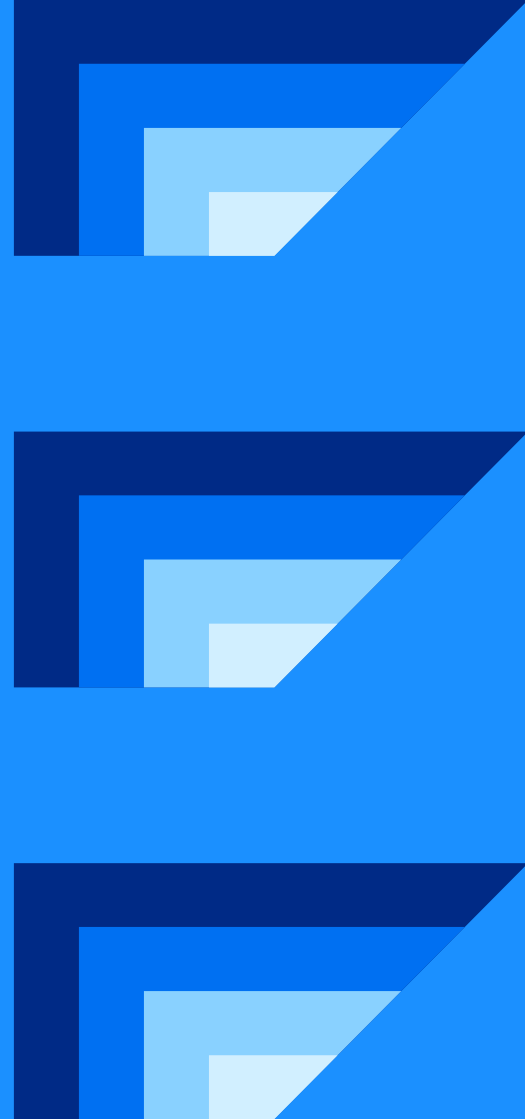


Point of view

# Beyond tariffs: A holistic approach to trade pressures

Businesses must prepare for a new era of global trade complexities beyond just tariffs.

**SAP**



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## Looking beyond tariffs to strategic resilience

As global trade tensions continue to rise, businesses must prepare for more than just tariffs. While tariffs can affect pricing and profitability, they are only one part of a broader set of economic tools used in international negotiations. Governments are increasingly using subsidies, export restrictions, regulatory changes, and foreign investment policies to shape trade dynamics. These measures can disrupt supply chains, alter competitive advantages, and require businesses to adapt quickly.

For example, new EU digital regulations can impact American tech firms, just as U.S. subsidies for domestic industries can shift market dynamics for European manufacturers. Meanwhile, geopolitical developments, such as evolving relations with China and shifts in energy policy, further complicate trade strategies. Instead of focusing solely on tariff rates, companies must adopt a comprehensive approach that considers a wide range of economic and policy shifts affecting global trade.



## Key strategies for business resilience

Resilient companies anticipate disruption and build agility into every aspect of their operations. By focusing on these key strategies, businesses can better position themselves to adapt quickly, minimize risk, and seize new opportunities amid global shifts.

Navigating today's global trade landscape requires more than quick fixes. Businesses need resilient strategies that strengthen operations, open new market opportunities, and support smarter, faster decision-making.

The following key strategies are critical for building resilience and navigating uncertainty:

1. Plan for policy changes
2. Diversify markets and supply chains
3. Monitor geopolitical trends
4. Strengthen supply chain collaboration and visibility
5. Prepare for trade countermeasures



# Plan for policy changes

Shifting trade barriers—such as new subsidies, export restrictions, and regulatory changes—are creating operational uncertainty. Companies must respond with agility and ensure compliance without sacrificing growth opportunities. Adapting quickly to policy shifts can protect supply chains and maintain competitive advantage.

## Building compliance agility

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SAP Global Trade Services (GTS) automates global trade compliance, simplifies customs documentation, and manages dynamic tariff regulations. SAP Business Network (SBN) complements this by helping businesses comply with data sovereignty rules while staying globally connected. Together, these solutions help companies adapt to export controls, import duties, and new trade agreements efficiently—avoiding costly delays and fines.

## Adapting through automation

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A European manufacturer facing new U.S. export restrictions used SAP GTS to automate duty calculations and ensure ongoing regulatory compliance. With automated updates to changing trade policies, the company avoided major operational slowdowns and safeguarded its U.S. market presence.

