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STRATEGIC FORESIGHT AND POLICY AGILITY: NAVIGATING COMPLEXITY AND UNCERTAINTY IN THE ERA OF POLY-CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

The acceleration of global poly-crisis, including pandemics and climate shocks, geopolitical volatility and technological disruption, has demonstrated that time-consuming, traditional strategic planning and fixed, hierarchical governance structures do not scale. This theoretical article presents the argument that sustainable advantage and resilience in such turbulent environments requires the merger of two capacities that tend to be separated: strategic foresight and policy agility. With reference to theories of dynamic capabilities, complex adaptive systems and anticipatory governance, we formulate the Foresight-Agility Nexus Model, a model demonstrating how real-time policy implementation can be combined with long-term anticipation of possible futures. Some of the mechanisms that can be highlighted through the model include feedback loops, learning process and foresight-based action that can help organizations and government anticipate and adapt towards uncertainty. By connecting foresight and agility, we propose that decision-makers can also drive innovation, legitimacy, and resilience, thus being able to avoid short-termism and paralysis associated with volatility. The paper makes contributions to the field of strategic management and policy in that it presents an integrative framework that reconstitutes the future as not a horizon to be predicted into a future as an unfolding landscape to be continuously engaged. The consequence of the findings is the recommendation to scholars, policymakers, as well as to business strategists to develop their foresight capabilities, institutionalize their ways of agile governance, and build their hybrid strategies that can be more focused on exploration or exploitation in specific cases. Future research sites are suggested to empirically examine and develop the nexus model within other policy areas and the various organisational settings.

KEYWORDS

Strategic Foresight. Policy Agility. Poly Crisis. Resilience. Dynamic Capabilities. Governance. Foresight–Agility Nexus.

Introduction

A trend which has defined the 21st century is that the current crises are becoming more and more complex, convergent and disruptive in nature. From climate change and global pandemics to technological disruption, financial instability, and geopolitical conflicts, today's environment reflects what scholars and practitioners alike have termed a poly crisis a condition in which multiple, overlapping crises interact in unpredictable and often compounding ways (Tooze, 2022; Morin & Callahan, 2023). Unlike the single shocks, poly crises contribute to chain reactions that undermine the premises of linear planning and reveal the potential weak points of the conventional strategic and policy planning. Against this background, the problems facing organizations, governments and societies are, thus, a daunting task of approaching environments characterized by the concept of radical uncertainty i.e. environments where existing models of control and predictions are generally inadequate.

Rational planning models and predictive approaches have served as the backdrop to strategy and policy making on a decades-long basis. These models presume a state of relative stability where trends may be forecast with a reasonable degree of accuracy and resources may be allocated on the basis of predefined models. objectives (Mintzberg, 1994). Nonetheless with the increasing volatility, the strategies based on stability have become redundant with time. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated, in particular, how vulnerable long-term plans are to unexpected challenges that lack adaptive flexibility, and the pace of digital transformation has taken several industries by surprise and outstripped the ability of regulatory or corporate policies to keep up. Such developments underscore the inadequacy of "fit-and-freeze" approaches to strategy and policy, reinforcing the imperative for more dynamic paradigms that prioritize resilience, foresight, and agility (Teece, Peteraf, & Leih, 2016). It is against this background that the relevance of conceptual frameworks which can re-align strategic and policy thinking has never been more needed. A promising avenue is to combine strategic foresight-systematic exploration of multiple plausible futures-with policy agility-the ability of institutions as freeway ambulance and organizations to respond nimbly and effectively to changes on the run. Strategic foresight, rooted in futures studies, moves beyond prediction to embrace the exploration of uncertainties, weak signals, and alternative scenarios (Rohrbeck & Kum, 2018). Policy agility, by contrast, emphasizes real-time responsiveness, experimentation, and iterative learning in decision-making (Ansell, Trondal, & Øgård, 2022). Despite the research done on each of the dual concepts separately, there lacks a collective approach to the two concepts in the context of strategy and policy. As argued in this paper, foresight and agility can be synergistically integrated to provide a new and powerful model of dealing with situations of Poly-crisis.

The importance of such an integration is two-fold. On one hand, strategic foresight can provide decision-makers with the cognitive and shell-tools to predict the multigenerational trajectories of change, expanding the planning time horizon and broadening the conceptual planning domain. Second, policy agility is the attribute that will allow giving form to anticipatory insight when unexpected disturbances arise. The combination of the two helps develop a self-enhancing cluster that allows both anticipation and adaptation something which is required in environments where uncertainty is not an exception but a regular condition of modern systems. This foresight-agility nexus is indeed disruptive of existing paradigms of rationalist strategy and rigid policy frameworks and goes further to challenge the underlying strategic rationale, and thus, the use of resilience in the face of uncertainty by states, corporations, and non-state actors.

