



## EDITORIAL

# Disruptive knowledge in international business research: A pipe dream or attainable target?

Rosalie L. Tung<sup>1</sup>,  
Gary Knight<sup>2</sup>, Pervez Ghauri<sup>3</sup>,  
Shameen Prashantham<sup>4</sup> and  
Tony Fang<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, Canada;  
<sup>2</sup>Willamette University, Salem, USA; <sup>3</sup>University of  
Birmingham, Birmingham, UK; <sup>4</sup>China Europe  
International Business School, Shanghai, China;  
<sup>5</sup>Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

Correspondence:  
RL Tung, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby,  
Canada  
e-mail: tung@sfu.ca

Needless to say, we were delighted with the 2023 announcement of the journal's increased Impact Factor (IF) to 11.6, thereby maintaining *Journal of International Business Studies'* (JIBS) status as the top-ranked journal in the field of international business (IB). This accomplishment is a tribute to and recognition of the collective contribution and efforts of the Academy of International Business (AIB) scholarly community and beyond. However, as we celebrate this milestone, we could not help but notice that the IF at some other journals, particularly in the biological sciences and medicine have reached stratospheric heights, such as 120.7 for the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA). In the spirit of non-complacency, we thought that it would be appropriate to take stock of what JIBS needs to do to maintain its trajectory and, perhaps, more importantly, to make continuous improvement, in line with the Japanese principle of *kaizen*.

At the risk of over-generalization and taking into full consideration the differences between the fields of business/management and the biological/medical sciences, it appears that, among other things, publications in the latter tend to be more disruptive than those in the former. In general, knowledge generated in IB publications tend to be more consolidating. As a whole, disruptive research attracts greater attention (hence higher IF) because of the game-changing nature of the knowledge that is generated. According to Park et al. (2023: 138–139), consolidating research “improve(s) existing streams of knowledge, and therefore consolidate(s) the status quo”, while disruptive research renders “existing knowledge ... obsolete, (thereby) propelling (research in that discipline) in new directions”. In other words, disruptive research is typically associated with a “paradigm shift”, a term coined by Thomas Kuhn (1970). The words commonly used to characterize consolidating research are “‘improve’ or ‘enhance’ to connote incremental progress (i.e., evolutionary or consolidating)” while “‘produce’ to evoke ‘creation or discovery’ (i.e., revolutionary)” is characteristic of disruptive research (Kozlov, 2023: 225). A cursory review of the most commonly used words to characterize the nature and contributions of research published in JIBS suggests that the preponderance of papers falls into the category of consolidating, not disruptive, knowledge.

## DISRUPTIVE VIS-À-VIS CONSOLIDATING RESEARCH

In general, disruptive research tends to be more impactful not only in terms of citation but, more importantly, in terms of its societal impact. Take the examples of the invention of generative AI and the development of mRNA vaccines. Generative AI impacts virtually all aspects of societal functioning, including work/employment, writing, learning, and warfare, to name a few. The development of mRNA vaccines helps reduce the probability of contracting COVID-19 and/or to lessen the severity of symptoms associated with the virus, and to tame a major health crisis with immeasurably positive and consequential societal impact. In comparison, the contributions of consolidating research pale against these revolutionary and life-changing discoveries. In all fairness, however, based on their analyses of 45 million papers published over the course of six decades, Park et al. (2023) found a roughly 90% decrease in disruptive research across all fields – biomedical/life sciences, physical sciences, social sciences, and technology – even though the volume of publications in all fields has surged exponentially. There are several possible reasons for this development – the “publish or perish” imperative; the proliferation of research outlets; information overload enabled, in part, by the Internet; and the need for publishers to balance the scientific vis-à-vis commercial imperatives, among others (Buranyi, 2017; Kozlov, 2023).

