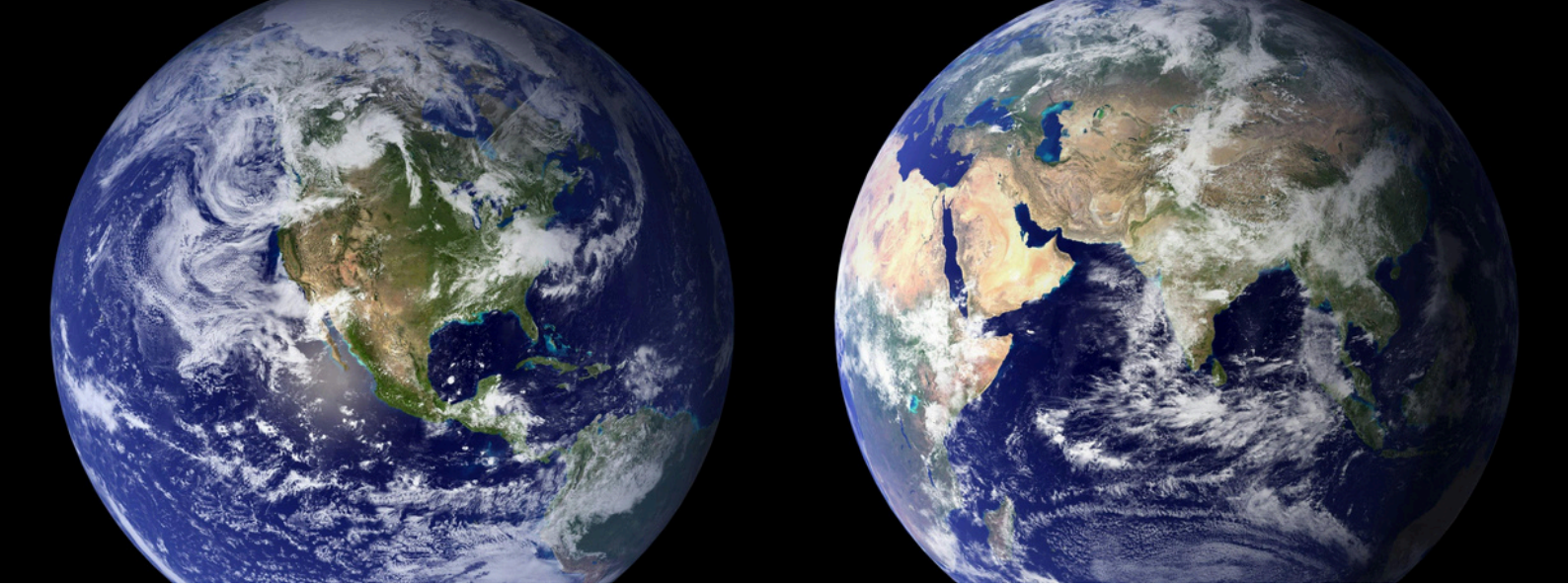
ESCP
BUSINESS SCHOOL
Geopolitics
Institute

GEOPOLITICAL RISK CONFERENCE

14.12.26

ESCP, 4 Rue Moisant
75015 Paris



GEOPOLITICAL RISK CONFERENCE

In 2024, ESCP Business School launched the ESCP Geopolitics Institute, co-directed by Professor Maxime Lefebvre and Professor Vanessa Strauss-Kahn. The Institute examines the connections between geopolitics, geoeconomics, economics and business, bringing academic expertise into dialogue with the perspectives and needs of decision-makers.

Against a backdrop of growing geopolitical fragmentation and uncertainty, the ability to understand and assess political and geopolitical risks has become a major challenge for businesses. But what exactly do we mean by geopolitical risk? How can it be analysed and assessed, and how can organisations translate this understanding into concrete decisions and responses?

Led by Dr Sara Bertin, the Geopolitical Risk project was launched in late 2025 through a series of consultations with key stakeholders across different industries. The conference builds on the discussions held over the past year, bringing together academics and business executives to examine geopolitical risk from both analytical and operational perspectives.