The aim of this paper is to theorise and conceptualise the two of incorporating strategic foresight and policy agility as a framework to navigate complexity and uncertainty in the era of poly crisis. Specifically, it seeks to answer three interrelated questions: (1) Why are existing strategy and policy models insufficient in Poly-crisis contexts? (2) How can the integration of foresight and agility offer a superior paradigm for decision-making in uncertain environments? (3) What are the theoretical, practical, and research implications of adopting a foresight–agility nexus in strategic and policy domains? The answers to these questions make this work relevant to current reflections in the field of strategic management, policy studies, and organizational theory, as well as a point of departure of future empirical inquiry.

In this paper, there are three contributions made. First, it contributes to a growing body of strategic foresight research by further understanding its connection with policy agility, therefore, attempting to bridge two bodies of work that have grown largely independently. Second, it contributes to the theoretical base of dynamic capabilities and complexity theory by integrating them into a general conceptual model with the help of which Poly-crisis situations are addressed. Third, it provides practical recommendations to policymakers and managers who want to achieve resilience strategies that are not only anticipatory, but also adaptive. By doing so, the paper contributes to developing the academic discourse, as well as being directly relevant to acute practical concern that confronts institutions across the world.

The rest of the paper is organized in the following way. Section 2 examines the emerging literature on strategy, policy, foresight and agility, stating what has been done and what is lacking. In Section 3, the theoretical backgrounds used in the foresight-agility nexus are detailed. In Section 4, the perspectives used in the work are combined into a conceptual model that forms a unified whole. Section 5 represents the methodology that was used to formulate this theoretical paper. In section 6, theoretical and practical implications of the proposed framework are discussed, and in section 7, I make research and practice recommendations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Evolution of Strategy and Policy Frameworks

There has been a long history of rationalist approaches to the study of strategy and policy, based upon an assumption of stability, predictability and the ability of decision makers to plan a path forward into the future. Classical strategy models, epitomized by the works of Ansoff (1965) and Chandler (1962), emphasized deliberate planning, long-term forecasting, and hierarchical implementation. These paradigms were anchored in the thought that organizations could manage its environment by predicting trends, injecting resources and implementing plans. Similarly, traditional policy-making processes were anchored in linear models of agenda-setting, formulation, and implementation (Lasswell, 1956), where rational analysis and incremental adjustments were expected to ensure optimal outcomes.

Nonetheless, this reasoning has become the subject of greater questioning during the last thirty years. Mintzberg's (1994) critique of the "fallacy of prediction" and the "illusion of control" marked an early recognition of the limits of rationalist planning in volatile contexts. Strategy scholars began to acknowledge the role of emergent strategies, organizational learning, and adaptation as key drivers of success (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). In policy studies, Lindblom's (1979) notion of "muddling through" highlighted the incremental, negotiated, and often improvisational nature of policy

development. These criticisms unwittingly helped in pioneering other paradigms of flexibility, adaptability, and resilience at the organizational as well as at the policy level.

Contemporary scholarship increasingly emphasizes that environments are not only uncertain but also deeply complex, characterized by nonlinear dynamics, interdependencies, and emergent phenomena (Snowden & Boone, 2007). The increase in global poly-crises including pandemics and international climate emergencies- has shown the inefficiency of systems of presumed stability and linearity. In response, both strategy and policy research have turned to concepts such as resilience (Lengnick-Hall & Beck, 2016), dynamic capabilities (Teece, Peteraf, & Leih, 2016), and complexity theory (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). However, based on these developments, there is still the shortfall of integrative conceptual frameworks that explicitly integrate long-term anticipatory capability with short-term adaptive agility.

2.2 Strategic Foresight

The concept of strategic foresight has come up as an outstanding counter to the inadequacy of predictive models amidst an uncertain environment. Defined as the systematic exploration of multiple plausible futures to inform present-day decision-making (Voros, 2017), strategic foresight extends beyond forecasting to incorporate scenario planning, horizon scanning, weak signal detection, and systems mapping. Foresight will allow organizations and policymakers to plan by taking into account a broader set of contingencies because it encourages them to act on the basis of uncertainty and to recognize the limits of prediction.