It is important to note that there is nothing inherently negative about consolidating research. As Kozlov (2023: 225) noted, “the ideal is a healthy mix of incremental and disruptive research”. The keyword here is “a healthy mix” as a severely imbalanced ratio in incremental (or consolidating) vis-à-vis disruptive research, in favor of the former, can result in a narrowing of focus in a discipline, thereby inhibiting paradigm shifts in the field. This “healthy mix” has to be accompanied by a genuine desire and willingness to introspect on the shortcomings and limitations of the status quo. Healthy introspection or self-critique can be a powerful tool for correcting course and making quantum advances. Zengzi, ancient Chinese philosopher and a disciple of Confucius, preached about the need for frequent self-introspection to advance learning and knowledge.

An argument can be made that paradigm shifts may not be necessary under a relatively stable state

where conditions do not change rapidly and or dramatically. However, developments in the subject domain of IB research in the past couple of years appear to have been upended – the assumption of continued globalization has been replaced by rising geopolitical tensions, increased reliance on industrial policies and sanctions, decoupling/derisking, wars and violent conflicts, pandemic(s), disruptions in global supply chains, and global warming and climate change, to mention a few. In other words, VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) have become the new normal; thereby rendering traditional perspectives and ways of viewing and analyzing IB phenomena either obsolete and/or in need of substantial and substantive updating. Tung et al. (2023) have outlined how IB theories and practices have to be revised in the face of antagonistic geopolitical rivalry between the world’s two leading powers, multipolarity and the rise of middle powers.

A cursory review of existing theories of foreign direct investment and a study of MNC–subsidiary relationships, international firms’ strategics and managerial decision-making/behavior suggest that they are, by and large, guided by the assumptions of unfettered globalization. Recent developments have signaled that many of these assumptions need to be revised and revisited, as these new VUCA realities, unfortunately, do not appear to be temporary blips. These disruptive changes lend credence to W. Brian Arthur’s (Arthur & Tetzeli, 2023: 7) assertion that “confusion remakes things or even remakes us” and highlights the urgent need to break out of traditional modes and mindsets that have served us well in the past half century, a bygone era that was characterized by relative stability and predictability. These changes have highlighted the need for us, as a discipline, to introspect about the need for a paradigm shift and, if so, the nature of such paradigm shifts and how they can be accomplished. As guardians of the foremost journal in the area of international business, it is imperative that we welcome the best minds engaged in IB research to undertake research that is more likely to yield disruptive, as opposed to consolidating research. A continued emphasis on consolidating research with little or no attention to the riskier approach of entertaining disruptive research can only result in a diminishing marginal return.

Another development that has rendered our traditional mindsets and paradigms obsolete is the attempt to understand IB phenomena from a singular rather than a plurality of lenses. In Tung’s



(2023) opening editorial, she emphasized the need for the adoption of a multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approach to capture the true nature of international business activities and behaviors. In other words, there is a need to return to the roots of the founding of the IB discipline where the pioneers in the field “came from different backgrounds and disciplines – economics, political science, sociology, marketing, finance, and so on – and had industry, public sector, and military backgrounds before joining academia”. Over time, the focus in JIBS publications has narrowed. A future paper to be included in JIBS will survey how the landscape of topics and the knowledge structures in the journal have evolved over time.

This editorial draws attention to the need for deeper insights on the journal’s strengths and deficits to highlight opportunities for IB scholars to help capture and address the multiplexity of global systemic risks to understand IB undertakings, strategies, and behaviors in a world that is in a state of rapid flux. Throughout this editorial, we use disruptive knowledge in the Kuhnian (Kuhn, 1970) sense. Over the past 40 to 50 years, IB research can be characterized as “normal science”. In the light of the new VUCA realities, the time is ripe for a paradigm change.

Furthermore, in light of the aspirations articulated in Tung’s (2023) editorial for greater inclusivity, to approach this objective entails the following, at the very least: one, encouraging multidisciplinary perspectives as highlighted above; two, incorporating non-Western lenses along with traditional Western lenses to better understand the multiplexity of rapidly changing IB phenomena and dynamics; and, three, improving accessibility of our theories and findings to decisions-makers and policymakers to influence action that can bring about true changes for the betterment of society.

