

**THE UNFORESEEN FUTURE BY STRATEGY GURUS -
THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN SENSE MAKING, SENSE
GIVING, AND THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE**

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ABSTRACT

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>Strategy gurus play a crucial role in the field of strategy due to their knowledge and contributions to the development and execution of strategy. In the preceding decades, debates have been sparked on guru identities, particularly in terms of interpreting unforeseeable future events. Gurus demonstrate their prognostic abilities, through the use of narratives and an emphasis on numerous phenomena and concepts, compared to novices. In contrast, sense-making research is currently conducted in all disciplines, particularly to comprehend how human thoughts, behaviors, and actions operate and interact with one another. However, research in the field of sense-making and guru event predictions is viewed as a potential future area of study, particularly in terms of the role that communication and language play in the process.</p> <p>This research is conducted to determine how strategy gurus make sense of future events and how they maintain control of the process when their predictions are inaccurate. The study will employ a grounded theory research approach, particularly the Gioia method, to determine how gurus interpret events. The study will concentrate on four strategy gurus who participated in the process of predicting the Ukraine-Russia war of 24 February 2022. The study will concentrate on post-analysis narratives until April 9, 2023, in order to better comprehend the process of how gurus ensure control over inaccurate predictions.</p> <p>The empirical findings identify eight sense-making and sense-giving strategies. The gurus foresee the future using prospective, retrospective, and strategic sense-making while providing meaning through identity, metaphorical framing, cognition, semiotic interpretation, and pragmatism-heuristics. Finally, a conceptual framework will be developed to illustrate the interaction between sense-making and sense-giving. It will also be discussed in the study how the power of gurus, particularly the discursive and authoritative power of their guru status, can moderate the process.</p>	
Key words Sense-making - Sense-giving - Communication - Language - Guru narratives	
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1 INTRODUCTION

"I make a living advising government on strategy. Strategy is the logic of war and the logic of peace".

- Edward N. Ltwark -

Strategy gurus, wise and sage, Foresee the future, turn the page, Explore depths of information, Giving meaning to each situation. How do they figure out what's to come, Events that lie ahead, yet undone?

The subject of predictions has been intensively studied in the strategy literature in recent years. Most organizations employ predictive or adoptive strategies as a control mechanism to align their organizational goals with set targets (Wiltbank et al., 2006). Adoptive strategies are used when the company has no ability to make predictions, or when there are gaps in the accuracy of predictions that can impact the future of the organization. Nevertheless, the majority of firms apply predictions, i.e., predictive strategies, to manage future risks (K. Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). This arises the importance of understanding how people predict events. The concept of "strategy gurus" has been widely recognised in the field of strategy as a significant character who possesses the ability to make predictions and provide insights into unseen events. These individuals are known for their expertise in the area of strategy and are often sought after for their guidance and counsel. Their contributions to the field have been widely acknowledged and have played a crucial role in shaping the way organisations approach strategic decision-making.

Over the years, the reliability and accuracy of predictions have sparked debate. However, to improve organizational performance in the face of unforeseen circumstances, the most dominant strategy employed by strategists is "anticipations/predictions." According to Karl Weick's interpretation of "expect the unexpected," individuals anticipate because the future is unpredictable, highlighting the necessity to be prepared for the unexpected (K. Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). Preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify interpretations, and sensitivity to operations" are the three guiding principles that a person must keep in mind when making predictions (K. Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007).

In light of recent global issues involving geopolitics, government instability, climate change, and rising demands for human rights, the precision, and dependability of these forecasts have drawn great attention. Professionals in the

field of strategy-making rely on forecasts and interpretations of ambiguous contextual events. This task has become easier for consultants and management-level personnel in contemporary firms due to technological advancements. However, the challenge is to examine, how strategists create sense by generating meaning as opposed to relying on technology. According to a study conducted to determine the relationship between choice, chance, and the inevitability of strategy explains that 'strategy would seem pointless in a deterministic universe where yesterday's events dictate today' (de Rond & Thietart, 2007, p. 535). This then poses the question, "Why do strategists predict?" which shows the path to a potential research topic for strategy scholars to answer, why and how strategists make predictions in an uncertain environment, and how important are they in the field of strategy?

Predictions can be communicated in terms of personal opinions, professional observations, or subject-specific knowledge, which can be accomplished through an academic process known as "sensemaking." Sense-making as a concept has a rich history that was first put forward as how people give meaning and later developed into a concept that is valid in different contexts. Following the introduction of sensemaking as a concept (by Weick, 1993), the notion has been researched by scholars in several areas, particularly by organizational strategy scholars (Cristofaro, 2022; Gioia et al., 1994; Gioia, Patvardhan, et al., 2013; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Liu & Maitlis, 2014; Maitlis et al., 2013).

Despite their accuracy, understanding how strategy experts make and communicate predictions is a rare contribution to strategy literature. On the contrary, sensemaking literature has been the topic of one of the most important qualitative studies done by strategy scholars over the last several decades due to its significance, nature, and development. In fact, it is a wide subject applicable to various philosophies. Sense-making, according to literature, 'is a series of formal and informal activities by which new data is contextualized within the culture, identity, strategy, and operations of said organization in order to inform decisions both in the present and in the near-term future' (Rosa et al., 2021, p. 2). Moreover, studies on sense-making have been conducted from various perspectives, and the process has been written in relation to leadership, organizational change, crisis, behavior, narratives, political strategy formulation, and sustainability (Rosa et al., 2021)

Father of sense-making Karl E. Weick introduced retrospective sense-making, in which he states that "people cast themselves into future, imagining that an event has taken place - i.e., "this will have happened" - and then make sense of the imaginary events by looking back on them" (Patvardhan et al., 2018).

Recent research has focused on retrospective and prospective sensemaking due to its applicability and significance in current world scenarios especially in the context of predictions.

The conflict between Ukraine and Russia has captivated the world, and therefore it is fascinating to comprehend what made some strategy gurus and management gurus predict the Ukraine-Russia war. According to war prediction information and historical precedent, strategists have assigned significance to every minor aspect with a high level of specificity, i.e., human behaviors, history, war trends, speech, communication, other sensitive information, etc. It is a fascinating phenomenon to examine how strategy gurus use their senses to provide information about something that is supposed to happen in the future. Therefore, Predictions about the war between Ukraine and Russia provide an excellent foundation for investigating the above topics. The war and the predictions have also been of interest to the general public, the government, military institutes, the media, economists and strategists, international corporations, and the entire globe.

It is interesting to understand how the above principles in sensemaking can be seen in the context of the war. As cited by Weick (1993), sensemaking 'enables individuals to comprehend what is happening around them and it acts as a precondition for actions since the failure to make sense can incapacitate an individual' (Sukhov et al., 2018). The war has been a topic of interest for strategists, and predictions of the conflict were prevalent from a variety of perspectives. The author identified that the predictions made of war have been a wider topic amongst the general public, government, military institutes, media, economists and strategists, international corporations, and also amongst other stakeholders including neighboring countries. Intriguingly, most strategy gurus have shown interest and enthusiasm in anticipating a series of events based on their professional experience, knowledge, and/or observation of people's and events' actions from the past.

Following the completion of the initial phase of text collection, the author identified that the texts collected on war forecasts by strategy gurus exhibited a clear interplay between sense-making and sense-giving characteristics, a relatively narrow component of sense-making theory in general. They were thus identified as plausible theories that can address the gaps in communicating predictions. The majority of strategists anticipated war, but their forecasts were incorrect. The study will help determine the extent to which sense-making is based on predictions that are applicable when evaluating context-specific events and constructing the past and future in real-world settings. However, researchers

have placed a greater emphasis on sense-making theories, but few efforts have been made to determine the relationship between sensemaking theories and predictions. Therefore, it is essential to understand how and on what basis strategists use sense-making and sense-giving when making predictions. In order to carry out the research in the field of sense-making, the accuracy of prediction has been ignored and only the context of prediction will be taken into account.

The purpose of my research study is to determine the nature of predictions made by strategy gurus, i.e., how strategy gurus make statements (predictions) about future events and how they react and respond when the predictions go wrong (post-analysis). I will also develop a conceptual framework to demonstrate the relationship between the themes and theories that emerged. To achieve that, I will use grounded theory, and Gioia methodology for data analysis (Gioia et al., 2013). The research results will aid future sensemaking studies that seek to comprehend the relationship between human predictions with sense-making, sense-giving, and the role of language. The present study aims to make a contribution to the field of sense-making and sense-giving research, with a specific focus on the role of language and communication in shaping these processes. The study seeks to explore the complex interplay between these two theoretical constructs.

The strategy gurus, particularly those in the military, have attempted to predict the outcomes of wars before they occur. Therefore, I consider war predictions to be an excellent research area for research. Therefore, I intend to figure out, *“What methods do strategy gurus use to interpret events as predictions, and how do they ensure control over the process?”*

This report, which is divided into six chapters, will be a comprehensive study of strategic predictions and their contribution to sensemaking and communication research. First, I will begin with a brief introduction to my research context, the theories considered, and the purpose of my research. The next chapter, which is the theoretical background to my study, is a compilation of early and recent research findings related to predictions and the use of sensemaking in different contexts. The next chapters will highlight how the author used grounded theory along with the Gioia methodology to arrive at conclusions on the data collected and analyzed. The findings chapter will highlight the first-order concepts, second-order themes, and aggregate dimensions derived through my data set and their interplay. Next, I will discuss my findings followed by the contributions, limitations, and implications for future research. Finally, the report ends with a conclusion that primarily recaps my research.

Lastly, I acknowledge the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and do so with a complete comprehension of the advantages and disadvantages AI could bring to academic contributions. I utilised a few AI tools occasionally to enhance the value of the report. To ensure the quality of my contribution, I always read and revised the text as necessary. This report was edited using AI applications such as Grammarly and Elephas. I have used these two AI tools to formalise some of the paragraphs and present the report without grammatical errors. In addition, Grammarly has been installed on all of my Microsoft Word documents to flag errors as I write. I used Elephas to make the text more professional and to ensure the quality of my report. However, the use of AI does not imply that AI is the sole contributor to this report; rather, AI was utilised to improve the report.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the grounded theories of guru predictions, where event prediction is generally viewed as complex and impossible. As the study was conducted predominantly using the Gioia methodology, literature was not utilized to a great extent. As predictions and post analysis were heavily based on how people make sense of events, the author chose to employ sense-making knowledge in the study. In addition to sense-making theories in general, the key findings of this study will characterize a deeper understanding of prospective and retrospective sense-making, as well as sense-giving theories. The importance of comprehending the background of gurus, guru theories, guru narratives, and related information during the research process is also identified. Consequently, this chapter will also provide a concise introduction to each of the previously mentioned topics. The chapter is structured as follows. Following a theoretical introduction to predictions, sense-making theories, sense-giving, and their interrelationships will be discussed. At the conclusion of the chapter is a table containing the key terms that will be used for the research.

2.1 Predictions

The topic of predicting and envisioning future events has attracted widespread interest among individuals across the globe. We would all be delighted to know what will happen to us in the future. In the context of literature, this concept of predictions has been explored in various forms, ranging from prophetic visions to divination practices (Marienza Benedetto, 2017). However, the desire for prediction has been depicted as both a blessing and a curse, as it can provide a sense of security or lead to a spiral of anxiety (Van Petten & Luka, 2012). Irrespective of the accuracy, the prediction process has been extensively studied and analysed in various academic disciplines, including, communication and language (Huettig & Mani, 2016; Mitzenmacher & Vassilvitskii, 2022; Pickering & Garrod, 2007), science (Clauaset et al., 2017; Harker, 2008; Stone, 1974), psychology (Curtis et al., 2004; Holmes, 1968), sociology (Henshel, 1971, 1982; Huber & Bell, 1971) and management (Brumback, 1988; Howard & Bray, 1990; Kloppenborg & Opfer, 2002; Mahajan, 1992). The topic at hand has gained significant attention and has been the subject of extensive discourse over a considerable period of time, with varying viewpoints being presented.

Wagenaar and Keren (1986, p. 87) posit that individuals' ability to predict events is closely linked to their capacity to explain the likelihood of those events

occurring. Specifically, they suggest that people's predictions are informed by their assessment of the probability of an outcome, and the accuracy of their predictions is contingent upon the accuracy of their probability estimates. Experts or gurus in a particular field are well-known for their ability to predict the future compared to novices (Camerer & Johnson, 1991; McAndrew et al., 2021). The concept of expertise and its association with individuals who have achieved a high level of knowledge and skill in a particular field has been widely recognised and acknowledged. These individuals, commonly referred to as experts or gurus, have garnered a reputation for their proficiency and are often sought after for their insights and guidance. In the literature, experts are defined as individuals possessing extensive knowledge and expertise within a particular field. According to Sukhov et al. (2021), the process of predicting or generating ideas by experts is a complex process that involves screening and action, which necessitates the use of intuition, analysis, and sensemaking.

