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Why geopolitical uncertainty is now a revenue-execution problem

Geopolitics is the trigger. The subject is what happens to a commercial system when the outside world gets less certain.

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Key Points

- Geopolitical instability doesn't stay in markets. It moves directly into company behaviour: tighter credit, postponed investment, softer demand, and slower decisions.
- Buyers don't stop buying. They become harder to move. Committees widen, procurement tightens and proof thresholds rise. The question shifts from “could this help?” to “what risk does this remove, and why now?”
- More than half of executives are already adjusting forecasts, reducing costs, and diversifying suppliers. UK CFOs still rank geopolitics as their top external risk, according to Deloitte.
- In tighter conditions, software has to be sold on consequence: cost avoided, revenue protected, risk reduced, or time-to-value made visible. The aspiration-led pitch doesn't survive a tighter procurement process.
- Treating volatility as a messaging problem is the core mistake. It's also an operating problem. Vague qualification, inconsistent stage definitions, and judgement-based forecasting all become more expensive when buyers hesitate.
- The commercial task is to make revenue execution more governable, as well as to generate more pipeline. When the outside world gets noisier, weak execution gets exposed faster.

The immediate issue isn't whether every geopolitical shock turns into a recession. The issue is that geopolitical shocks increase uncertainty, and uncertainty changes how companies buy, lend, invest, and plan. Right now, the IMF and World Bank are both warning that the current Middle East conflict is likely to leave the world with slower growth and higher inflation even if the ceasefire holds. Reuters reported World Bank estimates of a 0.3–0.4 percentage point hit to global growth in a baseline case and up to 1 percentage point if the conflict drags on, alongside disruption to oil, gas, fertiliser, helium, and other supplies.

That matters commercially because uncertainty doesn't stay in markets. It moves into company behaviour. ECB research shows that heightened policy uncertainty reduces corporate lending through both loan demand and loan supply, which in turn weighs on investment. The World Bank is also warning that firms are holding back in this environment, with weak investment and higher sensitivity to external shocks.

What that looks like in live business surveys

You can already see the operating effects. In the UK, services firms saw the biggest monthly jump in costs since 2021, while clients postponed investment decisions. In Spain, demand softened, confidence fell to its lowest level since 2023, and firms linked that deterioration directly to uncertainty over the conflict and fears that inflation would hit spending. In Canada, S&P Global's services PMI showed war-related uncertainty was delaying client decisions and keeping new business in contraction.

In that environment, the commercial problem shifts. Buyers don't stop buying altogether, but they become harder to move. Forecasts get revised more often. Costs come under more scrutiny. Risk appetite falls. PwC found that more than half of executives had already moved beyond planning and were actively adjusting forecasts, reducing costs, and diversifying suppliers. Deloitte found that UK CFOs still rank geopolitics as their top external risk, and that corporate risk appetite remains below its long-run average.

> Buyers don't stop buying. They become harder to move. The question shifts from "could this help?" to "what risk does this remove, and why now?"

Selling in a pressure market is a different discipline

McKinsey's work on B2B growth amid uncertainty makes this concrete. Companies operating in a world shaped by trade shifts, monetary changes, and geopolitics perform better when they respond with sharper commercial focus and more investment in sales operations. McKinsey notes that high-growth companies prioritise sales operations investment at 1.4 times the rate of low-growth companies.

The reason is straightforward. In easier conditions, software can be sold on aspiration, transformation, or broad future value. In tighter conditions, it has to be sold on consequence: cost avoided, revenue protected, risk reduced, time-to-value shortened, or cash impact made visible.

Buyer committees widen. Procurement slows. Forecasts get less forgiving. The issue is no longer just whether demand exists. It's whether the revenue system is tight enough to convert demand under pressure.

The implication is operating as well as commercial

The key mistake is to treat this as a messaging problem only. It's also an operating problem. If stages mean different things to different reps, if deals stay single-threaded, if finance sees the proposal too late, or if forecast calls are still judgement calls, uncertainty makes all of that more expensive. A softer market doesn't create those problems. It reveals them sooner.

The implication is practical. Teams need sharper qualification, stronger buyer evidence, clearer stage exits and a forecast cadence built on evidence rather than optimism. When the outside world gets noisier, weak execution gets exposed faster.

That is why the commercial task in this market is to make revenue execution more governable under uncertainty, as well as to generate more pipeline. The teams that cope best aren't necessarily the ones with the loudest positioning or the most activity. They're the ones that sell a must-fix problem, qualify harder, build buyer evidence earlier and run a cadence that brings truth forward before quarter-end.

Geopolitics is the trigger. The subject is what happens to a commercial system when the outside world gets less certain. That is why geopolitical uncertainty is now a revenue-execution problem.

Further Reading

- Forecast Accuracy: Why B2B Forecasts Miss and How to Fix Them
- Sales Qualification: The Standard That Separates Pipeline From Forecast
- 7 Steps to Win Buying Group Consensus and Cut Deal Slippage

Related terms

- Revenue Execution: The operational capability to consistently convert pipeline into closed revenue.
- Forecast Accuracy: The degree to which predicted revenue matches actual closed revenue.
- Deal Inspection: A structured review of a deal's health, risks, and next steps.
- Buyer Evidence: Proof points and documentation that validate a buyer's decision to purchase.
- Forecast Call: A regular meeting where sales leaders review deal status and revenue projections.
- Sales Process: A defined sequence of steps that guides reps from first contact to close.
- Pipeline: The aggregate of all active deals being worked at any given time.
- Commit: A rep's forecast category indicating high confidence a deal will close in the period.

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Related service: 5 Days to Scale

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