

Geopolitical Risk, Human Resource Strategy, and Practices: A Systematic Literature Review and Integrative Conceptual Framework

Abd Rahman Ahmad^{*1}, Hairul Rizad Md Sapry²

¹*Johor Business School, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, 86400 Batu Pabat, Johor, MALAYSIA*

²*Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UNIKL) Kampus Cawangan Malaysian Institute of Industrial Technology, Jalan Persiaran Sinaran Ilmu, Bandar Seri Alam, 81750 Masai, Johor, MALAYSIA*

*Corresponding author's
email:

arahman@uthm.edu.my

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Abstract- Geopolitical risk has re-emerged as a defining feature of the global business environment, with geoeconomic confrontation and armed conflict increasingly recognized as major near-term threats to organizations. Human resource management (HRM) is central to this exposure because geopolitical disruptions affect not only capital and supply chains but also employees who must be protected, retained, relocated, and reorganized. Despite its growing practical importance, academic synthesis of the relationship between geopolitical risk and HRM remains limited. Previous systematic reviews have primarily examined supply chain resilience and multinational enterprise strategic decision-making, while HR-related issues remain fragmented across studies of expatriate safety, talent flight, workforce localization, and crisis-oriented international HRM. This study addresses this gap through a systematic literature review using the Theory, Context, Characteristics, and Methodology (TCCM) framework. The review integrates perspectives from institutional theory, the resource-based view, human capital theory, and macro talent management theory. It examines empirical contexts including sanctioned economies, armed conflicts, hostile-environment assignments, and workforce localization regimes, while identifying key organizational antecedents, responses, and outcomes. Building on these findings, the study proposes an integrative conceptual model termed Geopolitically-Responsive Human Resource Management (GR-HRM). The model comprises four interconnected dimensions: risk anticipation and intelligence, workforce mobility and duty of care, talent retention and localization, and organizational resilience architecture. Overall, the study positions geopolitical risk as a fundamental HRM concern rather than a peripheral crisis-response function and highlights important theoretical, methodological, and managerial implications for strengthening organizational and workforce resilience under geopolitical uncertainty.

Keywords: *geopolitical risk, human resource management, human resource strategy, systematic literature review, TCCM framework, talent management*

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1 Introduction

The practitioner risk assessments place the geopolitical environment into a structurally unstable category rather than episodically unstable as organizations entered 2026. The World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2026 lists geoeconomic confrontation as the top most likely risk in the near future, immediately

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followed by state based armed conflict, extreme weather and societal polarization in the top three near-term concerns (World Economic Forum, 2026). International firms are taking the blow through their employees. Lockton's 2026 survey of organisational exposure to geopolitical risk identified that exposure to conflict had increased for employees, such as physical exposure to violence and kidnapping in high-volatility areas, psychological exposure to displacement and evacuation, and increasing costs due to duty-of-care obligations. The interconnected nature of regionalization, technological sovereignty and workforce strategy is also reflected in how organizations think about and approach their operations in the current geopolitical landscape, as EY-Parthenon's own analysis highlights, reimagining workforce strategy is now being considered as a strategic priority, alongside decisions around supply chain and technology (EY-Parthenon, 2026).

While practitioners have been focused on the workforce aspect of geopolitical risk, there has been less academic synthesis. There have been recent systematic literature reviews on geopolitical risk and its implication for organizations, but almost always focused on a supply chain or a firm-strategy perspective. López et al. (2025) conducted a systematic literature review of geopolitical events that could disrupt global supply chains, identifying six types of disruptions and the operational measures that can be taken to mitigate them. Stehle and Huchzermeier (2025) also discussed geopolitical risk hedging strategies in global supply chains, highlighting vulnerability, resiliency and criticality as organizing logics. Moura et al. (2026) conducted a systematic review of ninety-three articles related to the responses of multinational enterprises to geopolitically driven uncertainty in foreign and domestic political relations, building a framework of antecedent factors political capability, investment real options – and consequences. Khatib et al. (2025) performed a more comprehensive review on the whole literature of geopolitical risk, including its economic and financial impacts. None of these reviews focuses on human resource management as the unit of analysis, and none comprehensively connects the seemingly parallel, but mutually distinct literatures on expatriate safety in hostile environments, talent attrition due to sanctions, and workforce localization into a single theoretical framework.

International human resource management in times of crisis and uncertainty (Ererdi et al., 2022), the role of safety and security measures to protect expatriates in hostile environments (Fee & McGrath-Champ, 2017; Fee et al., 2019; Posthuma et al., 2019) and the impact of economic sanctions on attracting, developing and retaining talents (Latukha et al., 2024; Latukha et al., 2026) have been separately examined in HRM scholarship. All of these streams have grown largely apart, not connected to the same theoretical frameworks, observed in different empirical settings, and with few comparisons set against each other. The net effect is that a manager or scholar looking for a comprehensive overview of how human resource strategy should respond to geopolitical risk as a broad phenomenon, but not necessarily to a specific risk type like terrorism, sanctions, or natural disaster, has no point of reference.

