reconcile apparent contradictions. The pursuit of lasting peace remains a paramount challenge for the international community and social science researchers alike. Comprehensive conceptualisations of peace, which include territorial and spatial dimensions, underscore the importance of recognising power relations not only in active conflict zones but also in the production of knowledge about conflicts and their dynamics (see Chapters 5 and 6). This book shows that research is strongly influenced by the surrounding peace or conflict, particularly because unstable conditions can impact the methods researchers conduct their research (refer to Part 1 of this book). While limitations in available data complicate the assessment of business contributions to peacebuilding—particularly in measuring change and societal impact of both MNCs and SMEs in fragile environments—future research holds promise for establishing suitable indicators and parameters. These innovations could bolster qualitative analysis and generate comprehensive quantitative data (see the Peacebuilding Business Index⁴⁶ developed by the PeaceNexus Foundation), thereby addressing the growing need for robust measurement tools in the peacebuilding sector. Although democracy-building remains a key policy objective, it continues to fuel theoretical debates and empirical controversies (refer to Chapter 4). Some critics view democracy promotion and “liberal peacebuilding” as neocolonial efforts by Western powers to perpetuate undemocratic structures. The character and development of labour market policies in Africa have been greatly influenced by globalisation and neo-colonialism. Significant Chinese FDI has entered numerous economic sectors, including mining, infrastructure, natural resources, and power generation, as a result of structural changes made in response to the debt crisis of the 1980s and the decolonisation and post-colonial restructuring of Africa in the mid-twentieth century. The labour market in Africa were greatly influenced by the shifting geopolitical landscape from Western to Chinese sources of FDI (see Chapter 6), involving numerous post-conflict governance arrangements like free market democracy and free international trade for all citizens. However, there are still no democratic checks and balances on today’s foreign and international investments and interventions, with a large question mark behind the source of power and the site of sovereignty of “occupying powers.” The social capital paradigm discussed here may provide useful solutions to problems encountered during democratisation

in post-conflict situations (refer to Chapter 3, Figure 3.1 and Chapters 4 and 6). However, further research is necessary to fully understand the complex transnational dynamics between peacekeeping efforts and democratic development, particularly with regard to the role of businesses in promoting democratic processes, such as through supporting civic education (i.e. education enhances knowledge and skills—the “cognitive proficiency”—needed for engaging in political and civic activity). It should therefore increase perceptions of efficacy. Additionally, education can foster a civic culture that values civic and political engagement, cooperation with electoral authorities, and protecting political stakeholders during unstable times. This civic culture may be instilled through peer effects.⁴⁷ For instance, the broad-based forms of social capital were destroyed by violent war and the political and economic breakdown of the Rwandan state. Horizontal social capital such as trading, mutual aid, group action, trust, and protection of the weak were all severely impacted by the civil war. Rather, the usage of credit in transactions, which was prevalent in pre-conflict culture, declined during the conflict (1994) as a result of diminished trust brought on by combat, rising poverty, and a greater emphasis on money and individualism.⁴⁸

The issues of corporate meddling in a nation state’s political agenda are more prevalent than ever and have a significant impact on social capital outcomes. Even while business is becoming more interested in politics, its methods are still frequently based on a “reactive” rather than a proactive strategy. I observe that companies modify their “political” strategy in response to spontaneous social developments. This is especially true following the January 2021 Capitol uprising. A CNN survey revealed that after the Capitol uprising, 123 of the Fortune 500 companies (including Morgan Stanley and the hotel chain Marriott), an unprecedented number of businesses with combined revenues close to a quarter of the US GDP in 2019, announced a halt to their political action committee (PAC) contributions to federal candidates.⁴⁹ Of these, 36 companies specifically targeted Republican objectors, and 159 businesses declined to make such commitments. Stakeholder pressure can also promote significant changes in corporate political activities that more accurately reflect stakeholders’ political values. Different business responses to democratic shocks may explain the variety of intervention according to pressures arising from consumers, employees, and shareholders. It is also interesting to see how gender and business type influence corporate executives’ reactions to defending democratic values and peace. Following historians who have analysed the constitutive relationship of class and gender in the early United States, there is a compelling case for rethinking the connection between capitalism and gender. Capitalism is always and everywhere gendered, but how capitalism and gender produce each other varies. State power and violence intersected with culturally specific notions of honour, masculinity, and whiteness “to engender a set of masculinised

economic relations” in the early American republic.⁵⁰ This historical background is also recognisable in the public statements that the CEOs of key US multinational corporations made after the rebellion at the Capitol.⁵¹

Julie Sweet, Accenture’s CEO, explicitly emphasised that democracy should be maintained and recalled to shared ideals such as the right to free and fair elections:

“Our elected leaders must stand together to support democracy, accept this free and fair election and bring to justice the perpetrators of today’s violent assault on our country. As Americans we must stand in support of our democratic values and the leaders who uphold them.”

In turn, Brian Moynihan, CEO of Bank of America, responded with caution:

“We must move forward together peacefully, respectfully and with a singular, shared focus on our American ideals.”

