SMS 47TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE CALL FOR PAPER PROPOSALS

Competing in the Shadow of Sovereignty: Firms, Technology, and Middle Powers

Sheraton Vancouver Wall Center, October 16-19, 2026

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Organizations today operate in an era of intertwined geopolitical and technological disruption. Rivalry over critical resources, advanced technologies, and industrial leadership is accelerating fragmentation, with tensions emerging even among traditional allies, while middle powers increasingly pursue strategic autonomy and economic sovereignty. The evolving order is shaped not only by U.S.–China rivalry but also by the actions of these middle powers. Through industrial policy, coalition building, and economic diversification, these countries are actively shaping the rules and partnerships that will help define the next phase of economic development and globalization.

At the same time, rapid technological change is transforming companies and competitive dynamics. Artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies are reshaping how firms innovate, organize work, make decisions, and compete. Rather than being a neutral driver of productivity, technological change has become a primary arena for geopolitical contestation. Governments increasingly view advanced technologies as strategic assets tied to sovereignty and influence. As a result, global coordination on ethics, standards, and regulation has fractured,

while countries simultaneously promote domestic technological capabilities and national champions.

These developments carry profound implications for strategic management. Foundational questions in strategy, from how firms compete and innovate to how they organize, are being stress-tested against these new realities. More broadly, these shifts challenge the boundaries of our existing theories: Are they sufficient to explain firm behavior when the market logic of efficiency coexists with, or is sometimes subordinated to, the state logic of security? Does efficiency-based strategy hold in sectors where national security considerations are important? How do policies aimed at technological leadership and economic security reshape firm strategy, innovation, and international expansion?

We therefore invite theoretical, empirical, and practitioner-oriented submissions that advance our understanding of strategic management under conditions of geopolitical and technological transformation. We welcome contributions examining how firms respond to geopolitical tensions, state intervention, and technological disruption. We are particularly interested in proposals examining how firms and corporate leaders help reshape the norms that govern business and strategy. While U.S.–China dynamics are vital, we especially welcome contributions on the strategies of firms operating within or across middle powers and emerging blocs. How do firms in these contexts actively shape business norms rather than simply adapt to fragmentation created by larger powers? How do they diversify beyond traditional economic relationships and identify opportunities in new markets and regions? How do they compete, innovate, and catch up in advanced technologies dominated by leading firms and major powers?

We are interested in these dynamics across sectors of growing geopolitical and economic importance. While advanced technologies remain central, we strongly encourage proposals in other strategic sectors, including critical infrastructure, transportation, clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and critical minerals, that underpin economic security, national competitiveness, and the energy transition.

The conference location in Vancouver, British Columbia, provides an ideal setting for these conversations. As Canada's gateway to the Asia-Pacific and a major hub for trade, port infrastructure, resource industries, and clean energy innovation, Vancouver reflects many of the strategic challenges facing firms today—from supply chain resilience and infrastructure development to economic diversification, sustainability, and resource governance. This is a critical moment for strategic management scholarship to contribute to broader discussions about how organizations navigate and influence the evolving global order.

Conference Theme Tracks

Track A: Competing under State and Market Logics

Chairs: Mia Raynard, University of British Columbia and Yanbo Wang

This track examines how firms compete, adapt, and shape their environments in industries increasingly influenced by national security concerns, industrial policy, and geopolitical rivalry. These include strategic sectors such as semiconductors, advanced manufacturing, critical minerals, resource industries, clean technologies, and critical infrastructure. We invite research on how state and market logics reinforce one another or come into tension. Government support may enable investments that firms would otherwise forgo, while security requirements can constrain where firms operate, what technologies they transfer, and whom they partner with. At the same time, pressure to reshore or friend-shore critical activities may conflict with the advantages of global specialization, scale, and access to innovation. How do firms respond when commercial and government objectives align or diverge, whether by redrawing their boundaries, relocating production and R&D, or restructuring their alliances? Comparative studies across countries and regions are especially welcome, as is work on how industrial and innovation policies foster capability development and entrepreneurship or encourage rent-seeking.