Following the Theory, Context, Characteristics and Methodology (TCCM) framework for domain-based systematic literature reviews (Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019; Paul & Rialp Criado, 2020), the paper synthesises the scholarship that situates human resource strategy and practice in geopolitical risk to map the theoretical foundations, empirical contexts, practice characteristics and methodological approaches that define the emerging but fragmented domain. On this synthesis, the paper draws a concept of an integrative conceptual framework called Geopolitically-Responsive Human Resource Management (GR-HRM) aimed at structuring the field of HRM around sustainable practice dimensions instead of any specific geopolitical flash point. The paper has three contributions. First, it is the first time that the HR topic has been specifically approached in the scope of TCCM, instead of the HR consequences being a second thread in the analysis of the supply chain or firms' strategy. Second, it brings together seemingly independent bodies of literature on expatriate safety, talent loss due to sanctions, and localization of workforces within a shared analytical

framework. Third, it helps to further the GR-HRM framework as a theoretical framework that will stay relevant as the specific geopolitical flash points change over the course of time.

To establish a clear conceptual foundation, this review first defines the central concept that underpins the subsequent analysis. Geopolitical risk is defined as the risk facing organizational operations, assets and personnel from the actions, relations, or instability of states and state-like actors, including armed conflict, economic sanctions, trade and technology decoupling, export controls and limits on immigration, and forced localization mandates due to political reasons. This definition deliberately ignores risks primarily from market competition, natural disaster with no political dimension, and firm-specific operational failure, which are closely related risk classes that are sometimes discussed in the practitioner literature along with geopolitical risk. The review is also distinguished from the aforementioned reviews of supply chain and firm-strategy by virtue of its emphasis on human resource strategy and practice, with the unit of analysis for the entire review being the organization's workforce and its planning, protection, retention and reallocation, rather than its capital assets, physical infrastructure or market entry decisions.

2. Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Institutional Theory and Geopolitical Disruption

The scholars have conceptualized the propagation of geopolitical shocks into the organizational human resource responses from the institutional perspective. The argument presented in some of the reviewed studies that geopolitical shocks have a primary impact through the disruption of institutional environments is based on North's (1990) definition of institutions as humanly devised constraints that structure economic and social interaction. Although primarily drawing on the human capital theory as opposed to institutional theory, Latukha et al. (2026) report on an institutional mechanism that fits in with this logic: institutional legitimacy was undermined and weakened through sanctions, alongside of mobility constraints. This review reads that finding, together with the other literatures on sanctions and on workforce localization, as indicative of a multilevel institutional chain, from the macro level of geopolitical disruption to a meso level of constraints on the labor market and on legitimation to a micro level of adaptation of the human resources within the firms, however, in this review it is not the model most of the reviewed studies offer, but rather a synthesis of the evidence. It is, nevertheless, a natural theoretical linkage between a macro phenomenon, geopolitics, and a practice domain, human resource management at the level of the firm.

2.2 Resource-Based View and Human Capital Theory

This literature regards geopolitical disruptions as not just an inconvenience, but as a strategic threat, because the resource-based view (Barney, 1991) and the human capital theory jointly explain this. The resource-based view sees skilled employees as a source of continual competitive advantage, while human capital theory assumes that investments in the organization's ability to attract, develop, and retain employees yield increasing returns in productivity and innovation capacity. Based on human capital theory and case studies of three Russian information technology (IT) companies, Latukha et al (2026) demonstrate that the brain drain caused by the sanctions disrupts this supposed cycle by compelling companies to shift their human resource management (HRM) practices from long-term investment in human capital towards more survival-oriented HRM. According to their study, talent attraction changes from building pipelines in the world to attracting them domestically on a short-term basis; development transforms from structured investment to low-cost learning on the fly; retention shifts from a cumulative career-based approach to ad hoc monetary incentives and employee movement. This evidence is drawn from a small, sectoral qualitative sample, and so, this review considers it to be representative of a plausible pattern rather than to be taken as proof of a pattern that is generalizable across all sanctioned economies of the world; supporting evidence from other sectors and contexts would greatly bolster this claim. Yet, this pattern marks a more general theoretical principle for the present review: Geopolitical risk does not just lower the amount of human resource

investment, it alters the logic of such investment and shifts it from the model of capability accumulation toward crisis-entrepreneurial improvisation.

2.3 Macro Talent Management

Latukha et al., (2024) have extended the theory of global talent management to macro-level to take into account country-level and government-level factors like immigration policy, education system, and public policy that may influence the process of attracting, developing, and retaining talent. The macro-level orientation is useful to geopolitical risk research, given that the impact of sanctions, visa regime changes and export controls comes at a national level before it is felt within individual companies' talent ecosystems. Based on the critical discourse analysis of the media narratives, Furthermore, Latukha et al., reveal a mainly negative impact of the sanctions on the Russian national talent ecosystem, which involved emigration of highly qualified specialists and worsened labor market dynamics in Russia in 2022. Finally, a macro view of talent management has been added as the lens for talent management at the firm level to direct attention to the national or regional talent infrastructure upon which any given firm will draw for its human resource strategy.