According to an extensive study by Camerer and Johnson (1991) was carried out to figure out why experts who have extensive knowledge about a field cannot make the right predictions and identified that it is due to the 'process-performance paradox' meaning, experts tend to rely excessively on inaccurate configure rules or cues, rather than utilising straightforward statistical rules which can lead to biases. As a result, the majority of studies have primarily concentrated on quantitative methods of prediction due to the validity and reliability of statistics. However, a recent study by McAndrew et al highlights the advantages of human predictions due to overcoming data issues as people develop meaningful predictions from a small and unstructured set of data (2021, p. 3).

2.2 Sense-making theory

Sensemaking refers to the cognitive process of creating and attributing significance to a real-world occurrence through the utilization of research or personal experience. The outcome of this process is contingent upon an individual's psychological factors. The concept of theory is widely debated among scholars, who utilize it to observe particular behaviors and forecast future outcomes. According to Karl Weick, who is considered the pioneer of sense-making, the process involves constructing a functional theory or a "map" of the world in response to continuous changes (Weick, 2020). This theory or map is then subjected to scrutiny through observation, experimentation, and discourse with others. Subsequently, the theory or map is either modified or discarded based on new information that emerges (Ancona, 2012). Numerous investigations have been carried

out on the concept of sense-making from diverse viewpoints, and its application has been documented in connection with leadership, organizational transformation, emergency situations, conduct, storytelling, political strategy development, and sustainability (Christianson & Barton, 2021; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Vaara & Whittle, 2022). Moreover, the interpretations of sense-making exhibit significant variations contingent upon the context or occurrence in which it is explained distinctively.

The concept of sensemaking pertains to the attribution of significance to particular events that capture the attention of individuals engaged in the process of sense-making. Karl Weick explains that “active agents construct sensible events” and that they “structure the unknown” (Weick, 1995, p. 04). As a result, the process of sensemaking delivers significance upon events that are typically disregarded or deemed insignificant due to their unstructured nature. Weick writes, “how they construct, what they construct, why and with what effects” (Weick, 1995, p. 04). The literature on sensemaking has undergone an evolution over time and it is interesting how the concept of sensemaking can be applied to various phenomena. The literature on sense-making is expanding and lacks a strict, comprehensive definition. Scholars have approached the concept of sense-making from various angles in order to formulate a theoretical framework. The concept of sensemaking was initially recognized as a phenomenon in which individuals attribute significance to occurrences over a period of time. Over time, it has evolved from being a self-contained theoretical construct to being developed as a method of analysis (Helms Mills et al., 2010, p. 182).

Karl Weick is recognized as a pioneering figure in the field of sensemaking, alongside other esteemed scholars. He has distinguished the concept of sensemaking from other related concepts such as understanding, interpretation, and attribution by outlining seven defining characteristics. These characteristics include being grounded in identity construction, retrospective in nature, enactive of sensible environments, social in context, ongoing in process, focused on and by extracted cues, and driven by plausibility rather than accuracy (Weick, 1995, p. 17). The field of organizational studies has extensively explored the concept of sensemaking, which has proven to be a multifaceted area of inquiry. This theoretical framework has been primarily utilized to explain human behavior from a qualitative standpoint. Nonetheless, researchers in the field of sensemaking have examined the concept in various iterations, leading to distinct variations of sensemaking that have facilitated more precise and efficient investigation of the phenomenon. The figure below is adopted by Maitlis & Christianson (2014, p. 68) which defined different forms of sensemaking.

Form of sensemaking	Definition
Constituent-minded sensemaking	"the process by which an arbiter renders an assignment of blame, guided not only by the arbiter's professional standards and rational analysis but also by his or her own biases and the anticipation of his or her constituents' biases." (Wiesenfeld, Wurthmann, & Hambrick, 2008, p. 235)
Cultural sensemaking	"how entrepreneurs or communities make sense of venture failures." (Cardon, Stevens, & Potter, 2011, p. 79)
Ecological sensemaking	"the process used to make sense of material landscapes and ecological processes." (Whiteman & Cooper, 2011, p. 889) "how actors notice and bracket ecologically material cues from a stream of experience and build connections and causal networks between various cues and with past enacted environments." (Whiteman & Cooper, 2011, pp. 890–891)
Environmental sensemaking	"actors make sense not only of the event itself, but of the broader organizational field." (Nigam & Ocasio, 2010, p. 826)
Future-oriented sensemaking	"sensemaking that seeks to construct intersubjective meanings, images, and schemes in conversation where these meanings and interpretations create or project images of future objects and phenomena." (Gephart et al., 2010, p. 285)
Intercultural sensemaking	"the process involving the selection of scripts that reflect individuals' cultural values and cultural history." (Fisher & Hutchings, 2013, p. 796) "... can lead to various outcomes such as schema development and a higher level of cultural understanding." (Fisher & Hutchings, 2013, p. 796)
Interpersonal sensemaking	"the role of interpersonal cues from others in helping employees make meaning from their jobs, roles, and selves at work." (Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003, p. 102)
Market sensemaking	"a macro version of Weick's approach to meaning construction in organizations." (Kennedy, 2008, p. 272).
Political sensemaking	"how powerful social actors construct the relationship between multinational enterprises (MNEs) and their multiple local contexts." (Clark & Geppert, 2011, p. 395)
Prosocial sensemaking	"process in which employees interpret personal and company actions and identities as caring." (Grant, Dutton, & Rosso, 2008, p. 898)
Prospective sensemaking	"the conscious and intentional consideration of the probable future impact of certain actions, and especially nonactions, on the meaning construction processes of themselves and others." (Gioia, Thomas, Clark, & Chittipeddi, 1994, p. 378)
Resourceful sensemaking	"the ability to appreciate the perspectives of others and use this understanding to enact horizon-expanding discourse." (Wright, Manning, Farmer, & Gilbreath, 2000, p. 807)

Figure 1 Forms of Sensemaking

The theory of sense-making has been widely accepted and can be applied to a diverse range of events, including both internal organizational changes and global scenarios. This theory encompasses both micro and macro-organizational factors. Sensemaking and its various manifestations have served as the foundation for many of the novel theories and correlations that have emerged. According to Holt and Cornelissen's research, the theory of sense-making outlines the mechanism through which agents-in-contexts use words or bodily gestures to frame, narrate, or categorize organizational situations, and how these actions subsequently structure perceptions (2014, p. 525). The phenomenon of assigning specific meanings to various lenses in order to observe a single theory is a fascinating area of study. The process of sense-making is contingent upon the presence of contextual information.

Individuals do not make sense in the absence of a trigger. The trigger event is characterised by a discrepancy between the individual's expectations and the actual experience, leading to the emergence of 'equivocality and anxiety' (Kramer, 2016, p. 3). Sandberg and Tsoukas (2014) identified five triggers for sensemaking in their study. The five distinct types of events are, "(1) major planned events, (2) major unplanned events, (3) minor planned events, (4) minor unplanned events, and (5) hybrids of major/minor planned/unplanned events" (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015, p. 07).

The process of sensemaking involves the explication of experiences, and the definition of the sense made is moderated by the context in which it occurs. Given that contexts are often ambiguous, they may be subject to multiple interpretations. According to Kramer's (2016) research, the process of sensemaking involves the management of equivocality in experiences that deviate from expectations and is achieved by selecting a single interpretation from the various possible interpretations of the experience (p. 1). The present analysis involves the tabular representation of various studies published in diverse contexts. The studies have been summarized to highlight interesting findings and demonstrate the concept of sensemaking.

Table 1 Definitions of Sense-making

Author	Event/ Context	Definition to sensemaking/ Interesting Findings
Karl E. Weick (1993)	Mann Gulch Fire Disaster in Montana	<p><i>"Reality is an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs"</i></p> <p>Findings: The loss of meaning during sense-making process</p>
Karl E. Weick (K. E. Weick, 1995)	<p>The Mann Gulch Disaster: In 1949</p> <p>The Three Mile Island Nuclear Accident: In 1979</p> <p>The Challenger Space Shuttle Disaster: In 1986,</p>	<p><i>"The ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing"</i></p> <p>Findings: Introduction of 7 properties of sensemaking. "1) grounded in identity construction, (2) retrospective, (3) enactive of sensible environments, (4) social, (5) ongoing, (6) focused on and by extracted cues, (7) driven by plausibility rather than accuracy"</p>
Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991, p. 442)	CEO's Role in strategic change	<p><i>Sensemaking is related to "meaning construction and reconstruction by the involved parties as they attempted to develop a meaningful framework for understanding the nature of the intended strategic change"</i></p>
Langley (1999)	Use of literature review and research	<p><i>"A set of seven generic ways for gaining theoretical insight from shapeless data that does not reveal the data's richness, dynamism, or complexity but is understandable and potentially valuable to others"</i></p>
David Wicks (2002)	Disaster at Westray	<p>Findings: Importance of identity construction</p>

Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015)	Use of literature review and research	<i>“Sensemaking in organizations has been seen as consisting of specific episodes, is triggered by ambiguous events, occurs through specific processes, generates specific outcomes, and is influenced by several situational factors”</i>
Rosness et al. (2016)	Sensemaking in operation theatre	<p><i>“Sensemaking in organisations has traditionally been conceived as a retrospective process (Weick 1995), concerned with assigning meaning to things that have already happened”</i></p> <p><i>Findings: “Instead of waiting for things to happen and making sense of them in retrospect help making things easy to handle”, “Prospective sensemaking is less event-driven than retrospective sensemaking”</i></p>
Thurlow and Helms Mills (2009, p. 461)	Sensemaking in language, talk and communication	<p><i>“Sensemaking provides a recipe for understanding organizational processes through the utilization of a series of interdependent social psychological “properties”, offers a way of understanding how individuals make sense of their complex environments”.</i></p> <p>Findings: How language and power affect different sensemaking processes</p>
Karl E. Weick (1990)	Tenerife air disaster	<i>“Combination of interruption of important routines among interdependent systems, interdependencies that become tighter, a loss of cognitive efficiency due to autonomic arousal, and a loss of communication accuracy due to increased hierarchical distortion, created a configuration that encouraged the occurrence and rapid diffusion of multiple small errors”</i>

Brown (2005)	The collapse of Barings Bank	<i>“Exercising a disciplinary function that constitutes actions and events in order to establish a regime of truth that fixes meanings in specific ways. This is important because once meanings become fixed they may exercise a profound hegemonic influence, shaping the stories told by others about these and similar types of events”</i>
Breit (2010)	Corruption media coverage	<i>“Discourses are crucial elements of sensemaking and sensegiving in the media around corruption”</i>
MacLean et al. (2018)	Hilton International in promulgating anti-communist	<i>“Through astute political sensemaking and sensegiving, macro-political discourse that is ideological and universalizing may be allied to micro-political practices in strategic action fields”</i>
Cornelissen et al. (2014)	shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes (Stockwell shooting)	<i>“Language has a formative effect on meaning construction, and thus directly impacts behavioural enactments”</i>

Louis (1980) posits that sensemaking is based on the assumption that individuals engage in retrospective efforts to comprehend and cognitively process their surroundings. Wright (2005) highlights the significance of both prospective and retrospective sensemaking in the process of sense-making. This is particularly crucial when individuals come across cues that do not conform to their pre-conceived expectations. Failure to recognize potential threats in such situations can be mitigated only through the application of prospective and retrospective sensemaking. In contrast, the findings of Davis et al. (2016) suggest that sense-making can be defined as the process of symbolically interpreting a narrative, which encompasses both the reflection on past sensemaking efforts and the creation of new patterns of sensemaking for future use. This process involves both retrospective and prospective sensemaking.

2.3 Retrospective and Prospective Sense-making

The process of sensemaking can be categorized into two distinct types: retrospective and prospective. In Weick's words, "The outcome of sensemaking is a new account of the world that connects cues and frames in a meaningful and actionable way" (Maitlis et al., 2013). Weick (1993) publication, titled "The Collapse of Sensemaking in Organizations: The Mann Gulch Disaster," delves into the process of sensemaking and the retrospective modification of sense through the utilization of past information. Previous research has emphasized the significance of "frames and cues" in facilitating the shift from looking back to looking forward. Therefore, the process of sensemaking plays a critical role in the establishment of meaning for effective signaling. According to Moore et al. (2021), the construction of meaning can be attributed to explanations of causes, mechanisms, and/or forces that surround and drive an issue. Additionally, meaning can be explained in terms of human interactions, perceptions, beliefs, and actions. Thus, the examination of retrospective and prospective sensemaking is deemed essential from the standpoint of strategic management.