To date, while JIBS is the leading journal in the field of IB, a cursory review of the cross-citation of JIBS articles reveals that while our papers are well cited within the ecosystem of IB journals, they have not garnered the attention that they merit in other business/management journals, let alone in the world of practice as reflected in the insufficient media attention to our publications and/or the relatively low incidence of practitioners referencing lessons learned or strategies borrowed from the findings in JIBS publications. While recognizing that JIBS is an academic journal that focuses on “insightful, innovative, and impactful research on international business” (from Editorial Statement),

a question can be raised on the true meaning of “impactful” if practitioners and policymakers are not aware of and/or do not adopt many of the excellent findings in our journal that relate to their strategies and practices. Viewed in this context, impact is not unidimensional but consists of at least two important dimensions: impact as in, one, the scholarly Journal Impact Factor (JIF); and, two, in terms of Societal Impact (SI). JIBS should encourage research that has societal implications so that the new, resultant knowledge will be more meaningful and have more consequential and positive effects on society and the world. JIBS should increasingly aim to publish research that reflects new knowledge that is useful and helpful to humanity and the world. Furthermore, there is a synergistic effect between these two dimensions of impact, i.e., greater attention to SI can broaden the appeal of the journal, thereby raising its JIF. For this reason, Tung (2023) has broadened impact to include the “publication of meaningful, high-quality research that has societal impact; this is reflected in the rationale for the establishment of the Societal Impact Advisory Committee (SIAC)” in the editorial team.

In this editorial, we pose two provocative questions: One, is JIBS’ aspiration to grow its JIF beyond the range typical of business/management journals attainable or is it a pipe dream? Two, if aiming high is considered as a positive, what will it take for JIBS to accomplish a breakthrough? Only time will tell whether JIBS will continue its upward trajectory, although we are of the opinion that our aspirations are attainable. The focus of this editorial is to address the second question, namely, what does it take for the journal to accomplish a breakthrough? In our opinion, these strategies are at least three-fold: One, to place greater emphasis on research that has societal implications since SI can broaden the appeal of the journal, thereby raising its JIF. Two, to leverage the multi-disciplinary nature of the IB discipline by engaging in a diversity and multiplexity of paradigmatic, methodological, and cognitive approaches to capture and understand IB phenomena. Three, to improve the readability of our publications and thereby draw greater attention from executives and policymakers to the findings of our research that have real-life implications beyond mere theoretical contributions. Pursuit of the first two strategies can enable the journal to approach the goal of creating disruptive knowledge. The third strategy can assist in developing a journal that is more widely read by practitioners,

policymakers, and researchers outside the current IB community, and thereby increase the likelihood of impactful action by IB stakeholders as well as engaging a broader audience of researchers outside of the present ecosystem of IB journals. Tung's (2023) opening editorial alluded to these strategies and will be amplified here in the context of raising JIBS' profile to accomplish this breakthrough. Each of these strategies is discussed below.

At the outset, it should be emphasized that we are not discarding the sage advice of preceding editorials that have appeared in JIBS and elsewhere, such as the one by Bello and Kostova (2012) entitled, "Conducting high-impact IB research: The role of theory". In that editorial they offered useful suggestions on "smarter positioning and framing", including how to: one, convince the editors of the theoretical contributions of their submission; and two, use revisions to "re-see" and "re-think" their conceptual framework and/or findings. The present editorial will not reiterate many of the useful suggestions that they provided therein. It is important to emphasize that research rigor and excellence will not be sacrificed nor compromised in our pursuit of disruptive research/knowledge. For this reason, the current editorial team includes a Research Methods Advisory Committee (RMAC) to ensure the use of appropriate methodologies to examine phenomena under investigation and to encourage a diversity of research methods to be published in the journal (see, Tung, 2023). Rather, this editorial will focus on a passing observation that Bello and Kostova (2012: 537) made, namely their belief that "international business (IB) scholars are systematically missing opportunities to make a bigger contribution not only to the IB field but also to the organizational literature in general".