Track B: Firms, Middle Powers, and Economic Transformation

Chairs: Peng Zhang and Thomas Lindner

Firms from advanced middle-power countries, including Canada and some countries in Europe and Asia, play important roles in cross-border value creation and innovation. Firms from emerging economies in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America are sources of global trade, entrepreneurship, investments and economic growth. Yet these firms operate in a global economy increasingly shaped by great-power rivalry, shifting country-level alliances, economic nationalism, and the pursuit of strategic autonomy.

This track invites research on how firms from middle-power countries and emerging economies compete and navigate this changing global landscape. How do they respond to geopolitical tensions while maintaining access to markets, technologies and supply chains? What challenges and opportunities do they face in globalization, innovation, and entrepreneurship? How do their strategies contribute to industrial upgrading and economic transformation? How do home country governments interact with these MNEs' activities in host countries? We especially encourage research that generates novel theoretical insights, rather than simply applying established theories to these empirical settings.

Track C: AI, Technology, and the New Geopolitics of Competition

Chairs: Pek Hooi Soh and Kenneth Huang

Artificial intelligence (AI) is both a cornerstone of firm strategy and a central arena of geopolitical competition. With frontier AI capabilities concentrated among a small number of countries and firms, middle powers must build competitiveness with technologies and under regulatory frameworks largely shaped elsewhere. This track welcomes theoretical, empirical, and practitioner-oriented contributions that deepen understanding of strategic management in this context. We are especially interested in how firms (from not only superpower but also middle

power and emerging middle power countries) develop AI strategies under asymmetric dependence; respond to and shape governance and safety regimes; and, independently or through coalitions, build capabilities and influence the rules of AI competition. We also invite research on when, and in which sectors, AI safety, resilience, assurance, and trustworthiness become sources of differentiation and competitive advantage for these firms (e.g., in critical infrastructure and energy, health and financial services, semiconductor, and advanced manufacturing). Submissions may span levels of analysis and methods and examine AI's broader effects on competition, innovation, entrepreneurship, and organization.

Track D: Leading Organizations in a Politically Fragmented World

Chairs: Irina Surdu and Cheng Gao

This track examines how organizations navigate an environment in which geopolitical rivalry, institutional divergence, nationalism, and social polarization affect strategy. It explores how leaders and organizations respond when the assumptions of an integrated global economy cannot be taken for granted. Key themes include how firms build resilience whilst remaining innovative, pursue international growth whilst managing political risks, and reconcile competing demands from stakeholders such as governments, employees, communities, and investors.

We welcome research that connects strategy with macro-level political tensions and offers new insight into how organizations can lead, adapt, and create value amid fragmentation. Questions of interest might include:

- How does political fragmentation change the way organizations compete, cooperate, and innovate?
- How do CEOs and TMTs navigate escalating political and social pressures such as polarization, populism, and global social activism?
- How do corporate leaders shape public policy and the rules governing business in a politically fragmented world?
- How do organizations manage supply chain disruptions arising from geopolitical conflict, sanctions, and trade restrictions?

Interest Group Tracks

Track E: Competitive Strategy

Track Chair: Jan-Michael Ross, University of Groningen

Competitive strategy has traditionally explained advantage through positioning, superior resources, and rivalry governed primarily by market logic. Increasingly, however, states shape who competes, where, and on what terms. Industrial policy, security screening, subsidies, and the promotion of national champions alter industry structure, entry barriers, and the value of firm resources. When the market logic of efficiency coexists with, or is constrained by, the state logic of security, how must our theories of competitive advantage adapt?

We invite research on how sovereignty and security concerns reshape rivalry, competitive dynamics, and value capture, and on how state-backed and private firms compete. We are also interested in how firms from middle powers and emerging economies build capabilities, imitate, and catch up with leading firms in AI and other advanced technologies as their governments seek to reduce technological dependence. Finally, we welcome work on how firms — and the managers, founders, and technical leaders within them — turn geopolitical alignment, resilience, and trustworthiness into sources of advantage, and how they shape the rules and standards that govern competition.