The programme will open with a keynote address examining the current geopolitical and geoeconomic landscape and the dynamics of fragmentation, followed by a business executive's perspective on what geopolitical risk looks like in the boardroom – and what may be overlooked.

Three panels will then explore different dimensions of the subject:

- Geopolitical Risk: What Are We Talking About? Examining the conceptual and theoretical foundations of political risk analysis, alongside the way geopolitical risk is understood and assessed by practitioners.
- Political Risk Assessment in Practice. Exploring how organisations approach the assessment of political risks in different sectors and operational contexts.
- From Analysis to Organisational Response. Discussing how companies translate risk analysis into organisational governance, resilience and strategic options.

The conference will conclude with a presentation on how the European Union can strengthen its strategic independence.

PROGRAMME

Time	Session	Speaker
9:00 -9:30	Registration - Arrival & networking coffee	
9:30 -9:35	*Presentation of the ESCP Geopolitics Institute*	Professor Maxime Lefevre & Professor Vanessa Strauss-Kahn
9:35 -9:40	*Presentation of the day*	Sara Bertin
9:45-10:30	Keynote: The current geopolitical & geoeconomics landscape and fragmentation	Mr. Sébastien Jean, Associate Director of Ifri's Geoeconomics and Geofinance Initiative
10:30-11:15	"What the boardroom sees — and misses"	Ms. Caroline Ruellan, CEO SONJ - Board member (Ardian, Atos, KKO) - AMF- chairwoman (CdA). (confirmed)
11:15-11:45	Coffee Break	
11:45-13:00	Panel: Geopolitical Risk: What are we talking about? *followed by Q&A*	Julian Campisi, Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Toronto - Scarborough Cecilia Sottilotta, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Foreigners of Perugia Rita Floyd, Professor of International Security and Ethics at the University of Birmingham, UK Sarah Carlson, CFA Senior Vice President, Sovereign Risk Moody's Ratings
13:00-14:15	Lunch	
14:15 15:30	Panel: Political risk assessment in practice *followed by Q&A*	Mathieu Pecquery, Director of Economic Affairs, Takeda, Takeda. Pharmaceutical General Olivier Kim, Directeur Sûreté Globale du Groupe Suez Maria Andrea De Villa, Dean and Professor School of Management Universidad EAFIT
15:30-16:00	Coffee Break	
16: 00-17:00	Panel: From analysis to organisational response *followed by Q&A*	Johannes Leitner, Co-founder and Managing Partner LM Political Risk and Strategy Advisory General Louis Pena, Conseiller Militaire - Affaires Publiques, AIRBUS Thierry Poignant, Director of Strategic and International Foresight, Thales Group David Chekroun, Professor of International Business Law at ESCP Business School
17:00-17:45	Closing Presentation	How can the European Union strengthen its strategic independence
17:45	Cocktail	

SPEAKERS



SÉBASTIEN JEAN

Professor of Economics

Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers, Paris

Sébastien Jean is professor of economics at Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers (Paris), where he holds the chaire Jean-Baptiste Say d'économie industrielle. He is also Associate Director with Ifri, where he is in charge of the "Geoeconomics and Geofinance" initiative. He is a member of France's Council of Economic Advisers (Conseil d'analyse économique) and National Productivity Council (CNP), a Research Associate with CEPII, a Policy Associate with GEP (University of Nottingham, UK), and a fellow of CESifo Research Network (Munich, Germany). He has previously been Director of CEPII, the French leading centre for research and expertise in international economics, from 2012 to 2021, after holding positions at INRAE, OECD and CEPII. His research and policy works mainly deal with the applied economic analysis of globalization, with special emphasis on international trade, trade policies, international economic policy, and their links with geopolitics. He has taught in various institutions. He graduated from Ecole Centrale de Paris and holds a PhD in economics from University of Paris-1.
Personal webpage: http://sebastien.jean.eco.free.fr/



CAROLINE RUELLAN

PhD

SA former Law professor, and currently an executive and non-executives advisor (Sonj), Caroline Ruellan is a board member (Ardian, Atos…), a member of the Conseil national de la médiation and of the AMF (French Financial Markets Authority). She is also the chairman of the CdA (French Association of Directors).
A graduate of the IHEDN (Institute for Advanced Studies in National Defence), she holds a degree from Harvard Law School and a PhD from Panthéon-Assas University.