### **GREATER EMPHASIS ON RESEARCH WITH SOCIETAL IMPLICATIONS**

The addition of Global Sustainability as one of two new sub-domains of JIBS highlights the importance the journal attaches to issues with societal relevance and implications. At the outset, we draw attention to the excellent editorial written by Doh, Eden, Tsui, and Zaheer (2023: 757) entitled, "Developing international business scholarship for global societal impact". This editorial highlighted the unique role that JIBS can play in providing insights on actionable research that addresses the "cross-national dimensions of IB and the differing social, economic, and political preferences faced by MNEs

across the contexts in which they operate". The findings of such actionable research can help solve "some of the grand challenges of our times". Their editorial draws upon the ideas contained in the Responsible Research in Business and Management (RRBM) network, the details of which will not be repeated here. A Special Issue on this theme, "Multinationals' solutions to Grand Challenges", is underway.

Wickert, Post, Doh, Prescott, and Prencipe (2021) identified five forms of impact: scholarly, practical, societal, policy, and educational. Scholarly impact is analogous to the JIF alluded to earlier. At the risk of over-generalization, the remaining four forms of impact can be lumped under SI. Similarly, Woolston (2023: 377) asserted that aside from "standard publication metrics" (i.e., JIF), societal impact can be gauged along four dimensions: policy, innovation and economic, societal and environmental, and alternative metrics or "altmetrics", in short. The latter tracks "the reach of research through social media, news sites, and other outlets, rather than academic citations". Thus, there appears to be general consensus that JIF constitutes only one of several indicators of impact. JIF is relatively easy to determine, as an accepted algorithm is used to arrive at the statistics that are generated every year, such as the 11.6 IF for JIBS in the end of June 2023 based on citations in the two preceding years. The other indicators of impact, while "potentially the most meaningful ... are also the most challenging to measure" (Woolston, 2023: 375). For example, a cursory review of tweets on a given paper reveals that "in most cases there is no deep understanding or deep reading of the paper", thereby its use as a measure of societal impact is, at best, questionable (Woolston, 2023: 377). Much work needs to be done, on a concerted basis, to arrive at an accurate gauge of societal impact, which is beyond the scope of this editorial. According to Meijer (cited in Woolston, 2023: 377), "any successful approach must include input from the researchers, as well as from industry, government, and the funders that support that work". It is important to note, however, that while the challenges for developing accurate measures of societal impact remain, it does not mean that it should not be done.

At present, submissions for inclusion in JIBS must meet the criteria of novelty, generativity, and absence of major theoretical and/or methodological flaws/limitations. Novelty refers to the extent to which the phenomena under investigation have been widely studied. If much prior knowledge has already been



generated on a subject/topic (i.e., lacks novelty) and where the contribution(s) of a given submission is deemed to be marginal by both the Action Editor and/or reviewers, even though there are no major theoretical and/or methodological flaws associated with the paper, it will most likely be rejected. Generativity refers to the ability of the paper to encourage/stimulate research on a phenomenon that has hitherto been under-researched and/or ignored. Knight and Cavusgil's (2004: 124) paper on born globals represented a marked departure from the theory of incremental internationalization popularized by Johanson and Vahlne (1997). The former's paper drew attention to the reality that some firms, by virtue of "their distinctive mix of orientations and strategies", are able to expand successfully into "diverse international markets" almost from their inception. This new insight on "internationalization of international firms" generated much attention to born globals and garnered 4649 citations, based on Google Scholar in mid-2023. Luo and Tung's springboard theory (2007, 2018) of outward foreign direct investment (OFDI) by emerging market multinationals (EMMNCs) meets the criterion of generativity in that the 2007 and 2018 versions of their paper have garnered close to 3700 and 470 citations, respectively, based on Google Scholar in mid-2023. Their springboard theory has spawned and encouraged the study of OFDI by EMMNCs. Prior to their 2007 study, the focus has been on traditional theories of OFDI that were useful for explaining outward investment by multinationals from developed countries. Another example is the 2013 paper by Goerzen, Asmussen and Nielsen entitled, "Global cities: Beachheads, command posts, and multinational enterprise location decisions", that won the 2023 JIBS Decade Award as it drew attention to "the subnational contexts ... that shed light on the patterns of economic globalization and, more specifically, the behavior and performance of multinational enterprises (MNE)" (Goerzen et al., 2024). The contributions of the Goerzen et al. paper (2013) will be discussed further under the second strategy, namely leveraging the multi-disciplinary nature of the IB discipline by engaging in a diversity and multiplexity of paradigmatic, methodological, and cognitive approaches to better capture and understand IB phenomena.