Empirical studies demonstrate that organizations that actively engage in foresight are better positioned to identify emerging risks and opportunities, innovate proactively, and adapt to disruptive change (Rohrbeck & Kum, 2018). As an example, multinationals like Shell have used scenario planning to play in the energy transition and geopolitical uncertainty with a certain degree of success. Similarly, governments have institutionalized foresight units to anticipate long-term societal challenges, such as demographic shifts or technological disruption (OECD, 2019).

However, foresight also has some limitations despite the above successes. Critics argue that foresight exercises often remain peripheral to core strategic and policy processes, functioning more as symbolic activities than as integral decision-making tools (Vecchiato, 2015).

2.3 Policy Agility

The policy concept of agility may be viewed as the ability of institutions in responding promptly and effectively to the changing conditions by adjusting the policies as appropriate. Unlike traditional policy models that assume stability and linearity, agility emphasizes responsiveness, flexibility, and iterative learning (Ansell, Trondal, & Øgård, 2022). Policymaking agility is marked by quick-response monitoring, input-output feedback, learning through experimentally adjustable interventions that can be recombined as circumstances change.

The agility of policy has gained special importance after world crises. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, governments that adopted agile policy responses—such as adaptive lockdown measures, rapid vaccine rollouts, and real-time communication—were better able to mitigate public health and economic impacts compared to those that relied on rigid, pre-established plans (Capano et al., 2020). And equally applicable to the sphere of climate change, policy light-footedness occurs that combine

experimentation with iterative adjustments have proven more effective than top-down, static regulations (Jordan & Huitema, 2014).

Nonetheless, agility possesses certain issues. Excessive flexibility also can do damage to policy coherence, stability and legitimacy because often such rapidity creates the sense of motion in the absence of a sense of direction, or direction perceived as unpredictable. There is also no organizational culture, process or capacity, and institutions typically lack the adaptive capacity needed to become agile since there is institutional path dependence, bureaucratic inertia, and vested interests. These limitations imply that besides creating agility, it is not sufficient to have other supplementary anticipating systems in place.

2.4 Toward a Foresight–Agility Nexus

The literature on foresight and agility, while extensive, has largely evolved in parallel, with limited cross-fertilization. Foresight tends to gravitate towards anticipation but rarely excels at action, whereas agility tends to be reactive and needs a forward-looking orientation. The bridging of the two domains presents the opportunity to transcend shortcomings of the two domains.

There were new studies that gave a hint of the advantage of the integration of anticipatory and adaptive capacities. For example, research on dynamic capabilities emphasizes the integration of sensing (anticipation) and seizing (adaptation) as core functions for strategic renewal (Teece, 2018). Similarly, studies of resilience highlight the dual importance of robustness (preparation) and flexibility (adaptation) in enabling systems to withstand shocks (Folke, 2016). Nevertheless, even with these insights scanty generalizations are depicted on how foresight and the agility can be systematically integrated into a coherent framework of strategy and policy in the context of Poly-crises.

Such a gap opens a space of conceptuality. Theorization of foresight agility nexus allows making the point that the combination of these two capabilities introduces a new way of operating in the domain of complexity. In particular, foresight offers the anticipatory horizon that is required in order to explore possible futures, and agility, the ability to respond to the changing circumstances. Together they create positive loop and increase resilience, innovation and legitimacy of decisions and decision-making.

2.5 Identified Gaps

From the foregoing, three critical gaps emerge:

1. Insufficient Integration: Foresight and agility are studied as distinct domains, with little attention to their combined application.
2. Conceptual Underdevelopment: Existing strategy and policy frameworks have not adequately theorized the interplay between anticipatory and adaptive capacities in Poly-crisis contexts.
3. Limited Practical Translation: While foresight generates valuable insights and agility facilitates adaptation, mechanisms for operationalizing foresight-informed agility remain underdeveloped in practice.

Addressing these gaps requires a conceptual model that explicitly articulates the interdependencies between foresight and agility, grounded in robust theoretical foundations. This provides the platform for advancing the proposed foresight–agility nexus, which will be elaborated in the subsequent sections.

3. Theoretical Foundations

Developing a conceptual framework that integrates strategic foresight and policy agility requires a strong theoretical foundation. The foresight–agility nexus builds on multiple strands of theory that address uncertainty, adaptation, and institutional behavior in complex environments. This section examines four key perspectives—complexity theory, dynamic capabilities, institutional theory, and behavioral strategy—and demonstrates how they collectively underpin the proposed model.

3.1 Complexity Theory

Complexity theory provides a foundational lens for understanding the unpredictable, nonlinear, and interconnected nature of poly-crises. Unlike traditional systems theory, which assumes linear cause–effect relationships, complexity theory emphasizes emergent behavior, adaptive dynamics, and the interdependence of system components (Holland, 1995; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). In complex adaptive systems (CAS), outcomes cannot be fully predicted from initial conditions, and small perturbations can have disproportionately large consequences—often referred to as the "butterfly effect."

