



SMS 46TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE CALL FOR PAPER PROPOSALS

Strategy in a Fragmented Geo-Economic Landscape: Bridging Divides Across Markets, Institutions, and Technology

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The global strategic landscape is entering a period of profound transformation. The post–Cold War consensus around open markets and global interdependence is fracturing into a world of entrenched geopolitical blocs, regulatory divergence, and economic nationalism. States increasingly turn to economic tools—sanctions, export controls, tariffs, and industrial policy—not only to promote domestic interests but also as instruments of geopolitical leverage. Interdependence, once a foundation of cooperation, is now often weaponized.

Digital transformation and innovation ecosystems both shape and are shaped by these dynamics. New technologies emerge and are diffused unevenly across geopolitical lines, while digital infrastructure, platforms, and data governance have become contested domains. At the same time, innovation ecosystems—once globally integrated—are fragmenting, raising questions about where breakthroughs emerge, who controls them, and how firms and institutions collaborate under conditions of mistrust. Digital platforms, AI systems, and standards regimes are increasingly entangled with geopolitical agendas. Strategic responses must now integrate geopolitical foresight with technological agility.

This evolving order challenges core assumptions about strategy. Firms must operate across fault lines shaped not only by competition but by divergent political systems, security interests, and institutional logics. The consequences are likely uneven: while large multinationals with diversified footprints can navigate multiple regimes and influence global standards, smaller and mid-sized firms face growing uncertainty and tighter constraints.

Bridging divides—between markets, institutions, and ideologies, but also between technological infrastructures and data regimes—has never been more important. Continued value creation depends on building connective tissue across fragmented systems. Strategic leaders must rethink how to balance responsiveness to local pressures with global coherence, how to foster collaboration despite institutional divergence, and how to manage ecosystems that cross national and technological boundaries.

Berlin offers a uniquely resonant setting for these conversations. Once a symbol of global division, the city now embodies reunification, resilience, and regeneration. It is also home to a vibrant mix of economic actors: global giants and Mittelstand (SME) manufacturers, startups and social enterprises, research institutes and policy makers. Berlin thus provides not only symbolic context but also a living laboratory for examining how firms of all sizes and missions navigate strategic challenges in a complex global order.

Strategy scholars are especially well-positioned to engage with these dynamics. The field's diverse theoretical traditions and interdisciplinary reach provide powerful tools to explore how organizations respond to geopolitical shifts, institutional fragmentation, digital transformation, and asymmetries of scale and power. We invite contributions that investigate how strategic management can help firms—and societies—understand, adapt to, and shape the evolving geoeconomic, institutional, and technological landscape.

Conference Theme Tracks

Track A: Code, Chips, and Choice: Strategy and Technology in a Shifting Global Landscape

Track Co-Chairs: Andrew Shipilov, INSEAD; Bart Vanneste, UCL

Advances in artificial intelligence, digitization, and automation are reshaping the foundations of strategic decision-making. These technologies alter how firms compete, how they organize, and where they find opportunity. At the same time, their development and diffusion are increasingly shaped by broader shifts in the global landscape—shifts marked by institutional divergence, regulatory complexity, and uneven access to critical infrastructure and talent.

This sub-theme invites research on how digital and computational technologies both respond to and reinforce changing patterns in the global economy. How do firms navigate a strategic environment where the tools of innovation are embedded in—and sometimes constrained by—broader societal and geopolitical dynamics? What strategic choices become more or less viable

as technology itself becomes a site of differentiation, negotiation, and alignment? How do strategic decision-makers adapt when critical inputs (e.g., semiconductors, training data, cloud infrastructure) are increasingly politicized? We seek contributions that explore the role of emerging technologies not only in driving performance, but in mediating the broader divides that today's firms must navigate in a fragmented global economy.

Track B: Beyond Markets: Strategizing in Politicized and Polarized Environments

Track Co-Chairs: Tobias Kretschmer, Imperial; Aharon Cohen Mohliver, London Business School

Firms today operate in environments where political, legal, and social dynamics increasingly shape the boundaries of strategic choice. Traditional free-market assumptions—about open competition, regulatory neutrality, and the primacy of economic logic—are under pressure. Strategic outcomes are now often mediated by political alignments, societal expectations, and legal uncertainty. In many regions, reliability of institutions and predictability of rules can no longer be taken for granted.

