THE ASIA GROUP

Navigating the GeoCommercial Era

Defining a strategic playbook for the next generation of corporate diplomacy

by Kurt Campbell, Nirav Patel, Maxfield Brown, and Aman Thakker

July 2025

Executive Summary

Multinational companies can no longer assume insulation from geopolitics

Firms that proactively align strategy with geopolitical realities can turn uncertainty into competitive advantage.

Integrating geopolitics into corporate strategy unlocks resilience and growth

By aligning with trusted markets and adapting to shifting state priorities, companies can secure market access, optimize capital flows, and build more agile supply chains.

Competitive edge requires integration

TAG can equip leaders with the tools to craft and embed a GeoCommercial strategy across corporate functions, and build capabilities to anticipate, absorb, and adapt to geopolitical disruption.

The Front Line & The C-Suite

In February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. As the first missiles exploded, political leaders in capitals around the world responded in real time – rallying diplomatic coalitions, imposing sweeping sanctions, and mobilizing support for Ukraine. But governments weren't the only ones forced to respond. In boardrooms from Frankfurt to San Francisco, executives faced a cascade of urgent decisions: whether and how to exit the Russian market, how to protect the safety of employees and physical infrastructure, how to manage new legal and financial exposure, and, soon after, how to contend with the broader knock-on effects triggered by the war, from ruptured supply chains to surging energy prices. While multinational firms had faced geopolitical crises before, the business implications of Russia's invasion of Ukraine made clear that the nature of how geopolitical impacted business had fundamentally changed.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its fallout for global business marked a defining moment in the opening act of a new era: the GeoCommercial Era. While global businesses have always been aware of the impact of geopolitics on their business interests, the GeoCommercial Era is defined by the breakdown of the long-standing assumption that global commerce exists above or outside of geopolitics. In this new environment, geopolitical dynamics, ranging from strategic rivalry and industrial policy to sanctions, export controls, and talent restrictions, directly shape market access, capital flows, supply chains, and corporate risk exposure. The defining feature of this era is that commerce is no longer neutral terrain. As a result, geopolitics is no longer the sole concern of government affairs teams; it has become a central concern for CEOs, boards, and senior leadership. Russia's invasion made this explicit, but it only accelerated a broader trend that was already well underway – and one that has deepened since.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its fallout for global business marked a defining moment in the opening act of a new era: the GeoCommercial Era.

Enter The GeoCommercial Era

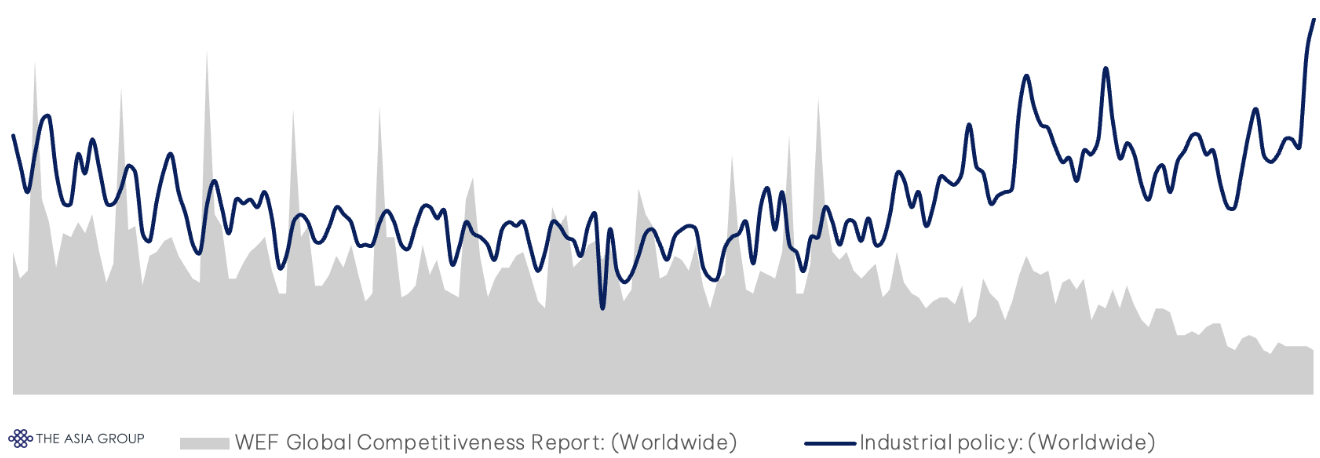
As geopolitical rivalry reshapes the global order, the architecture of commerce is being rewired. Capital is shifting, driven both by state-led industrial policy and private-sector efforts to de-risk away from politically volatile jurisdictions in favor of strategically aligned markets. Trade and tariffs have returned as tools of statecraft. The use of sanctions, export controls, and investment restrictions is expanding. New visa regimes are limiting talent flows, while data localization laws are fragmenting the internet along national lines. And conflict continues to loom large over global economic flows. Houthi attacks in the Red Sea have interfered with maritime trade. Israel's expanding campaigns in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and Iran have rippled across energy markets. India's emergence as a critical growth market is in tension with the complex nature of its geopolitical relations with neighbors such as China and Pakistan, and risks that hostilities, as they did with both neighbors over the last five years, could escalate. Rising frictions in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait threaten to upend vital supply chains and shipping corridors.