Returning to Wickert et al. (2021: 299) explication of scholarly impact, they specifically alluded to the "need for problem-driven and phenomenon-based research". While this need is implicit in JIBS' criteria of "insightful, innovative and impactful research", it should be made explicit. Due to the over-emphasis on theoretical merit, there may be a

tendency to focus on an overly tight framing of our research which leads to a narrowing of our lens/focus to result in a finished product that, while conceptually sound and methodologically correct, may have limited appeal and relevance to the real world. This insular approach lends credence to Delios' (2017: 391) critical assessment of the sorry state of IB research in general: "The world of IB is vibrant and stimulating. Current IB research is not. Managers engaged in IB are energetic, creative, and risk-taking. Modern-day IB scholars are not. Media stories covering IB are novel, engaging, and eye-catching. Recent IB journal publications are not". Delios attributed this unhealthy development to detachment from "new phenomena in the globalizing world" or bifurcating world, the current reality. Delios (2017: 392) warned that if IB researchers fail to correct course from "this descent into a research coma", the field "will exhaust its relevancy, with no one other than cloistered academics reading IB research".

While Delios used very strong language, his alarm merits attention because if we continue with our current trajectory of narrow focus, it can be very difficult to maintain, let alone grow our JIF. Sometimes, it is necessary for us, as IB researchers, to be jolted from our complacency to change course. As the Chinese saying goes: "Though the medicine is bitter to the taste, it is good for the disease". Through increased attention to "problem-driven and phenomenon-based research" we can rejuvenate IB research to bring about a true renaissance in the field. "Problem-driven and phenomenon-based research" is research that has societal relevance and impact. "Engaged, and results-oriented, scholarship" can enable researchers to "build deeper connections with their communities, to demonstrate the value of their knowledge, and to counter declining trust" (Fischer, 2023). According to a July 2023 Gallup Poll, only one-third of Americans have confidence in higher education. Even though other factors, such as the rising cost of tuition, the ongoing debates on the value of a university education and culture wars have contributed to this decline, the contribution (or lack thereof) of what academics produce is under-appreciated and does not bode well for the overall image of universities, including research-oriented ones (Schermele, 2023).

Engaging in "problem-driven and phenomenon-based research" entails listening and engaging with practitioners and policymakers to better understand opportunities and challenges in the

international arena. Engaging with practitioners is a two-way street – on the one hand, as researchers, we get a better understanding of the dynamic developments and challenges that practitioners and policy-makers face; on the other hand, we can share insights/knowledge from our research findings to better inform their decisions, policies, and strategies, thus contributing to a win-win situation. Research that is guided by more acute awareness of grand challenges or “wicked problems” (Ghauri, 2022) can inform IB researchers to focus their attention on emerging and developing societal challenges that matter rather than adhering to the safer strategy of focusing on subjects that have already accumulated a healthy body of literature. In this context, there have been recent calls for IB scholars to explicitly link their work to relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the United Nations’ global agenda (Ghauri, 2022). This approach offers a tractable way to relate the societal efforts of IB research efforts to specific grand challenges or wicked problems. As one of many examples, Prashantham and Birkinshaw (2020: 1162) talk about “fruitfully addressing the SDGs via MNE–SME cooperation”, and make a specific link to SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).

