



Annual Supply Chain Debate 2025

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Global supply chains: Is it time to revisit your strategy?

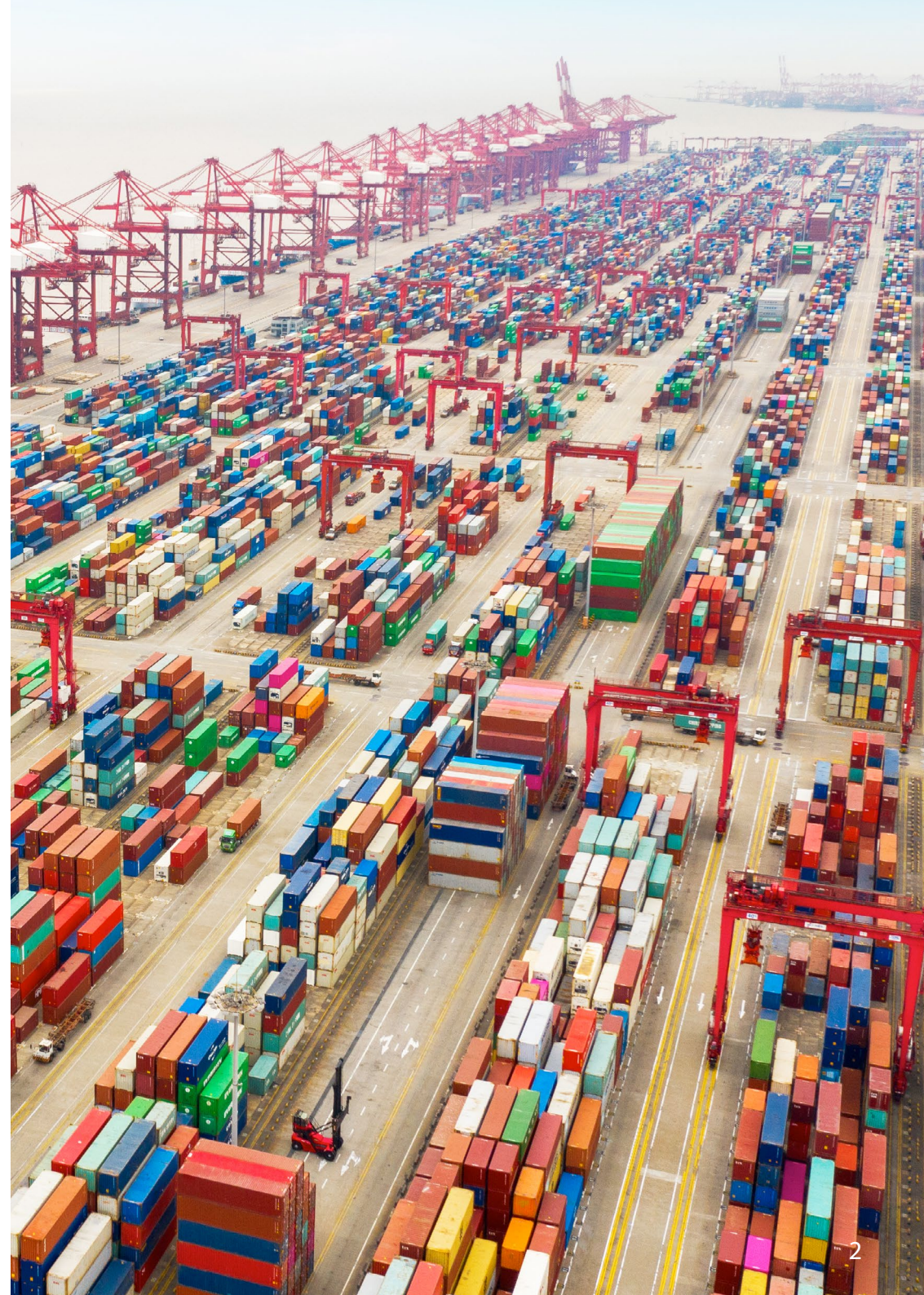
On 5 June 2025, over 150 senior supply chain professionals gathered for the 22nd Annual Supply Chain Debate hosted by global supply chain and logistics consultancy, [SCALA](#).