JULIAN CAMPISI

Assistant Professor of Political Science
University of Toronto - Scarborough

Julian Campisi is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto – Scarborough. He completed his PhD in Political Science at York University in 2019. His research interests are predominantly in the field of international political economy and comparative politics, specifically the geopolitics of risk, and the methodologies that underpin political risk assessments in the private and public realms. Julian was a 2022 Associate Fellow at JHU SAIS Bologna, a 2021 MITACS Canadian Science Policy Fellow with the Department of National Defence, and a recent Science & Technology Fellow with the Inter-American Institute on global change research. In 2015-2016 he was a visiting scholar at LUISS University in Rome; he completed his MA at UBC Vancouver in European Studies, and his BA at the University of Ottawa in International Studies. Julian has worked and studied in China, Australia, and Italy over the years in a variety of industries. Currently, he teaches courses on Canadian politics, IPE, public policy, IR, and multiculturalism, in addition to providing consulting advice on geopolitical risks. He is co-editor of The Routledge Handbook of Political Risk (2025).



CECILA EMMA SOTTILOTTA

Associate Professor of Political Science
University of Foreigners of Perugia

Cecilia Emma Sottilotta is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University for Foreigners of Perugia and Visiting Professor at the College of Europe (Bruges). She previously directed the Peace Studies MA Program at the American University of Rome. Her research covers political risk analysis, state-MNE relations, and European and Latin American politics. She is the author of Rethinking Political Risk: Concepts, Theories, Challenges (Routledge, 2016) and Il rischio politico (LUISS University Press, 2019), and co-editor of The Routledge Handbook of Political Risk. She holds a PhD from LUISS and has held visiting positions in Salzburg, Barranquilla, Hamburg and Berlin.



RITA FLOYD

Professor of International Security and Ethics
University of Birmingham

Rita Floyd is Professor of International Security and Ethics at the University of Birmingham, UK. She is the author of four monographs and three edited books as well as numerous peer-reviewed articles. Prof. Floyd is co-editor in chief of International Affairs.

Professor Floyd researches and teaches in security studies. She is interested in the ethics of emergency politics, in security theory and climate/environmental security. Floyd also has a general interest in IR theory, especially the English school.

Floyd is the originator of Just Securitization Theory. Her 2019 book The Morality of Security: A theory of Just Securitization (Cambridge University Press) combines insights from the just war tradition and securitization studies to provide a theory of morally permissible security practice. This book was shortlisted for the Susan Strange Best Book Prize in 2020. A symposium on the book was published in the European Journal of International Security in 2022.

In 2024, Floyd published The Duty to secure: From just to mandatory securitization, also with CUP. This book builds on top of the Morality of Security. It considers when securitization is not 'merely' morally permissible but morally required of actors and different levels of analysis.

Floyd has been in Birmingham since April 2012 when she was appointed Birmingham Fellow in Conflict and Security. Before then she was a British Academy Post-doctoral Fellow at the University of Warwick and before then an ESRC post-doctoral fellow. She received her PhD in 2007 from the University of Warwick. Her PhD was published in 2010 by Cambridge University Press as Security and the Environment: Securitisation theory and US Environmental Security Policy. It appeared in paperback in 2014, and it was translated into Chinese in 2021.