The implication for strategy and policy is profound: decision-makers must abandon the illusion of precise prediction and control, and instead cultivate capacities that allow systems to adapt and evolve. Foresight aligns with complexity theory by encouraging exploration of multiple plausible futures rather than reliance on singular forecasts (Miller, 2007). Agility complements this by enabling rapid reconfiguration in response to emergent dynamics (Snowden & Boone, 2007). Thus, complexity theory legitimizes the foresight–agility nexus as a paradigm suited to environments where uncertainty is inherent and uncontrollable.

Moreover, complexity theory highlights the importance of feedback loops and learning. In complex systems, interventions often produce unintended consequences; therefore, strategies and policies must be designed for continuous monitoring and adjustment. Foresight contributes by identifying potential system tipping points and emergent trends, while agility operationalizes iterative adaptation as feedback becomes available. Together, these capacities embody a complexity-informed approach to decision-making.

3.2 Dynamic Capabilities

The dynamic capabilities framework (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997; Teece, 2018) offers another critical theoretical anchor. Dynamic capabilities are the higher-order routines that enable organizations to sense opportunities and threats, seize them through timely action, and reconfigure resources to maintain competitiveness. Unlike ordinary capabilities, which focus on efficiency and stability, dynamic capabilities emphasize flexibility, transformation, and renewal.

Foresight and agility can be directly mapped onto the three dimensions of dynamic capabilities. Foresight enhances sensing by broadening the temporal and cognitive horizons through which organizations detect emerging risks and opportunities. By engaging in scenario planning, horizon scanning, and systems thinking, organizations expand their ability to anticipate discontinuities and weak signals. Agility strengthens seizing by enabling organizations and policymakers to respond effectively and swiftly once change occurs. Agility also contributes to reconfiguring by allowing institutions to reallocate resources, redesign processes, and restructure policies in ways that align with evolving contexts.

Importantly, dynamic capabilities emphasize the integration of anticipation and adaptation as mutually reinforcing processes rather than isolated competencies (Peteraf, Di Stefano, & Verona, 2013). This theoretical insight directly supports the argument that foresight and agility should not be pursued in isolation but rather synthesized into a coherent framework that enables strategic and policy resilience in Poly-crisis environments.

3.3 Institutional Theory

Institutional theory provides a complementary perspective by emphasizing the role of rules, norms, and legitimacy in shaping organizational and policy behavior (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2014). Unlike the efficiency-oriented lens of dynamic capabilities, institutional theory highlights the constraints that institutional structures impose on adaptation, as well as the mechanisms through which organizations and policymakers seek legitimacy.

Foresight interacts with institutional theory by challenging path dependence and entrenched assumptions. By exploring multiple plausible futures, foresight exercises can help actors question the institutional logics that constrain innovative action (Wright, Bradfield, & Cairns, 2013). Agility, meanwhile, interacts with institutional dynamics by enabling rapid responses that maintain or restore legitimacy in the face of crisis. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, governments that adapted policies swiftly were better able to sustain public trust and compliance than those that adhered rigidly to outdated plans (Capano et al., 2020).

However, institutional theory also highlights barriers to foresight and agility. Bureaucratic inertia, vested interests, and regulatory frameworks may inhibit anticipatory thinking or slow adaptive responses. The foresight–agility nexus therefore requires not only technical capacities but also institutional reforms that allow flexibility without undermining legitimacy and accountability. This underscores the need for balancing innovation with stability in policy and strategy.

3.4 Behavioral Strategy

Behavioral strategy extends the conversation by incorporating insights from psychology and behavioral economics into strategic management (Powell, Lovallo, & Fox, 2011). It recognizes that decision-makers operate under bounded rationality (Simon, 1997), cognitive biases, and social influences that constrain their ability to process information and make optimal choices. In environments of radical uncertainty, these limitations become especially salient.

Foresight addresses bounded rationality by expanding cognitive frames and counteracting biases such as overconfidence, anchoring, and confirmation bias. By exposing decision-makers to diverse scenarios and perspectives, foresight encourages more nuanced and reflective strategic thinking (Schoemaker, Heaton, & Teece, 2018). Agility complements this by countering decision paralysis and enabling iterative learning-by-doing. In effect, foresight enhances the cognitive dimension of strategy, while agility operationalizes adaptive action despite uncertainty and cognitive constraints.