Amid a time of geopolitical and socioeconomic turbulence, this year's debate tackled one of the industry's biggest questions of the moment: is it time to rethink global supply chain strategies?

Leaders from Jordans Dorset Ryvita, Tangle Teezer, and the worlds of academia and global logistics debated the future of supply chain globalisation at a time of growing instability and uncertainty.

Cybersecurity and geopolitics emerged as the top concerns for the United Kingdom's international supply chains, with most respondents agreeing that the ongoing tariff war will ultimately strengthen ties between Europe and Asia.

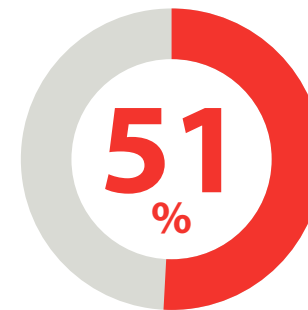
Read on to find out what industry experts leading supply chain and logistics operations on the ground had to say on the matter.





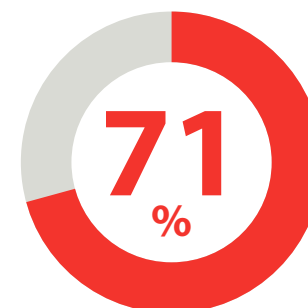
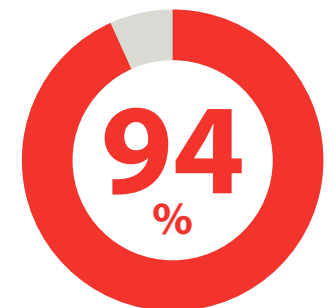
Live insights from the debate floor

As always, the debate included live audience polling, offering a valuable snapshot of current industry thinking. The headlines were...

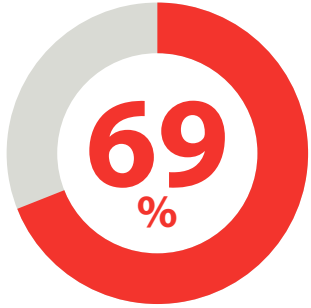


Around half (51%) of respondents remain committed to **global sourcing and operations**, while 38% are actively balancing global and regional suppliers

The vast majority (94%) of respondents believe the current trade tariff war will **strengthen supply chain ties between Europe and Asia**

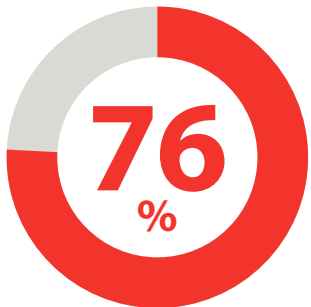
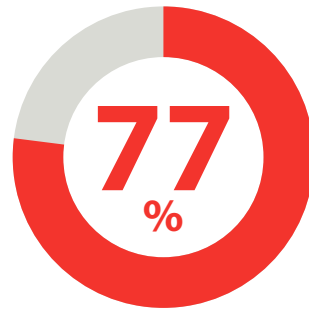


Almost three-quarters (71%) say **supply chains are in transition** towards more regional, hybrid models

