

How GCs Can Help Build A Geopolitical Command Center

By **Lars Faeste** (September 15, 2025)

Uncertainty is everywhere. With artificial intelligence regulation on the horizon in the European Union aiming to keep pace with innovation, the rise in U.S. protectionism influencing policy, conflicts across the Middle East, and the prevalence of misinformation, it can feel at times like businesses are stuck in permanent response mode.

For businesses, and for general counsel in particular, the rising tide of geopolitical disruption is more than just politics — it's a strategic business risk, and increasingly a moment of change and opportunity.

In the face of sustained geopolitical uncertainty, one of the most effective ways businesses can move from just response to proactive management is by building a clear, cross-functional geopolitical command center, with the general counsel at its core.



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Defining the Geopolitical Command Center

A geopolitical command center is not just another crisis response team. Whereas traditional crisis management is often reactive and short-term, a geopolitical command center is proactive, strategic and ongoing.

Functioning as a structured and cross-functional forum, it brings together teams from legal, risk, strategy, operations and regional business units, while also steering the efforts of external advisers and key third parties. Designed to navigate continuous change, not just one-off disruption, it creates alignment under pressure, imposes structure when ambiguity feels overwhelming, and ensures that the organization can move with speed and clarity when the stakes are highest.

At its core, the geopolitical command center is about operationalizing a command and control mentality in a constantly shifting threat landscape. This means actively monitoring and coordinating responses to a wide spectrum of issues, such as cyberattacks, regulatory shifts, reputational hits, overnight tariffs, new sanctions, and sudden changes in supply chain dynamics or market access.

This can be done using scenario-based planning and early warning indicators to anticipate disruption before it hits. The value lies not in predicting the future perfectly, but in creating a framework to explore different outcomes and understand how they might affect your operations, people and reputation.

Selecting the right scenarios starts with identifying your business's critical exposure points and stress testing them under a variety of probable conditions with a variety of trigger moments. Take, for example, a technology manufacturing company with an upcoming major product launch. It might model a scenario where a sudden rule change bans the import of certain components, forcing a rapid redesign and legal maneuvering to keep shipments on track.

Similarly, a business reliant on a single supplier might explore the impact of a territorial dispute closing key shipping lanes, cutting off critical inputs overnight and triggering a high-

speed search for alternative sources to keep production running.

Strategic communication is also an essential part of the geopolitical command center. When the pressure is on, knowing your ecosystem, those who need to be informed, those who need to act, and how messages could resonate internally and externally can mean the difference between containment and escalation.

Some key strategies that can be developed and implemented include predefined escalation protocols to trigger timely action, adaptable core messages tailored for different stakeholder groups, and a carefully planned cascade sequence to ensure the right groups receive the right information at the right time.

Building the Geopolitical Command Center

Creating a geopolitical command center starts with getting the right people in the room, bringing together legal, risk, strategy, operations, human relations and communications.

The role of the general counsel here can take a variety of different forms, whether that is to lead or co-lead this effort, given their ability to connect legal, regulatory and reputational concerns to broader strategic decision-making, or to act as a close sparring partner with the CEO. By challenging assumptions, stress testing strategies, asking hard questions and anticipating blind spots, the general counsel can help prepare the CEO for high-stakes decisions with greater clarity and resilience.

As geopolitical risks escalate, the need for more centralized and top-down decision-making increases, especially in volatile situations, where both speed and alignment are essential — whether that is the rapid imposition of trade tariffs, embargoes and sanctions, or the sudden financial collapse in a key market.

For decentralized organizations with strong local go-to-market teams and profit and loss ownership, this entrepreneurial drive can be a winning feature, but it could also be a barrier to the need for centralization. The general counsel can help strike this balance by preserving what makes the business effective locally — by tailoring contracts and compliance processes — while layering in the governance through initiatives such as standardized risk reporting.

Given their enterprisewide vantage point and long-term orientation, general counsel can identify and connect external signals — such as incoming tariffs — to internal vulnerabilities, such as overdependence on key suppliers, enabling them to take informed and coordinated action.

A common mistake to avoid is treating this as a one-time exercise or failing to link geopolitical issues to actual operational risks. Take the Russia-Ukraine conflict, for example. This exposed how a regional crisis could cascade into global supply chain disruptions, cyber threats and energy volatility — risks that caught many organizations unprepared.

Their focus had been limited to immediate geographic relevance, such as office or factory presence, rather than dynamic, interconnected threats that could affect multiple areas of their business simultaneously, including pricing, logistics, cybersecurity or reputation.

But having the right people in the room at the right time could have enabled a more proactive coordinated approach with earlier scenario planning, diversified sourcing strategies and more transparent stakeholder communications, ultimately helping mitigate long-term operational risks before they fully materialized.

Getting Buy-In From the C-Suite

One of the biggest barriers to establishing a geopolitical command center is buy-in, especially when budgets are tight and attention is diverted elsewhere. The key is to frame the initiative not as a defensive overhead, but as a strategic investment in resilience, reputation and competitive advantage.

General counsel are well positioned to make this case, given their strong surrounding teams and ability to focus on the long-term big issues. This allows them to tie geopolitical risk not only to commercial risk, but also opportunity.

A targeted scenario exercise that highlights vulnerabilities in a key market or supply chain can be a powerful way to demonstrate value quickly. For example, simulating a sudden export restriction in a key semiconductor supply chain can quickly reveal vulnerabilities — such as a lack of inventory buffers or gaps in cross-team communication — that would otherwise remain hidden and only be brought to life when a crisis hits.

These quick wins and advance insights can build momentum while laying the groundwork for more structured and long-term capability.

Final Thoughts

The geopolitical command center offers a powerful model for how general counsel can lead with impact, helping businesses not only withstand disruption, but shape their response with confidence, clarity and influence.

This isn't about predicting every crisis, but about building the strategic muscle to navigate whatever comes next. The choice facing businesses today is clear: Continue to simply react, or build a proactive structure for long-term resilience. General counsel have a pivotal role at the center of strategy, not just the edge of legal.

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