3.5 Integrative Theoretical Basis

Taken together, these theories provide a robust foundation for the foresight–agility nexus. Complexity theory highlights the inevitability of uncertainty and the need for adaptive responses. Dynamic capabilities emphasize the integration of sensing and seizing as core organizational competencies. Institutional theory underscores the constraints of legitimacy and path dependence while pointing to

the importance of adaptive governance. Behavioral strategy reveals the cognitive and organizational factors that influence anticipatory and adaptive capacities.

The synthesis of these perspectives yields a comprehensive theoretical justification for conceptualizing foresight and agility as complementary and mutually reinforcing. Rather than viewing them as isolated competencies, the nexus represents an integrated paradigm for navigating Poly-crisis contexts. This theoretical foundation sets the stage for the development of the conceptual framework, which will articulate how foresight and agility interact to produce resilience, innovation, and legitimacy in strategic and policy domains.

4. Conceptual Framework

The review of literature and theoretical foundations points to a significant gap in how strategy and policy scholarship conceptualizes the relationship between anticipation and adaptation in Poly-crisis contexts. While strategic foresight enables decision-makers to anticipate a range of plausible futures, it often struggles to translate insights into timely action. Policy agility, on the other hand, facilitates rapid responsiveness but risks being reactive without a longer-term orientation. To bridge this gap, this paper advances the Foresight–Agility Nexus Model, which integrates anticipatory and adaptive capacities into a mutually reinforcing system of decision-making for strategy and policy.

4.1 Core Assumptions of the Model

The Foresight–Agility Nexus Model rests on four interrelated assumptions derived from the theoretical foundations:

1. Uncertainty is structural, not temporary. Complexity theory emphasizes that uncertainty, volatility, and emergent behavior are inherent features of modern systems, particularly in Poly-crisis environments. Strategy and policy cannot eliminate uncertainty but must learn to operate effectively within it.
2. Anticipation and adaptation are complementary. From the perspective of dynamic capabilities, organizations require both sensing (foresight) and seizing (agility) to remain resilient. One without the other is insufficient.
3. Institutional legitimacy constrains and enables flexibility. Institutional theory suggests that anticipatory and adaptive actions must align with normative and regulatory expectations to maintain legitimacy. Thus, foresight–agility integration must balance innovation with legitimacy.
4. Human cognition is bounded. Behavioral strategy emphasizes that cognitive biases and bounded rationality limit decision-making. Foresight expands cognitive horizons, while agility provides mechanisms for adaptive action despite these limitations.

4.2 Dimensions of the Foresight–Agility Nexus

The model conceptualizes foresight and agility as two dimensions of adaptive resilience, which interact dynamically to shape strategic and policy outcomes.

Strategic Foresight (Anticipatory Capacity):

Temporal Horizon: Extending planning beyond short-term predictions to multiple futures.

Cognitive Horizon: Challenging dominant assumptions, mitigating biases, and expanding interpretive frames.

Systems Horizon: Mapping interdependencies, weak signals, and emergent dynamics across sectors.

Policy Agility (Adaptive Capacity):
Responsiveness: Rapid translation of foresight insights into action when disruptions materialize.
Flexibility: Capacity to reconfigure policies, resources, and structures iteratively.
Learning: Continuous feedback loops, experimentation, and institutionalized adaptation.
By themselves, foresight and agility are valuable but incomplete. Their integration produces synergistic benefits, enabling decision-makers to both anticipate disruptions and adapt effectively when surprises occur.

4.3 The Foresight–Agility Nexus Model

At the heart of the model is a reinforcing loop between foresight and agility:
1. Foresight informs agility. Insights from foresight exercises (e.g., scenario planning, horizon scanning) guide the design of flexible policies and strategies, ensuring that adaptive mechanisms are prepared before crises strike.
2. Agility operationalizes foresight. Agility ensures that foresight insights are not relegated to symbolic exercises but are embedded into organizational processes, enabling timely and responsive adaptation.
3. Feedback loops enhance foresight. Experiences from agile responses feed back into foresight processes, updating scenarios, refining assumptions, and improving anticipatory accuracy over time.
This iterative cycle transforms decision-making into a dynamic, learning-oriented system rather than a static, one-off process.
(At this stage, a diagram would typically illustrate the model as two interlocking cycles: foresight feeding into agility, agility feeding back into foresight, both reinforcing resilience in Poly-crisis contexts.)