This strategic interplay between commercial decisions and geopolitical realities is at the heart of the GeoCommercial Era, and nearly every dimension of commercial strategy must

Exhibit 1

Global Focus is Shifting from Competitiveness to Competition

Online Traffic for WEF Global Competitiveness Report & Industrial Policy (2010 to 2025)



Source: Google Trends; TAG GeoCommercial Strategy Group

be refracted through the lens of geopolitics. This shift is reshaping how boards and executive teams think about corporate structures and decision-making processes.
The traditional role of the government relations team, once centered on regulatory compliance and lobbying, is no longer fit for purpose in a world where political risk must be factored into almost every business decision, from market expansion to M&A strategy to talent deployment.

In response, some companies have appointed a "Chief Geopolitical Officer" to navigate this complexity. But that understates the scale and scope of the transformation that is required to meet the GeoCommercial moment. Firms instead need to think about developing and deploying a "GeoCommercial Strategy" that deliberately integrates geopolitical insight into core business decision-making. The development and deployment of a true "GeoCommercial strategy" cannot be siloed and must be embedded across the enterprise, integrated into corporate strategy, operational planning, risk management, and even brand positioning. Unlike traditional risk management or government relations approaches, a GeoCommercial strategy treats geopolitics as a structural force shaping both risk and opportunity. It enables companies to proactively align with trusted jurisdictions, anticipate disruptive political shifts, and adapt organizationally to stay competitive in a fragmented, state-driven global economy.

At its core, GeoCommercial strategy is not about reacting to crises. It's about positioning the firm to lead and compete for advantage in an era where commerce and geopolitics are inseparable.

The traditional role of the government relations team, once centered on regulatory compliance and lobbying, is no longer fit for purpose in a world where political risk must be factored into almost every business decision, from market expansion to M&A strategy to talent deployment.

Introducing

GeoCommercial Readiness

While every company is different, we've found that many face similar challenges, and benefit from a common starting point. We call it the Six A's: three elements focused on **strategic posture** – alignment, adverse trends, and advantageous trends—and three that assess **operational capability**—anticipation, agility, and adaptability. Together, these six dimensions provide a practical structure for navigating the GeoCommercial Era, enabling companies to think across time horizons and organizational functions.

Exhibit 2

TAG's Framework for Evaluating GeoCommercial Readiness

Imperatives for Enhancing GeoCommercial Readiness

Focus on strategic posture and operational execution

Strategy defines posture—which markets to enter, which sectors to prioritize, and how to prepare for divergent geopolitical scenarios. A strong strategic posture means that a company is geographically aligned, positioned to withstand adversarial political trends, and able to seize emerging advantages. It's the difference between having the right map and knowing how to drive the car. Firms must also develop the internal capabilities to execute – building the muscle memory to respond quickly and coherently when conditions shift, ensuring cross-functional coordination, and, when necessary, restructuring operations to support their strategic direction.

Plan across time horizons

Some geopolitical events demand immediate action – a new tariff is imposed, a company is added to an export control list, or conflict suddenly disrupts a critical market. In these moments, speed and clarity are essential. But other dynamics unfold more slowly: the steady realignment of capital toward favored sectors, the gradual rise of new strategic geographies, or the creeping risk of continued exposure to a fragile jurisdiction. Too often, the planning functions within a firm are built to handle one tempo but not the other. Firms must build the capacity to do both – to respond decisively when events break fast, and to reposition early when long-term trends signal structural change. Doing both well often means creating new internal structures that can bridge day-to-day responsiveness with long-term planning – something most traditional org charts aren't built to do.