## Smarter compliance solutions

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SAP Business Network also supports businesses by ensuring compliance with data sovereignty regulations, allowing companies to manage and report data accurately while staying connected globally. Additionally, built on SAP Business Technology Platform (SAP BTP), SAP Business Network enables partners to create tailored compliance solutions that address specific trade needs without requiring changes to the core system.



## Diversify markets and supply chains

Overreliance on a single market leaves businesses vulnerable to trade shifts, tariffs, and policy changes. Expanding operations into regions such as Asia, Latin America, and within the EU can reduce risks and ensure more resilient supply chains amid evolving global dynamics.

### Optimizing supply chain flexibility

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SAP Integrated Business Planning (SAP IBP) uses AI-supported insights to optimize demand and supply planning, helping businesses identify alternative suppliers and new markets in real time. Companies can quickly adapt to changing conditions, ensuring greater supply chain resilience and operational continuity.

### Achieving global growth opportunities

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Looking to capitalize on its data-driven strategy, ZF expanded its global operations by rolling out [RISE with SAP](#) across its enterprise. With an AI-supported cloud ERP managed by SAP and access to SAP BTP, ZF enhanced agility, enabled low-code development, and unlocked additional capabilities like generative AI and SAP Datasphere. Together, these solutions provided a foundation for ZF to transform its business processes and drive continuous innovation.

In its aftermarket division, ZF replaced legacy planning software with SAP IBP applications, enhancing operational and demand planning with AI-supported intelligence to better understand global demand patterns. The investment strengthened ZF's flexibility and responsiveness to changing trade and market conditions worldwide.



## Scaling beyond tariff barriers

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SAP's market entry support helps companies reduce reliance on tariff-heavy regions by connecting with local suppliers and logistics providers, increasing go-to-market agility by 45% (according to IDC). Additionally, SAP ensures material traceability and sustainability data exchange, enabling companies to maintain transparency, compliance, and brand integrity when diversifying suppliers.





# Monitor geopolitical trends

Global trade policies are increasingly shaped by political dynamics across regions. Businesses that understand shifts in U.S.-EU-China relations, NATO priorities, and broader economic trends can better anticipate risks and seize opportunities as they arise.

## Gaining real time insights for smarter decisions

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SAP BTP with AI and analytics capabilities provides real time insights into evolving trade policies and macroeconomic trends. Companies can receive automated updates on policy changes and quickly adjust sourcing, pricing, and market strategies to stay competitive. SAP BTP provides Governance, Risk, and Compliance (GRC) and cybersecurity solutions to support risk-aware decision-making by helping businesses identify and monitor geopolitical risks.

## Turning complexity into opportunity

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A business leader using SAP BTP's AI-supported dashboards can track real time changes in trade agreements and adjust strategies proactively. SAP Business Network Global Track and Trace adds visibility into shipments and logistics, enabling faster responses to geopolitical disruptions. Additionally, SAP uses Agentic AI to analyze over \$6 trillion in transactional data, providing predictive insights that help businesses stay agile and make informed decisions.

## Predicting trade impacts with AI

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SAP's AI-supported predictive analytics identify potential shifts in trade relations before they impact operations. By analyzing massive datasets, SAP's solutions recommend proactive adjustments, helping companies minimize risk and maintain supply chain continuity in uncertain environments.





Enterprise risk  
and compliance



International  
trade management



Cybersecurity data,  
protection, and privacy



Identity and  
access governance



GRC and  
cybersecurity



# Strengthen supply chain collaboration and visibility

Building a resilient supply chain requires more than flexibility—it demands stronger collaboration and real time visibility across global partners. As supplier relationships shift and trade risks evolve, businesses that invest in digital collaboration tools are better positioned to become the “buyer of choice” in a competitive marketplace.

## Strengthening networks to adapt to change

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SAP S/4HANA Cloud, SAP Supply Chain Management (SAP SCM), and SAP Business Network help businesses connect with suppliers, optimize logistics, and gain full supply chain visibility. A connected network allows companies to reduce disruptions, adapt faster to trade shifts, and access alternative suppliers when needed. SAP’s asset intelligence solutions also enable businesses to manage assets efficiently, minimizing downtime and cost impacts from changing tariff conditions.

## Scaling supply chain resilience

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A multinational electronics company used SAP Business Network to identify and onboard suppliers across regions, mitigating the risks tied to evolving trade barriers. With access to real time data, the company optimized production and distribution plans based on regulatory developments.

## Smarter compliance solutions

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SAP Business Network’s comprehensive process coverage helps businesses meet immediate supply chain needs while scaling for future growth. Companies can move at the pace of global markets by entering new regions, advancing sustainability goals, and digitizing critical processes. A supply chain suite first approach strengthens resilience beyond tariff mitigation, supporting broader digital transformation strategies.