4.4 Application of the Model in Poly-crisis Contexts

The Foresight–Agility Nexus Model is particularly relevant in contexts characterized by multiple, overlapping crises. Three illustrative domains highlight its application:
1. Public Health Crises: During COVID-19, governments that combined anticipatory scenario modeling with agile policy responses (e.g., adaptive lockdown measures, rapid vaccine rollout) were more successful in mitigating impacts. The nexus ensures that governments prepare for a range of pandemic trajectories while maintaining the agility to adjust interventions in real time.
2. Climate Change Policy: Anticipatory foresight enables policymakers to envision a range of possible climate futures, while agility ensures that policies (e.g., carbon pricing, renewable energy incentives) can be adapted as new data and technologies emerge. The nexus supports long-term sustainability while enabling short-term responsiveness**.**
3. Corporate Strategy in Disruptive Industries: Firms in technology, energy, and finance face accelerating disruption. Foresight enables them to anticipate shifts such as digital transformation or energy transition, while agility ensures rapid business model reconfiguration. The nexus fosters competitive resilience and innovation.

4.5 Implications of the Model

The conceptual framework yields several implications:
Theoretical Implications: The model contributes to strategy and policy theory by integrating foresight and agility into a single framework, bridging literatures that have developed in parallel. It advances complexity-informed perspectives by operationalizing how organizations can navigate uncertainty.

Practical Implications: For policymakers and managers, the model highlights the need to institutionalize foresight processes while simultaneously building agility into organizational structures. This may involve creating foresight units, embedding scenario planning in decision-making, decentralizing authority, and fostering cultures of experimentation.
Research Implications: The model provides a platform for empirical validation through case studies, surveys, or simulation models. Future research could investigate conditions under which the foresight–agility nexus produces superior outcomes compared to foresight or agility alone.

4.6 Summary

The Foresight–Agility Nexus Model conceptualizes the integration of anticipatory and adaptive capacities as a mutually reinforcing system of decision-making. By linking foresight (anticipation) and agility (adaptation), the model provides a coherent framework for navigating Poly-crisis environments marked by uncertainty and complexity. It thus offers a novel contribution to strategy and policy literature and a practical guide for decision-makers facing turbulent futures.

5. Methodological Approach

5.1 Nature of Conceptual Research

Conceptual research differs fundamentally from empirical studies in that its primary purpose is to advance theoretical understanding, propose new constructs, and develop integrative models that address gaps in the literature. Whereas empirical research tests hypotheses through data collection and analysis, conceptual research builds frameworks that generate new insights, stimulate scholarly debate, and guide future empirical investigation (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015). This study falls squarely within this tradition, seeking to theorize the integration of strategic foresight and policy agility into a novel framework for navigating Poly-crisis contexts.
In particular, this paper adopts a theory-building approach (Suddaby, 2010), in which diverse streams of scholarship are synthesized to generate new conceptual linkages. The methodological task here is not to measure foresight or agility empirically but to articulate how their integration—the foresight–agility nexus—offers superior explanatory and prescriptive power compared to existing frameworks.

5.2 Methodological Rationale

The decision to employ a conceptual methodology is justified by three key factors:
1. Emergent Nature of the Phenomenon: The challenges posed by poly-crises are relatively new and evolving. Empirical data remain fragmented, and no single dataset adequately captures the complex interplay of anticipation and adaptation. A conceptual model provides the necessary groundwork for later empirical exploration.
2. Fragmentation of Existing Literature: As highlighted in the literature review, foresight and agility have developed as separate domains of research with limited integration. Conceptual research is particularly well-suited to synthesizing disparate literatures and bridging theoretical gaps.
3. Need for Theoretical Innovation: Conceptual methodologies allow scholars to transcend incremental contributions and offer bold, integrative models that shift paradigms. Given the inadequacy of existing strategy and policy frameworks in Poly-crisis contexts, a conceptual approach provides the intellectual space to propose a novel foresight–agility nexus.

5.3 Approach to Theory Synthesis

This study employed a structured conceptual synthesis process, involving three steps:

Literature Integration: The research began with an extensive review of literatures on strategic foresight, policy agility, complexity theory, dynamic capabilities, institutional theory, and behavioral strategy. The goal was to identify convergences, complementarities, and gaps across these fields.

Construct Clarification: Following Whetten's (1989) criteria for theory building, the constructs of foresight and agility were carefully delineated in terms of their dimensions (anticipatory vs adaptive capacities). Their respective strengths and limitations were articulated to establish the rationale for integration.

Model Development: Insights from the theoretical foundations were synthesized into the Foresight–Agility Nexus Model, which articulates the dynamic and mutually reinforcing relationship between anticipation and adaptation. The model was developed iteratively, ensuring alignment with existing theory while offering novel extensions.