Compete for position, not just protection

This is not simply a moment of risk; it is also a moment of strategic opportunity. Firms that focus solely on defense will miss the openings created by geopolitical change. Those that recognize shifts early, position themselves at the leading edge of new trade and capital flows, align with national priorities, and make proactive organizational adjustments – rather than merely monitoring global trends – can secure meaningful advantage. This is true not only at the global level, but also within specific markets where policy shifts and geopolitical alignments are actively redrawing the competitive landscape.

Calibrating Strategic Posture

Alignment

The extent to which a company's global footprint (supply chains, operations, partnerships, and revenue streams) is concentrated in geopolitically "trusted" markets versus those that may pose higher strategic, regulatory, or reputational risk due to growing geopolitical tensions.

Example

A leading global infrastructure company made a strategic decision in the past five years to reorient its international footprint around six core markets closely aligned with the United States, including key intelligence-sharing partners. As a result, the company was better insulated from the knock-on effects of rising geopolitical tensions and was well positioned to compete in sensitive sectors where government trust and national alignment are now critical factors for market access and contract eligibility.

Adversity

The extent to which a company is positioned to identify, monitor, and assess its exposure to geopolitical risks and to evaluate their significance, likelihood, and potential impact on operations, supply chains, and long-term strategy.

Example

A global tech company began shifting parts of its manufacturing from China to India and Vietnam well before trade tensions and pandemic disruptions escalated. When geopolitical risks materialized, including export controls, tariffs, and shutdowns, the company's early diversification helped avoid major delays and maintain supply continuity, demonstrating the value of proactive geopolitical risk planning.

Advantage

The extent to which a company is positioned to identify and pursue opportunities emanating from evolving geopolitical trends, and assessing their significance, likelihood, and potential impact on operations, supply chains, and long-term strategy.

Example

As U.S. allies announced major increases in defense spending, a global software company historically focused on data integration and analytics recognized an opportunity to expand into defense and security markets. The firm began repositioning its platforms to support military logistics, operational planning, and decision-making for allied defense agencies. By aligning its offerings with the evolving priorities of Western governments it gained access to new contracting pipelines and long-term programs that had previously been dominated by traditional defense suppliers.

Optimizing Capability and Operations

Anticipation

The recognition of how geopolitics intersects with a company's core business strategy, and proactive planning for a world in which current assumptions may no longer hold.

Example

A U.S.-based AI company eyeing expansion in the Gulf recognized that shifts in U.S. export policy could alter access to key markets. While previous restrictions limited prospects in the near term, the company chose not to disengage. Instead, it maintained relationships, monitored political signals, and built compliance pathways in anticipation of future policy shifts. When a new administration adopted a more open stance toward tech exports to Gulf partners, the company was ready. Its early groundwork allowed it to move quickly, gaining a first-mover edge in a strategically important region.

Agility

The capacity for a company to respond rapidly and effectively to geopolitical shocks and disruptions as they arise, with minimal loss to continuity or competitive position.

Example

Following a series of missile and drone attacks by Houthi rebels in the Red Sea, a shipping giant activated its contingency protocols swiftly rerouted container vessels around the Cape of Good Hope. Within days, they stood up alternative logistics hubs and instituted contingency surcharges to offset longer travel times and higher fuel costs.

Adaptability

The capacity to evolve organizational structures and business configurations in response to geopolitical shifts and strategic imperatives, enabling cross-functional alignment, faster decision-making, and tailored approaches to regional or market-specific conditions.

Example

An electric-vehicle manufacturer developed a specialized micromobility division focused on scooters and compact vehicles. Recognizing this segment's distinct market dynamics, the firm spun it off into a new independent company. This strategic move gave the spin-off autonomy to focus on region-specific design, regulatory compliance, and market partnerships, while enabling the parent company to streamline its core operations.

To meet the GeoCommercial moment boards and CEOs will need to engage across their business to understand how their global footprint, strategy, and corporate architecture generates unique risks, opportunities, and readiness. These reviews and any transformations carried out in response must be championed at the highest levels of corporate leadership to ensure success.

TAG GeoCommercial Strategy Group was set up to support boards and executive teams to place geopolitics at the center of corporate strategy, enabling unique strategic and operational efficiencies is a world increasingly focused on strategic competition.

Kurt Campbell is Chairman & Co-Founder at The Asia Group; Nirav Patel is CEO & Co-Founder at The Asia Group; Maxfield Brown is a Vice President at The Asia Group; Aman Thakker is a Vice President at The Asia Group.

THE ASIA GROUP

What's Your GeoCommercial Strategy?

Info@theasiagroup.com