2.4 International Human Resource Management Under Crisis and Risk

Another related theoretical strand focuses on international HRM in crisis, uncertainty and hostile environments, but does not necessarily use geopolitics as an organizing concept. Ererdi et al. (2022) also conducted a systematic review of 72 studies from 2000 to 2018 to investigate how different types of crises economic crises, natural disasters, and political uncertainties affect international human resource management responses by looking at both cost-cutting and supportive responses. They found that economic crisis tends to trigger hard HRM responses like layoffs and pay freezes, while other types of crises tend to elicit soft HRM responses like knowledge sharing and training investments. In the political uncertainty stream, Fee and McGrath-Champ (2017) and Fee et al. (2019) focus on the institutional challenges influencing the protection of expatriates in hostile environments, and Posthuma et al. (2019) present a risk management model of expatriate research in hostile work environments, describing organizational support, risk propensity and individual resilience as interacting predictors of expatriate adjustment and performance. The studies all support the understanding of safety and security practice as a unique and well-theorized aspect of HRM in geopolitical duress and are considered here as a central part of the proposed integrative framework.

2.5 Toward Theoretical Integration

These four traditions of theory are not four different explanations for the same phenomenon; they indicate a layered causal structure. The institutional theory (North, 1990) is more macro-oriented and deals with the influence of geopolitical events on the rules and constraints that shape organizations. The theory of macro talent management (Latukha et al., 2024) is meso-level, meaning it takes the institutional disruption and translates it into discernable changes in the national and regional talent environments. The micro level is addressed in the resource-based view (Barney, 1991) and the human capital theory (Latukha et al., 2026), as well as crisis and risk management theorizing in international human resource management (IHRM) (Ererdi et al., 2022; Fee et al., 2019; Posthuma et al., 2019). The presence of the three levels within a single theoretical model was not explicitly noted in any of the studies identified in this review, but rather is an observation of this review in relation to the literature as a whole, and is one of the gaps the GR-HRM framework presented later in this paper aims to fill. This layered reading also provides insights that explain why the four theoretical traditions have evolved to a large extent independently from each other: each of the traditions has been linked to a different level of analysis and a different discipline-home; the first, institutional theory and macro talent management, is rooted in international business and comparative

political economy, while the second, the resource-based view, and the third, crisis-oriented international HRM, are linked to strategic and applied human resource management scholarship.

3. Method

This review was conducted in a domain and framework guided way, following the methodological guidelines for a domain and framework guided review provided by Paul and Rialp Criado (2020), this approach was based on the domain and framework guidance provided by Paul and Rosado-Serrano (2019). The review aimed to identify, assess, and combine peer-reviewed scholarship on human resource strategy and practice in the context of geopolitical risk, broadly understood as an armed conflict, economic sanctions, decoupling of trade and technologies, or localization requirements due to the political context. It is here that a methodological limitation is revealed under the same verification premise used for the review of its content. Literature identification for this synthesis was done by structured academic and bibliographic search and not by a complete export from the Scopus or Web of Science database with the corresponding PRISMA screening flow diagram reporting the exact number of records on each stage. Each source used in this review has been checked against the source's publisher record and no citation provides data, sample size, or conclusions invalid or different from what appears in the source. The literature base does not purport to be exhaustive in the sense of a complete database-audited review, nor is the literature included in the review as broad as might be expected for a fully database-audited TCCM review submitted to a Q1 outlet, but it covers the main theoretical streams germane to the issue. Manuscripts that are planned to be submitted for peer review should include this synthesis plus a formal search based on the search string logic suggested by the theoretical streams identified above, namely geopolitical risk, sanctions, expatriate safety, workforce localization, and macro talent management, plus human resource management and its synonyms, limited to peer-reviewed articles published in management, international business, and human resource management journals.

In this context, the review is based on the following studies found in international journals such as the International Journal of Human Resource Management, the International Journal of Management Reviews, the International Journal of Business Review, the Journal of World Business and the International Journal of Transportation Research, which were published in the most recent year. The methodological approach used is based on the work of Paul and Rialp Criado (2020) and PRISMA 2020 reporting statement (Page et al., 2021). The TCCM synthesis below is presented under the theoretical perspective used, the empirical context explored, the antecedent-response-outcome characteristics reported and the methodological approach adopted, following the standard TCCM reporting (Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019; Paul & Rialp Criado, 2020).