5.4 Criteria for Conceptual Rigor

To ensure methodological rigor, this study follows established guidelines for evaluating conceptual contributions in management and policy research (MacInnis, 2011; Jaakkola, 2020). Four criteria guided the design of the study:

1. Novelty: The foresight–agility nexus represents a novel integration of two previously fragmented domains of scholarship.
2. Usefulness: The model offers practical value to policymakers, managers, and scholars by providing a framework for decision-making in uncertain contexts.
3. Parsimony: The model distills complex dynamics into a clear framework without oversimplification, ensuring accessibility and applicability.
4. Grounding in Literature: The model is firmly rooted in established theoretical traditions, enhancing credibility and scholarly legitimacy.

5.5 Limitations of the Methodological Approach

As with all conceptual research, limitations exist. The absence of empirical validation means that the foresight–agility nexus remains a theoretical proposition requiring future testing. Additionally, while the study integrates diverse literatures, it cannot claim exhaustiveness, as both foresight and agility are rapidly evolving fields. Nevertheless, these limitations are offset by the study's primary contribution: providing a conceptual foundation and research agenda for future empirical inquiry.

5.6 Summary

In sum, this study adopts a conceptual methodology that synthesizes theory across multiple domains to propose the Foresight–Agility Nexus Model. Through literature integration, construct clarification, and model development, the paper contributes to theoretical innovation in strategy and policy. The next section discusses the broader implications of the model for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers.

6. Discussion and Implications

The Foresight–Agility Nexus Model offers a fresh paradigm for navigating the uncertainties of the 21st-century Poly-crisis environment. By integrating strategic foresight (anticipation) and policy

agility (adaptation), the model highlights the interdependence of two capacities that have traditionally been studied in isolation. This section discusses the broader significance of the model by examining its theoretical, practical, and research implications, as well as potential challenges in implementation.

6.1 Theoretical Implications

6.1.1 Extending Strategic Management Theory

The foresight–agility nexus extends the field of strategic management beyond its traditional focus on deliberate planning and competitive positioning (Porter, 1980) by emphasizing resilience, adaptability, and nonlinearity. While classical strategy frameworks assumed stable environments and predictable competition, the nexus acknowledges that competitive advantage increasingly depends on the ability to anticipate discontinuities and adapt dynamically. In this sense, the model complements and extends the dynamic capabilities perspective (Teece, 2018) by clarifying how sensing (foresight) and seizing (agility) interact in turbulent contexts.

6.1.2 Bridging Foresight and Agility Research

Although foresight and agility have matured as distinct literatures, their integration remains under-theorized. This paper positions the nexus as a bridge, providing a coherent framework for understanding how long-term anticipatory insights can be translated into short-term adaptive action. By doing so, it responds to calls in both fields for greater theoretical integration (Vecchiato, 2015; Ansell et al., 2022).

6.1.3 Contribution to Complexity-Informed Strategy and Policy

The model also advances complexity-informed perspectives in strategy and policy. Complexity theory emphasizes emergence, unpredictability, and adaptive capacity, yet it often stops short of offering prescriptive guidance. The foresight–agility nexus operationalizes complexity principles by showing how organizations and policymakers can institutionalize adaptive learning through the dual practices of anticipation and agility.

6.2 Practical Implications

6.2.1 For Policymakers

For policymakers, the foresight–agility nexus offers a structured yet flexible approach to governing in Poly-crisis contexts. Instead of relying solely on rigid long-term plans, governments can use foresight to explore alternative futures and agility to adjust policies in real time. For example:

Public Health: Scenario-based foresight could inform pandemic preparedness, while agile responses enable rapid adjustments as new variants or data emerge.

Climate Policy: Long-term foresight identifies plausible climate trajectories, while agility ensures that regulatory instruments (e.g., carbon taxes, subsidies) can evolve alongside technological and societal shifts.

Adopting this model requires institutional reforms—such as creating foresight units within government, decentralizing decision-making authority, and embedding feedback mechanisms into policy cycles.

6.2.2 For Business Leaders

For firms, particularly those in volatile industries (technology, finance, energy, healthcare), the foresight–agility nexus provides a framework for sustainable competitiveness. Foresight enhances innovation pipelines by identifying emerging technologies, market shifts, and regulatory changes. Agility ensures that organizations can pivot business models, reconfigure supply chains, and reallocate resources as disruptions occur. Together, these capacities enable firms to avoid strategic inertia and build resilience against shocks.