Other SDG topics that merit research attention include, for example: One, the application of IB principles and models to the international non-profit and NGO sectors. Even though non-profits and NGOs play very important roles in the world, they may often fail to achieve their goals due to poor management. Many such organizations are run by visionaries or idealists who may not be aware of the latest developments pertaining to the potentials and pitfalls associated with the successful management of such operations. Two, the role, feasibility, and methodology of incorporating “societal profit” and/or “environmental profit” in the measurement of “performance” in international firms. Three, the nature of different types of stakeholders that are potentially impacted, directly or indirectly, and positively and negatively, by the activities of IB, particularly in a societal or environmental context. The aforementioned examples are, of course, not exhaustive.

### **LEVERAGING THE MULTI-DISCIPLINARY NATURE OF THE IB DISCIPLINE**

In Tung’s (2023) editorial, she alluded to the multi-disciplinary background of the founding fathers of the Academy of International Business (AIB) and

their backgrounds in “industry, public and military” before joining academia. At its inception, “IB research galvanized a generation of inspired scholarship” (Delios, 2017: 391). Over time, the focus of publications in JIBS has narrowed and resulted in an under-representation of international marketing, finance, and accounting in our publications. Fortunately, the Executive Board at AIB has taken notice of this development and established two task forces, one in International Marketing and another in International Finance, to correct course. The editorial team in JIBS has responded to the findings of these two task forces and has taken concrete steps to re-invigorate the multi-disciplinary nature of the journal. For this reason, in laying out her vision for JIBS, Tung (2023) encourages a diversity and multiplexity of paradigmatic, methodological, and cognitive approaches to capture and understand IB phenomena, as well as entertaining both Western and non-Western perspectives.

Earlier on, reference was made to the 2013 paper by Goerzen, Asmussen, and Nielsen entitled, “Global cities: Beachheads, command posts, and multinational enterprise location decisions”, and identified one of the important factors that contributed to its selection as the winner of the 2023 JIBS Decade Award. Aside from drawing attention to the subnational contexts, their paper was interdisciplinary in nature and drew from literatures in economic geography, sociology, and urban development. In their 2024 reflection paper, they included an analysis of publications on global cities over two 5-year time periods (2013–2017, 2018–2022). In the first 5-year time period, they found that publications in global cities appeared primarily in urban studies and economic geographies whereas in the second 5-year time period, they reported a 56.5 and 35% increase on the topic in management and economic journals, respectively. To gauge the paper’s impact in IB and other disciplines, their citation analysis revealed that 64% of their 2013 publication was cited in the business/management/economics journals; 26% in the disciplines that their global cities concept were drawn from (i.e., economic geography, urban studies); and 10% from other disciplines, such as “anthropology, sociology and environmental studies to engineering”. To incorporate perspectives from other disciplines that their paper drew from, Cindy Fan, a geographer by training, served as a commentator on the 2023 award-winning paper.

Fang’s (2003, 2012) application of an ancient Chinese philosophical approach, the yin yang



perspective, to study culture is yet another example of the benefits associated with the adoption of a multidisciplinary lens to understand the dynamism and fluidity associated with culture and IB. The incorporation of the yin yang principle, popular in East Asia societies, represents a significant departure from the general assumptions that, one, a country's cultural orientation is fairly stable over time; and, two, a country scores either high or low on a select cultural dimension when in reality there are "ebbs and flows" of cultural orientations in a given society. Furthermore, people within a given country can embrace opposing value orientations associated with a given cultural dimension. This perspective suggests the potential value associated with a paradoxical lens to generating fresh insights and knowledge of IB phenomena. Welch, Piekkari, Plakoyiannaki, and Paavilainen-Mäntymäki (2011) advocated a pluralist approach to research methodology in order to learn from multiple paradigms by gaining access to multiple sources of information, and thereby enabling the opportunity to embrace the tensions between seemingly contradictory perspectives.