Track F: Corporate Strategy

Track Chair: Jasmina Chauvin, Georgetown University

The Corporate Strategy Interest Group invites submissions that examine how firms create value from their business portfolios and reconfigure their corporate scope over time. We welcome diverse theoretical and empirical approaches to questions concerning resource allocation, redeployment, diversification, refocusing, vertical integration, mergers & acquisitions, divestitures, alliances, organizational boundaries, and headquarters' value-added, among others. Consistent with this year's theme, we especially encourage research on how these corporate choices change in a world reshaped by technological change and splintering geopolitical orders. For example, how are firm boundaries redrawn when security concerns shape what firms own, acquire, or spin off? How do government policies, such as export controls and industrial subsidies, reshape markets for corporate control and gains from diversification? How do multilocation firms allocate capital, talent, and data across rival jurisdictions? We especially welcome research of firms located in middle powers and emerging economies, where business groups, state-owned enterprises, and national champions loom large.

Track G: Global Strategy

Track Chair: Charlie Stevens, Rutgers University

The Global Strategy Interest Group invites research examining how firms navigate and shape a global economy increasingly organized around national security, economic sovereignty, and technological competition. These forces challenge established assumptions about where multinationals locate activities, how they enter markets, and what they internalize. How do export controls, investment screening, sanctions, and data localization reshape international expansion and global value chains? How do multinationals manage competing sovereign demands across their subsidiary networks, and when does country of origin become a liability or an asset? How do firms from middle powers and emerging economies turn great-power rivalry into opportunity by diversifying markets, forging new alliances, and shaping the rules of cross-border business rather than simply adapting to them? How do artificial intelligence and states' pursuit of technological sovereignty alter the organization of multinational enterprises and the geography of value creation? We encourage conceptual, qualitative, and quantitative

contributions that identify novel mechanisms and revisit established theories, and we welcome work across the full breadth of global strategy.

Track H: Strategy Process

Track Chair: Joachim Stonig, University of St. Gallen

The Strategy Process Interest Group focuses on how strategies are envisioned, implemented, changed, and governed over time. The conference theme invites strategy process scholars to examine how firms navigate the increasingly intertwined forces of geopolitical fragmentation, state intervention, and technological disruption. We particularly encourage research on how strategists and organizations interpret shifts in economic sovereignty and security, incorporate geopolitical considerations into strategic decision-making, and balance market logics of efficiency with state logics of security and resilience. How do these tensions shape strategic choices, resource allocation, organizational adaptation, and relationships with governments and other stakeholders? How do strategy processes enable firms in middle powers to navigate competing blocs, build strategic autonomy, or actively shape emerging norms and ecosystems? We also welcome research examining how AI and other advanced technologies transform strategic decision-making and implementation. More broadly, we invite theoretical and methodological contributions that advance our understanding of strategy processes across contexts.

Track I: Knowledge and Innovation

Track Chair: George Chondrakis, Esade Business School

The Knowledge and Innovation IG invites submissions examining how organizations develop and use knowledge to innovate and achieve competitive advantage. This year's conference theme highlights how the pursuit of technological sovereignty and advances in artificial intelligence are reshaping the conditions for knowledge creation, sharing, and application. We are particularly interested in how firms navigate tensions between international knowledge interdependence and national ambitions for technological autonomy. How do industrial policies shape firms' incentives to invest in learning and innovation? How do organizations reconfigure knowledge networks and innovation partnerships as geopolitical relationships shift? How does AI transform organizational learning and the development of innovative capabilities? How can firms in middle powers access, combine, and commercialize knowledge to develop technological strengths and influence the direction of technological change? We welcome quantitative, qualitative, and conceptual contributions addressing these questions and the broader challenges of managing knowledge, learning, and innovation within and across organizations.

Track J: Strategy Practice

Track Chair: Renate Kratochvil, Stockholm School of Economics

The Strategy Practice IG invites empirical, theoretical, and practitioner-oriented submissions examining practices, praxis, and practitioners in strategy-making.

Illustrative questions in the context of the conference theme include: How do firms and strategy practitioners navigate geopolitical transitions? How do AI and other advanced technologies reshape strategic decision-making, participation, power, and organizing? What practices enable firms to build new collaborations, diversify markets, develop capabilities, and create resilience amid geopolitical and technological disruption? How do practitioners navigate increased polarization and conflicting stakeholder demands?