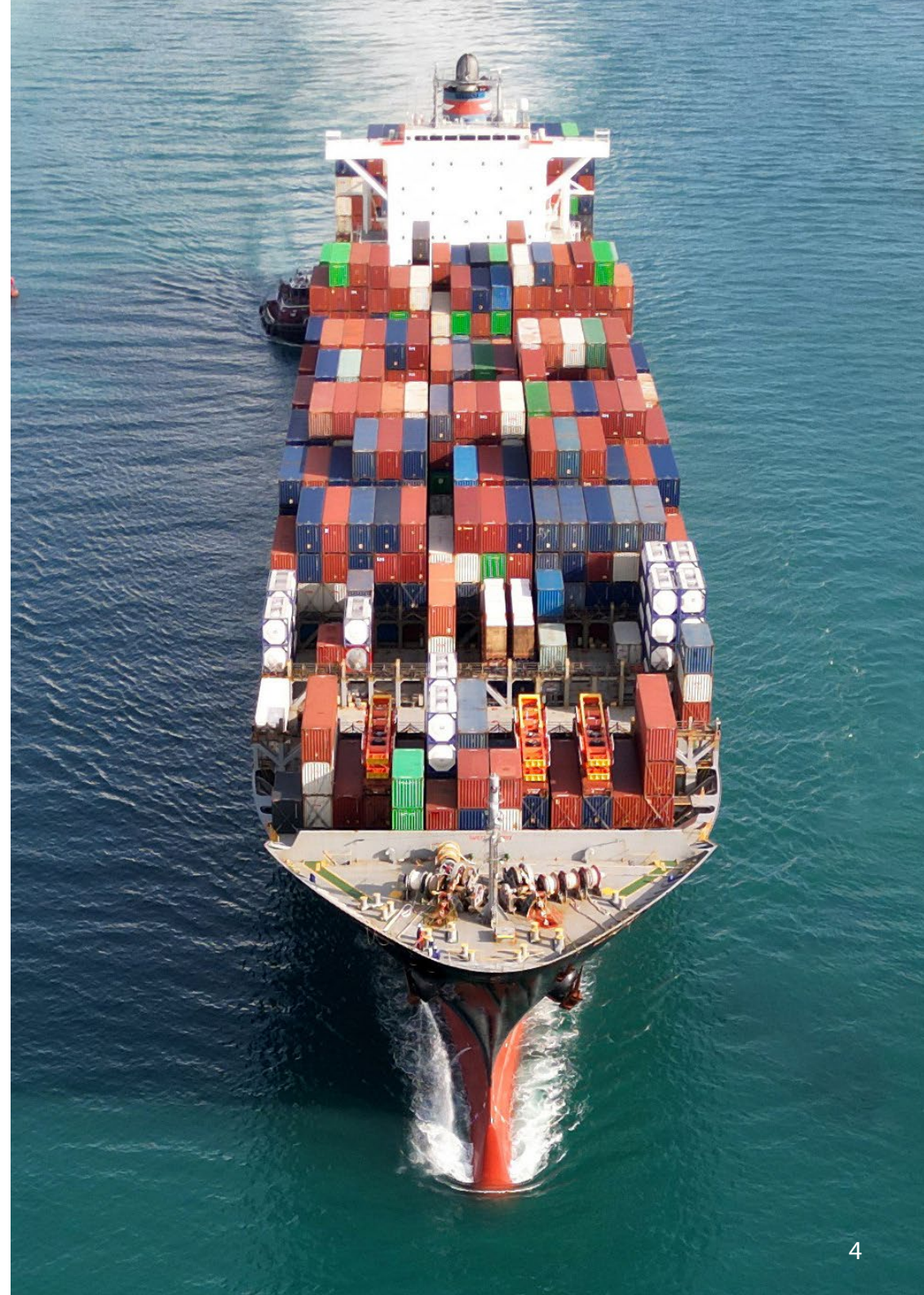


69% of respondents believe that **geopolitical tensions and trade barriers** have had the greatest impact in eroding confidence in global supply chains in recent years - more so than factors such as the pandemic or volatility in energy and transport costs

When asked how important **re-industrialisation** is to the **UK's supply chain resilience**, **77%** of respondents agreed it was **important or very important**