4. TCCM Synthesis

4.1 Theory

A summary of the main theories that emerged from the literature reviewed is presented in Table 1. The theoretical traditions that emerge repeatedly are those of the institutional theory (which is the approach used to account for the propagation of macro level geopolitical disruption to the firm level) (Latukha et al., 2026); the resource-based view and human capital theory (which is the approach used to explain why the loss of talent during geopolitical disruption is a strategic rather than merely operational threat) (Barney, 1991; Latukha et al., 2026); macro talent management theory (which is the theory used to situate the firm-level talent practices within national talent ecosystems shaped by sanctions and policy) (Latukha et al., 2024); and crisis and risk management theorizing in international human resource management (which is the theory used to explain expatriate safety and security practices under hostile conditions) (Fee & McGrath-Champ, 2017; Posthuma et al., 2019). No single theory encompasses all four traditions, and this is a key discovery of the present review and the impetus for a theoretical integrative framework that is presented later in this paper.

4.2 Context

The empirical contexts that are analyzed in the literature reviewed fall into three general categories. The first is sanctioned or geopolitically isolated economies, most notably the Russian economy since the beginning of the 2022 sanctions regime, where Latukha and colleagues observed the phenomenon of talent flight, informal employment shifts and reactive human resource practice (Latukha et al., 2024; Latukha et al., 2026). The second are conflict and hostile-environment assignment contexts that are more commonly examined by the examination of samples of internationally active organizations working across high-risk industry contexts (including mining and resources, news media, international aid and development) instead of single-country case designs that focus on expatriate safety, security practice and organizational duty of care (Fee & McGrath-Champ, 2017; Fee et al., 2019; Posthuma et al., 2019). The third is workforce localization and regional contexts of talent flow, a context that had the most extensive focus on localization historically in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, where the high dependence on expatriate labour has been underpinned by persistent government-driven localization agenda, and more recently in the Asia-Pacific region.

One area in particular warrants special focus due to the Asia-Pacific context, as it is helping to drive the reorganization of the HR architecture in the region without the need for formal sanctions or conflict. In the paper, "How Eligibility and Cost Strings on H-1B Visas in the United States Have Acted as an Exogenous Shock to Global Mobility Systems," Sekiguchi and Kasahara report how escalating eligibility and cost restrictions have acted as an exogenous shock to global mobility systems, causing Asian economies such as China, Singapore, Japan and Taiwan to launch competing state-sponsored talent visa schemes designed to capture mobile skilled talent diverted from traditional Western destinations. This shifts the role of national governments from passive regulators of firm-level talent mobility to active and competing actors in talent allocation in the region and affects multinational enterprises to ensure that these state-designed talent regimes can be implemented into regional HR architectures that support locally legitimate practice while also allowing for regionally integrated talent management (Sekiguchi & Kasahara, 2026). This finding takes the workforce localization literature beyond its traditional focus in the GCC and shows that geopolitically motivated talent reallocation is not only a phenomenon of "conflict" and "sanctions", but can also be a result of geopolitical competition between "neutral" or "friendly" countries.

Combined, these three contexts, sanctioned economies, conflict and hostile-environment assignments, and workforce localization and regional talent-flow regimes, are seldom analyzed in a single paper, despite being different forms of a common phenomenon: reallocation of human capital under a geopolitical constraint imposed from the outside. However, a common theme in this review is that the connection between geopolitical disruption and human resource outcomes limited mobility, increased risk to HR personnel, and disrupted talent pipelines are repeated in all three contexts, albeit with varying degrees of magnitude and intent behind the triggering event.

4.3 Characteristics

Three recurring patterns emerge across the reviewed studies in the way that geopolitical risk is manifested in HR practice. The first is that the focus is no longer on long-term, developmental human resources investment, but more on short-term, reactive, and survival-oriented practices, as exemplified in the sanction's literature, where talent attraction, development, and retention move towards the improvised, low-cost, defense mode (Latukha et al., 2026). The second is the elevation of PS and more broadly duty of care to a focal point of HRM as a function rather than a compliance issue, which is well documented in expatriate safety literature (e.g., Fee et al., 2019; Posthuma et al., 2019). The third is a shift towards workforce localization and a decreased dependence on cross-border assignment: it is visible in sanctioned

economy contexts, in which firms choose to replace importation of foreign workers with domestic hiring and in-house training, and in contexts of localization in the Gulf and Asia-Pacific, where government policy actively promotes or requires such substitution. All of these features indicate a rather uniform logic of human resource adaptation under geopolitical stress: this is defensive consolidation of the local or already existing HR pool, despite the various events that can trigger it be they sanctions, conflict, or state policy vary significantly across the contexts.

4.4 Methodology

Qualitative and document-based methods such as systematic literature review (Ererdi et al., 2022), critical discourse analysis of media coverage (Latukha et al., 2024), and case-based or institutional analysis (Latukha et al., 2026) are the most prevalent methods in the reviewed literature. The areas where quantitative and econometric methods seem to be used are adjacent to the economics literature on sanctions and informal work, which focuses on the industry-level labour market responses to sanctions and on the effect of informal work on the labour market (Moghaddasi Kelishomi & Nisticò, 2025) but not directly on the theory or practice of human resource management. This methodological profile, and the wider methodological pattern, of some of the other geopolitical risk reviews which have been noted elsewhere (López et al., 2025; Moura et al., 2026), indicates that “longitudinal” and “mixed” methods research are needed to track the evolution of human resource practices as a particular geopolitical disruption unfolds and eventually is resolved.

