

## Exam assignment

International Business: Market and Non-Market Strategies, 2025–26  
MSc International Business & Politics

# Nokian Tyres: Getting a “Flat Tyre” from Geopolitics

The exam assignment for the IB course consists of a 72-hour take-home assignment. The exam is based on the case ‘**Nokian Tyres: Getting a “Flat Tyre” from Geopolitics**’.

The case describes the complications faced by Nokian, a Finnish tyre manufacturer, following Russia’s full invasion of Ukraine in 2022. It highlights Nokian’s strong dependence on Russia through a state-of-the-art production facility near St. Petersburg, and the subsequent pressure the company faced to divest from the Russian market.

**The exam case can be accessed through the following link:**

<https://hbsp.harvard.edu/tu/381667ee>

In addition to the **exam case** and its exhibits, the exam material includes a letter by the Ukrainian ambassador to Finland (**Appendix I**) and an organisational value statement (**Appendix II**).

In your assignment, please answer all questions below, drawing on concepts and readings from the IB course curriculum. The page limit is 10 pages. Specific details on the formal requirements for written exam papers at CBS can be found on *my.cbs.dk*.

Please note that the assignment consists of **four** exam questions, and that the following restrictions on the use of AI apply, as specified in the course description:

- **You may use GenAI tools for proofreading your written product - for example, to check spelling, grammar, punctuation, or formatting.** This kind of use does not need to be declared.
- **You may not use GenAI to generate ideas, conduct analysis, or develop conceptual arguments on your behalf.** However, you are welcome to use AI as a conversation partner to reflect on your own ideas or test your understanding, as long as the core analytical work and formulation of recommendations remain your own. This is because the ability to independently analyze and evaluate strategic challenges and formulate theoretically grounded recommendations is a central learning objective of the course.

## EXAM QUESTIONS

### Question 1 (max. 5 points)

The case provides insight into Nokian's strategy and the company's challenges since the escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian war in 2022.

- a. *Based on the case and the exhibits at the end of the case, how would you characterise Nokian's market strategy? Motivate your answer.*
- b. *On page 9, the case authors describe Nokian's manufacturing plant at Vsevolozhsk in Russia as "[the company's] competitive advantage". How do you evaluate this statement? Do you agree?*
- c. *The Vsevolozhsk tyre plant was newly constructed in 2005 to primarily serve the Russian market. How do you evaluate Nokian's decision to build the plant from scratch rather than acquire a domestic tyre producer in Russia at the time?*

### Question 2 (max. 3 points)

The case describes how Nokian pledged a € 100.000 donation to UNICEF at the start of the war in 2022.

- a. *How would you characterise this form of humanitarian engagement?*
- b. *What could have motivated Nokian to make this donation? Discuss three potential reasons.*

### Question 3 (max. 5 points)

Nokian's operations in Russia attracted significant criticism in 2022, including Ukrainian protests outside its headquarters and an open letter from the Ukrainian ambassador (**Appendix I**).

- a. *Are the protests at Nokian's headquarters and the letter sent by the ambassador examples of 'boomerang politics'? Why, or why not?*
- b. *Nokian's website states that the company seeks to contribute to a safer world (**Appendix II**, this exam document). Does this value statement complicate Nokian's handling of its response to Russia's full invasion of Ukraine? If so, how?*
- c. *Russia's invasion was predated by its annexation of Crimea in 2014, an event to which few businesses responded. What actions could concerned employees have taken at that time to make Nokian rethink its operations in Russia? Make three recommendations.*

**(Please see next page for Question 4)**

**Question 4** (max. 2 points)

In hindsight, the case authors conclude that Nokian severely misread the uncertainties associated with operating in Russia.

*What can Nokian do to better assess such uncertainties in the future? Make three distinct recommendations.*



March 22 2022

**Nokian Tyres**

Dear Sir/Madam!

The Russian Armed Forces keep committing war crimes in Ukraine, including bombing kindergartens, schools, hospitals, water reservoirs and residential buildings

The Russian troops do not allow the civilians to leave the combat areas exposing peaceful people as a human shield.

Several Ukrainian towns, including Volnovakha in Donetsk region after the inhumane indiscriminate shelling and bombing by the Russian Armed Forces are almost obliterated as populated locality.

Due to the constant inhumane shelling and bombing of the residential buildings in the Ukrainian cities by the Russian Armed Forces, ~10 mln people have fled their homes in Ukraine: ~6.5 mln people have been displaced inside Ukraine, and ~3.4 mln left the country.

According to the UNHCR about 12,5 million people currently reside in the regions of Ukraine, that are directly affected by the war. The latter causes the number of those who leave their homes, growing.

117 children were killed by Russian troops.