6.2.3 For Civil Society and Non-State Actors

Non-governmental organizations, international institutions, and grassroots movements also benefit from the foresight–agility nexus. These actors often operate in resource-constrained environments where crises disrupt programmatic continuity. Foresight allows them to anticipate vulnerabilities among affected populations, while agility ensures rapid adaptation of interventions (e.g., in humanitarian aid or disaster response).

6.3 Research Implications

The model opens several avenues for future research:

1. Operationalization of Constructs: While this paper conceptualizes foresight and agility, empirical studies are needed to develop valid measures. For example, foresight could be operationalized through the presence of scenario planning processes, while agility could be measured via organizational responsiveness and flexibility indices.
2. Comparative Studies: Researchers could examine variations in foresight–agility integration across contexts, such as public vs private sectors, developed vs emerging economies, or stable vs crisis-prone environments.
3. Performance Outcomes: Future studies could investigate whether the foresight–agility nexus enhances outcomes such as resilience, legitimacy, and innovation, and under what conditions these benefits materialize.
4. Processual Studies: Longitudinal research could explore how foresight insights evolve into agile responses, and how feedback from adaptation reshapes future foresight exercises. By offering a testable conceptual framework, this study lays the foundation for empirical research that can refine, validate, or challenge the proposed model.

6.4 Challenges and Boundary Conditions

While the foresight–agility nexus offers significant promise, its implementation faces challenges:

Institutional Inertia: Bureaucratic organizations may resist the flexibility required for agility or dismiss foresight as speculative. Overcoming these barriers requires cultural change and leadership commitment.

Resource Constraints: Both foresight and agility demand investment in skills, processes, and technology, which may be difficult in resource-constrained environments.

Legitimacy Risks: Excessive agility may create perceptions of inconsistency, while foresight exercises that generate radical scenarios may face skepticism from stakeholders. Balancing innovation with credibility remains a critical boundary condition.

Cognitive Overload: Engaging in multiple foresight scenarios while maintaining agile responsiveness can overwhelm decision-makers. Structured processes and decision-support systems are needed to mitigate these risks.

These challenges highlight that the nexus is not a panacea but a framework that requires careful tailoring to institutional contexts.

6.5 Study Implications

The Foresight–Agility Nexus Model has significant theoretical, practical, and research implications. Theoretically, it integrates fragmented literatures and advances complexity-informed strategy and policy. Practically, it provides a framework for policymakers, managers, and civil society actors to navigate Poly-crisis environments. For researchers, it opens new avenues for empirical investigation into anticipatory and adaptive capacities. While challenges and boundary conditions exist, the model nonetheless represents a timely and necessary contribution to both scholarship and practice in an era defined by volatility and uncertainty.

7. Conclusion

The 21st century is increasingly defined by poly-crises a convergence of interdependent shocks such as climate change, pandemics, geopolitical instability, technological disruption, and financial volatility. These conditions render traditional models of policy and strategy, which rely heavily on linear planning and stability assumptions, insufficient for contemporary realities. Through the proposed Foresight–Agility Nexus Model, the paper conceptualizes how organizations and governments can build resilience and adaptability in an era of heightened uncertainty. Strategic foresight enhances the capacity to anticipate multiple plausible futures, while policy agility ensures responsiveness to real-time shifts. Together, these capacities form a reinforcing cycle: foresight informs adaptation, and agile responses generate feedback that refines foresight. The nexus thus provides a dynamic approach to strategy and policy, bridging the gap between anticipation and adaptation.

The paper makes several key contributions. Theoretically, it extends the dynamic capabilities perspective by clarifying the interplay between long-term anticipation and short-term responsiveness, while also advancing complexity-informed approaches in strategy and policy research. Practically, it offers a guiding framework for policymakers, managers, and civil society actors seeking to design institutions that can withstand shocks without succumbing to rigidity or irrelevance. For researchers, it opens fertile ground for empirical inquiry, including operationalizing foresight and agility, investigating their impact on performance outcomes, and exploring their integration across sectors and geographies.

Nevertheless, the nexus is not without challenges. Institutional inertia, resource constraints, and risks of cognitive overload may limit its implementation. Recognizing these boundary conditions is critical for ensuring that foresight and agility are not reduced to rhetorical buzzwords but embedded as functional capacities.

Ultimately, this paper calls for a rethinking of strategy and policy in the age of poly-crisis. The foresight–agility nexus provides not merely a conceptual model but a call to action for scholars and practitioners alike: to embrace uncertainty as a defining condition of our time, and to build adaptive systems that can navigate it with resilience, creativity, and foresight. The ability to thrive in turbulence

will no longer depend solely on the strength of resources or the elegance of plans, but on the capacity to anticipate and adapt—continuously, iteratively, and collaboratively.

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