This sub-theme explores how firms balance market strategies with nonmarket considerations across different national and institutional contexts. How do organizations adapt when social movements, political polarization, or shifting legal regimes alter the logic of competition? What role do legitimacy, stakeholder engagement, and values-based positioning play in shaping strategic outcomes? We welcome contributions that investigate how strategy must evolve when firms face contested societal roles, politicized reputations, or regulatory systems that diverge in structure and intent.

Track C: Talent, Teaching, and the Future of Strategic Capabilities

Track Co-Chairs: Sabine Reisinger, Johannes Kepler University; Barbara Müller-Christensen, Johannes Kepler University

In an era of institutional mistrust, political polarization, and rapid technological change, the foundations of strategic capability are being reshaped. Firms have long depended on higher education systems to produce talent, generate foundational research, and shape the leadership pipeline. But today, those systems are under increasing pressure—facing questions about relevance, legitimacy, and adaptability. At the same time, technologies like AI are transforming the skills firms need and the ways in which learning itself occurs.

This sub-theme explores what these shifts mean for strategy. How do firms navigate human capital development when educational institutions are destabilized or out of sync with emerging needs? What happens to innovation capacity, organizational learning, or strategic renewal when the traditional academic research base erodes? And how should firms think differently about training, learning partnerships, and long-term knowledge investments in response? We welcome contributions that examine how shifts in academic research and education — with respect to

content, processes, and accessibility — are shaping strategic choices and capability development in talent-intensive industries and beyond.

Track D: Strategic Interdependence: Navigating Complex Ecosystems Across Borders and Systems

Track Co-Chairs: Susanne Royer, Europa-Universität Flensburg; Julia Hautz, University of Innsbruck

In today's environment, few firms act alone. Strategic outcomes increasingly depend on how organizations manage interdependence—across borders, across supply chains, and within evolving systems of innovation and governance. Some partnerships are deliberate, others imposed by necessity. In either case, complexity is rising, while predictability is declining.

This sub-theme invites submissions on how firms navigate strategic interdependence in a fragmented but connected world. How do they manage coordination and control in systems they do not own? What kinds of structures, alliances, or technologies—such as platform ecosystems, AI-enabled governance or green technologies—enable responsiveness without collapse? What are the challenges in nascent ecosystems? And how do firms choose between building for resilience versus simplicity, for control versus collaboration? We welcome contributions that examine the interplay between uncertainty, complexity, and cooperation, and the new forms of strategic thinking they demand.

Interest Group Tracks

Track E: Competitive Strategy

Track Chair: Elisa Operti, ESSEC Business School

Competitive strategy has long examined how firms position within industries, shape rivalry, and build capabilities for sustained advantage, typically assuming integrated markets and relatively coherent institutions. In today's fragmented geo-economic landscape, these premises are strained: geopolitical blocs, divergent regulatory regimes, and competing technological standards mean that rivalry increasingly unfolds across ecosystems, platforms, and innovation networks shaped by political and institutional fault lines.

We invite research that examines how geo-economic fragmentation and technological change reshape industry structure and barriers to entry; how firms compete within and across ecosystems and platforms; and how collaboration networks, pre-competitive arrangements, and shared infrastructures affect competitive advantage and performance in a fragmented landscape. We also welcome microfoundational perspectives that trace how boundary-spanning managers, founders, scientists, or technical leaders forge cross-divide ties, reposition firms within polarized environments, and modify classic mechanisms of commitment, signaling, and multimarket contact. Finally, we invite contributions that integrate competitive strategy with nonmarket

behavior and institutional theory to explain how firms' political, regulatory, and standard-setting activities shape their positions and competitive outcomes in a fragmented geo-economic order.

Track F: Corporate Strategy

Track Chair: Daniel Keum, Columbia

The Corporate Strategy Interest Group invites submissions that examine how firms formulate and execute strategy in a world shaped by geopolitical fragmentation, technological shifts, and institutional divergence. As cross-border interdependencies become politicized and innovation systems splinter, firms must reassess how they allocate resources, define organizational boundaries, and compete across markets. We are interested in submissions that sheds light on core corporate-level choices – diversification, vertical (dis)integration, global footprint, alliances, M&A, restructuring, and technology investment – under rising political uncertainty and uneven access to talent, data, and critical infrastructure, such as energy.