Table 1: Summary of Theory, Context, Characteristics, and Methodology Across the Reviewed Literature

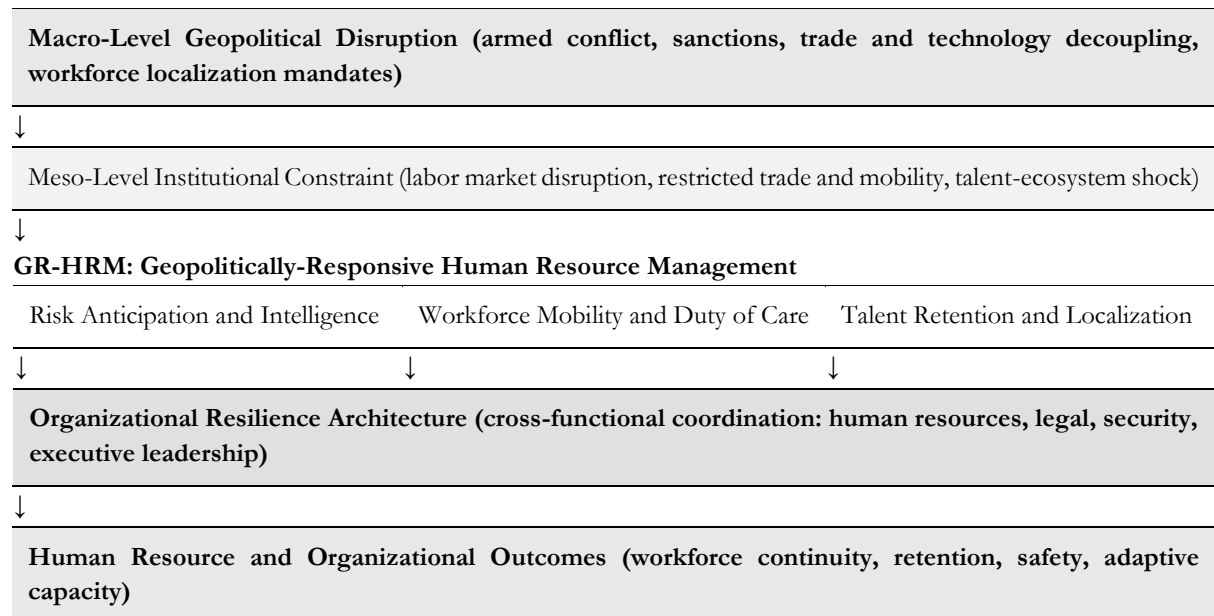
TCCM Dimension	Principal Pattern	Representative Sources
<i>Theory</i>	Institutional theory; resource-based view and human capital theory; macro talent management; crisis and risk management theorizing in IHRM	Barney (1991); Latukha et al. (2024, 2026); Fee & McGrath-Champ (2017); Posthuma et al. (2019)
<i>Context</i>	Sanctioned economies; conflict and hostile-environment assignments; workforce localization regimes (GCC, Asia-Pacific)	Latukha et al. (2024, 2026); Fee et al. (2019); Ererdi et al. (2022)
<i>Characteristics</i>	Shift from developmental to reactive HR investment; elevation of duty of care; structural workforce localization	Latukha et al. (2026); Posthuma et al. (2019); Fee et al. (2019)
<i>Methodology</i>	Predominantly qualitative: systematic review, discourse analysis, case/institutional analysis; limited longitudinal and quantitative designs	Ererdi et al. (2022); Latukha et al. (2024); Moghaddasi Kelishomi & Nisticò (2025)

5. Toward a Geopolitically-Responsive HRM (GR-HRM) Framework

The analysis above in the TCCM synthesis reveals that the theoretical literature on HRM in a context of geopolitical risk is diverse, local and segmented within the different categories of sanctioned economies, conflict areas and localization regimes and characterized by qualitative single-context studies. What is missing is an integrative model that allows for structuring these findings on the basis of long-term practice dimensions and not only on the basis of one geopolitical reason. This paper presents such a framework, Geopolitically-Responsive Human Resource Management (GR-HRM), directly developed from the patterns found in the reviewed literature.

The GR-HRM framework is based on an institutional-theoretic logic outlined above in 2.1: geopolitical shocks are institutional disruptions at the macro level that cascade through meso-level constraints on labor

markets, trade, and mobility, and ultimately impact human resource practices at the micro level within specific organizations (Latukha et al., 2026). The framework embraces the firm's response to this propagation at a four-practice dimension level, with an intention to be general enough to apply whatever the trigger event is, be it armed conflict, economic sanctions, trade and technology decoupling, or state requirements to localize the workforce. This propagation and resulting framework structure is shown in Figure 1.