## Prepare for trade countermeasures

Trade conflicts can trigger retaliatory tariffs, currency fluctuations, and supply chain disruptions. To protect profitability, businesses must model these scenarios in advance and stay ready to adjust strategies as conditions change.

### Planning ahead to stay profitable

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SAP trade management and risk solutions help businesses simulate the financial impact of tariffs and implement dynamic pricing strategies. By modeling potential cost changes, companies can proactively adjust contracts, sourcing plans, and market approaches to maintain sustainable margins.

### Turning disruption into opportunity

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A global luxury goods company anticipating new trade restrictions used SAP risk modeling to adjust pricing strategies and safeguard profitability. SAP Analytics Cloud enhances these capabilities with AI-driven scenario planning, enabling companies to refine mitigation strategies in real time.

### Strengthening agility through proactive planning

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SAP helps businesses stay ahead of tariff impacts by enabling near real time pricing and sourcing adjustments. SAP's planning and collaboration tools help businesses quickly update forecasts and procurement plans, while automated invoicing and compliance tools manage tax implications, ensuring accuracy and agility amid shifting trade conditions. Automated compliance solutions ensure accurate duty calculations and reporting, helping companies remain agile and compliant in an unpredictable global trade environment.



## The path forward: Cooperation over division

Instead of reacting defensively, businesses and policymakers should work together to find cooperative solutions with the United States. Economic fragmentation and supply chain decoupling would only raise costs and increase inefficiencies for everyone involved.

To promote stability, businesses can:

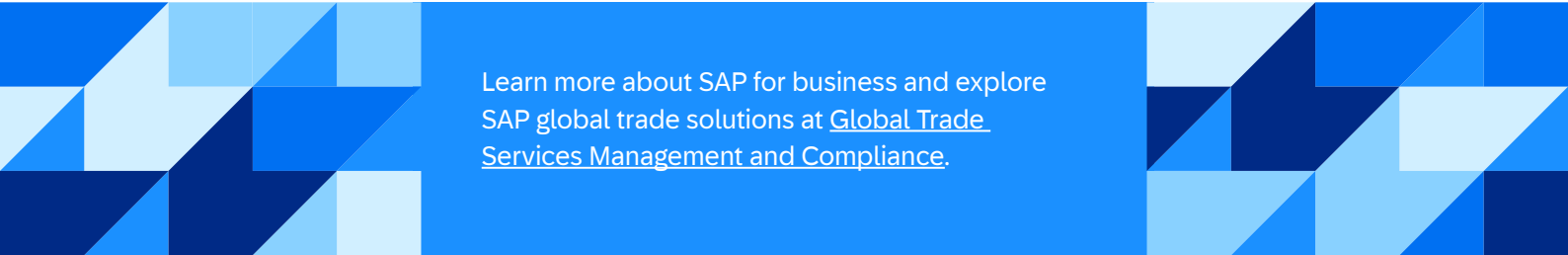
- Engage in policy discussions to advocate for balanced trade agreements.
- Leverage technology to build flexible and resilient supply chains.
- Strengthen trade partnerships through transparent collaboration.

By focusing on long-term cooperation instead of short-term protectionism, businesses can help create a stable and prosperous trade environment. True economic resilience comes from strategic adaptation, trusted partnerships, and using the right technology to stay competitive and resilient as global trade conditions change.



## Build resilience for the future of global trade

Discover how SAP business solutions help businesses navigate tariff impacts, improve supply chain agility, and manage global trade compliance with confidence. Whether optimizing sourcing strategies or preparing for geopolitical shifts, SAP provides the tools to build a more resilient and adaptive business network.

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Learn more about SAP for business and explore  
SAP global trade solutions at [Global Trade  
Services Management and Compliance](#).



## About the authors

**Manuel Flubacher** is a seasoned professional with deep expertise in logistics and SAP solutions. With years of experience helping businesses optimize their supply chains and logistics operations, Manuel specializes in SAP S/4HANA Cloud and SAP Business Technology Platform. He focuses on driving innovation, improving operational efficiency, and enhancing logistics resilience through digital transformation. Passionate about continuous learning, Manuel shares actionable insights on best practices in logistics, cybersecurity, and resilience for organizations navigating their digital journeys.

**Richard Downs** brings over two decades of experience in the software industry, across procurement, supply chain, finance automation, business networks, and B2B marketplaces. In his current role, he serves as vice president and head of Business Network Product Marketing at SAP, where he leads a team of product marketers for the SAP Business Network portfolio.