We welcome contributions to both, strategy as practice more generally and strategy as practice connected to the conference theme that advance our understanding of strategy as a lived, situated, and practice-based phenomenon.

Track K: Entrepreneurship and Strategy

Track Chair: Colleen Cunningham, University of Toronto / University of Utah

The Entrepreneurship and Strategy Interest Group invites submissions that focus on the entrepreneurial strategies of both in new ventures and established organizations, across different, markets, geographies, and technological domains. The IG's objective is to advance knowledge for the understanding of entrepreneurial ecosystems, in which new ventures and established organizations operate to create effective entrepreneurial strategies to improve competitive advantage and societal impact. This year's conference theme focuses on how the shadow of sovereignty affects firm strategy, considering the role of technology and middle power countries, including the host nation of Canada. We hope this theme prompts novel entrepreneurship research exploring the interactions between geopolitical and technological disruptions which characterize today's business landscape. Some of the questions that can engage with the conference themes include, but are not limited to: What are the effects of geopolitical and technological disruption on entrepreneurial action and outcomes? What are the influence and consequences of entrepreneurship in turbulent and shifting international trade environments, for instance, when existing free trade agreements are disrupted? How are advanced technologies, including but not limited to artificial intelligence, reshaping the entrepreneurial landscape, especially when combined with geopolitical fragmentation and tensions? Grounded in the overall theme, while entrepreneurial activities broadly specified across the economy are of interest, we encourage submissions in sectors of increasing geopolitical importance, including infrastructure, transportation, energy, and others that relate to national and international security and national competitiveness.

Track L: Strategic Human Capital

Track Chair: Federica De Stefano, University of Oxford

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 operate in contexts characterized by geopolitical turmoil, state intervention, and technological disruption. 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 do state interventions and public policies reshape firms' human capital strategies? We also encourage submissions exploring the relationship between human capital and organizational strategy for firms operating within and across middle powers and emerging blocs, as well as within sectors relevant to national security and competitiveness. Submissions that address these and other relevant topics are particularly welcome.

Track M: Stakeholder Strategy

Track Chair: Kate Odziemkowska, University of Toronto

The Stakeholder Strategy Interest Group invites submissions that advance understanding of when, why, and how firms engage with their stakeholders, and the implications of those interactions. 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 that influence relationships between organizations and social movements. We welcome theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions that examine how stakeholder strategies create value and how macro trends, including geopolitical and technological disruptions central to this year's conference theme, shape their formulation and outcomes. Aligned with that theme, we encourage submissions that explore stakeholder management and governance against a backdrop of inter-state rivalry, national security, and contestation, cooperation and regulation of new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence. We also encourage submissions that explore stakeholder strategies within and across middle powers and emerging blocs, as well as sectors relevant to national security and competitiveness, including but not limited to critical infrastructure, transportation, energy, advanced manufacturing, and critical minerals.

Track N: Cooperative Strategies

Track Chair: Pankaj Kumar, Virginia Tech

The Cooperative Strategies Interest Group welcomes theoretical, empirical, methodological, and practitioner-oriented submissions examining how organizations develop, govern, and adapt cooperative arrangements in a world shaped by geopolitical fragmentation, technological disruption, and competing state and market logics. We invite research on alliances, joint

ventures, networks, ecosystems, platforms, federations, constellations, buyer–supplier relationships, franchises, public–private partnerships, community collaborations, and other forms of interorganizational cooperation across firms, governments, and nonprofit organizations. We particularly encourage studies of cooperation among and across middle powers and emerging economies; strategic collaboration in critical infrastructure, advanced manufacturing, clean energy, transportation, semiconductors, critical minerals, and AI; and the role of cooperation in fostering innovation, resilience, economic security, technological capability development, and strategic autonomy. We also welcome work on trust, power, legitimacy, knowledge sharing, conflict resolution, cooperative governance, standards, and value capture, as well as the emergence, evolution, renewal, and termination of cooperative strategies in fragmented platforms and ecosystems.