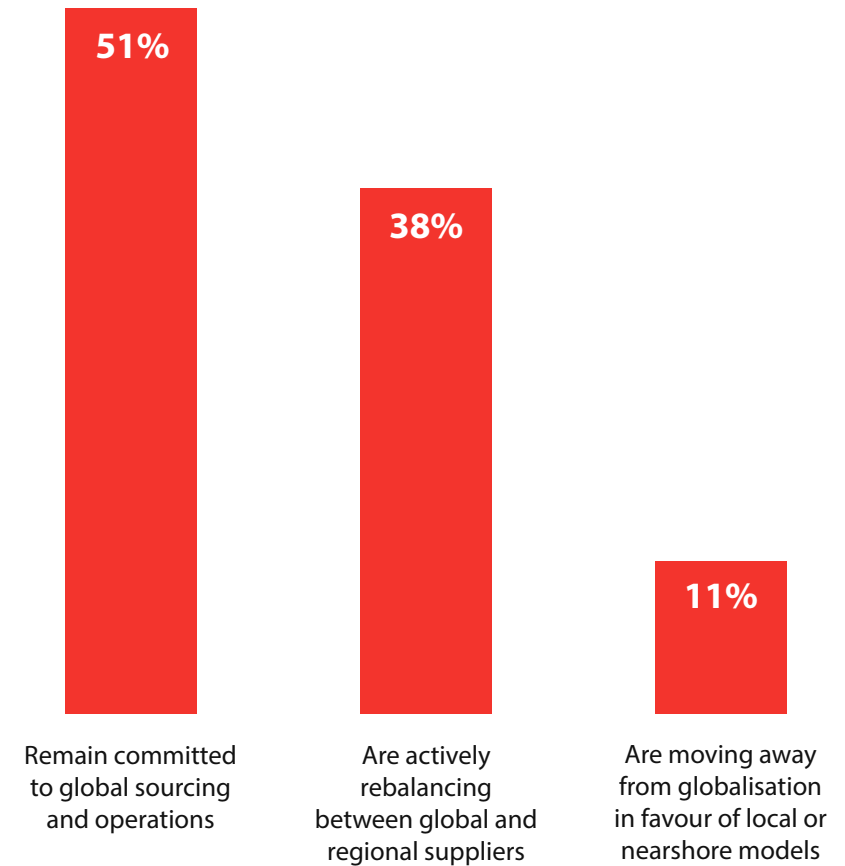


However, **76%** consider **reshoring** critical manufacturing sectors to be a **difficult** feat, with 8% deeming it **impossible**



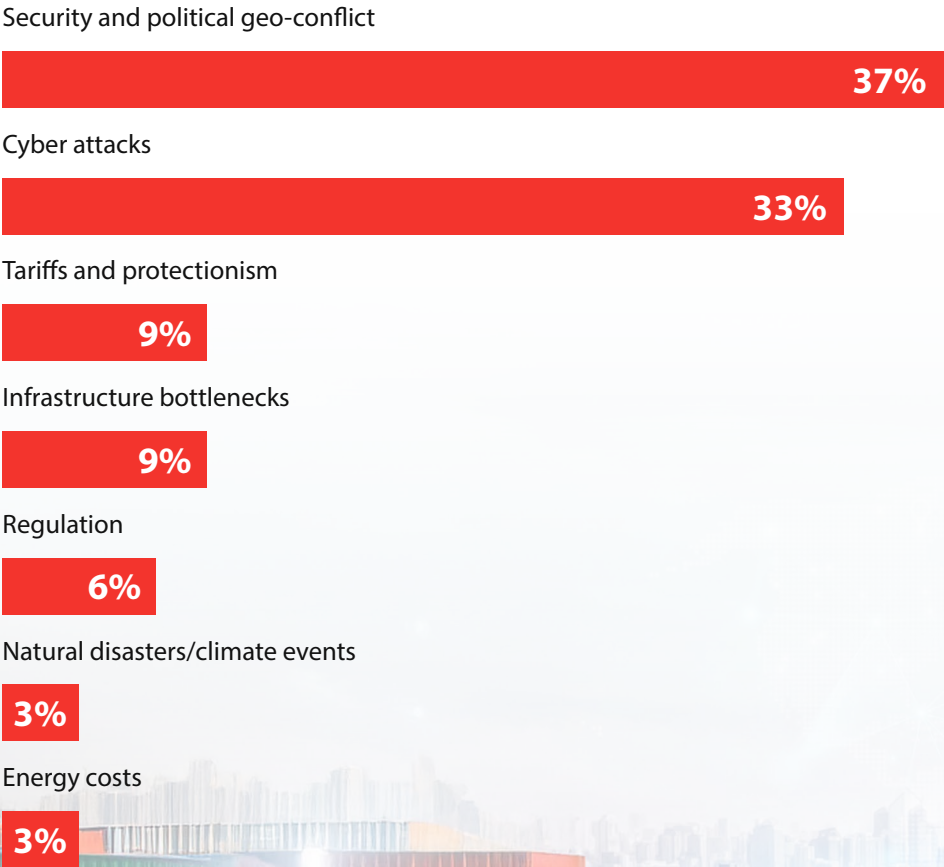
A stylized globe with a grid of latitude and longitude lines, overlaid with a network of white dots and connecting lines, suggesting a global network or data flow. The globe is rendered in shades of blue and green.

