Course title: International Business and Geopolitics (MBA Module)

Responsible teacher: Perttu Kähäri, Professor of Practice, International Business
Credits: 3 ECTS
Timing: January 4-8, 2027

(Note that there is another implementation of the module in 10-14 May 2027 in conjunction with a week at CBS 3-7 May 2027, Aalto's schedule slightly differs and topic of the CBS module is different)

Overview
This intensive course brings together international MBA students to analyse how geopolitical dynamics, socio-political risks and global disruptions influence international business strategy. A key focus is understanding how geopolitical, and geoeconomic developments influence multinational enterprise's strategic decision-making. It also considers the relationship between firms and politics, examining how companies respond to as well as are affected by, broader political and regulatory changes. It focuses on how multinational enterprises can navigate the uncertainty that arises from geopolitical tensions, sudden regulatory shifts and economic fragmentation, paying additional attention to resilience. Participants will explore the re-emergence of industrial policy, changing regulatory approaches across regions and the implications of growing economic and political polarization for international business. Working in teams, international MBA students will engage with a real-world case study to understand global business environments. Combining conceptual frameworks with applied learning through group work, scenario analysis and case discussions, the course enables participants to develop tools for analysing and responding to complex geopolitical environments. A key outcome of the course is a structured strategic assessment in which participants diagnose geopolitical risks and develop resilience-oriented strategies for multinational enterprises.

Learning outcomes
By the end of the module, participants will be able to:

- Assess geopolitical trends and political risks relevant to international strategy and market entry.
- Analyse how national security, physical and cyber threats, and alliance structures (e.g., Finland & NATO) influence multinational decision-making.
- Translate geopolitical insight into corporate strategy, risk mitigation, and stakeholder engagement plans.
- Synthesize firm, industry, and country perspectives into a coherent executive recommendation via a team case project and presentation.
- Reflect on insights from site visits and connect them to strategic choices.

Key topics

- International strategy under geopolitical uncertainty
- Political risk frameworks and scenario planning
- Geopolitics and national security; physical and cyber threats
- Finland & NATO: implications for firms and investors
- Geopolitics and multinationals: supply chains, technology controls, sanctions, and resilience

Pedagogy and learning methods

- Interactive lectures and discussions (International Strategy; Political Risks; Geopolitics and Multinationals; Geopolitics and National Security; Physical and Cyberthreats; Finland & NATO)
- Pre-readings related to the course topics
- Applied teamwork on a case throughout the week, culminating in formal presentations
- Executive/industry engagement via field trips
- Experiential learning elements including a campus tour and a recreational geopolitical visit to Suomenlinna fortress to contextualize history and security in the Nordic-Baltic region

Indicative schedule

- Monday
  - Morning: Course intro; International strategy
  - Afternoon: Political risks; Case intro; Teamwork on the case
  - Campus tour
  - Welcome dinner

- Tuesday
  - Morning: Geopolitics; Geopolitics and multinationals
  - Afternoon: Field trip 1 — A company affected by geopolitics

- Wednesday (public holiday)
  - Morning: Teamwork on the case
  - Afternoon: Field trip 3 — Recreational geopolitical visit – Suomenlinna fortress

- Thursday
  - Morning: Geopolitics and national security; Physical and cyberthreats; Finland & NATO
  - Afternoon: Field trip 3 — A visit related to national security

- Friday
  - Morning: Teamwork on the case

    - Afternoon: Case presentations; Closing

- Lunch provided each day

Assessment (indicative)

- Team case project (written brief and presentation): 50% — application of geopolitical analysis to international business strategy with actionable recommendations
- Class participation and engagement during sessions and field trips: 30%
- Individual reflection memo connecting field insights to strategic frameworks: 20%
  Note: The specific weighting and deliverable formats are not specified in the provided material; the above is a typical structure for a 3 ECTS intensive module.

Workload
Total 3 ECTS ≈ 81 hours, combining contact time (lectures, visits, presentations), pre-readings and independent/teamwork (case analysis, preparation). The hour breakdown is estimate following standard ECTS conventions.

Prerequisites and target audience

- MBA students or professionals with foundational knowledge of strategy and global business.

Deliverables

- Team case presentation on Friday with report
- Individual reflection memo

Logistics and notes

- The module runs as an on-campus, full-time intensive week with multiple off-campus field visits in Finland.
- Safety, security, and confidentiality protocols may apply at certain venues.