Track O: Strategic Leadership & Governance

Track Chair: Ann Mooney Murphy, Stevens Institute of Technology

The Strategic Leadership & Governance interest group welcomes research examining how CEOs, top management teams, and boards of directors shape the formulation and implementation of organizational strategy and, ultimately, the creation of value. The track is particularly interested in research on the characteristics, behaviors, decision-making processes, and strategic discretion of organizational leaders, as well as how these factors interact with governance structures, vary across contexts (e.g., organizational, environmental, and geographic), and are influenced by broader forces such as technological, institutional, and geopolitical change.

In keeping with this year's conference theme, the track also invites research addressing how strategic leaders and governance structures navigate an era of intertwined geopolitical and technological disruption driven largely by advancements in artificial intelligence. We welcome work examining how intensifying rivalry over critical resources, advanced technologies, and industrial leadership, alongside the growing pursuit of strategic autonomy and economic sovereignty by middle powers, reshapes strategic decision-making and organizational governance. Particular attention may be given to how strategic leaders respond to the growing influence of the state, industrial policy, and national security considerations, including when market-based logics of efficiency coexist with, or are subordinated to, broader geopolitical objectives. We are especially interested in research examining how strategic leaders actively shape, rather than simply respond to, an evolving global order, including how they navigate geopolitical tensions, state intervention, technological disruption, and changing international partnerships.

Track P: Behavioral Strategy

Track Chair: Daniela Blettner, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver

The Behavioral Strategy Interest Group invites submissions examining how decision makers and organizations learn from and adapt to their environments, and how they strategize. How do strategists address challenges such as intensifying geopolitical competition and AI-driven technological transformation? How do goals, cognition, attention, emotions, and affect shape responses to feedback and strategy making? What role do social interactions, including power dynamics, negotiations, politics, and shared cognition, play? How do organizational culture, structure, and design shape these processes, and how do stakeholders such as shareholders and media commentators weigh in? We aim to explain search, learning, routines, strategies, innovations, and other adaptive processes emerging from these dynamics.

We welcome proposals at diverse levels of analysis (individual, team, and organizational), including cross-level studies, and conceptual, methodological, and empirical contributions, particularly those applying novel methods and contexts to reveal the many facets of Behavioral Strategy. How do strategists make sense of AI-driven shifts? Can AI augment strategy processes and outcomes? Will it enhance or stifle creativity? How does it disrupt organizational heuristics and routines? We encourage contributions on these and many other questions.

Community Tracks

Track R: Research Methods

Track Chair: Joseph Harrison, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Rapid geopolitical and technological change present strategy scholars with both new research questions and new methodological challenges. The Research Methods Community welcomes submissions that advance the methods and research practices used to study strategic management, including novel qualitative and quantitative approaches, experiments, computational methods and simulations, measurement and construct validation, and applications of artificial intelligence throughout the research process. In keeping with this year's conference theme, we particularly encourage work that considers how methodological innovation can help scholars study firms operating across increasingly heterogeneous geopolitical, institutional, and technological environments. How can researchers leverage new data and methods to examine rapidly evolving phenomena such as technological disruption, industrial policy, and economic sovereignty? How can comparative, longitudinal, multilevel, and causal approaches illuminate differences across countries, regions, and emerging blocs? We also welcome methodological contributions that use these changing contexts to replicate prior findings, test theoretical boundary conditions, and strengthen the rigor and relevance of strategy research.

Track T: Teaching Community

Track Chair: Sabine Reisinger, Johannes Kepler University

In a world shaped by geopolitical rivalry and technological disruption, the Teaching Community welcomes proposals that address challenges in teaching strategy at undergraduate, graduate, and executive levels. How can we prepare students to strategize when the market logic of efficiency

coexists with, or is subordinated to, the state logic of security? Do our syllabi, frameworks, and cases still reflect the realities of industrial policy and economic sovereignty? How can we bring perspectives from middle powers and emerging economies into our classrooms, and draw on alternative viewpoints beyond dominant paradigms and geographic centers? As AI transforms how firms compete and how students learn, how should we redesign assignments, assessment, and classroom interaction? Which pedagogical formats, such as simulations, role plays, or live cases, best convey strategic decision-making under geopolitical uncertainty? We welcome conceptual, empirical, and practice-oriented proposals exploring these questions to keep strategy education relevant for students, educators, and practitioners alike.