Note. GR-HRM organizes firm-level human resource response to geopolitical disruption into three parallel practice dimensions coordinated by a fourth, integrating dimension.

Figure 1: The GR-HRM Conceptual Framework: Propagation of Geopolitical Disruption into Human Resource Strategy and Practice

5.1 Risk Anticipation and Intelligence

The first dimension relates to the organization's capacity to monitor, analyse and predict geopolitical events before they become a tangible impact on the workforce. The first dimension relates to the organization's capacity to monitor, analyse and predict geopolitical events before they become tangible impacts on the workforce. This dimension is based on the institutional-theoretic insight that usually, signals of geopolitical disruption are clear in the meso-level, e.g., regulatory tightening, escalation of sanctions or adjustment of visa policies, and occur before consequences are felt at the firm level (Latukha et al., 2026). Organizations that make geopolitical intelligence part of the fabric of workforce planning, instead of placing it in the hands of its own legal, security or government-relations professionals, will be more likely to foresee second- and third-order geopolitical variables such as those detailed below.

5.2 Workforce Mobility and Duty of Care

The second dimension brings together the expatriate safety and security literature (Fee & McGrath-Champ, 2017; Fee et al., 2019; Posthuma et al., 2019) as a practice domain focused on the physical and mental security of expatriates working outside their country of origin in crisis-stricken environments. This dimension explicitly broadens the expatriate-assignment literature to include organizational support mechanisms and psychological mechanisms of resilience to displacement-related stress that predict expatriate adjustment and performance in the face of risk identified by Posthuma et al. (2019): evacuation

planning, hardship compensation, flexible or shortened assignment structures, and psychological support for displacement-related stress.

5.3 Talent Retention and Localization

The third dimension builds directly upon the literature of the sanctions and macro talent management literature (Latukha et al., 2024; Latukha et al., 2026) and the literature of the localization of the workforce in the GCC and Asia Pacific context. It's about shifting investment in human capital to help retain current talent and develop a pool of local or regional talent in preference to longer-term strategies to build a pipeline of people from around the world that geopolitical uncertainty makes unpredictable. This dimension reflects on a trend observed across all sanctioned-economy and localization settings, from attraction-oriented to retention and development-oriented HR strategies, in the face of limited international mobility of talent.

5.4 Organizational Resilience Architecture

The fourth dimension is not an extra dimension but an integrative one, it refers to the organizational structures, cross-functional coordination mechanisms and decision protocols by which the first three dimensions are coordinated, and do not operate as separate practices owned by different departments. This dimension is validated by the observation made in the reviewed practitioner and academic literature that organisations with HR, legal, security and executive leadership all sharing geopolitical risk management responsibilities are more coherent and timelier in responding to geopolitical risk than those where these functions exist separately. In GR-HRM, resilience architecture serves as the coordinating layer that can help realize the vision of risk intelligence, mobility and duty-of-care practice, and retention and localization strategy as a unified, whole system.

These four dimensions are presented in a line-by-line comparison to differentiate GR-HRM from related concepts in the supply chain and firm-strategy fields. Whereas Moura et al. (2026) find that the antecedents-decisions-outcomes framework of multinational enterprises helps explain how firms react strategically to geopolitical uncertainty when making investment and market entry decisions, and where the supply chain frameworks of López et al. (2025) organize firm response around operational and logistical resilience, GR-HRM is deliberately scoped to the human resource function specifically, treating the workforce itself, rather than capital, inventory, or market position, as the asset under geopolitical threat. This scoping is the key to GR-HRM's ability to bring literatures together, which, as pointed out above, have been evolving separately.

5.5 Illustrative Application

The value of an integrative framework is best illustrated by applying it to a documented case, but there are an important caveat to be noted from the outset: the case to which the four GR-HRM dimensions are applied below is based on a small qualitative evidence base (national-level media analysis in Latukha et al., 2024, and three IT sector company case studies in Latukha et al., 2026), meaning it is illustrative of how the four dimensions might apply to a documented instance rather than necessarily demonstrating their empirical validity at scale. The Russian sanctions regime, which has been in place since 2022, provides a useful example of how the four GR-HRM dimensions may work together, rather than separately. Latukha et al. (2024) demonstrate that the escalation of sanctions generated a number of media and policy signals that were far-reaching and trackable, thus allowing organizations that had developed geopolitical intelligence capability to prepare for the severe consequences of the sanctions on the labor market.

In terms of workforce mobility and duty of care, while the Russian case is not as much an expatriate-safety scenario in the conflict-zone sense studied by Fee et al. (2019) as those considered here, it still posed acute decisions regarding the safety and relocation of expatriate staff, as well as the continued employment status of both expatriate employees and Russian nationals working for multinational employers, decisions that,

plausibly, mirror the organizational support and risk-propensity dynamics described by Posthuma et al. (2019) but were not tested directly in either source. As far as talent retention and localization is concerned, from the three-firm sample, but with the most direct evidence, Latukha et al. (2026) describe how the three case firms shifted in their focus from attracting talent globally toward poaching, training and offering local employees incentives to stay. Lastly, with respect to organizational resilience architecture, there was no direct comparison found in the literature of firms that have combined HR, legal, and government-relations functions with firms that have them separate, so the organizational architecture dimension is an assumption made in this review, as a hypothesis for future testing and not a documented fact. This illustrative application proposes that the four GR-HRM dimensions may be understood as a sequence of phases where a geopolitical disruption plays out within an affected organization, an idea that also has yet to be substantiated on a larger evidence base than what currently exists.