Further, the CEO of BlackRock, the world’s largest asset management organisation and a prominent provider of investment, advisory, and risk management solutions, stated:

“I condemn in the strongest possible terms the violence at our Capitol today. This is an assault on our nation, our democracy, and the will of the American people.” —Larry Fink, CEO BlackRock

Mary Barra, CEO of General Motors, and Alex Gorsky, Chairman and CEO of Johnson & Johnson, both emphasised in their speeches the importance of maintaining US democratic ideals and the inalienability of civil rights in liberal democracies:

“The peaceful transition of power is a cornerstone of American democracy, and regardless of politics the violence at the U.S. Capitol does not reflect who we are as a nation.”—Mary Barra, CEO of General Motors

“As an American, as a colleague to tens of thousands of Johnson & Johnson employees in the country, and as a U.S. military veteran who served overseas to protect our democracy, I’m devastated by this assault on what our country has stood for since its founding: free, fair and peaceful elections.”—Alex Gorsky, CEO of Johnson & Johnson

Corporate stakeholders and other factors have a significant impact on how businesses participate in processes that promote peace and democracy. As I have seen, public expectations of businesses’ civic responsibility have grown, despite the fact that corporate political activities have historically served to further firms’ special interests. In response to the Capitol uprising,

an unprecedented number of large US corporations decided to withhold PAC contributions. The consequences of these corporate PAC pledges for democratic institutions and business-government relations demonstrate how closely politics and business are intertwined. Attacks on democratic institutions allow business to exercise the “political power” that management scholars have theorised.

There is another instance where business showed a prominent political power. It is interesting to note that SodaStream was accused of antisemitism for harming the interests of Palestinian workers and was at the centre of the bilateral conflict between Israel and Palestine. The accusation followed the company’s choice to move its operations from the West Bank to the Negev Desert in Israel. Due to geopolitical concerns about the new factory’s location in the Negev Desert, an area where Israel has previously suggested resettling Bedouin Arabs, SodaStream, a multinational corporation owned by PepsiCo that sells home fizzy drink machines, was initially singled out by international protests, particularly the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. While the company explained that the boycott movement had only a minor impact on his business, it also revealed that it already employs over 300 Bedouins in its manufacturing. The corporation also accused the BDS movement of disseminating misinformation, claiming that Palestinian employees were paid and provided with benefits significantly superior to those found elsewhere in the West Bank.⁵² Instead, SodaStream’s business model became an example of Israeli-Palestinian collaboration and social contact that benefited both the Israeli and Palestinian economies.⁵³

Business-government-society tensions are also evident in Taiwan, where MNCs are building up contingency plans in the event of a US–China military clash, following Beijing’s unprecedented series of manoeuvres outside Taiwan, most recently in December 2025. The United States and Taiwan have entered into the first of multiple anticipated trade deals under the framework of the US–Taiwan Initiative on 21st Century Trade. Signed on June 1, 2023, the First Agreement covers: administration and trade facilitation; good regulatory practices; services domestic regulation; anti-corruption; and SMEs. Under the deal, “U.S. businesses will be able to bring more products to Taiwan and Taiwanese customers, while creating more transparent and streamlined regulatory procedures that can facilitate investment and economic opportunities in both markets, particularly for small- and medium-sized enterprises.”⁵⁴ Bilateral deals like this between the United States and Taiwan are now increasingly including clauses addressing investment screening, ownership transparency, and critical supply chain security. These provisions, however, reflect growing scepticism of globalisation. Instead, actions pivoting towards “strategic decoupling” or “de-risking,” particularly with respect to China, have been on the rise. Business executives in the United States, Europe, Japan, and elsewhere have upped their planning, indicating that investors in China no longer regard an invasion of

Taiwan as a low-probability “black swan” risk to the world’s second-largest economy. In the Financial Times, Jörg Wuttke, the head of the EU Chamber of Commerce in China, emphasised, “there’s a lot of scenario thinking going on. . . . What shall we do in case there is a war? Should we close our China operations? How can we sustain our business and overcome possible blockades?”⁵⁵ MNCs, as a consequence, nervously formed associations to collectivise their responses to mitigate the side effects of Taiwan’s democratic status and the increasing tensions with China under the “one China” political and legal framework, which holds the territorial integrity of China and the indisputable integration of Taiwan in China’s territory.

It is evident that business leaders and the political system are at a turning point to establish a new momentum for contemporary societies, where they support one another in safeguarding the checks and balances system of democracy, peace, and the Rule of Law with the ultimate goal of searching new horizons of widespread social and economic prosperity. Figure 9.2 reflects my efforts throughout this book to find new ways of framing business responsibility in contemporary societies.