As the term stand, "prospective" refers to the anticipation of future events, while "retrospective" refers to the contemplation of past events. Karl E. Weick distinguishes prospective sensemaking from retrospective sensemaking as, "if retrospective sense-making is making sense of the past, prospective sense-making is an attempt to make sense for the future" (Weick, 1996). Consequently, the interrelated concepts have contributed significant perspectives to the existing body of knowledge on sensemaking. Nevertheless, the gap between the two concepts remains the subject of ongoing investigation. Weick (1979, p. 165) elaborates on the gap as, "It is this initial implanting of reality that is preserved by the word enactment (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2014). However, studies have shown that the destruction of prospective and retrospective sensemaking has a significant impact on the sensemaking process in general, implying that the process should maintain a healthy equilibrium (Pelly & Hopper, 2022). The table below Adopted by Patvardhan et al. (2018), explains how retrospective sensemaking is different from perspective sensemaking

Table 2 Differences between retrospective and prospective sensemaking

Retrospective sensemaking	Prospective sensemaking
Search for fit with unexplicable event ("What's the story here?")	Search for fit with desired state of the world (prospective)
Triggered by event that disrupts flow of experience, a discrepancy between current and expected state of the world ("The world does not seem to behave the way we expect it to")	Triggered by awareness of discrepancy between current and ideal state of the world ("The world is not the way I want it to be")
Mindfulness required to perceive discrepancy and attempt to reconcile	Deliberation required to engage in attempt to reconcile current and desired state of the world
Fast-paced action to test provisional interpretations (crises) vs. conversational exchange of accounts (change)	Centrality of metaphors and material artefacts to support development of new forward- looking interpretations

2.3.1 Retrospective sensemaking

The concept of retrospective sense-making has been defined as a process of interpreting past events in order to derive meaning and gain insights from experience. This approach involves reflecting on past experiences and using them to inform future decision-making. By engaging in retrospective sense-making, individuals can better understand the factors that contributed to past outcomes and use this knowledge to improve their future performance. Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015) draw upon Weick's (1969) concept of the future perfect tense to explain that the planning of future actions is not done in the future tense, but rather in the future perfect tense. This means that the meaning of planned actions can only be discovered through retrospective sensemaking, as they are viewed as if they have already occurred. This perspective emphasizes the importance of sensemaking in understanding the planned actions necessary for carrying out an activity. The notion of retrospective sense is often invoked when individuals perceive a discrepancy between the world as it appears and the world as it ought to be. This phenomenon has been observed in various contexts and is thought to reflect a cognitive process by which individuals reconcile their expectations with their experiences. Barr (1998) posits that cues serve as triggers that disrupt the

typical flow of experience, prompting individuals to react. This reaction is indicative of a perceived discrepancy between one's expectations and the current state of reality. The notion that a retrospective narration of clues can establish coherence and achieve contextual balance is a commonly held belief among individuals.

The process of retrospective analysis involves a systematic review of past events or experiences. Holt and Cornelissen (2014), conducted a study that elucidates the tripartite procedure involved in the retrospective construction of meaning. According to the authors (2014, p. 526), the process of sensemaking involves three stages. Firstly, agents are confronted with complex and ambiguous situations. Secondly, they must generate novel interpretations and actions. Finally, if agents become uncertain about the meanings they have constructed, they must engage in further sensemaking to clarify or expand their understanding (2014, p. 526). Hence, the process of constructing meaning remains inadequate in the absence of retrospective analysis. Kramer's (2016) research highlights the significance of retrospective sensemaking in the context of event anticipation. The study emphasizes that individuals may contemplate various interpretations of anticipated events, but it is only after the occurrence of the event that individuals collectively make sense of it or adhere to a specific interpretation. As per the previous statement, the process of sensemaking occurs subsequent to retrospective sensemaking, and it is imperative to have a collective interpretation.

Retrospective sensemaking involves understanding the experience to adequately figure out the next steps where the process requires rational thinking and comprehensive analysis skills. Henningsen et al. (2006, p. 62) conducted a study to determine the relationship between groupthink and retrospective sensemaking and found that people are more likely to show retrospective sensemaking when they were given negative feedback rather than positive feedback as in a study to investigate impression management of managers (Merkl-Davies et al., 2011). This is probably because people are less likely to accept negative feedback and are good at explaining past experiences yet giving focus to sensemaking. Thus, a retrospective sense that is created when things are known can be more enriching compared to a sense that is created when everything is unknown (Tsoukas & Shepherd, 2004).

Davis et al. argue that even though the sensemaking process is known to be "continuous, people often reframe their lives by reflecting on the past and negotiating new meanings retrospectively" (Davis et al., 2016). This elaborates on sense-makers' novelty and flexibility that results in giving meaningful sense

on decision-making or solutions. Degirmenci and Recker's (2023) study highlights the importance of retrospective interpretations and meaning creation as a means of enriching the knowledge base. This is achieved by obtaining diverse insights and viewpoints from individuals that are not accessible through other methods. Thus retrospective sensemaking is tightly related to personal identity, beliefs, values, behaviours, cognition, emotions, and attitudes (Brann et al., 2023, p. 2; Dwyer et al., 2023). On the contrary, research has also been conducted to identify adverse effects of sensemaking in situations where managers engage in retrospective sensemaking as a means of "self-presentational dissimulation" following failure in achieving desired objectives (Aerts, 2005, p. 497; Merkl-Davies et al., 2011, p. 332).

The process of retrospective sensemaking entails utilizing rational thinking and comprehensive analytical skills to gain an understanding of an experience in order to determine the appropriate subsequent actions. The study conducted by Henningsen et al. (2006, p. 62) aimed to establish the correlation between groupthink and retrospective sense-making. The results indicated that individuals tend to exhibit retrospective sense-making behavior when they receive unfavorable feedback, as opposed to positive feedback, as observed in a separate study that examined the impression management strategies of managers (Merkl-Davies et al., 2011). This phenomenon may be attributed to individuals' tendency to resist unfavorable feedback and their proficiency in retrospectively interpreting past events thereby reinstating the importance of sensemaking. According to Tsoukas and Shepherd (2004), the creation of a retrospective sense can be more enriching in comparison to a sense that is created when everything is unknown.

2.3.2 Prospective sensemaking

The opposite of retrospective sensemaking is prospective sensemaking. One of the most prominent and earliest definitions of prospective sensemaking is to "structure the future by imagining some desirable (albeit ill-defined) state" (K. E. Weick, 1996, p. 1229). The term can also be defined as a "sensemaking process where the attention and concern of people are primarily directed toward events that may occur in the future" (Rosness et al., 2016a, p. 55). Multiple studies refer to the same concept as "future-oriented sensemaking" (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012). This extensive term can be broken down into the properties as explained by Rosness et al., (2016b, pp. 63–64).

Table 3 Properties of prospective sensemaking

1. The persons involved are primarily concerned with their own and the team's successful handling of events in the near or intermediate future, ranging from seconds and minutes to weeks and months into the future. Their attention is thus directed at the future, rather than the past.
2. Prospective sensemaking does not necessarily require strong external cues or triggering events to occur. While retrospective sensemaking activities are typically triggered or intensified by uncertainty or ambiguity, prospective sensemaking also occurs spontaneously, as a "natural" part of the work practice.
3. Prospective sensemaking relies on both verbal and non-verbal communication, including observation of the actions of others and of the effects of those actions.
4. Prospective sensemaking can be open to the possibility of alternative chains of events – the future may be conceived as an event tree rather than a single path of events. An implication of this is that prospective sensemaking allows for ambiguity and uncertainty
5. The main outcomes of successful prospective sensemaking are practical preparations to handle possible future events, mental preparedness to interpret future events, and improved coordination in tasks involving intertwined actions of two or more persons.
6. The process of prospective sensemaking may involve human as well as non-human actors, including different forms of representations or models.

According to a study carried out by analyzing extensive past literature by Stigliani and Ravasi (2012) found that people who engage in prospective sensemaking use different types of strategies to give meaning; especially using metaphors, artifacts, objects, and other types of interactive communication tools. They also explain how flexible the interpretations can be as future sensemaking has no pressure and therefore, people have more room and opportunity to express their thoughts freely and leisurely. However, to foresee a future, or in other words to prospectively make sense, one also should have openness and transparency along with the ability to interpret and explore (Wright, 2005, p. 91).

According to Patvardhan et al. prospective sensemaking is commonly defined as the process of envisioning "a possible future and then constructing a plausible path back to the present in order to make sense of it" (2018, p. 9). In basic terms, the process involves attempting to predict future events and

subsequently developing a plan of action to attain them. Prospective sensemaking is a commonly employed approach in organizational strategic and scenario planning to proactively identify and mitigate potential obstacles that may impede the realization of future goals, as per the provided definition. According to Weick, the concept of prospective sensemaking is focused on generating significant possibilities for the future (1996, p. 129). Thus this process of reverse-engineering enables individuals to utilize their cognitive faculties and logical reasoning to investigate an uncertain future and construct a framework that can facilitate progress toward a more desirable outcome.

Recent studies on sensemaking focused more on the positive aspects of prospective sensemaking. According to Rosness et al. (2016) prospective sensemaking refers to the cognitive process of forecasting and making preparations for possible future events with the aim of averting undesired consequences and facilitating seamless execution of activities. The process of forecasting and attributing significance to an unpredictable future can be advantageous. Degirmenci and Recker (2023), underscore the significance of prospective sensemaking for individuals by underscoring the role of "presumptions and action planning." This approach enables individuals to identify the necessary steps to take and avoid during specific events, thereby promoting plausibility and guiding actions

Research has been also carried out to understand if prospective sensemaking is affected by personal identity (Pelly & Hopper, 2022), culture (Brown & Starkey, 1994; Means & Mackenzie Davey, 2023), leadership styles (Murphy & Devine, 2023), purpose (Kemppainen & Uusitalo, 2022), technology adoption (Sakellariou & Vecchiato, 2022), etc. And these research studies demonstrate the subjective nature of future sensemaking, in which how people interpret the future and give it meaning depends on a variety of factors. However, sensemaking research demonstrates its significance and validity on numerous occasions (as listed in Table 1), demonstrating that it is worthwhile to give meaning to future events despite the occurrence being a question of "how to move on." (Hernes & Obstfeld, 2022).

2.4 Sensemaking for predictions

Sense-making has been largely used to make predictions and give insights by different parties and the concept has been gaining frequent attention with external environmental uncertainties. A study carried out by Meryl Louis in 1980 on the sensemaking of newcomers in terms of 'entering unfamiliar organizational settings' describes sensemaking as 'a recurring cycle comprised of a sequence of events occurring over time. The cycle begins as individuals form unconscious and conscious anticipations and assumptions, which serve as predictions about future events'. He describes predictions as "events, reasons for outcomes, or prospective explanations that do not necessarily require thinking' (Louis, 1980, p. 242).

The accuracy of predictions (senses) also has sparked debates. Wieck has observed that accuracy is not a necessary element in sensemaking literature (Czarniawska, 1997, p. 113). Sensemaking has been seen more as a process in which people make information that is memorable. Wieck and Sutcliffe, describe this difference as: 'reality is an ongoing accomplishment and sensemaking is about flows, a continually changing past and variations in choice, irrevocability, and visibility that change the intensity of behavioral commitments' (2007, p. 11). According to sensemaking theory by Wieck and other great scholars on similar subjects, the story (narrative) was deemed more important than accuracy. As cited by Wieck (1995) this is described shortly as 'what is necessary for sense-making is a good story' (Czarniawska, 1997, p. 113).

What explains the discrepancy between predictions and actual outcomes? Louis (1890) explains that "the tension between anticipation and experience acts as a quasi-need (the need to return to equilibrium)". Simply stated, psychological tensions or imbalances result in inaccurate predictions. In such situations, forecasters attempt to explain why they were unable to predict. In such cases, predictors attempt to explain why they were unable to anticipate. Sensemaking theory, especially retrospective sensemaking act as the bridge that explains the reasons for the above unbalanced scenario. Louis (1980) further adds, "When scripts fail, the individual must develop explanations for why the actual outcomes occurred and why the predicted outcomes did not". A study on the limitations of the attribution process found that people predict based on their knowledge and professional knowledge (Ross, 1977). Nonetheless, it is evident that such predictions can result in bias.

How sensemaking is formed? The process of sensemaking formation is of interest to researchers. According to a review paper by Czarniawska carried out for Weick's 'Sensemaking in Organization' paper published in 1995, discusses two primary components that sensemaking consists of namely "frame and cue" and one that acts as the connecting device, 'narratives' that links cues and frames (Czarniawska, 1997, p. 114). Cues are defined as pieces of information that an individual focuses their attention on in order to make sense of their surroundings. However, they have been identified as 'simple and familiar features such as expectations or acceptable justifications' that a person uses to make sense of some aspects (Sukhov et al., 2018). This explains that individual sensemaking involves more than merely analysing information, but rather what a person wishes to conclude from the information they consider, which can have an effect on its accuracy.