Which of the following best describes your organisation's current approach to global supply chain operations?



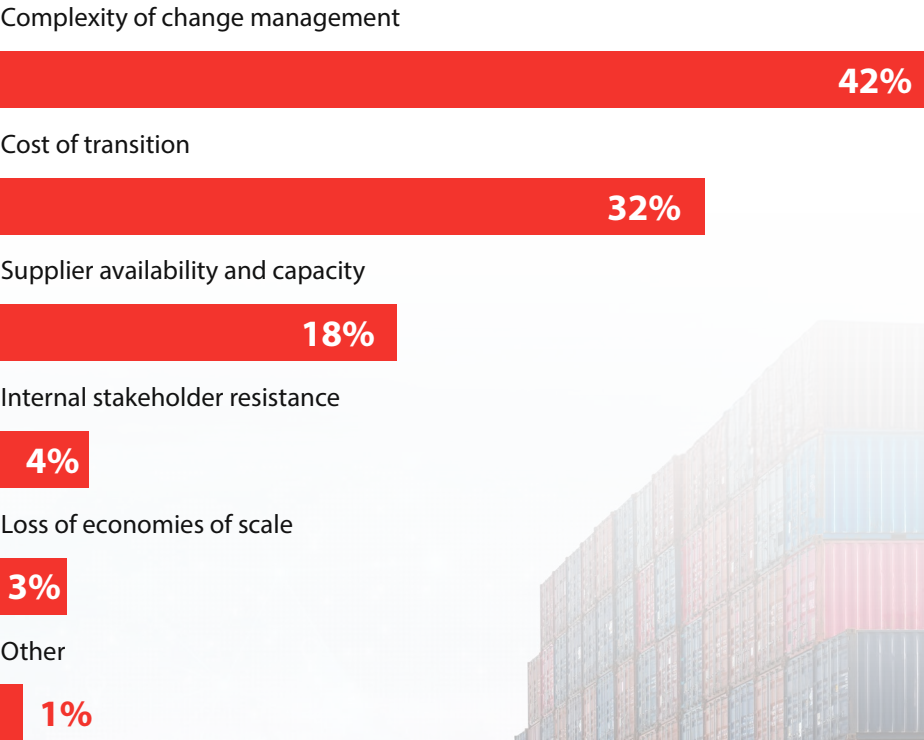
Respondents identified security and political geo-conflict, closely followed by cyber attacks, as the **biggest threats** to UK international supply chains.

What will be the biggest threat to UK supply chains in the next five years?



And the **biggest barrier** to reducing reliance on global supply chains was the complexity of change management.