A cursory review of the grand challenges and wicked problems that confront society reveals that no single discipline can capture the true complexity of the issues that need to be addressed and the ways for resolving them. Noted climatologist and Executive Director of the International Council for Science (ICSU), Deliang Chen, for example, noted that "(t)he environmental problems facing today's society cannot be overcome by a single nation or a single scientific discipline" and called for a transdisciplinary approach. The call for a transdisciplinary approach has been echoed in a growing number of major research-granting agencies, such as the National Institute of Health's (NIH) National Institute of General Medical Sciences Collaborative Program Grant for Multidisciplinary Teams, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and the Collaborative Research Funds by the Hong Kong University Grants Committee, to name a few.

### **IMPROVE THE READABILITY OF OUR PUBLICATIONS WITH PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

The criticisms that Delios (2017) lodged against IB research earlier on are not unique to our field alone. Researchers in the hard sciences echoed similar

concerns. Doubleday and Connell (2017: 803) lamented that: "Scientists spend most of their working life writing, yet our writing style obstructs its key purpose: communication", thereby creating a "science writing paradox" as communication can drive innovation. They attributed this paradox to the use of "dense, uninspiring language" in our journal articles to satisfy the requirements of the "official style", thereby rendering the finished product to be "laborious to wade through and difficult to understand". While credible research that appears in top-tier journals needs to be evidenced-based and factual, that does not preclude presenting material in an "engaging" manner (Gewin, 2018). To render our articles more "engaging", Doubleday and Connell (2017: 804) proposed that greater attention should be paid to using a writing style that can be characterized as "absorbable, inspiring, original, accessible" without sacrificing the essential attributes that make our research credible. In an analysis of texts that appear in science journals, Ball (2017) voiced similar concern that "multisyllable words that have non-technical meanings ... have become part of the standard lexicon of the science paper ... include 'robust', 'significant', 'furthermore' and 'underlying'... are markedly more prevalent in the scientific literature. These words aren't inherently opaque, but their accumulation adds to the mental effort involved in reading the text". Springer Nature, the publisher of JIBS, for example, is developing a variety of resources and initiatives to guide authors in developing Plain Language Summaries, social media posts, and other formats to highlight the impact of their research for practice and policy.

As stated earlier in the link between JIF and SI, publications that are accessible (i.e., readable) are more likely to be read by non-specialists (executives and policymakers in the field of IB) which, in turn, can increase the likelihood that they will shape practice (Gewin, 2018). In addition, as noted earlier, Woolston (2023) asserted that alternative metrics or "altmetrics" can be used as a gauge of SI. In an analysis of 108 articles in the field of medical and health sciences published between 2013 and 2015, Girolamo and Reynders (2017: 35) found that articles with titles that are "easy-to-understand" were more likely to rank among the "Altmetric Top 100" articles, thus suggesting "absorbable" and "accessible" titles "may help bridge the gap between academia and social media".

To render our research findings and publications more attractive to readers outside of academia to

include executives and policymakers who can adopt our evidence-based recommendations, beginning in August 2023, the journal has added the following to the text of papers that are at the conditional acceptance phase: “At JIBS, our goal is to disseminate the findings of our papers to researchers and decision-makers who are interested in the latest theories/developments in international business. Improving the readability of our papers to a broader audience represents a step in that direction. In revising your paper for final submission, we encourage you to keep this objective in mind”. These two sentences complement the earlier request to authors whose papers have been conditionally accepted to “compose a more compelling 200-word abstract ... The abstract will be the ‘entry point’ to the article for most potential readers, and a well-written, compelling abstract is likely to increase substantially the article’s impact in terms of number of downloads and ultimate citations”. By incorporating these texts in the conditional acceptance letter, the standards of novelty, originality, generativity, research rigor and absence of conceptual and methodological limitations described earlier will not be compromised as papers that have advanced to this stage should have already fulfilled the aforementioned criteria.