The cognitive process of sense-making has been found to facilitate effective decision-making and accurate forecasting. The 4-CAP model for leaders was introduced in a study that was published in one of Ancona's handbooks on teaching leadership. This model comprises four key components, namely sensemaking, relating, visioning, and innovating (Ancona, 2012). According to Klein et al. (2006), the process can be characterised as a "reinvented wheel, expressing concepts that have been prevalent in psychology for decades, if not centuries". The process of sensemaking can be characterised as a sequential activity involving individuals who are concerned with their identity within a social context. These individuals engage with ongoing circumstances, extracting cues and retrospectively making plausible sense of the situation. In doing so, they enact varying degrees of order into the ongoing circumstances (Weick et al., 2005).

2.5 Sense-giving

The theory of sense-making includes the idea of sense-giving but with a different emphasis. According to the findings of Degirmenci and Recker (2023), the integration of sensemaking into strategic disclosures results in the phenomenon of "sense-giving" (p. 87). This indicates that the person providing meaning has an effect on the receiver's ability to grasp and make sense of the information. Making sense of something entails figuring out what's important about it in the face of complexity and ambiguity, and giving someone else a sense of something is the act of moulding their own perceptions by providing an explanation for what happened. Gioia and Chittipeddi, define sense-giving as "the act of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others in a

way that is consistent with a desired redefinition of organisational reality" (1991, p. 442).

Sensemaking, as defined by Gioia and Chittipeddi entails gaining an awareness of processes, whereas sensegiving, on the other hand, involves attempting to influence the sensemaking of another individual (1991, pp. 443–444). Their study shows that highlighting the difference between these two stages is crucial for effective communication and persuasion. Thus, the idea of sensemaking can be a helpful guide for helping people make sense of actions and occurrences, in addition to its more general applicability to the understanding process (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007). One must first make sense of a situation before being able to convey that understanding to another person. Because of this, it follows that sense-making is a prerequisite to providing sense. As a result, the processors involved in this process are interconnected (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015, p. 19).

Hill and Levenhagen (1995, p. 1057) emphasized the importance of interpreting information during uncertain periods and when taking risks (in the context of entrepreneurship) using a "mental model of how the environment works (sensemaking) and then being able to communicate with others and gain their support (sense-giving)". Thus, sense-making can be highlighted as an essential aspect of communication. Their efforts to influence the outcome, communicate their thoughts on the change to others, and obtain their support comprise sense giving. Businesses can attempt to influence public opinion and perception by controlling the flow of information and presenting their actions from a favorable perspective thereby using sense-making for public relations and crisis management. Stigliani and Ravasi write, sense-giving along with future-oriented sensemaking and retrospective sensemaking has been used extensively in crisis research (2012, p. 1234). People who give sense have their own methods of interpreting information via adaptation, modification, resistance, or rejection (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014).

It is possible that people use sense-giving tactics to affect how others make sense of events, policies, and decisions. Crafting messages, using symbolism or narrative elements, and presenting events so that they support desired goals all fall under this category. During framing, managers and executives adopt a wide variety of communication strategies (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Examples of these strategies include the use of metaphors (Hill & Levenhagen, 1995; Keulen & Kroeze, 2012; Putnam, 1994; Tourish & Hargie, 2012); the modification of explanation style and the exhibition of emotion (Rouleau, 2005); the application of

specific framing language (Fiss & Zajac, 2006); the provision of economic justifications for social issues (Sonenshein, 2006); the use of sense-breaking (Pratt, 2000).

Konlechner et al. (2019) conclude by emphasising the connections between future and past sensemaking as well as sense-making and sense-giving. The historical and current outcomes of a situation can be affected by the sense-makers' efforts to alter the conceptual frameworks actors use to make sense of change activities. Sense-giving can be affected by prospective sensemaking because it equips leaders with a future-oriented viewpoint they can use to inspire and encourage their workforce. Organisations gain benefits from engaging in retrospective sensemaking and modifying strategies in light of past mistakes. "Moreover, (retrospective) sensemaking is regarded as the background activity out of which (prospective) "sense giving" is thought to be derived" (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015, p. 19).

2.6 Sense-making, sense-giving, and language

"How can I know what I think until I see what I say?". (Webb & Weick, 1979, p. 133; Weick, 1995, p. 18, 2009, p. 143). The following line from the author Karl E. Weick emphasizes the significance of language in the process of self-discovery and self-expression. It suggests that the act of articulating one's thoughts and feelings through language is a crucial step in understanding and clarifying them. This idea has been explored in various fields, including psychology (Hamel, 2009; Klein et al., 2006; Maitlis et al., 2013; Salvatore, 2018), linguistics (Cuffari et al., 2015; Dinh & Nguyen, 2023; Nicholson & Anderson, 2005), and cognitive science (Combe & Carrington, 2015; Hahn et al., 2014; Zhang & Soergel, 2014). For instance, Nicholson and Anderson (2005) explain the role of myths and metaphors in sense-making which plays a crucial part in terms of making the process of understanding concepts far more easy. Overall, that underscores the power of language in shaping our understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

Thurlow and Helms Mills (2009), in their study, explain how sense is transmitted through language and talk. However, the direct role of language in the process of sensemaking has been a relatively neglected area of research until recent times. The specific correlation between language and sense-giving, or language and sensemaking, has yet to be thoroughly examined. Weick et al. explain how meaning-making is materialised through "an issue of language, talk, and communication" (2005, p. 409) demonstrating the significance of language in the process of creating and imparting meaning. On the contrary, Maitlis and

Christianson highlight how language and communication have a huge impact on sense-making especially in the context of culture and social influence (2014).

Whittle et al. (2023) carried out a review paper on the scarcity of research that links sense-making with language and emphasises the potential consequences of disregarding the role of language in sense-making, which can lead to the breakdown of the sense-making process. They explain how cognitive linguistic elements, patterns of language use in social interaction, and discursive structures enable or constrain sensemaking. On the other hand, Thurlow and Helms Mills (2009) identified how language is mediated by the power and identity of individuals. They also emphasise how meaning and individual identities can be deviated, thereby destroying the purpose of sense-making.

2.7 Sensemaking and Power

The inter-relationships between sensemaking, individual characteristics, and power has been extensively studied by different scholars (Balogun et al., 2014; Fleming & Spicer, 2014; Putnam, 1994; Ryu, 2013; Schildt et al., 2020; Vough et al., 2020). They have found a strong positive relationship between these variables. For instance, research has shown that individuals with high levels of power tend to engage in more effective sensemaking processes compared to those with lower levels of power (Bird, 2007). In addition, research has shown that certain personal characteristics, such as cognitive ability and emotional intelligence, are positively associated with sensemaking ability (Rouleau, 2005). Overall, the literature suggests that there is a significant link between sensemaking, individual characteristics, and the power (Vough et al., 2020). Schildt et al. (2020) in their recent work, has highlighted the significance of power in shaping the sensemaking process. The authors argue that power influences the knowledge structures and identities that individuals use to make sense of their experiences pointing out the critical role of power dynamics in shaping the sensemaking process. On the contrary, Balogun et al. (2014), examines the complicated connection between strategy, sense-making, and power. The authors argue that strategy is not merely a matter of discourse, but rather a complex process of sense-making that is heavily influenced by power dynamics. Balogun et al (2014), Caughron et al. (2011) and Bird (2007) shed light on the critical role that power plays in shaping strategic decision-making and highlight the need for a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between strategy, sense-making, and power. The authors elaborate on the concept that an individual's ability to comprehend and interpret their

surroundings is influenced by their control over various factors, including cues, identity, narratives, audience, history, and retrospective analysis.

The role of power in sense-making and particularly sense-giving has been seen impacting differently. Schildt et al. (2020), in their recent study, identified two forms of power that impact the sensemaking process: (1) episodic power, which arises during specific time periods or specific to a context, and (2) and systematic power, which originates in a much broader sense, especially in organizational level, and that can improve or hinder one's communication and interpretations abilities. They also highlight how the sense-giving process is impacted by biases as a result of ambiguity and interpretations. Understanding these power dynamics can be beneficial to see how they can shape the sense-making process of individuals and organizations. Fleming and Spicer (2014, p. 17) on the other hand identified four types of powers namely, coercion, manipulation, domination, and subjectification (2014, p. 1), and highlight how they can shape the process of self-empowerment and facilitate effective organizational functioning. Furthermore, adding more content to the power and sensemaking Vaara and Whittle (2022), explains how people with more decision-making power and people with access to more information about an organization can largely influence the sensemaking process.

Table 4 Key Sense-Making Concepts for the Study

Key Concept	Definition	Contribution	Related Work
Prospective sensemaking	<i>"The conscious and intentional consideration of the probable future impact of certain actions, and especially nonactions, on the meaning-construction processes of themselves and others"</i>	<i>What are the characteristics of prospective sensemaking in war forecasts, and what do they ought to be? (Adopted by, (Jensen, 2009)</i>	(Maitlis & Christianson, 2014)
Future-Oriented Sensemaking	<i>"Sensemaking that seeks to construct inter-subjective meanings, images, and schemes in the conversation where these meanings and interpretations create or project images of future objects and phenomena"</i>	<i>How human behaviors, history, war trends, and communication can create sense for predictions?</i>	(Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012)
Forward-looking sensemaking	<i>"People envision a desired or expected future event and then act as if that event has already transpired, thus enabling a 'retrospective' interpretation of the imagined event"</i>	<i>How confident are people in making predictions?</i>	(Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Nicholson & Anderson, 2005)
Retrospective Sensemaking	<i>"Retrospective sensemaking is considered a social and ongoing process in which "goals are often formed after acting as a kind of retrospective explanation for what people think they must have been doing"</i>	<i>What role do post-explanations play?</i>	(Pye, 2005; Weick, 1993, 1995, 2005)

Strategic sense-making	<i>“Strategy meaning-making is an ongoing semi-otic process in which the interplay between visual and discursive practice influences subsequent actions within the strategy process” (Knight et al., 2018, p. 896).</i>	<i>How do strategy gurus create meaning?</i>	(Jalonen et al., 2018; Knight et al., 2018; Thomas et al., 1993)
Sense-giving	<i>“Sense-giving is concerned with the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organizational reality”</i>	<i>What are the strategies employed by gurus to maintain control over the prediction process in situations where the predictions turn out to be inaccurate?</i>	(Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991)

Although there are slight variations between prospective, future-oriented, and forward sensemaking, and retrospective and backward sensemaking, the author uses these words interchangeably in our study for better clarity

3 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Setting - Guru Narratives and Predictions

Passing the most uncertain times due to the rapid advancement of science and technology, it is important not to overlook how the management gurus and experts in the field analyse information that converts into “*catchphrases, acronyms, examples, stories, and anecdotes using pseudo-jargon*” (Keulen & Kroeze, 2012) for a specific set of audience. Understanding such rhetorical qualities and patterns embedded in management language is crucial in this competitive era. Management language that demonstrates in expert and guru narratives has been widely used in strategy, organizational behaviour, management consulting, or social science research in order to build a wide range of conceptual advances, and theoretical disciplines or to identify grounded synergies (Clark et al., 2015; Clark & Greatbatch, 2004; Fincham et al., 2008; Groß et al., 2015; Keulen & Kroeze, 2012; Kipping & Clark, 2012; Munslow, 2002; Wagenaar & Keren, 1986).

Providing a simple definition for knowledge (i.e., strong and specialized) of gurus or experts in general however has been proven difficult particularly as a result of periodic shifts in the knowledge, significantly along with the advancement of science and technology (Clark et al., 2015; Fincham et al., 2008; Kipping & Clark, 2012). Clark et al. (2015, p.233) have identified management gurus as ‘knowledge entrepreneurs’ that have been also referred to as management consultants, business schools, and publishers (cited by Abrahamson, 1996; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001; Ernst and Kieser, 2002) who transfer knowledge to an audience, especially when addressing contemporary management problems and providing solutions (Groß et al., 2015).

Guru narratives (organizational science) have been differentiated from historians (historical studies). In history research, narratives have been referred to as a story, especially those that demonstrate *zeitgeist* characteristics (Keulen & Kroeze, 2012; Munslow, 2002) that have been commonly expressed as “stories that function by means of the plot, goals, causes, and chance are brought together within the temporal unity of a whole and complete action” (Keulen & Kroeze, 2012, p. 177) that is expressed as rich and reliable information. Historians bridge the gap that is left unspoken by gurus. Gurus narrate stories and try to retrospectively change the story in a short time because they lack short-lived relevance and explanations for lacking clarity.

The management guru's ideologies or guru narratives have been extensively used in strategic decision-making and predictions (Clark et al., 2015; Keulen & Kroeze, 2012) and prior research has significantly stressed the importance of guru narratives regardless of their accuracy (Groß et al., 2015; Wagenaar & Keren, 1986; K. E. Weick, 1988). Gurus or experts provide narratives of contemporary issues to access two probabilities: 01) the probability that something will happen and 02) the probability of answers are correct (Wagenaar & Keren, 1986, p. 87). Understanding how gurus narrate stories, especially in terms of predicting future events (forecasts) that have been widely researched area in strategy research however lacks grounded synergy (Schneider, 1997). Therefore, it is important to understand the theories behind guru predictions and explanations.