SARAH CARLSON

Lead Ananlyst

Moody's

Sarah has been the lead analyst for most countries in the European Union, and is also a former lead analyst for the United States. She is currently the lead analyst for France and Italy, among other European countries. She is also one of the Sovereign Risk Group's global spokespeople. She joined Moody's in 2009 after completing a Sloan Fellowship at the London Business School. Prior to this academic sabbatical, she spent seven years at the Financial Services Authority in London where she headed the regulator's Risk Analysis area and acted as its chief macroeconomist. Before joining the FSA, she worked in Dun & Bradstreet's Economic Analysis Group for six years, where she was the organisation's Deputy Chief Economist. She holds an MA in European Studies (with a concentration in Economics and Finance) from the Elliott School of International Affairs at the George Washington University in Washington, DC and an AB with a double major in Government and History from Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire in the United States. She is a CFA Charterholder and is co-chair of the Macroeconomic Committee of the CFA Society France. She is a dual citizen of the United Kingdom and the United States and is based in Paris.



MATHIEU PECQUERY

Market Access Director

Takeda France

Mathieu Pecquery is Market Access Director at Takeda France. Since 2017, first at Shire and then at Takeda, he has led pricing negotiations with the French Economic Committee for Health Products (CEPS) across the company's portfolio, with a particular focus on rare diseases. He also takes part in the work of Leem, the French pharmaceutical industry association, on the framework agreement with public authorities and on regulation. Over more than twenty years in the industry, he has held market access, hospital sales and marketing roles at Novartis, Lundbeck, Baxter and Baxalta. His successive pricing roles have given him a privileged vantage point on the economic evolution of the pharmaceutical sector and on the political stakes that come with it. A pharmacist by training (PharmD, University of Amiens), he also holds a specialised master's degree in medical management from ESCP.



GENERAL OLIVIER KIM

Vice President and Director of Global Security
Suez Group

General Olivier Kim has served as Vice President and Director of Global Security for the Suez Group, based in Paris-La Défense, since September 2025. He joined after a distinguished career of more than 35 years in the French National Gendarmerie.

A graduate of Saint-Cyr (1988) and the National Gendarmerie Officers' School, he spent five years as second in command of the GIGN, the gendarmerie's elite intervention unit. During that time, he took part in around 100 anti-crime and counter-terrorism operations, including the 1994 assault that freed the 173 hostages aboard the Paris–Algiers Airbus. He went on to found and lead the gendarmerie's Anti-Terrorism Office and its Provost Marshal's Office. He also commanded the Haute-Savoie departmental group and the Burgundy-Franche-Comté region and served as Commander of the Gendarmerie Reserves. As Lieutenant General, he was Director of Operations and Employment at the General Directorate of the National Gendarmerie, then Commander of the Grand Est region and the Eastern Defense and Security Zone. His international service includes the Balkans (KFOR) and Afghanistan, where he advised the commander of the Afghan National Civil Order Police within NATO's training mission.

He is a former auditor of CHEM and IHEDN and holds master's degrees in strategy and international relations. He is a Commander of the Legion of Honor and of the National Order of Merit, and his decorations include the Cross of Military Valor and the U.S. Bronze Star.



MARIA ANDREA DE VILLA

Dean and Professor School of Management

Universidad EAFIT

Maria Andrea De Villa is Professor of Strategy at EAFIT University and Visiting Professor at University of Michigan-Flint. She received her Ph.D. from Cranfield University (UK). Her research focuses on how firms manage sociopolitical interactions and risks through nonmarket strategies. Her work has been published in Global Strategy Journal, International Business Review, Journal of International Management, AIB Insights, among others, and has received the Best Paper Prize 2025 from the Global Strategy Journal.



JOHANNES LEITNER

Co-founder and Managing Partner

LM Political Risk and Strategy Advisory

Johannes Leitner is the co-founder and Managing Partner at LM Political Risk and Strategy Advisory in Vienna, Austria, with over 15 years of expertise in geostrategy, trade compliance, geo/political risk management, and global business strategy.

He serves as the academic director of the EMBA program in International Management at the University of Applied Science for Economy, Management, and Finance in Vienna, and is on the board of the Political Risk Studies Association (PRSA) and is affiliated researcher at the recognized Austrian Institute for International Affairs (OIIP).