Additionally, in generating practical contributions, academically rigorous outlets like JIBS have a potentially symbiotic relationship with publications that are well known in the practitioner world, such as *Harvard Business Review* and *Sloan Management Review*. While it is customary for scholars to have a portfolio of papers and coauthors, this is typically targeted exclusively at academic journals. The time is ripe for IB scholars – and not just established ones – to also broaden this approach to cut across academic and practitioner outlets as they seek to widen their capability set in communicating to diverse audiences (see, for example, Prashantham & Yip, 2017).

## CONCLUSION

While we cannot definitively answer the first provocative question posed at the beginning of the editorial: “Is JIBS’ aspiration to grow its JIF beyond the range typical of business/management journals attainable or is it a pipe dream?”, we are of the opinion that our aspirations are attainable if we pursue the strategies outlined here. As Anthony Komaroff (2021), Editor-in-Chief, *Harvard Health Letter*, reminded us: “advances are a daily occurrence,

but true breakthroughs are rare”. Consolidating research represents “advances” while disruptive research constitutes “true breakthroughs”. Breakthroughs are often the culmination of “persistence and resilience in pursuit of a dream” in spite of “disinterest, ... skepticism, ridicule, and rejection”. As a community of IB scholars, we ought to share a collective aspiration toward the production of disruptive knowledge, i.e., “holding hard to (our) dreams”, to borrow Komaroff’s exhortation. While we will not be able to match the JIF of biological and medical journals because of the different nature of our discipline, we contend that we can produce disruptive as well as consolidating knowledge if we adopt a multi-disciplinary perspective and a multitude of cognitive approaches to examine and understand IB phenomena that have important societal consequences and implications. Furthermore, we need to make our research findings more “accessible” and “absorbable” to executives and policymakers to make changes for the betterment of society. If we continue along the trajectory of producing jargon-laden knowledge that is unappealing to decision-makers who can benefit from and, more importantly, apply our findings, we will be stuck in the predicament that Delios (2017) has alerted us to. Furthermore, it begs the question of what is the purpose of producing knowledge, whether disruptive or consolidating, if it fails to inspire decision-makers into action? This is analogous to the admonition by Jesus as reported in the Gospel of Matthew (5: 15-16): “No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house”. In other words, our research findings are intended to enlighten not only fellow IB researchers but researchers in other relevant disciplines and decision-makers in the international arena so that, collectively, we can make a difference and “make JIBS matter for a better world”. In short, increasing our journal’s societal impact can further boost our JIF.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The concept of VUCA is generally attributed to Bennis, W., and Nanus, B. 1985. *Leaders: Strategies for taking charge*. 2nd edition: 2007. New York, NY: Harper Business Books. The acronym, VUCA, first appeared in Army War College documents.





<sup>2</sup><https://www.palgrave.com/gp/palgrave/editorial-policy/13353636>.  
<sup>3</sup><https://www.palgrave.com/gp/journal/41267/about/2023-2025-editorial-team>.  
<sup>4</sup><https://www.palgrave.com/gp/journal/41267/about/2023-2025-editorial-team>.  
<sup>5</sup><https://www.palgrave.com/gp/journal/41267>.  
<sup>6</sup><https://www.rrbm.network/>.  
<sup>7</sup><https://resource-cms.springernature.com/springer-cms/rest/v1/content/23399332/data/v1>.  
<sup>8</sup>Regional Environmental Change: Human Action and Adaptation, 2010, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/47749518\\_Regional](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/47749518_Regional)

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<sup>9</sup><https://nigms.nih.gov/grants/RM1>.  
<sup>10</sup><https://www.neh.gov/grants/research/collaborative-research-grants>.  
<sup>11</sup>[https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/professors-professeurs/grants-subs/chrp-prcs\\_eng.asp](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/professors-professeurs/grants-subs/chrp-prcs_eng.asp).  
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