The paper bases guru narratives to analyse what theories act as a background for narratives/predictions. Studying a recent prediction event is an opportunity to bring out grounded theories in an advanced and highly competitive environment, especially when in an era where insights are mostly based on artificial intelligence (AI) and other technological improvements. Therefore, the study will be based on the context of the recent Russian invasion of Ukraine that took place on 24th February 2022. For the purpose of data analysis, the data will be separated into two sub-parts: 1) predictions (2020 - 2022) and 2) post-analysis (2022 - 09th April 2023). Studying predictions along with post-analysis is beneficial as it can indicate meaningful discoveries of relationships and cause-and-effect relationships and events, especially those that are unanticipated and unexpected (Curran-Everett & Milgrom, 2013). Data collection will be done until the theory is grounded in the data. Especially in the context of utilization of grounded theory as it suggests collecting data while coding existing data until finalizing a theory (Gioia et al., 2013).

This paper seeks to comprehend how sense-making and sense-giving can be applied to guru forecasts and post-analysis. Sensemaking is a theory that has been widely contributed to the fields of social science, organisational studies, and strategy. As Karl Weick explains, "active agents construct sensible, sensible events" and the "structure the unknown" (K. E. Weick, 1995, p.4). This demonstrates how crucial it is to establish the appropriate theory underlying narratives when generating predictions and conducting post hoc analysis. Sense-making has also assisted in bridging any gaps in the form of "plausible narratives" when coupling prior conceptual work to data, concepts, or meaning (Uren et al., 2006, p. 420). The paper also presents the data structure (1st order codes, 2nd order themes, and aggregate dimensions) to illustrate the relationship among data

along with the emerging concepts and the theory that is grounded in the data (Gioia et al., 2013).

3.2 Data

“Doing qualitative research is about putting oneself in another person’s shoes and seeing the world from that person’s perspective, the most important part of data analysis and management is to be true to the participants” (Sutton & Austin, 2015, p. 227).

The research study observes, collects, and analyzes texts pertaining to the recent Ukraine-Russia invasion forecasts and after-war information to identify the impact of the relationships and their correlations with sensemaking theory on future events construction and predictions. Texts have been gathered primarily from strategy gurus who predicted the invasion followed by their explanations of predicted events (post analysis). The research subjects of the paper are (1) Edward N Luttwak (Historian/strategist), (2) Frederick W. Kagan (Historian/Strategist), (3) Pepe Escobar (Brazilian journalist and geopolitical analyst), and (4) David P. Goldman (American economic strategist). Independent texts will be collected from the subjects in the timescale of 2003 – 2023. The predictions and war contextual information will be collected from 2003 to 9th April 2023 including all explanations regarding predictions and war after the invasion from 23rd February 2022 to 9th April 2023 will be used. The research will be conducted as a narrative evaluation of the literature.

The type of data is one component that influences the quality of this research investigation. The collected texts on predictions/post-analysis will be analyzed by separating them into two sections: war predictions and post explanations. The division of texts will provide the ground for theories that the research expects to find. To ensure the generalizability of the study, the author will use predictions from the armed invasion of Kharkiv, Ukraine on February 24, 2022, by Russia. The predictions on the invasion of Ukraine could be found from 2014 sources and therefore the research will collect predictions from 2014-2022. For the text collection task, the author will review pertinent interview data, Twitter posts, blogs, newspaper articles, US Intelligence reports, and sensitive information from the "Institute for the Study of War" from the year 2014 to 2022.

The reliability of data is an important element in qualitative research. There have been three common errors that can arise when collecting and tran-

scribing data in qualitative research that should be taken into account irrespective of the methods used, i.e., (1) equipment failure, (2) environmental hazards, and (3) transcription errors (Easton et al., 2000, p. 703). The author did not encounter the first and second failure as all the information (texts) were gathered from secondary sources and transcribed verbatim. Transcribing can be defined as “the process of reproducing spoken words, non-verbal clues (silence and body language) and emotional aspects (Laughing, sighs), such as those from an audiotaped interview, into the written text” while *Verbatim transcription* can be identified as, “the word-for-word reproduction of verbal data, where the written words are an exact replication of the audio recorded words” (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006, p. 38). Greatbatch and Clark also identify the importance of considering non-verbal techniques such as “volume tone, pitch, prolongation of sound, gestures and facial expressions etc” (2005, p.155). Nonetheless, the third error (transcribing error) is common, even when the original text is transmitted verbatim. The author reviewed all audio and video transcripts to ensure that the computer-generated texts are reliable.

3.3 Methods

“The subjective nature of qualitative research necessitates scrupulous scientific methods to ensure valid results” (Easton et al., 2000, p. 703).

This inductive study aims to develop a theory based on the collected data. As Gioia et al. (2013) emphasise, the importance of ensuring “qualitative rigor” while maintaining the creative credibility of data interpretation makes good research. Therefore, I have used the “grounded theory”, using the well-known variant called “Gioia method” (Gioia et al., 2013; Sukhov et al., 2021) to discover the theories that are grounded in guru narratives that are converted into predictions. This way, the author is able to identify the meaning of the text (discourse analysis). Yet, the use of grounded theory, which produces rich data, may incur certain costs in qualitative research if it is not employed effectively (Easton et al., 2000). Therefore, in all situations, the researcher remained responsible for employing suitable research procedures throughout the research. Furthermore, the research is undertaken to safeguard anonymity by quoting texts without mentioning the name of the informant. The use of the abductive method is also to freely build a theory as “predicting events” has been researched by different authors and therefore to avoid this research from using theories from the past.

3.3.1 Line by line Coding method

The data will be analyzed through qualitative coding. Coding can be defined as “the identification of topics, issues, similarities, and differences that are revealed through the participants’ narratives and interpreted by the researcher” (Sutton & Austin, 2015, p. 228) which “involves identifying and recording one or more passages of text or other data items such as the parts of pictures that, in some sense, exemplify the same theoretical or descriptive idea and indexing or categorizing the text in order to establish a framework of thematic ideas about it” (Gibbs, 2007, p. 02). According to the definitions, the main purpose for choosing to code is to create a framework based on the data and theory evaluated. Furthermore, coding can help the research study by preserving the privacy of sensitive data exposure. The framework will be built using a list of codes produced by first and second-order categories.

The coding by means of grounded theory was carried out in three steps as suggested by Robson, (1) open coding, (2) theoretical coding, and (3) selective coding (2007, p. 133). Under the first step, using the line-by-line coding method, the author split and labeled the sentences into meaningful codes and allocated the same codes to data that demonstrated abstract theoretical categories. As explained by Gibbs, open coding is one aspect that differentiates grounded theory from other frameworks (2007, p. 8). The main reason for using line-by-line coding is to understand and evaluate every single sentence by the identified narrators. In this paper, 1900 lines were recognised and coding was stopped at 1900 lines as the same codes were recurring. Next, under the second step, the author searched for links to interconnect the labels. To avoid any theoretical bias, the author took a more relaxed view in categorizing. Since the research intends to work on sense-making and sense-giving, it is crucial to focus on the actual meaning of the texts collected that can be ensured from this method. According to Gibbs, line-by-line coding will assist in understanding the general view of research subjects other than what they mean by words (2007, p. 16).

The next step was to arrange codes to organize codes in a structured way. The author retrieved “all text marked with the same label in order to integrate sections that illustrate the same phenomenon, concept, explanation, or activity”. The first-order coding is done for each line. First-order coding or analysis is coding the text using “informant-centric terms and codes” (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 18) and I have used most of the codes in informants terms (Gehman et al., 2018, p. 286). The table shows the first-level coding, second-level coding, and theoretical dimensions along with examples of guru narratives.

In qualitative research, it is essential to ensure the legitimacy of coding. One strategy presented by Sutton and Austin, to ensure the credibility of coding is to revise the coding with multiple researchers (peer debriefing: in the words of Lincoln and Guba in 1985) until the coding reflects the genuine voice of participants, resulting in the identification of trustworthy research findings (2015, p. 229). The texts collected by the author were constantly re-coded in response to supervisor comments and feedback, resulting in a reflection of true theories that were founded in the data. Coding was performed from various angles until they accurately reflected the participants' voices. The accuracy of coding is crucial as unreliable research findings are considered worthless (Amankwaa, 2016).

3.3.2 Grounded Theory (GT)

Grounded theory is a method used for “the use of data obtained through social research to generate ideas” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 173) which can be further defined as a process of “thinking about data processors of conceptualization of theorizing from data so that the end result is a theory that the scientist produces from data collected interviewing and observing everyday life” (Julianne S. Oktay, 2012, p. 14). Grounded Theory will be used to analyze the text which has been widely used in qualitative studies in developing theories through an inductive approach. Glaser or Strauss released this remarkable work in 1967 (Corley, 2015). However, grounded theory (GT) has been developing over time from the initial idea. The GT research process has been defined as “an investigating an area of interest to the researcher in order to highlight the main concern that emerges from the field through collected data; the purpose of this process is to identify a “core” category that also emerges from the researcher’s data as explaining this main concern” (Walsh et al., 2015). GT as explained by Corley (2015), as “looking for patterns of behavior” that explain the main concern’. The method is the best fit for this research study which intends to find human identity, communication style, language, etc. This technique can be used in either qualitative or quantitative research, but the main argument is the end results, i.e., “build theory vs. test theory vs. describe phenomenon” (Corley, 2015). The importance of the method is that here data collection and analysis are simultaneous (Oktay, 2012, p. 14), and therefore the research fluctuates from inductive to deductive making it an “abductive research” (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 14). GT was introduced as an alternative to the “classical hypothetico-deductive” approach which was meant to construct clear-cut categories and hypotheses before data are collected (Kelle, 2019).

Grounded theory methods and approaches have proven useful in numerous qualitative research, particularly in the field of organizational strategy,

where researchers discover correlations between topics such as organizational phenomena and strategic transformation. One of its main contributions is theory building. GT generally has the ability to cover a vast array of research areas that are not only “what is happening” it is all about “why” it is happening, and “how” it is happening, and “how and why” it is intimately connected with the contexts in which the researcher observes it” (Corley, 2015). One of the significant differences that differentiate a qualitative from quantitative is “rigorousness”. Carrying an inductive study could lead to a lack of scholarly rigor, focus on creativity rather than evidence, lack of generalizability, and problems with the transfer of theory and results that can be addressed by using GT methodology (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 14). For further understanding, I have added characteristics of grounded theory adopted from Julianne S. Oktay (2012, p.15)

Box 1.3 Characteristics of Grounded Theory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal of theory development • Based on symbolic interaction concepts • Multistage process with cycles of data gathering and data analysis, using abductive logic • Includes key components of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theoretical sensitivity • Constant comparison • Theoretical sampling • Theoretical saturation

Figure 2 Characteristics of Grounded Theory

3.3.3 Gioia methodology (GM)

Gioia method under GT with being used for theory grounding. The Gioia method has been used in multiple sensemaking studies because it was designed to overcome problems that could arrive from qualitative rigor in the qualitative research (Gioia, Corley, et al., 2013). Finally, the use of the Gioia method will also contribute to developing the conceptual framework. In order to safeguard grounded theory and to ensure prior hypothesis bias (confirmation bias as referred by Gioia et al. (2013, p. 21) using this method, the author did not consider any prior theory or literature. The coding process can be illustrated as explained by Gioia et al. (2013) below.

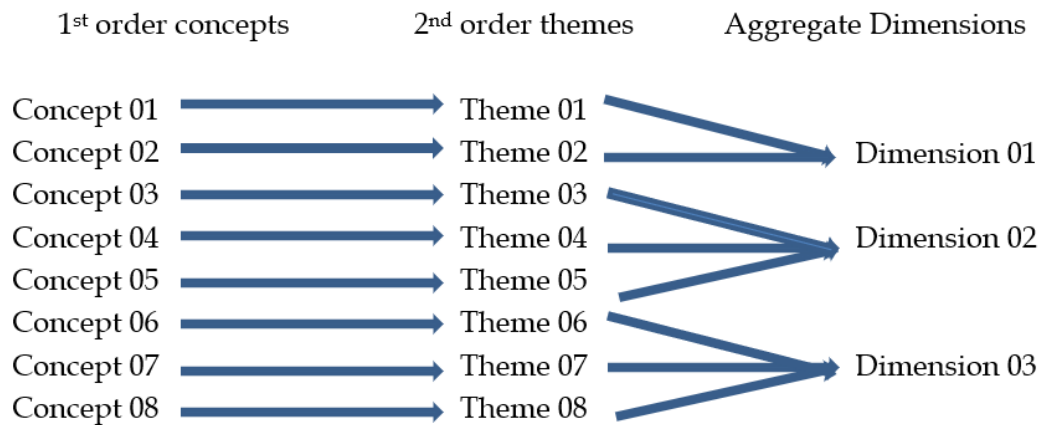


Figure 3 Gioia Methodology Data Structure Illustration

3.4 Data Structure and interpretation of results

A data structure is referred to as a “vibrant inductive model that is grounded in the data that captures the informants' experience in theoretical terms” (Gioia, Corley, et al., 2013, p. 22). The table 7 developed through findings shows the progression from raw data to the first, second, and theoretical dimensions and this is considered the most important section in the GT research and Gioia method because this ensures qualitative rigor (Gehman et al., 2018, p. 286). The interpretations and presentation of results have been carried out to ensure four characteristics of “trustworthiness” as introduced by Lincoln & Guba in 1985 (Amankwaa, 2016; Sutton & Austin, 2015). In this study, I will build a data structure to interpret data and guide it to a meaningful conceptual framework.