Johannes is an accomplished author and frequently participates in conferences and panel discussions sharing his expertise on trade compliance and geo-political risk management. Earlier in his career, Johannes served as a peacekeeper in Vukovar, Croatia. He received his PhD from the Vienna University of Economics and Business, graduated in International Business Studies at the Vienna University of Economics and Business, and in Political Sciences at the University of Vienna. In addition, he was a visiting scholar at the Stockholm School of Economics and lectured among others at Higher School of Economics in Moscow and Rotterdam School of Management, the Netherlands.

He is Co-editor of “The Routledge Handbook of Political Risk” published early 2025, were he contributed chapters on strategies to manage geo-political risks by international businesses.



AIR LIEUTENANT GENERAL LOUIS PENA
Defense Advisor to Public Affairs France
Airbus SAS

Air Lieutenant General (Ret.) Louis Pena is the former Inspector of the French Air and Space Force and former Deputy Commander of the Air Defence and Air Operations Command (CDAOA). Since 1 September 2024, he has served as Defence Advisor to Public Affairs France at Airbus SAS.

A graduate of the French Air Force Academy, he qualified as a combat navigator in 1994 and served in several operational and command positions throughout his military career. He participated in operations in the Balkans, including Operation Trident over the former Yugoslavia in 1999, and was among the first aircrews to convert to the Rafale, later commanding the French Air Force's first Rafale squadron. In 2007, he led the aircraft's first operational deployment to Tajikistan for operations over Afghanistan.

He subsequently commanded Air Base 133 Nancy-Ochey and held senior positions within the Joint Operations Command. In 2013, he was deployed to Mali during Operation Serval as Air Advisor to the Force Commander and commander of the deployed air base in Bamako. In 2015, he served as Chief of Staff of Operation Barkhane in the Sahel-Saharan region. He was appointed Inspector of the Air and Space Force in 2022 and transferred to the reserve list in August 2024.

He holds an aeronautical engineering degree from the French Air Force Academy, a research master's degree in Religions, Cultures and Politics, and is a graduate of the Spanish Armed Forces Staff College. He has also written for several defence publications, including the Revue Défense Nationale, DSI and Vortex. He is a Commander of the Legion of Honour and an Officer of the National Order of Merit.



THIERRY POIGNANT

Director of Strategic Foresight and International Affairs
Thalès Group

A former Air Force officer, he began his career as a fighter pilot and later transitioned to a role
in procurement programs and international relations within the Ministry of Defence and various French embassies in South America and Asia.
In 2018, he joined Thales Group as the Director of Strategic Foresight and International Affairs within the group's strategy department, responsible for prospective and cross-functional reflections on Thales' markets and activities.
He is an engineer from the Air and Space Force Academy and engineering school, holds a master's degree in aeronautics, and is also a former auditor of the Institut des Hautes Études de la Défense Nationale et de l'Armement.
Chevalier des ordres Nationaux du Mérite et de la légion d'honneur.



DAVID CHEKROUN

Professor of International Business Law
ESCP

David Chekroun is a Tenured Professor of International Business Law at ESCP Business School. He lectures on international business transactions and corporate governance for law and business students across Europe (Paris, London, Berlin), the Middle East and the United States.

At ESCP, he serves as faculty chair of the Law & Finance programme, which combines legal and financial education. He designs and develops executive education programmes in collaboration with faculty members and senior executives from leading European companies, with a particular focus on law and business skills. He previously held the KPMG Professorship in International Corporate Governance and is co-founder of the Institute for Corporate Governance.

He has been a Visiting Professor of Law at NYU Abu Dhabi and Cardozo School of Law in New York, a Global Hauser Research Fellow at NYU School of Law, and an adjunct professor at Sorbonne Law School.

His research focuses on International Business Law, Law & Finance, foreign direct investment (FDI) screening, corporate governance and complex legal issues. He has published numerous articles on international business transactions and is co-editor-in-chief of the International Business Law Journal. He is also a member of the Scientific Council of the Institut des Études et de la Recherche sur le Droit et la Justice (IERDJ).