Russian Armed Forces regularly neither allow humanitarian cargos to reach hundreds of thousand civilians in the besieged Ukrainian cities, nor to leave such cities using humanitarian corridors.

Due to such cruel actions of the Russian Armed Forces dozens of Ukrainian cities appeared on the verge of humanitarian catastrophe while hundreds of thousand malnourished civilians hiding in the basements of half ruined buildings do not have access even to basic facilities like electricity, water supply and medical aid.

On March 16, 2022, the United Nations International Court of Justice delivered its Order, which had binding effect, prescribing the Russian Federation to suspend immediately the military operations that it commenced on 24 February 2022 in the territory of Ukraine.

But the Russian War criminals ignored the Order of the Court and continued their aggression.

Today the whole free and democratic world stands with Ukraine that is facing treacherous Russian aggression. And the Government of Finland officially supports Ukraine.

In the beginning of March 2022, 141 states of the world condemned Russia and supported Ukraine at the United Nations General Assembly. Only 4

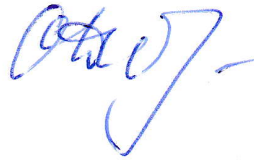
countries backed the state-aggressor: North Korea, Syria, Belarus and Eritrea.

Now it is time to make the choice.

Thus, I urge Nokian Tyres company to stop all business ties with the Russian Federation.

Otherwise, the blood of those killed by Russians in Ukraine and the tears of those suffering due to the Russian crimes in Ukraine will be on your hands.

**Olga DIBROVA,**  
**Ambassador of Ukraine to Finland**



[Home](#) / [About us](#) / Vision, purpose and values

# VISION, PURPOSE AND VALUES



## INSPIRED BY OUR NORDIC HERITAGE

Why does Nokian Tyres exist? What is the meaning we want to have for the world?

What we are proud of and what we aspire to be is summarized to a clear core: we stand for safety and sustainability; we drive innovation and think ahead to the future.

In this world, where technology and conditions are changing fast, we see a clear position for Nokian Tyres as the premium innovative brand made for demanding

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A horizontal progress bar with a dark grey background and a white line indicating the current position at approximately 34%.

## OUR PURPOSE

**We make the world safer by reinventing tires and how they are made, over and over again.**

We work to make the world a safer place for all through our tires. A safer place to drive, work and live, and for generations to come. For drivers, passengers and for those crossing roads. For professionals keeping the business rolling. And for us working to make the journey safer.

For us, safety is created by a safe working environment for our people, by the safe products that can be relied on in all conditions whether behind the wheel or not, by operating responsibly and sustainably, and by reducing our environmental impact to sustain life on earth.

Each day we are ready to rethink, retry and challenge ourselves to do more and develop what we have invented, pushing the frontiers in everything we do. Over and over again.

# LEAD THE WORLD TO DRIVE SMARTER

## OUR VISION

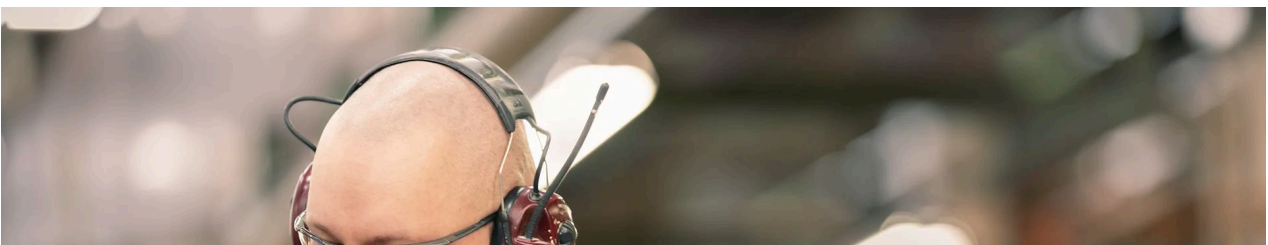
### Lead the world to drive smarter

As the tire industry pioneer, we are set to keep ahead. We enable smarter driving for people and businesses and lead the journey by example and inspiration.

Smarter driving means delivering the next level of safety and sustainability in mobility and in making tires for smarter vehicles. Mobility is becoming connected, autonomous, shared, and electric. Manufacturing is driven forward by advanced technologies, and the next generation of smart and circular raw materials.

We strive for progress by being resilient, and courageous in make pioneering decisions, sometimes for the first time in the world. Having a firm grip of the future means envisioning the journey and innovating ahead of the curve with continuous development, an open mindset, and collaboration.

## OUR VALUES





## We care

We respect and take care of each other, our consumers, customers, partners, and the globe.



## We drive innovation

As resilient pioneers of our industry we are leading the way, determined to find the smartest solutions.



## We succeed together

We team up to continuously improve and succeed together.

# EXPLORE NOKIAN TYRES

Strategy

Brand

Innovation

History