4 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The purpose of the chapter is to highlight and graphically represent the findings that emerged from the set of data. The findings and explanations completely represent the author's thought process. The chapter also aims to identify relationships and theories grounded in the predictions and post-analysis by the strategy gurus through a data structure and a conceptual framework. To align the study to a standard Gioia paper, and to elaborate the Gioia coding process, I am breaking down the chapter into different sub-sections along with a table containing definitions of each second-order theme that emerged through data in the later part of the chapter. Therefore, the chapter is organized as follows: (1) General information, (2) Findings, (3) Theoretical Dimension 01 - Sense-making, (4) Theoretical Dimension 02 - Sense-giving (5) Conceptual Framework, and the chapter ends with a summary.

4.1 General Information

To start off, and as discussed in the earlier chapters, the study is based on guru predictions, and I have collected information on predictions and post-analysis from four prestigious gurus and broken them into 1900 sentences for the purpose of line-by-line coding that can be tabulated as below. The sentences were not separated as “predictions” and “post-analysis” as the range of data collection is from 2004-2022 which includes two invasion events by Russia. Therefore, 2014-2022 includes both predictions and post-analysis of the invasion.

Table 5 Data Collection Summary

Guru	No: of sentences coded
Edward N. Lutwark	900
Fedrick W Kegan	600
Pepe Escobar	200
David P. Goldman	200

**" No: of themes emerged", i.e., the number of second-order themes that emerged from data through grounded theory - Gioia method coding.

As per table 5, the sample data was collected from four gurus who have been directly or indirectly involved with military predictions and mostly have been distant from making predictions incorporating artificial intelligence data.

The table below is a summary of gurus, their current roles, and the years that they started making predictions for a better understanding of how long the same predictions have been presented come in different forms.

Table 6 Summary of Gurus, Roles, and Prediction Time Frames

Name	Role	Year
Edward N Luttwak	American military strategist	2004-2023
Frederick W. Kagan	American resident scholar	2004-2023
Pepe Escobar	Brazilian journalist and geopolitical analyst	2003-2023
David P. Goldman	American economic strategist	2003-2023

4.2 Data Structure

My data structure is the visual representation of the data that has been categorized and arranged according to the codes that emerged. I first, read my data a couple of times to understand the scenario and to identify similar thoughts and patterns that helped me identify number first order codes. When deciding the first-order codes using the data, emphasis was given to the context of the prediction or post-analysis narratives other than what they really meant. As Gioia et al. explains, the “ultimate goal of building a vibrant inductive model that is grounded in the data (as exemplified by the data structure), one that captures the informants’ experience in theoretical terms” (2013, p. 22). The table 7 shows the data structure of my study whereas the rest of the chapter is an explanation of the relationships between originated themes. The paper used the abductive method in order to construct empirically based theories. As explained in previous chapters, “Abduction refers to a creative inferential process aimed at producing new hypotheses and theories based on surprising research evidence” (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 167). Therefore, in order to align the conceptual framework with the research purpose the following data structure was developed.

Table 7 Overview of the Data Structure and Connections

1st order codes	2nd order themes	Theoretical dimensions
Using historical analysis to predict future outcomes	Retrospective sense-making	Sense-making
Scanning and interpreting strategy	Strategic sense-making	Sense-making
Scanning and interpreting personal approaches to actions	Strategic sense-making	Sense-making
Exploring potential events through reasoning and assumptions	Prospective sense-making	Sense-making
Prospective forecasting through threat identification and trigger event analysis	Prospective sense-making	Sense-making
Recommendations and solutions grounded in professional expertise and individual reflection.	Identity-based meaning construction	Sense-giving
Identification and exploration of alternative options grounded in professional expertise and individual reflection.	Identity-based meaning construction	Sense-giving
Comprehensive analysis grounded in professional expertise and individual reflection.	Identity-based meaning construction	Sense-giving

Metaphorical meaning construction for enhanced comprehension and interpretation	Metaphorical Framing	Sense-giving
Causal inference for predictive modeling	Cognitive Dissonance	Sense-giving
Exposing discriminative cues as evidence for prediction accuracy	Semiotic-interpretive approach	Sense-giving
Performing contextual interpretation to establish the validity of narrative representations.	Semiotic-interpretive approach	Sense-giving
Interpreting and deducing the intended meaning from the context	Pragma-heuristic approach	Sense-giving
Creating meaning through the examination and situational framing	Pragma-heuristic approach	Sense-giving

The table above shows how I have categorised my data into first and second-order codes that led to two theoretical concepts. The two concepts that emerged through my data are “sense-making” and “sense-giving”. Here, sense-making theory has emerged through a combination of prospective, retrospective, and strategic sensemaking theories and sense-giving is done especially through different communication strategies (which are comprehensively analysed in the later part of the chapter). When naming first-order codes, I have given more content to highlight the meaning and to show its correlation with the second-order codes. From this point onwards, I will divide my analysis according to the two theoretical dimensions to deep dive into the empirical findings.

The next part of the report is subdivided into the two theoretical dimensions that emerged. First, I will give a brief introduction to the dimension. Next, I will discuss the themes under each dimension. When discussing the findings, I will first show how the theme emerged and under what conditions followed by a comprehensive explanation of the themes using data, i.e., quotes extracted from the strategy gurus.

4.3 Findings

This study which is carried out as a grounded theory – Gioia method research, focused more on understanding the underline meaning of data rather than applying theories in advance. According to this type of research, coding leads to a meaningful data structure that acts as the basis for the theory that cannot be immediately identified and observed. The data structure below (table 07) is an overview of 1st-order codes, 2nd-order themes that emerged, and aggregate dimensions identified. The data structure represents the relationship between the first-order codes, second-order codes, and the theories. Accordingly, the study findings show that the gurus’ predictions are mostly how the gurus communicate information to the audience through specialized forms. Linguistics and heuristics play crucial role here.

This is also the basis for the study’s primary research question, “*What methods do strategy gurus use to interpret events as predictions, and how do they ensure control over the process?*”. According to my data gurus use “sense-giving strategies” differently in different timescales to keep the momentum of the prediction process going. As gurus are a separate group of experts in an industry, the use of such strategies emerges from personal expertise and professional experience.

The findings also suggest that the different gurus have different extracted cues to use for the explanation of inaccurate predictions.

Theoretical Dimension 01 – Sensemaking

As mentioned above, this dimension is a combination of prospective, retrospective, and strategic sensemaking. From the data, it was obvious that strategy gurus were giving the sense of the events to an audience as predictions and through analysing the situation afterward. The predictions and the analysis were mainly based on assumptions, history, strategic comparisons, etc. Strategically comparing analysing information has made the guru's sensemaking process more realistic and valid. And especially, as gurus are the experts in a field, their knowledge is recognized as extraordinary, and it has been easy for them to make confident predictions based on their personal and professional reflections.

Theme 01: Retrospective Sensemaking

Introduction

As the term explains, history, past trends, and patterns were highly significant throughout the data set. As strategy gurus have been involved in the entire event of Ukraine-Russia invasion discussions and have been analysing and evaluating the situation from different perspectives throughout that time period (which still continues), which made them experts on that specific event. In addition, the gurus who provide strategy development and implementation for the government also have a thorough knowledge of the cultural, political, and environmental impact that they have incorporated when making sense of events. Thus, most of their statements are supported by history. The history here means, the history of leaders and the public, countries, geopolitics, actions, and decisions during similar events, actions, and decisions of the same event in the past, military history in general, etc.

Therefore, such a wide range of knowledge can be only prevalent among gurus, i.e., strategy gurus in this study. Noteworthy, all the gurus also have used multiple historical events and information in a mix to make them more accurate and reliable other than using one event for comparisons and evaluations. Accordingly, history or the retrospectively making sense of events has aided gurus to change their predictions from time to time while ensuring control of their reputation. The sense made by gurus differentiates from others because of its generalizability as they embed both current and historical significance in their statements. In addition, the way how gurus interpret history with a prospective sense

that is transmitted through a strategic sense (see Figure 3: the conceptual framework for more details for the inter-relationship) is also supported by their cognition that is a result of personal and professional expertise developed over time and experience.

As displayed in table 6, I have used strategy gurus from different backgrounds, and they are not solely from historical scholars or gurus who are specialized in history studies. This makes more “retrospective sensemaking” more interesting as these gurus are primarily employed in strategy development and economic analysis. Considering that, my findings also emphasize that, history is used to identify patterns and trends, to compare and contrast past predictions of gurus to make more accurate statements, and allow them to better understand how history evolves and how certain events have occurred, how certain historical prominent events have a strong direct impact on future events, how world history is impacting crisis events in general, etc. However, as can be seen in my data, most of the predictions made were not accurate as history has also led to prediction biases. Some of the reasons that results of the inaccurate analysis are that history is complex and interconnected in multiple ways and guru cognitive biases can strongly affect this process. Moreover, as “history repeats itself”, the way we think and see should change to stop the cycle of repeating history (Akoijam, 2001) especially during crisis situations.

Empirical Findings

“People always think they are going to escape from history, but history is waiting there to grab you back (Guru 01). History and guru predictions had a strong correlation. Most of the events predicted were grounded in historical data and narratives.

Predictions based on history and past events and trends are one of the main strategies used by gurus when making predictions. As the gurus identified in this study specialized in the field of military, they are well aware of trends and patterns of similar invasions and mostly geopolitics. The gurus with or without internal intelligence information, were able to highlight most of the information such as potential threats and actions of people only through studying patterns and themes. The gurus have always argued about the recent invasion compared with past invasions. For instance, in the text below, the guru has analysed texts from others and compared the texts with past actions to foresee the future.

"Putin publicly declared that he wanted to regain ex-Soviet lands for Russia when it could be done without a serious war, and did it in Abkhazia, S Ossetia & Crimea"

(Guru 01)

According to gurus, the future is a representation of past trends. Application of historical events and comparing them with current scenarios. It is interesting because, a guru, who is an expert in the field predicts events based on historical trends. Another important finding is that, as a result of historical analysis, the probability of predictions going wrong is higher than intelligence predictions that are presented along with artificial intelligence and satellite data. However, the gurus have neglected technology even when considering the history and past events. This then poses the question: *why do gurus not learn from past mistakes if they rely on the past when making predictions of serious uncertain events?* The gurus do not entirely rely on history and the past, but they scan the macro environment and incorporate history into such findings. For example, in order to see the Russian soldiers' actions, the gurus used their personal connections to get internal information (that has been also seen as a past model of Finns) and then compared the situation to an event that can happen in the future.

"My call for a Ukraine national militia of quick-trained volunteers to attack stopped Russian columns opportunistically (the Finnish model) is misrepresented as a call for an endless guerilla war. Not so: after losing a few soldiers the Russians withdraw (as they did in Chechnya)."

(Guru 01)

However, there were instances where gurus considered predictions from intelligence officials that were presented with satellite information. However, the information was used to show how they are different from one's historical background. Moreover, the gurus show less likelihood of accepting the predictions of officials and have highlighted their predictions as "premature hysterical warnings" predictions that have triggered events in a negative way. However, for the reader and audience, such predictions can be challenging because of the confidence in gurus in making predictions based on historical trends.

"I wrote from the start that Putin is not a gambler. And would not try to invade Europe's largest country with 130,000 soldiers. The "Intelligence community" disagreed, causing hysterical responses. Unsurprised: in the 17 or 18 (I forget) "intelligence agencies" v few read Pushkin"

(Guru 01)

According to data, the main strategy used by gurus when explaining events after predictions go wrong is also through history. History has been taken as a reason to defend the predictions. They show why it is important to have a comprehensive knowledge of history and the importance of seeing history in different perspectives. In the context of Russia-Ukraine war predictions, gurus have highlighted Russian history throughout the process to show the next steps of Russia. Russia is portrayed in the below quote as a secular empire of enormous proportions and a multicultural, multiethnic character. It emphasises the role of history in forming the Russian people's collective consciousness, suggesting that historical events continue to shape the identity and psyche of the country even now. As a result, the audience of these gurus starts believing the guru's predictions because of such valid historical interpretations.