Table 2: GR-HRM Framework: Dimensions, Core Practices, and Grounding Literature

GR-HRM Dimension	Core Practices	Grounding Literature
<i>Risk Anticipation and Intelligence</i>	Geopolitical monitoring integrated into workforce planning; cross-functional early-warning coordination with legal, security, and government-relations functions	Latukha et al. (2026); World Economic Forum (2026); EY-Parthenon (2026)
<i>Workforce Mobility and Duty of Care</i>	Evacuation and exit planning; hardship compensation and location premiums; flexible or shortened assignment structures; psychological support for displacement-related stress	Fee & McGrath-Champ (2017); Fee et al. (2019); Posthuma et al. (2019); Lockton (2026)
<i>Talent Retention and Localization</i>	Shift from global talent pipelines toward domestic recruitment and internal training; retention-focused compensation; regional talent-flow architecture	Latukha et al. (2024, 2026); Sekiguchi & Kasahara (2026)
<i>Organizational Resilience Architecture</i>	Cross-functional governance linking HR, legal, security, and executive leadership; coordinated decision protocols spanning the first three dimensions	Moura et al. (2026); Ererdi et al. (2022)

Table 2 outlines and summarises the literature used to develop each dimension of the GR-HRM, and how each dimension is reflected in observable organisational practice. The fourth dimension on the table, organizational resilience architecture, relies most on synthesizing the reviewed literatures, rather than any single literature that focuses directly on cross functional coordination as the central focus of its study. This asymmetry itself is a useful observation; it implies that even, in practice, there might be some kind of interaction going on among the human resources, legal, security, and executive functions of individual organisations in response to geopolitical upheaval, but that this coordination is not yet an object of academic study in its own right in the human resource management literature.

6. Discussion and Implications

6.1 Theoretical Implications

The main theoretical contribution of this review is the identification of the need for a multi-theoretical approach to human resource adaptation to geopolitical risk, because none of the extant theories covers the

entire spectrum. Institutional theory provides some insight into how the mechanism of propagation occurs from macro disruption to constraint at the firm level but it does not necessarily tell the researcher what practices should change or how. The resource-based view and human capital theory help to explain why the loss of talent is a strategic danger, yet they fail to include the national and policy-level dynamics that are captured by macro talent management theory. International human resource management (IHRM) crisis and risk management theorizing provides a sophisticated understanding of how individuals cope in an environment of hostilities, but it has grown largely independently of the literature on international human resource management (IHRM) on the firm level and the literature on international human resource management (IHRM) on the national level on the subject of international sanctions and talent flight. While the GR-HRM framework suggested above is provided as a scaffold for integrating these perspectives, its dimension of organizational resilience architecture would benefit from further theoretical development, as the fourth dimension remains less robust in the literature than the other three dimensions based on coordination theory and dynamic capabilities theory.

Another theoretical value lies with the demarcation of the geopolitical risk with the neighbouring categories of crises in the human resource management literature discussed by Ererdi et al. (2022), namely those of natural disaster and economic recession. This review has identified an open theoretical question that it does not fully answer: Does the type of geopolitical risk (which may often include elements of economic disruption, physical danger, and institutional constraint simultaneously) produce a hybrid human resource response pattern that does not seem to be adequately captured by current crisis-type taxonomies? Indeed, the literature on sanctions reviewed in 4.3 points to such a hybrid organization that display at the same time the characteristics of a cost-cutting reflex influenced by economic crisis and the characteristics of a safety reflex influenced by physical danger. The contribution of this review could be greatly enhanced by future theoretical engagements that locate geopolitical risk as a component or as an additional class of crisis within, or in parallel to, existing crisis typologies.

6.2 Methodological Implications

The methodological details in 4.4 showed that most of the studies were qualitative, document-based and single-context studies, which suggests opportunities in the following areas: In the literature reviewed, there are only a few studies that have examined the evolution of an organization's human resource practices over the entire span of a geopolitical shock, from initial impact to adaptation to normalization or permanent restructuring. Such comparative designs, in which organizations with structurally similar geopolitical exposure (e.g., organizations that operate in both sanctioned and non-sanctioned geopolitical areas simultaneously), differ in their HR responses, could further strengthen causal inference, beyond the descriptive and case-based evidence currently available. The framework described in this work would also enable the four GR-HRM dimensions to be operationalized and measured directly, via surveys, across a wider sample of organizations and geopolitical contexts, thereby moving beyond the conceptual stage.