We especially welcome research that helps explain how firms bridge divides across markets and institutions. How do multinationals maintain coherence amid local pressures? How do smaller firms navigate fragmentation with fewer buffers? How do corporate leaders balance long-term positioning with short-term geoeconomic shocks? We encourage submissions that bring diverse theoretical perspectives and empirical approaches to these questions.

Track G: Global Strategy

Track Chair: Stephanie Wang, Indiana University

The Global Strategy Interest Group invites inspiring and transformative research that reimagines how firms strategize in a world of simultaneous global connectedness and fragmentation. Worldwide grand challenges—spanning peace and security, climate change, global health, technological disruption, migration, and supply chain resilience—demand unprecedented global coordination, yet geopolitical tensions, institutional divergence, and technological decoupling complicate this imperative. We encourage work that revisits classic global strategy questions—internationalization, cross-border collaboration, global offshoring, and divestment—while exploring emerging paradigms that redefine what “global” means in contested spaces. How do firms orchestrate global networks when mobility of people, labor, capital, and knowledge is increasingly constrained or reconfigured? What does place mean when digital infrastructures blur geographical boundaries, yet local institutions and cultural contexts remain powerful? How do firms navigate ecosystems where integration and localization collide with demands for resilience and sovereignty? We also welcome research that examines the role of global stakeholders—governments, NGOs, multinationals—in shaping strategic choices under uncertainty. We especially welcome submissions that illuminate novel mechanisms, challenge conventional wisdom, and push the conceptual boundaries of global strategy in a fractured and fast-evolving world.

Track H: Strategy Process

Track Chair: Laura Poppo, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

The Strategy Process Interest Group invites bold, boundary-pushing research that reimagines strategizing and strategic sensemaking in a world where geopolitics, institutions, and technologies increasingly diverge. Fragmentation is not merely an external constraint—it has become a generative condition for how organizations envision the future, coordinate action, and construct coherence. We encourage work that challenges settled assumptions about how top management teams interpret geopolitical shifts, imagine alternative futures, and decide whether to shape emerging regimes or adapt to them. Equally important are the multilevel dynamics through which middle managers, experts, and frontline employees make sense of these forces, translating, contesting, or reinforcing strategic intentions. Such dynamics raise fundamental questions about how coherence is forged when organizations face conflicting rules, data regimes, and ecosystem partners. We also welcome research that uncovers novel routines, organizing principles, and forms of coordination that emerge as firms navigate fragmented technological infrastructures and politically contested markets. We invite contributions that not only explain strategy processes in this new global order but also push the field toward its next conceptual frontier.

Track I: Knowledge and Innovation

Track Chair: Victoria Sevcenko, INSEAD

The Knowledge and Innovation IG invites submissions that explore how managers can build, maintain and deploy their organizations' knowledge assets to achieve competitive advantage. These questions are becoming particularly critical in today's fragmented geo-political and economic environment, where organizations need to increasingly react to and manage rapid changes in technologies, industrial and trade policies, and data and standards regimes. We are especially interested in work that explores organizational learning, knowledge transfer, innovation, artificial intelligence capabilities, constraints on talent mobility, and organizational resilience to technology shocks, among others. Potential questions might include: How do organizations learn and adapt when they face persistent discontinuities across regulatory, political, and/or technological environments? How do firms balance protecting knowledge with benefiting from openness, collaboration, and ecosystem participation? What is the relationship between organizational learning and innovation when environments are fragmented rather than integrated? We welcome quantitative, qualitative, and conceptual papers that advance our understanding of organizational knowledge and innovation strategy and practice.