“The fall of the USSR a little over three decades ago did hurl Russia back three centuries – to its borders in the 17th century. Russia, historically, had been interpreted as a secular empire – immense, multiple, and multinational. This is all informed by history, very much alive even today in the Russian collective unconscious”

(Guru 03)

Gurus have also used history to explain why some predictions and explanations by others are not real-time and applicable, and why historical claims are valid evidence when making predictions. The below text from another guru shows some doubt in Washington's allegations about the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17. According to the speaker, there wasn't enough proof to back up the initial assertion that Russian President Vladimir Putin's missile caused the event. They infer that the United States administration frequently makes claims without providing reliable evidence. As shown in the conceptual framework, the gurus have denied and rejected unrealistic predictions (according to the guru perspective) frequently and history is one prominent aspect and valid proof used by gurus.

“Let's follow the facts. Washington from the get-go said it was Russian President Vladimir Putin's missile that downed MH17. They swore they had evidence. Like in “We know. Trust us”. The historical record for the past 60 years at least shows they cannot be trusted. There was never any evidence. Just spin”

(Guru 04)

Predictions and explanations based on history provide a plethora of knowledge for gurus to adequately understand the context. Past occurrences and patterns have aided in identifying certain trends that gurus recognise in order to predict what will happen in the future. For example, all of the gurus have a broad

and in-depth understanding and expertise of political disputes and geopolitics, which has assisted them in predicting the potential of future conflict. However, according to the statements and information in general, gurus do not rely on historical interpretations alone, but rather a combination of multiple parameters, as focusing on historical interpretations could possibly lead to subjective bias.

To conclude, looking back at history has been used as a rule of thumb for retrospectively revising predictions when they prove to be incorrect. And predictions that were related to other themes had a strong relationship to history.

Theme 02: Strategic Sensemaking

Introduction:

The sense-making process by gurus was complex but meaningful. Almost all the predictions and analysis involved scanning, interpretation, communication, and analysis. As these gurus work in the strategy field, their job has been directly involved with strategy development and implementation which includes a wide array of tasks such as environmental scanning, information interpretation, sorting, and filtering, etc. which was visible among all the predictions and post-analysis phases in my data set. Therefore, I have coded them as “scanning and interpreting strategy” or “scanning and interpreting personal approaches to actions” under the strategic sensemaking theme.

The word “*strategy*” was seen among all strategy gurus and was used extensively when making sense of the event. Personal strategies, military/war strategies, government strategies, past strategies, etc. have been used to make sense of the future. As these gurus were involved in military strategy development, they show that they have a deep knowledge of “strategy” in general. The statements they made show that they are based on strategy and are grounded in guru thinking, knowledge acquired through experience, and/or experience in strategy-related tasks. The strategy is also expressed in different forms. Therefore, I am considering “*Success in strategy*”, “*failure in strategy*”, “*Method*”, “*aim*”, “*target*”, “*action*”, “*style*”, “*policy*”, “*logic*”, “*approach*”, “*Exit strategy*” as how gurus explain the strategy.

Empirical Findings:

When asked why gurus predict wars, that are inevitable, the simple answer from Edward N Lutwark was, “*I make a living advising government on strategy. Strategy is the logic of war and the logic of peace*”.

Strategy gurus view the war from a strategic perspective, whereas many others view it as a chaotic environmental event that cannot be predicted. In the words of Micheal Porter (1996), a strategy is required when there are options or decisions to make, i.e., deciding what to do and what not to do. Gurus who have been actively involved in various industries have an extensive understanding of the strategies that must be implemented or considered at specific time intervals. The gurus who have been the subjects of this study are military analysts with highly specialized expertise. Therefore, their perspective on war strategies differs from that of other strategists. During the "prediction phase", one of the most intriguing findings is that gurus have ignored technology and artificial intelligence to a higher extent when making predictions. And to clarify why technology prediction can be detrimental to how individuals should view the event and plan for the future.

"Satellites reveal Russian troop movements. That is a weakness if the aim is a surprise attack, but an advantage if the aim to intimidate, to obtain the gains of war without fighting"
(Guru 01)

The preceding text emphasizes the dual nature of satellite surveillance of Russian military movements, depending on the strategy pursued, where the guru emphasizes why relying solely on satellite data can lead to disastrous results. In order to make the majority of their predictions, experts have periodically compared and contrasted current and past strategies of people, nations, and/or politics. The gurus also have compared external environmental factors, national and international policies, and geopolitics to their own strategies for this purpose. Furthermore, each guru has published their own books on strategy for specific contexts, to view the invasion from a variety of angles.

"There is a Russian Ed of my Strategy: the Logic of War and Peace"
(Guru 01)

In addition, they employ their strategies to defend predictions against other analysts (i.e., intelligence communities, allies and partners, and state, etc). In addition to the factors mentioned above paragraph, gurus who are confident in the accuracy of their predictions also use historical data, past trends, past actions of people, the current economic and political climate of the world, etc., to explain how accurate their forecasts are.

"In the meantime, the Intelligence community is in the hysteria business: they will invade Ukraine. tomorrow! (Only a fool invades EUR's largest country with less than 500,000 troops & P is no fool)"

(Guru 01)

The text extracted above demonstrates the confidence of gurus when arguing against intelligence community projections that are a result of technology and confidential internal information. Another characteristic of guru predictions based on strategy is that gurus attempt to compare the strategy of one event to that of another, thereby encouraging the audience to trust their predictions and admit that they are defensible. For example, the prediction below by Edward N. Lutwark explains why Russia is fabricating an invasion story to highlight the importance of understanding strategy.

"The Russians fail at most things but succeed in strategy; w Italy's GDP, they remain v formidable. the opposite of the Chinese, good at most things except strategy"

(Guru 01)

Comparing the strategies of Russia with Italy and China in this context provides validity to the reader or the listener. Strategy gurus are experts in a particular field and have been in an industry for a longer time period and have written and published well-known books for the public. Therefore, another importance of incorporating 'strategy' in their statements also adds value to their predictions and analysis. Performing a comparative analysis of their military strategies aids in gaining a better understanding of the tactics of different countries in that context, as well as aiding in the identification of gaps in the existing strategies of the specific circumstances.

"Russian strategy on the battlefield stands in stark contrast with the EU's obstinacy in being reduced to the status of an American dog's lunch, with Brussels leading entire national economies to varying degrees of certified collapse and chaos"

(Guru 03)

The quote above highlights an overlap between Russian military policy and the image of the EU as a whole. It depicts a clear distinction between the two, with the EU being criticized for allegedly submitting to American interests and the Russian strategy being praised for its assertiveness and visible success. Furthermore, the quote is compared with a metaphor where, "American dog's lunch" signifies a lack of autonomy or independence (Parsons, 2005). The gurus have not presented their opinions as illogical claims, but rather as comparisons

and contrasts of the facts. The same guru explains strategy as, “*The word Strategia itself is derived from the Greek strategos – which does not mean “General” in military terms, as the west believes, but historically corresponds to a managerial politico-military function*”.

“With the Kiev NATO junta making an absolute mess of “governing”; the International Monetary Fund already running the disaster capitalism show, Russia cutting off trade and energy subsidies, and the federalist movement growing by the minute after the Odessa massacre, Ukraine is so absolutely toxic that Moscow has all the time in the world on its side. Putin’s strategy is indeed Tao Te Ching meets Art of War: watch the river flow while giving enough rope for your enemy to hang himself.”

(Guru 04)

According to the text above, the guru compares Putin’s strategy with others (i.e., Putin's strategy is influenced by the “Tao Te Ching and the Art of War”) also by using the metaphor of a flowing river suggesting that Putin's strategy involves a patient approach, allowing events to play out and possibly resulting to the self-destruction or defeat of the perceived enemy or opponents. Likewise, gurus use strategy as a focal point to address the situation or to give meaning to events that can be taken place in the future.

In summary, all gurus use the term "strategy" along with related concepts such as "success/failure in strategy", "exit strategy", "method", "aim", "target", "action", "style", "policy", "logic", and "approach". Throughout the phases of prediction and post-analysis, the developed strategies remained unaltered, whereas the interpretations took on various forms. This is primarily because gurus have extensive knowledge of military strategies and have researched and implemented related strategies. Gurus predict future events by comparing their own strategies to those of individuals, organisations, and countries. Their own cognitive abilities (identity as a guru) were used to span the gaps. In addition to that, guru explaining events that are yet to happen is being criticized by different stakeholders but remained unchanged as all the predictions related to strategy have been supported by reliable and accurate sources, sometimes specialized to guru thinking and experience.

Theme 03: Prospective Sensemaking

Introduction

According to chapter section 2.1, prospective sensemaking is giving meaning to future events. As the data collected were predictions, most of the

predictions were based on assumptions, reasoning, and highlighting all the triggering events for the basis of predictions. Therefore, I categorized them as “Exploring potential events through reasoning and assumptions” or “Prospective forecasting through threat identification and trigger event analysis”. The interesting finding here is that strategy gurus give sense to events by interpreting their own thinking and professional knowledge (strategy knowledge, knowledge of history, knowledge of the military, etc.) other than the use of information technology and artificial intelligence information. According to my data, important aspects that are visible in the predictions were that they were either supported by previous predictions or prediction comparisons of another person. In addition, most of the prospective statements are a reply text to a prediction made by others that is not aligned with guru predictions. Here, the gurus show why their predictions are more valid and reliable and why others' styles are disagreeable.

However, as most of their predictions were inaccurate, one can also argue that strategy gurus have seen the situation in a subjective way. Even though they are supported by valid proof, the biases of gurus can be mentioned as one of the reasons for their failure to accurately predict the situation. As is further discussed in the discussion chapter (see section 5.5), gurus have used specific factors (cues) that led to their predictions, and they were also used to support their predictions when they go wrong. I have listed down some of the interesting predictions from gurus below. Even though they are mostly inaccurate, they make the audience attracted toward guru thinking in multiple ways. In fact, the statements lead people to look at the event from different angles.

Empirical Findings

As the study context is Ukraine-Russia war predictions, the main information is how gurus predict future uncertain events, or in other words, how gurus give meaning to events that are yet to happen in the future. According to most of the research done in this area (Section 3.3: Sensemaking for Predictions) show predictions can be done through statistical tools or technology that is not visible in the guru prediction process. However, it is interesting to see important predictions coming from strategy gurus.

“However, the close look at what such an invasion would entail presented in this report and the risks and costs Putin would have to accept in order. It leads us to forecast that he is very unlikely to launch an invasion of unoccupied Ukraine this winter 4 predictions introduced:

1. *Russia will not conduct a full mechanized invasion to conquer all of Ukraine this winter (unchanged)*

2. *Russian mechanized forces will overtly deploy into occupied Donbas on a large scale by mid-February (increased likelihood)*
 3. *Russia may launch an air and missile campaign throughout unoccupied Ukraine in conjunction with an overt deployment into occupied Donbas (newly identified course of action). and*
 4. *Russia may conduct limited ground incursions north and west from occupied Donbas and/or north from Crimea."*
- (Guru 02)*

According to the above text, the guru tries to identify risks to forecast the invasion while comparing the previous predictions. The new meanings were added along with valid statements (3rd point in the above prediction) and supported by the accuracy of previous predictions. In this text, the authors also emphasise Russia's potential invasion strategies by emphasising the importance of carefully assessing troop movements. In addition, the guru has referenced a previous prediction to remind the audience that a continuous assessment of the situation is necessary when making predictions.

"Looking ahead, there are only two possible major military moves for Russia. Following the mobilisation of 300,000 reservists last autumn, of whom more than half are now combat-ready, Putin's army is now larger than when it invaded last February. Then, the aim was not to start a war but to end it, with a quick victory forecast by Russian and US Intelligence, both equally intoxicated by the false promise of "post-kinetic" warfare; this would combine electronic propaganda with cyber-attacks on everything from military headquarters to civilian infrastructures. Generals who had never fought against patriotic Europeans but only against Middle Eastern sectarians, if they had fought at all, who considered tanks old-fashioned and had limitless respect for "information warfare", heavily influenced the totally wrong estimates that misled both Biden and Putin"

(Guru 01)

Another strategy when defining the future used by gurus is by highlighting accurate predictions of others and drawing conclusions. For instance, as per the text above, forecasts by others have been criticized the cause for an invasion and changed aims. In addition, the guru has tried to emphasize what was wrong in the prediction of others and its consequences. As the statement made by this strategy guru is a forecast, it is not solely based on the guru's knowledge (identity), but rather a combination of various approaches. He emphasises the complexity of conflict and the importance of accurate intelligence, thorough analysis, and effective military capabilities and strategies.

