

Navigating Geopolitics

How can business leaders manage geopolitical uncertainty? Here are the keys for strategy, operations, talent and stakeholders.



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Welcome to this special report on Geopolitics

By [Massimo Maoret](#)

For today's managers, geopolitics is impossible to ignore. A decade ago, it was just one among many risks to consider in business strategy; today, it sits at the top of the agenda.

We see this shift in our classrooms. Discussions of global expansion once treated the BRICS

— and especially China — as obvious opportunities. Then volatility grew, and decisions became far less clear. For me, the turning point came when a guest speaker — a leading private equity investor — told me how she had just invested in Kyiv, only for Russia to invade weeks later. Her question — *what now?* — captures a stark truth: a lack of proper geopolitical analysis can upend strategy overnight.

Strategy has always been about preparing for an unknowable future. That future now feels even less predictable. Yet leaders can still act: by minimizing risks, building resilience and staying ready to adapt as events unfold.

Geopolitics is entangled with technology, markets and society, demanding leaders who can think broadly, connect dots and manage across complexity. I sometimes joke that managers may need fewer conversations with economists, and more with sociologists, psychologists and political scientists.

Energy, the field I study, shows how deep this transformation runs. What was once considered a stable, technical, even “boring” industry is now shaped by transformative forces: the green transition, breakthrough technologies, polarized politics and intensifying rivalry among great powers. Europe’s decarbonization drive pressures Russia, still dependent on revenues from oil and gas. China imports vast amounts of energy even as it races to achieve independence by dominating clean technologies. The United States remains deeply divided, swinging between fossil fuels and renewables. These tensions spill across borders and industries, redrawing the competitive landscape and exacerbating social divides.

The stable institutional foundations that supported global growth for decades can no longer be taken for granted. Tariffs, national security concerns and shifting alliances are reshaping the global map of opportunity. Expansion decisions are harder, the risks higher — but the rewards can be greater for those who navigate wisely.

That is why our Strategic Management Department recently convened a workshop on geopolitics: to recognize its central role in competitive strategy today. The reflections that emerged helped shape this special report. Use it as a compass for these turbulent times. We hope it will help you make sense of the forces reshaping the business world, see connections others overlook, and chart a course forward with clarity and confidence.



**Strategy | Rethinking corporate strategy in the age of
gloeconomics**



**Operations | Balance efficiency with resilience to weather
geopolitical storms**



Talent | These are the competencies for geostrategic advantage. Does your team have what it takes?



Stakeholders | Leading with purpose when stakeholder management gets geopolitical

Mapping the geopolitical hot spots

The degree to which a specific company or organization is impacted by today's geopolitics depends partially on where in the world it is operating and the part of the global economy in which it is involved. [Mike Rosenberg](#) highlights the regions to watch.

[GO TO MAP >](#)



Prepare for a new age of conflict, warns Spain's defense chief

As the rules-based world order crumbles, resilience and deterrence are the new rules of the game.

The Russia-Ukraine war is not just a military crisis; it's a crisis for the rules-based order that characterized international relations since the end of World War II. And just like governments are preparing for a world where conflict and disruption are no longer rare occurrences, businesses, too, must strengthen key capabilities, like resilience, in anticipation of systemic

risks.

In this interview, the Chief of the Defense Staff of the Spanish Armed Forces, Admiral General **Teodoro E. Lopez Calderon** (pictured), discusses the challenges ahead with IESE Prof. Santiago Alvarez de Mon.

[READ FULL INTERVIEW >](#)





Polarized



Liquid



Unilateral



Tense



Omnirelational

Understand the challenges and opportunities of a PLUTO world

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Strategic actions you can take

- **Anticipate.** Draw up scenario-based strategies to anticipate different futures.
- **Cast a vision.** Identify the opportunities that the new geopolitical context presents and how you will capitalize on them.
- **Adapt.** Adapt your business model to stay relevant and create competitive advantage in the new landscape.
- **Diversify.** The new paradigm is strategic autonomy and less dependence on single markets and suppliers.

- **Take the long view.** Combine efficiency with greater resilience and longer time horizons.

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How resilient are your operations?



Business resilience is like the one house that remained standing after a hurricane: designed not to prevent impact but to absorb it and continue to operate. How does your organization rate on these factors?

- **Financial capacity.** Are you able to sustain operations under adverse economic conditions?
- **Business model.** Is it adapted to the possibility of lower growth potential?
- **People.** Are your employees capable of learning and acting quickly in atmospheres

of ambiguity?

- **Technology & cybersecurity.** Are your digital infrastructures robust enough to support operations in critical scenarios?
- **Reputation.** Are you building trust with customers and investors in the countries where you operate?

Whether racing ahead with AI or reshoring manufacturing, success depends on talent

DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

When stakeholder management gets geopolitical

\$ 600
billion

The amount Apple pledged to invest domestically in response to Donald Trump announcing a 100% tariff on foreign computer chips and semiconductors.

Many companies are finding the one stakeholder they must please the most right now is the U.S. government. Managing stakeholders is being tested like never before in this Age of Geopolitics, with patriotism being called “the new stakeholderism” in business.

[How should companies manage their stakeholders today?](#)

Get over it and move on!



By Mike Rosenberg

If we look at what's going on in the world today, we can react with anger, dismay, even rage. But how useful is all of that? From a business point of view, at some point we have to recognize the reality we're living in, move on, and try to figure out what to do about it. For companies, in my view, there are a few things that business leaders need to do.

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