Track J: Strategy Practice

Track Chair: Anna Plotnikova, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

The Strategy Practice IG invites submissions that explore strategy as a socially situated, practice-based phenomenon. Rather than viewing strategy as a static asset, we focus on the actors, activities, and practices through which strategy is continuously enacted in diverse contexts. In today's fragmented geo-economic landscape, we are interested in who participates in strategizing across fragmented systems; what practices—activities, tools, discourses, technologies—enable coordination and resilience; and how these practices are enacted in everyday work, across roles, and within varied geographic and institutional settings. This year, we especially encourage research on bridging divides through practitioners, practices, and praxis. Illustrative questions include: How do actors navigate fragmented markets and institutional logics to create strategic coherence? How do practices enable coordination and knowledge sharing across digital and data divides? Which forms of praxis support decision-making in contexts where divides—technological, cultural, or institutional—are most pronounced? In what ways do AI-driven tools and sociomaterial practices reshape participation, power, and inclusion in strategizing? We welcome empirical, theoretical, and methodological contributions that advance understanding of strategy as lived practice.

Track K: Entrepreneurship and Strategy

Track Chair: Luca Berchicci, Erasmus University

The Entrepreneurship & Strategy Interest Group invites research that pushes the boundaries of how we understand opportunity, innovation, and strategic action in an era of geopolitical tension, institutional divergence, and technological fragmentation. Entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial strategists within established firms increasingly operate across fault lines where regulatory regimes differ, digital infrastructures are contested, and collaboration networks are disrupted. These forces reshape how opportunities are sensed, formed, and pursued. We encourage submissions that revisit core questions of entrepreneurial strategy: How does entrepreneurial action generate competitive advantage when uncertainty stems not only from markets but from fractured institutions and politicized technologies? How do ventures craft strategic coherence when facing conflicting rules, data regimes, or ecosystem partners? We welcome conceptual and empirical contributions that strengthen theory on entrepreneurial behavior and reveal how new and established ventures forge paths through fragmented systems. Research that advances our collective understanding of entrepreneurial strategy in this evolving global order is especially encouraged.

Track L: Strategic Human Capital

Track Chair: JR Keller, Cornell University

The Strategic Human Capital Interest Group welcomes submissions on the relationship between human capital and organizational strategy and performance. Particular questions of interest include the ways that firms can derive competitive advantage from their employees, how firms compete successfully with one another in the labor market, and the barriers to and consequences

of increasing workforce diversity. In keeping with the conference theme, we are particularly interested in submissions that address the role of human capital as organizations navigate an increasingly fragmented geo-economic landscape. Does the shifting landscape change how firms can or should manage and deploy human capital for competitive advantage? How will geopolitical dynamics and technological advances reshape recruitment, selection, and internal labor markets? How might firms collaborate with (or will they replace?) educational institutions in terms of educating, training, and developing current and future employees? Submissions that address these and other relevant topics are particularly welcome.

Track M: Stakeholder Strategy

Track Chair: Arzi Adbi, National University of Singapore

The Stakeholder Strategy Interest Group invites submissions that advance understanding of when, why, and how firms engage with their stakeholders, and their implications. These interactions may be direct or indirect, initiated by firms, stakeholders, or external events. Stakeholder-related topics are explored across stable and volatile political, economic, and social environments, raising crucial questions for managers about strategy, governance, and resource allocation. Such environments create opportunities and challenges for firms, policy issues for governments and nonprofits, and ethical considerations for relationships between organizations and activists. We welcome theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions that examine how stakeholder strategies create value and how macro trends shape their formulation and outcomes. In line with this year's conference theme, we encourage submissions that explore stakeholder management and governance in a fragmented geo-economic landscape where geopolitical tensions, institutional divergence, and technological divides influence how firms build and navigate relationships with diverse stakeholders.

Track N: Cooperative Strategies

Track Chair: Libby Weber, Michigan State University

In a world of rapid geopolitical and technological change, cooperative strategies have never been more important. While participation in platforms and ecosystems have allowed firms to co-innovate in a more cohesive economic environment, political and institutional divergence have increased the uncertainty of value capture and cooperation for individual firms in these domains. Further, alliances provide greater flexibility for managers facing this more complicated world but face unique issues from this divergent environment. Thus, the cooperative strategies interest group welcomes submissions examining the need, structure, governance and development of alliances, ecosystems and platforms in a politically divided, technologically driven world. We also welcome microfoundational perspectives on trust and cooperation in these domains in this turbulent environment. Finally, we welcome contributions that explore how cooperative strategies can help build connective tissue across fragmented systems to foster collaboration despite growing geopolitical blocs, regulatory divergence, and economic nationalism.