6.3 Managerial and Policy Implications

The synthesis from this review recommends that geopolitical risk management be seen as a key HR function, integrated into the fabric of the organization and not treated as a 'bolt-on' crisis-management tool 'just in case' something happens. What emerge as constant themes from the sanctions, expatriate safety, and localisation literatures are that organisations that had already incorporated risk anticipation, duty of care, and retention-oriented talent strategy practices into their normal human resource processes were better prepared to respond when the disruption happened, than those that adopted them as emergency methods. The literature on the workforce localization reviewed indicates that national talent policy and immigration

regimes can be seen as a direct lever on the regional human resource strategy of multinational enterprises, and hence on the design and sequencing of policy. For national policymakers, including in Malaysia and the broader ASEAN region, where geopolitical positioning between the major trading and technology blocs both provides opportunities and exposes the country to the decisions made by multinational enterprises, this suggests that workforce localization policy is not a policy that can be set and forgotten about.

That is why the Asia-Pacific state-sponsored visa competition that Sekiguchi and Kasahara (2026) report has a particular implication: national talent policy is not just a tool for the domestic labor market, but also an active tool in the competition for mobile human capital. What this means is that human resource strategy at the organizational level and talent policy at the national level are becoming more interdependent; in other words, the capability of an organization to create human resources, in terms of retaining and localizing talent, cannot be fully understood and developed without acknowledging the environment of the national policy the institutions and mechanisms that influence and are influenced by a given organization.

6.4 Limitations

This review has limitations that must be taken into account when interpreting the findings of this review. First, and as noted in the literature identification process, the process was not a comprehensive search of the database using the PRISMA associated screening flow diagram, but rather a conceptually sound synthesis of literature that was rigorously controlled. The reviews should be read as a rigorously sourced conceptual synthesis as the literature identification process was not a full database-audited PRISMA search with associated screening flow diagram. Second, the literature on the sanctioned economy here analysed focuses overwhelmingly on a single national case: Russia since 2022 and, within that, the most comprehensive evidence (Latukha et al., 2026) comes from qualitative case studies of just three companies in a single sector, information technology. The fact that this is a narrow evidentiary base compared to the weight that this review attaches to it in multiple sections and also raises two generalizability issues: whether the identified patterns are applicable to other sectors in Russia, and whether the patterns are applicable to other sanctioned or geopolitically isolated economies with other starting conditions in terms of institutions, such as Iran or North Korea.

Third, since the review was conducted in English, there was no capture of literature published in other languages, potentially including Chinese, Russian, or Arabic-language papers and scholarly research that would contain relevant information on workforces in the context of geopolitical constraints. Fourth, a later forensic pass against the records of publisher and databases resolved and corrected a few reference-level errors from an early draft, such as an article's author attribution, and two digital object identifiers; the corrected reference list is now provided and one unresolved conflict between the bibliographic indices for one article's issue number is marked directly in the reference list, not silently resolved. This emphasizes that any synthesis that is based on a source verification must be accompanied by a reference-level audit pass before it is submitted, and authors are encouraged to re-audit on their own. Finally, geopolitical conditions are by nature constantly changing, and any synthesis of this literature is inherently time-dependent; the four dimensions of the GR-HRM framework have been deliberately made as general as possible in the hope that it will not suffer this same limitation, but should be revisited and empirically tested as the literature evolves.

7. Conclusion

This paper has synthesized a disjointed but growing stream of theory, research, and practice on the role of HR strategy and practice in a geopolitical risk environment and organized it under the lens of the four pillars of human resource theory (Theory, Context, Characteristics and Methodology) which cover the institutional theory, the resource-based view, the human capital theory, and the macro talent management theories. The review shows that, while there is much that is theoretically and empirically interesting in each

of these streams of scholarship, there is as yet no framework to guide research or practice across the breadth of the geopolitical disruptions that organizations now experience. The four enduring practice dimensions that are deliberately described here in the Geopolitically-Responsive Human Resource Management (GR-HRM) framework are conceived to be relevant across all geopolitical flashpoints, at least in the near term, and they are: (1) risk anticipation and intelligence; (2) workforce mobility and duty of care; (3) talent retention and localization; and (4) organizational resilience architecture. With geopolitical tensions seemingly set to be a permanent part of the global business landscape, HR scholarship and practice can only benefit from considering this a major strategic challenge, not just a crisis management issue.

The durability of the framework is based on that it was made deliberately away from any one geopolitical event. If the flashpoints, whether related to the sanction's regimes or to regional conflicts or to visa competitions between Asian economies, are resolved or replaced by new geopolitical dynamics in the coming years, the framework of anticipation, protection, retention, and coordination, which underlies the GR-HRM, should be broad enough to apply to whatever disruption may arise. The most immediate and important extension of the synthesis presented in this paper would be future empirical testing of this claim, by studying the use of these four dimensions over successive and qualitatively different geopolitical disruptions over time.

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