

Cambridge Elements

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SCENARIO THINKING

A Historical Evolution of Strategic Foresight

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Scenario Thinking

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Abstract: This Element infuses established scenario-planning routines with an exploration of cognitive reasoning, by contextualising scenario thinking within the wider human endeavour of grappling with future uncertainties. Using a study of ancient civilisations, it shows that scenario thinking is not new but has evolved significantly since ancient times. By decoupling scenario thinking from scenario planning, the thesis elevates the role of the former as *the* essential ingredient in managerial foresight projects. The historical theme continues with a focus on the evolution of modern scenario planning, by way of the French and Anglo-American schools of thought, using the intuitive logics methodology. Archival research for the Element has discovered early contributions from the United Kingdom around the development and use of scenario thinking in public policy, which has been overlooked in the many received histories. Finally, the thesis challenges the usefulness of scenario thinking for strategic management and refines the argument that it is simply a heuristic device for overcoming cognitive biases and making better strategic decisions.

Keywords: scenario planning, scenario thinking, foresight, strategic management

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