Track O: Strategic Leadership & Governance

Track Chair: Ann Mooney Murphy, Stevens Institute of Technology

The Strategic Leadership and Governance Interest Group invites submissions that provide novel and impactful examinations of how strategic leaders and governance mechanisms (e.g., CEOs, top management teams, boards) shape strategic direction, organizational outcomes, and value creation. Topics of interest include but are not limited to strategic decision making processes and dynamics of top executives and boards, the influence of stakeholders (e.g., media, activist investors), social evaluations of top leaders, the impact of advanced technologies such as AI, and executive career outcomes (e.g., compensation, promotion, turnover). Related to this year's conference theme, we encourage research that considers how strategic leadership and governance mechanisms affect or are affected by a fragmented geo-economic landscape. As geopolitical, technological, and institutional divides deepen, it would be especially interesting for scholars to examine how top executives and boards rethink how they coordinate across borders, manage interdependencies, and sustain value creation with shifting rules and constraints.

Track P: Behavioral Strategy

Track Chair: Gerard P. Hodgkinson, University of Manchester

The Behavioral Strategy Interest Group invites contributions that improve micro-foundational understanding of how individuals and collectives are variously addressing and failing to address the significant psychological challenges posed by the plethora of technological, economic, political, legal, social, and ecological uncertainties presently afflicting the world. In the wake of major technological and geopolitical shifts, mental models of the strategic landscape that once informed decision makers how to compete are no longer fit for purpose. Causal belief systems and cognitive heuristics that previously enabled firms to adapt with alacrity have become significant sources of inertia, as have established routines that previously enabled effective coordination within and between organizations. To what extent and in what ways are strategic decision makers equipped cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally to cope with these existential challenges? Why are some decision makers able to cope more effectively than others? How can psychological insights improve matters? How is AI transforming fundamental behavioral processes in strategic decision-making? Can AI complement or overcome human cognitive limitations? Conceptual, empirical, and methodological contributions that advance the science and practice of strategic management by bringing more realistic assumptions about human cognition, emotions, and social behavior to bear on the analysis of organizational decision-making and adaptation are equally welcome.

Community Tracks

Track R: Research Methods

Track Chair: Sandeep Pillai, Tulane University

Fundamental changes in strategic landscape, digital technologies, and innovative ecosystems offer scholars new tools and contexts to test theories. Research methods community invites submissions that use novel methodological approaches or existing methodological approaches in novel contexts undergoing substantial transformations. Similarly, we invite replication studies that extend our theories into the emerging fragmented geo-economic landscape or use such landscapes to identify the boundary conditions of the theories. Further, we invite articles that effectively demonstrate the use of AI in research. Topics of interest to the community also include philosophy of science, epistemology, experimental and non-experimental design, survey research, ethnography, measurement development and evaluation, construct validation, modeling and any other methodological topic that advances research practices within the SMS.

Track T: Teaching Community

Track Chair: Ayesha Malhotra, University of Calgary

It is an exciting and daunting time to teach strategy. As a syncretic field, we are fortunate to draw on a diverse set of theories and tools to navigate a volatile and complex business school landscape characterized by rapid and often unpredictable developments in artificial intelligence and robotics; trillion-dollar firms and their expanding ecosystems; geopolitics and economic nationalism; shifting cultural attitudes and student demographics; and the growing prominence of business schools outside North America and Europe. The SMS Teaching Community welcomes submissions on research, best practices, and innovations in teaching and learning that address a variety of questions, including: (a) How can strategy educators impart cutting-edge knowledge and skills in an age of artificial intelligence and automation—and what are the effective uses and potential abuses of these tools? (b) How can we help students better understand and bridge socio-political and technological divides to become ethical, engaged, and globally aware strategists? (c) How do we make strategic management curricula relevant to societal challenges and to an increasingly diverse student population in terms of experience, backgrounds, cultures, and career aspirations? (d) What useful concepts, tools, and frameworks lie outside the dominant paradigms—and geographic centers—of the strategy field?