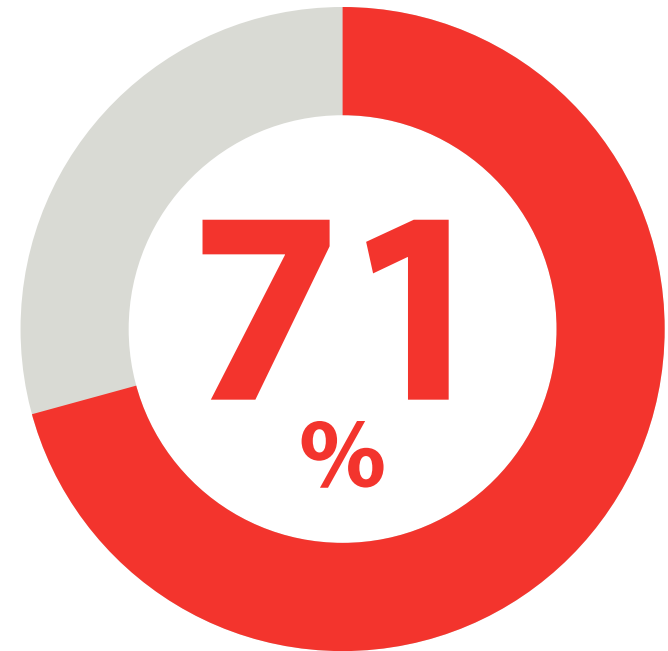
What is the most significant obstacle to reducing dependence on global supply chains?





Ultimately, the majority of survey respondents felt that the current global supply chain landscape is in a period of transition, with many evolving towards regional hybrid models.

What is the current state of play for the global supply chain landscape?



71% in transition

Evolving towards regional hybrid models

28% resilient

It will rebound and continue to dominate

1% in decline

The era of global supply chains is ending

Thoughts from a panel of **industry leaders**



Tiger Wang

Chairman of Ocean Enterprise Group
and co-chairman of [SCALA China](#)

Global supply chains aren't dead – they're adapting

Opening the debate, Tiger Wang argued that while global supply chains are under pressure, they remain essential - particularly for economic growth in developing nations.

He acknowledged the disruption caused by rising tariffs and geopolitical tensions, which in many cases have stalled global trade integration. However, rather than signalling the end of globalisation, he described the current environment as a period of adaptation.

Tiger advocated for a more balanced approach that combines global sourcing with diversified footprints to enhance resilience. He also emphasised the need for greater collaboration between governments and businesses to reduce risk and maintain stability in international trade.



Jennifer Smiley

Head of customer supply & logistics
at [Jordans Dorset Ryvita](#)

Managing volatility through collaboration and agility

Jennifer Smiley offered a practical perspective from her lived experience in the grocery sector, highlighting how recent years have brought unprecedented levels of volatility and complexity.

She pointed to Brexit, the pandemic, geopolitical instability, and sustainability as the most significant challenges impacting operations. In response, her team has had to act quickly and decisively over the past few years, adapting sourcing strategies, reformulating products, and navigating shifting regulatory requirements.

Jennifer emphasised that cross-functional collaboration, supply chain agility, and access to a strong internal knowledge network were key to managing disruption and maintaining continuity.

Thoughts from a panel of **industry leaders**



Kirsty Lantos

COO at
Tangle Teezer

**Supply chain strategy should chase growth,
not follow tradition for tradition's sake**

Kirsty Lantos shared how the brand reshaped its supply chain to support rapid global growth in recent years. Transitioning from UK-based manufacturing to a more globalised model enabled the business to scale operations and better serve key markets like the US and China.

Rather than focusing on cost reduction, however, this strategy was centred on improving responsiveness and speed to market. Kirsty also acknowledged changing consumer awareness around product origin, but noted that purchasing decisions still tend to be driven by value and availability over provenance.



Professor John Manners-Bell

Founder of the Foundation for Future Supply Chain and author of
The Death of Globalization