Admitted to the Paris Bar, he is the founder of a boutique law firm specialising in corporate governance and foreign direct investment projects. He is also active in several think tanks, developing policy initiatives and organising conferences on corporate governance and international business in Paris, London, Abu Dhabi and New York.

ORGANISERS



MAXIME LEFEBVRE

Diplomat - Permanent Affiliate Professor
ESCP

Maxime Lefebvre, born in 1967, is a career diplomat, since 2022 seconded to ESCP Business School as Permanent Affiliate Professor. He is teaching international relations and is the scientific director of the MSc "International Business & Diplomacy".
He began his diplomatic career in 1994, has been working as a technical councellor at Hubert Védrine's Cabinet office on strategic affairs, Balkans and Russia, as director of international relations at ENA, and as a deputy director of the policy planning staff. He was posted in Berlin and in Brussels (European Union) and was ambassador / permanent representative to the OSCE in Vienna.
He has written a lot of books and articles about international relations and European policy.
He is Co-director of ESCP Geopolitics Institute.



VANESSA STRAUSS-KAHN

Professor of Economics

ESCP

Vanessa Strauss-Kahn has been a Professor of Economics at ESCP Business School since 2008.
Her research focuses on economic geography and international trade, with an emphasis on trade liberalization and its impact on firm performance, global value chains, and the labor market. She also examines trade diversification and its relationship with economic development. More recently, she has studied financial and political crises. Her work has been published in renowned journals such as The Review of Economics and Statistics, The Journal of International Economics, and The Review of World Economics.
Professor Strauss-Kahn teaches microeconomics, managerial economics, and topics related to international trade, globalization, and regulation to Bachelor, Master, and EMBA students.
Her professional experience includes working with major international organizations such as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the United Nations Development Programme on specific missions.
Vanessa holds a PhD in Economics from New York University. Before joining ESCP Business School, she spent seven years as a faculty member at INSEAD and taught at institutions such as Baruch College International Programs (Singapore and Paris) and The American University of Paris (AUP). She also served as Associate Dean for the Bachelor program at ESCP Business School for several years and as Associate Dean of the Graduate Business School at AUP for one year.
She is Co-Director of ESCP Geopolitics Insitute.



SARA BERTIN

Economist, ESCP affiliate professor of Economics, PhD
ESCP

Sara Bertin is a research fellow at the ESCP Business School Geopolitics Institute and an affiliate professor. She also works as a consultant. Sara has had a long career as a macroeconomist and specialist in sovereign and geopolitical risk, in both international institutions and the private sector.

She served as Chief Country Economist for Egypt and then for Morocco at the African Development Bank, as an economist in the Africa Department of the International Monetary Fund, and as a research associate at the OECD Development Centre.

In the private sector, she has held a range of positions: first at Moody's, as Senior Vice President–Analyst covering North African and Southern European countries, and later as Deputy Director in charge of sovereign risk at an insurance group.

She has also taught at Sciences Po, Baruch College and New York University. She holds a Ph.D. in Economics from New York University, a master's in journalism from Columbia University, and a Master 2 in Financial and Monetary Economics from Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne.

Sara has a passion for documentary film. Among other projects, she produced a film about the so-called "crack babies," highlighting the misuse of scientific evidence by the media and policymakers during the crack epidemic.



AURÉLIE LE LIÈVRE-EKICI

Post-Doc

ESCP Geopolitics Institute

Aurélie Le Lièvre-Ekici holds a PhD in Political Science from Sorbonne Nouvelle University.
She spent nearly a decade working in the private sector in the international football industry, specialising in the legal and regulatory dimensions of international player transfers.
Her research examines how the movement of football players and the international football labour market are shaped by regulatory frameworks, international agreements, and political and geopolitical developments. She is particularly interested in how rules governing international football relate to broader political and legal contexts, and how political crises and armed conflicts, including the wars in Mali and Ukraine, affect cross-border player mobility and the football transfer market.
She currently contributes to the development of the Geopolitics Institute at ESCP Business School, where she also teaches in the Bachelor's programme. Her work lies at the intersection of international relations, political economy, and the governance of professional football.