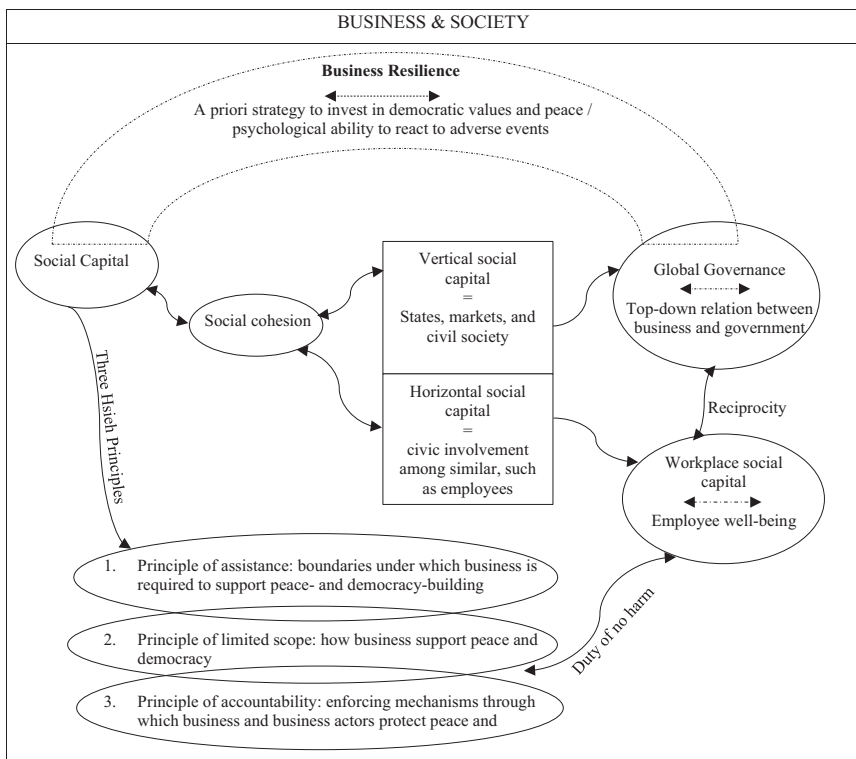


Figure 9.2 Drawing New Horizons of Business Responsibility in Contemporary Societies.

9.2 Concluding Remarks

In this book, peace and democracy emerged as concepts that relate to public issues, such as the environment, poverty or governmental institutions. Accordingly, investigations of peace- and democracy-related issues involve the meaningful and reasonable interpretation of political and economic ramifications that both sustain and undermine the role of business in society. The findings underscore the need to integrate peace and democracy into daily business operations, by changing the managerial perspective and putting at the centre the recognition of the power of business' responsibility in contemporary society. Because business is part of the civil society and act and react to government regulations, its political role should ensure responsible operations. With current levels of transnational commercial and business activity, for example, in the multinational enterprise sector, managers (and regulators) need to stay informed about the nature of business activity abroad, including in relation to any connections with human rights (see relevant to standards set by the OECD Guidelines for MNEs). The book discusses that managers are in a position to help realise peace and democratic values of shared purpose and community through business activity, values that are independent of the efficient production and allocation of goods and services. Given the number of existing accounts of the responsibilities and role of business in relation to society, I decided to reflect on these existing accounts and to provide a framework for evaluating the conduct and policies of business in relation to society and for guiding managerial decision-making. While such consideration might only contribute partially to settling open discussion in B4P, PCSR, and BHR, it establishes an overarching consensus on accepted business norms for promoting peace and democracy in societies emerging from conflicts and in Western countries. The debate is particularly relevant for small businesses and multinational corporations operating in societies where legal and political institutions are weak. A responsibility to refrain from infringing on human rights, for example, is consistent with an approach to a corporate responsibility to not do harm, albeit this function to protect individuals in the exercise of their rights is a responsibility normally attributed to nation states. I structure the responsibilities of business and their managers in terms of a duty not to harm, which is only one way to draw upon ordinary morality to frame the responsibilities of business in relation to society. Using this approach, I was able to demonstrate how multinational firms and small businesses contribute to the problem of establishing peace and democracy in regions of the world plagued by fragility. Resettling governance institutions is one way that competing local and international actors of political order reveal themselves throughout the course of a succession of interconnected phases that make up building peace and democracy. As I described in the first section of this

book, these long-term and intricate processes are susceptible to theoretical paradoxes. Three case studies show that this is also true in the empirical sense. The transition of all societies into a contemporary, democratic political system is impacted if industry does not make a constructive contribution to this process. In his September 1963 speech to the UN General Assembly, John F. Kennedy said, “peace does not rest in charters and covenants alone. It lies in the hearts and minds of all people. And if it is cast out there, then no act, no pact, no treaty, no organisation can hope to preserve it without the support and the wholehearted commitment of all people.” Resilience, a new corporate culture, is the result of both a pioneering business power and the relationship—which I have defined as unstable—between peace, business, and democracy. Managers approach resilience as an intentional design element integrated into people, processes, and culture rather than as an act of recovery. The ability of managers to define long-term goals and horizons, as well as their willingness to lead innovation and change, manage risk and uncertainty, and retain flexibility, are the foundations of the relationship between peace, business, and democracy. Thus, in contemporary societies, business should be viewed as a system of beliefs, values, practices, and principles that its managers uphold.

Notes

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