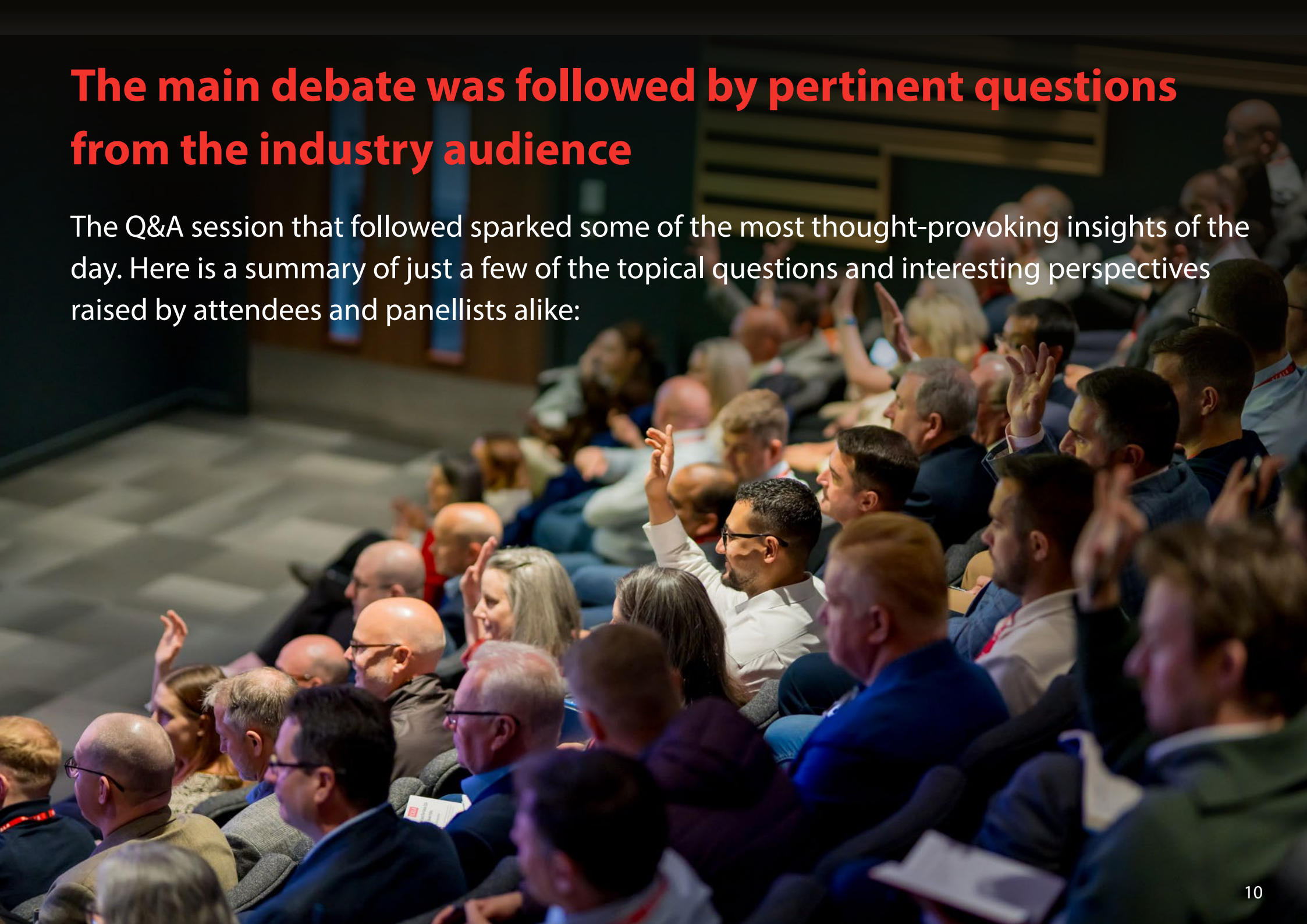
Globalisation isn't done, but it's no longer dominant

Closing the panel, Professor John Manners-Bell offered a more cautious outlook on globalisation. He argued that while global supply chains still have a role to play, they are no longer the default model.

Highlighting the impact of political instability, cyber threats, and energy costs, he suggested that businesses are increasingly turning to hybrid models, blending global, regional, and local sourcing strategies to suit their specific needs. He also underscored the importance of automation, digital technologies, and a strong skills pipeline as essential enablers for building resilient, future-ready supply chains.

The main debate was followed by pertinent questions from the industry audience

The Q&A session that followed sparked some of the most thought-provoking insights of the day. Here is a summary of just a few of the topical questions and interesting perspectives raised by attendees and panellists alike:



Question:

What's keeping supply chain leaders awake at night?

