

● Executive Exchange Takeaways

Reframing How Financial Institutions Make Decisions

Geopolitical Risk, Operational Resilience, and the Rise of Agentic Systems

London, March 2026

Introduction

For decades, something about Filippino Lippi's *The Virgin and Child* felt wrong. The proportions were off, the perspective distorted—until art historians realised the painting was never meant to be viewed head-on. It was designed to be seen from below. From the intended angle, it was perfectly proportioned.

Manas Chawla, CEO of geopolitical advisory London Politica, used this as a metaphor for how institutions assess geopolitical risk. Organisations tend to analyse the world from their own vantage point, then wonder why the picture looks distorted.

“The critical jump is to look at political risk from the perspective of the actors involved, from the perspective of their intended audience.”

Chawla was speaking at Evalueserve's Executive Exchange in London on 18 March, alongside the Research Director of a leading European private equity firm. Senior leaders from banking and private markets gathered to discuss how geopolitics, technology, and AI are reshaping decision-making, operating models, and value creation.

A clear theme emerged: the frameworks most institutions still rely on were built for a world that no longer exists. The next decade will belong to firms willing to look at the landscape from a different angle.

5 Takeaways to Rethink Risk, Resilience, and Operating Models

1. Volatility Is Structural, Not Cyclical

Financial markets are designed to price uncertainty—but the nature of uncertainty has changed. Shocks now interact across geopolitical, technological, and macroeconomic systems, producing cascading effects well beyond their point of origin. As Manas Chawla observed, “We’re seeing a world where shocks don’t just happen in isolation. They interact, amplify each other, and force us to question even our most basic assumptions.”

The challenge is not the severity of any single shock, but the speed at which second- and third-order consequences emerge in places institutions were not watching. Volatility is no longer a passing phase. It is the operating environment itself.

2. New Frameworks For New Risks

Chawla challenged the prevailing notion of a “multipolar world,” arguing it no longer reflects geopolitical reality. Rather than fixed blocs, today’s landscape is better described as multi-aligned. Countries such as India, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia maintain overlapping and sometimes contradictory relationships, guided by incentives rather than allegiance.

Frameworks built on bloc logic consistently misread these dynamics. The more valuable discipline is understanding who actors are accountable to, what dependencies they carry, and how their incentives shift under pressure. Many of the most damaging risks—from fertilizer chokepoints to supply-chain fragility—remain invisible when institutions only look at individual assets or events in isolation.

3. Creating Value Through Operational Resilience, Leverage, and AI

Private equity’s historical playbook—cheap leverage and expanding multiples—has lost its edge in a higher-rate, more volatile environment. According to the PE firm’s Research Director, “When we have market headwinds, the only thing that protects our output is the operational improvement and operational development of our assets. And AI is a crucial component of that.”

Resilience today means flexibility: the ability to scale analytical and execution capacity up or down quickly, without rigid cost structures. Operational leverage increasingly comes from combining internal AI-enabled self-service tools with specialist partners, allowing firms to expand coverage and insight without growing headcount.

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4. Managing AI Through Volatility

AI adoption is advancing faster than most institutions can govern it. Systems trained on historical data can continue producing confident outputs even when the assumptions beneath them no longer hold. The governance challenge lies not in whether AI should be used, but in how its outputs are interrogated.

As the PE Research Director noted, “Your ability to question the output—tell me why you think that’s correct, what sources did you use—those are the types of questions you’d ask a human being.”

Institutions that apply the same scrutiny to AI as they do to human analysts retain control. Those that do not risk automating flawed assumptions at scale.

5. Rethink Your Workforce: People, Agents, Disruption

Agentic AI can analyse, synthesise, and generate views—but without human direction, it produces volume without judgment. Domain expertise has become more valuable, not less. It is what enables professionals to guide AI effectively and distinguish insight from noise.

This shift is already influencing hiring strategies. Firms like Bridgewater are actively recruiting people trained in disciplines such as history, philosophy, and music alongside technical specialists. As Mangesh Patnaik, Senior Vice President at Evalueserve, explained, “We’re now looking for people who think beyond the obvious, those who can prompt AI in new ways and approach problems from unexpected angles.”

The winning model combines human intent and experience with AI execution, deployed deliberately across the workflow.



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Conclusion

The throughline across the discussion was consistent. The old frameworks, whether for pricing geopolitical risk, creating portfolio value, governing AI, or building teams, were designed for a world of cyclical volatility and the eventual resolution of disruption. That world is gone. What has replaced it demands something different.

The firms that will define financial services over the next decade will not do so by predicting every shock or adopting every new tool. They will do so by building the institutional capacity to move with agility through disruption, think beyond the consensus, and deploy both human and artificial intelligence in ways that compound over time rather than cancel each other out.

About Our Executive Exchange Series

Evalueserve's Executive Exchange events provide an unparalleled opportunity for senior financial services executives to connect, share insights, and explore innovative ideas in a relaxed setting over dinner and drinks. Our exchanges feature engaging expert-led discussions on trends such as digital transformation and AI.

These intimate, invitation-only events are carefully curated to bring together leaders in banking, lending, and private capital in global financial hubs including New York, Toronto, London, and more.

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