Answer:

The ongoing impact of geopolitical tensions, regulatory volatility, and a lack of political foresight were identified as major concerns. John Manners-Bell identified the UK's heavy reliance on offshoring as a key vulnerability, especially in critical sectors.

Tiger Wang added that businesses are increasingly aware that building resilience requires a more strategic, balanced approach to global and regional supply chains. With international trade becoming more complex and compliance risks escalating, supply chain leaders are seeking smarter, more future-ready models.





Question:

Is automation just replacing one type of risk with another?

Answer:

While automation was widely viewed as essential to increasing supply chain efficiency and resilience, concerns were raised that it could simply shift, rather than eliminate, risk.

Leaders agreed that while automation brings its own challenges, such as technical vulnerabilities and implementation risks, it is a necessary step to strengthen future supply chains. Investment, cross-sector collaboration, and robust planning will be critical in mitigating risk and enhancing supply chain resilience.

To find out more about the role of robotics and automation in supply chain operations, read [our report](#).

Question:

Are rising labour costs in China and global tensions changing sourcing strategies?

Answer:

Rising labour costs in China and geopolitical shifts are prompting many businesses to re-evaluate their sourcing models. However, decisions are no longer based on labour costs alone.

Kirsty Lantos stressed the importance of understanding total end-to-end costs, including logistics, regulation, and sustainability. Flexibility and agility were seen as vital for adapting quickly to changing market conditions and ensuring long-term operational success.





Question:

Is the UK too reliant on institutions to drive change?

Answer:

There was a strong sense that businesses must take greater ownership of driving innovation. While policy and institutional support remain important, a culture of risk aversion and an overdependence on top-down change may be slowing progress.

Jennifer Smiley highlighted how businesses have had to build their own capabilities, systems and networks to stay ahead of changing regulations, often without waiting for institutional support. The consensus was clear: futureproofing the UK's supply chains will require greater confidence, agility, and leadership from the business community itself.

Question:

How do we ensure government recognises the strategic importance of supply chain?

Answer:

The supply chain and logistics sector remains underrepresented in industrial policy. Attendees called for a more coordinated voice across the industry to help influence policymakers.

John Manners-Bell stressed a growing need to raise the profile of the sector and demonstrate its central role in economic resilience. A united approach, led by trade associations and supported by businesses, was seen as critical to driving recognition, funding, and meaningful policy change.





Chris Clowes

Executive Director at [SCALA](#)

Chris hosted this year's debate and reflected:

"The panel explored a spectrum of views, from strong advocacy for continued globalisation to calls for greater regional resilience and nearshoring through investment in automation technologies. What was clear is that while globalisation is far from dead, it is no longer the only path forward. Instead, we're seeing a shift towards more flexible, hybrid models that balance efficiency with resilience, and depend entirely on each business's unique circumstances. In fact, most attendees agreed that we're in a transitional phase, rather than an all-out rejection of global supply chains, despite the complex landscapes unfolding around us.

"Broader, long-term challenges were also raised, such as the urgent need to attract more talent into the sector from across the globe. Ultimately, building resilient, future-ready supply chains isn't just about where we source or manufacture; it's about rethinking how we design, manage, and lead them in an increasingly complex world."



SCALA Consulting was founded in 2001 and has earned an excellent industry reputation for providing high-quality supply chain and logistics expertise. The company's specialist consultants are guided by an executive board composed of seasoned business leaders with extensive senior-level experience.

SCALA consultants work with many leading international companies. It is our approach to create partnerships with clients, combining our external experience and expertise with our client's own business knowledge to deliver practical solutions in order to meet future commercial requirements and drive real tangible benefits.

SCALA Consulting is focused on ensuring that all our projects are carried out with sustainability and environmental factors as part of any decision-making process.

SCALA's experienced team is passionate about innovating supply chain improvements and providing independent objective expertise with professionalism, diligence, and integrity.

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