“Still, Putin won’t “invade” Ukraine because Russian public opinion doesn’t want him to. Moscow will keep supporting what is a de facto resistance movement in the Donbass. Remember: in give or take two months, General Winter starts to set in those broke, IMF-plundered Ukrainian pastures.”

(Guru 04)

The statement above is a precise prediction, and it is followed by an explanation of why the guru believes the prediction to be true and legitimate. The statement is subject to numerous interpretations, the most prevalent of which are as follows: (1) the possibility of Putin's inaction (which emphasises the importance of considering the intentions and objectives of involved parties in order to understand the dynamics of the situation); (2) Putin's relationships and networking attempts (which implies that there are underlying factors or disagreements that impede the development of constructive relationships); and (3) Guru's views on the decline of the West (which reflect a pessimistic outlook on the future of the West).

“Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir “the new Hitler” Putin is in absolutely no hurry to end this larger than life drama that is ruining and rotting the already decaying West to its core. Why should he? He tried everything, since 2007, on the “why can’t we get along” front. Putin was totally rejected. So now it’s time to sit back, relax, and watch the Decline of the West.”

(Guru 03)

The statement above is thoroughly the subjective viewpoint of the guru. He also used metaphors here along with history to construct a prediction. Therefore, this quote is also a good example of predictions that comes along with different strategies. The quote primarily suggests that Putin may not be inspired to actively pursue a resolution to the situation in Ukraine. This interpretation on the other hand underlines that he may be motivated by factors besides diplomacy. It highlights the importance of investigating the origins of armed conflicts and the goals of key players. Additionally, the guru emphasises the failure of previous efforts to establish mutually beneficial relationships between Russia and the West. The significance of past interactions and their impact on the present dynamics are emphasised. Lastly, the gurus' perspective on the Western world suggests a pessimistic assessment of the West's contemporary condition and its ability to effectively address problems. It is terrible news for the future prospects of Western societies

Dimension 02 – Sense-giving

The second theory identified is “sense-giving”. Strategy gurus have been seen as experts at breaking the stories of others mainly as a result of their identity, professionalism, and communication styles. Therefore, I identified five themes that lead to sense-giving. I hereby refer to these five themes as “guru sense-giving strategies”.

Theme 04: Identify-based meaning construction.

Introduction

Guru identity-related statements were one of the main findings. Unlike others, how gurus use their specific narrative styles that differentiate their predictions and explanations from others. When coding identity-based statements were, therefore, a challenging task. Therefore, I coded statements that included recommendations, prevention strategies, advice, and thoughts that do not come along with technology proof or historical proofs under “Identity-based meaning construction”. However, as a result of being an expert in the field of military, the gurus have ignored some important aspects of the events, and this has led to poor thinking and creativity.

Empirical Findings

Theme 02 adds more importance to the research question because gurus have used their own ways of interpreting (identities) information that leads to a theory. In practice, it is identified that gurus are the experts in the field, and they are highly appreciated for their work and findings. Therefore, irrespective of some clueless predictions that they made; predictions were taken into consideration by the audience. Guru identity has been widely used when presenting solutions and highlighting the pros and cons of actions.

“Putin again. Is the European Union alarmed over the Ukraine? Let it ban imports of Russian gas. Is NATO alarmed? Let it mobilize the idle troops in barracks to be ready to counter-intervene. Is the Ukraine alarmed? Let it conscript its troops for 1 month home-defense training”

(Guru 01)

Gurus have continuously provided suggestions that authorities should follow based on their own strategies and thoughts. The prominence of guru identity is observed in all the predictions. The concept of guru identity is often

highlighted by gurus in their statements, as they interpret a wide range of information. In many cases, gurus convey their interpretation of the situation through careful analysis, although their claims are subjective yet informed by the latest information. This shows that strategy gurus are well informed of the latest changes, trends, and developments of the situations or people that come out as a meaningful prediction. The following statement depicts the perspective of a guru regarding a situation in a concise manner, which represents an interpretation of significant events aimed at assigning meaning to a future event. Here, the guru has drawn a parallel between the perceived decline of the Western world and the actions of Putin. It is crucial to note that in order to make such a statement, the expert must demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of all of Putin's previous actions.

“Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir “the new Hitler” Putin is in absolutely no hurry to end this larger than life drama that is ruining and rotting the already decaying West to its core. Why should he? He tried everything, since 2007, on the “why can’t we get along” front. Putin was totally rejected. So now it’s time to sit back, relax, and watch the Decline of the West.”

(Guru 03)

Therefore, a strategy guru is viewed as an expert in the field and someone who has confidence in their own communication style. Just as normal strategies developers’ gurus also scan the environment and follow important aspects that are relevant to their future meaning-making process. The communication style of gurus is an essential aspect of their identity. Gurus can be therefore defined as good communicators and storytellers. Gurus are also observed confronting the claims of others. Gurus, therefore, attempt to demonstrate that their perception of the situation differs from that of many others by highlighting the differences with evidence. Herein, gurus highlight the significance of performing a thorough analysis, taking into account various viewpoints, and being aware of potential biases when interpreting complex situations, especially in the geopolitical arena. The following statement illustrates how Western media information may potentially result in perception biases.

“Well, Putin could. If he wanted. But he doesn’t want it. What matters is what he told Rossiya state TV; that Kiev should promote inclusive talks about the future statute of Eastern Ukraine. Once again, the Western spin was that he was advocating the birth of a Novorossiya state. Here, The Saker analyzes in detail the implications of what Russia really wants, and what the Novorossiya forces really want.”

(Guru 04)

In conclusion, guru identity was seen as one of the important aspects of guru prediction and post-analysis phases. It is a combination of guru expertise, recognition in the field, and communication styles.

Theme 05: Metaphorical framing

Introductions

Theme 05 which is using metaphors as a communication strategy was widely seen during the prediction and post-analysis stages. This is to grab the audience's attention and simplify the statements that are expressed in guru styles. However, some metaphors were seen that are specific to complex historical events that happened in the past meaning they are targeted at a specific audience or to demonstrate the power of guru speech and communication.

Empirical Findings

According to my findings, strategy experts use a wide variety of metaphors when making predictions and explaining post-prediction situations. Some of the reasons for this can be summarised as follows: (1) to help the audience comprehend the situation better and grasp the concept easily (easy comprehension); (2) to link similar concepts and address differences, (3) to demonstrate connections with the past, (4) to evoke the situation's hidden emotional aspect, and (5) to guarantee a lasting impression on the audience, etc. In addition, using metaphors in guru performance has been discovered by researchers in this field.

"Putin is denigrated daily by learned fools who cannot understand his statecraft. He leaves noisy territorial demands to Zhirinovski & internet loudmouths. His method is to await the fall of ripe fruit into his hands"

(Guru 01)

According to guru knowledge and Putin's past behaviours, the metaphor "waiting for the fall of ripe fruit" exemplifies Putin's behaviour and strategy when negotiating, i.e., he does not make an immediate effort to accomplish his goals but rather waits for the optimal time to derive the greatest benefit. The metaphor suggests a passive strategy in which success or desirable outcomes are anticipated to occur effortlessly, comparable to the ease with which ripe fruit falls into the hands of a picker. Therefore, this can capture the audience's focus due to the ease of comprehension and tell a much simpler, yet profound story about the situation.

“An ice-cream warhead can still kill. Nukes are non-usable & useless of all Russian propaganda, the most absurd is that if Ukraine enters NATO”
(Guru 01)

The statement above is straightforward but expressed using metaphors to highlight to what extent an innocent looking aspect can be destructive. This metaphor here is simple to understand but provides a deep understanding of the whole situation. In addition, the gurus have used this metaphor here suggesting that appearances can be deceiving, implying that one should not judge solely based on outward appearances. Here the guru gives advice to the audience that, the consequences of actions can also be prominent during events that should be taken into consideration. It is also important and interesting to see how gurus embed different meanings in a single statement. Overall the few words here allow the reader to look at how misleading some aspects could be, potential threats to Ukraine, and Russians' view on NATO while providing insights on what happens next.

“This is the sort of move that gives “Pyrrhic victory” a bad name”
(Guru 04)

This quote might be quite difficult to grasp for an audience that does not have knowledge about history, particularly military history, or enough language skills. The metaphor here is *“Pyrrhic victory”* which refers to *“all victories are ultimately meaningless since even the winner has to give something up or overcome obstacles that hinder an ideal win”* (Beasley-Murray, 2016, p. 169). Additionally, as the strategy gurus did not predict an invasion, this can be also referred to as a retrospective change in predictions when predictions go wrong. Here, the guru is trying to convince that, even though Russia is going to win it is not a perfect (clean) victory. However, the statement also urges the audience to look at the invasion from a strategic perspective as it has long-term effects other than short-term visible outcomes.

“The apparently monolithic liberal west itself also cannot be understood if we forget how, historically, Europe is also a two-headed beast: one head may be tracked from Charlemagne all the way to the awful Brussels Eurocrat machine; and the other one comes from Athens and Rome, and via Byzantium/Constantinople (the Second Rome) reaches all the way to Moscow (the Third Rome)”
(Guru 03)

Here the metaphor used is *“two-headed beast”* to show that there is both positive and negative side of Europe, mostly used to show that only one side is

transparent and open, but the other side is not visible to many. Such statements also emphasize guru narrative skills that are different from others and that have all the information considered. The "two-headed beast" image perfectly captures Europe's complex and oftentimes paradoxical nature which has been influenced by a wide range of cultural, political, and significant historical dynamics. Another aim of using a metaphor here can be mentioned to show how historical nature can impact a decision.

“Exactly, exactly. So it was, it was a huge task and all of this leads to the externalization of grievance and the narrow and the feeding of a grievance narrative that blames the West and then and and then articulates this theory that the west is focused on preventing Russia from attaining great natural position of greatness in the world and so on. And then Putin, who is It was a spy master. He wasn't a terribly good one with the KGB, but he was a spy master begins and launches on a new form of (uh) conflict which we now call hybrid war)”

(Guru 02)

Here, Putin has been referred to as a “spymaster” to show what he does has a different goal that is not visible. The gurus highlight different interests of people that are contradictory by explaining the background for such declaration

Theme 06: Semiotic-interpretive approach

Introduction

Another important observation and finding through my data set was how gurus use extracted cues that are the basis for proving their predictions while influencing the statements of others. While coding data, these cues are apparently used to change the predictions and the direction of their own predictions. However, cues on the other hand improved the validity and reliability of the statements as they have come from media reports or intelligence reports.

Empirical Findings

Another way of making predictions of gurus was by extracting important cues from the environment around them and interpreting them with their own strategies. As found above, guru predictions were not solely from knowledge and experience and especially not based on technology cues. However, gurus have used multiple cues to strengthen their predictions and for their own benefit. However, cues that go against or beyond their expectations were neglected/not taken into consideration. When intelligence community predictions come out strong about an invasion by Russia and when gurus were predicting a “no war

situation”, the gurus tried to highlight cues that can demonstrate a non-occurrence of a war. For example, in the below text, without no valid proof, the guru has mentioned how strong the Ukraine army is.

“Ukraine. A country facing invasion by Russia does not eat dumplings & complain. It calls out its own citizens to practice w small arms & ATK weapons, & it calls on foreign volunteers”
(Guru 01)

Nonetheless, indicators play a significant role in this statement. Using a variety of indicators, the guru illustrates how Ukraine can respond to this situation. Their powerful military base is one indicator. Here, the guru is attempting to emphasise that even when an invasion is possible, victory is uncertain. The metaphor *"eating dumplings and complain"* is used to illustrate the urgency of the situation and the readiness of Ukraine to fight back in a short period of time.

Moreover, during the posthoc analysis stage, when gurus realized that their predictions are beyond being accurate, they use the same cues to retrospectively change the predictions to a new perspective. This has been done strategically and, in these situations, a wide use of external cues has been extracted. According to the statement below, while predictions were mostly about how Russia is unable to make an invasion, however, during the explanation phase, it is all about how Russia is being motivated by other parties who were making the right predictions about the invasion.

“What I did not anticipate was that irresolute US diplomats & generals would help Putin”
(Guru 01)

According to the statement, the situation has changed as a result of the decisions or strategies implemented by US diplomats and generals. It implies that the results of the war may be affected by their actions or lack thereof, and that there is a chance of unknowingly helping one's competitors or compromising one's own objectives. Furthermore, highlighting the predictions of others to convince the (mostly negative) consequences of the predictions is another strategy that gurus use to keep the attention of the audience even when guru predictions were completely opposite.

A prominent cue used by the gurus can be seen throughout their prediction history. Even though they tend to change the cues for their own benefit, they

use cues as proof and validation points to retrospectively change the way they predict the situation. Here in the example below, a guru has used “the number of troops” required for the invasion as the ground for predictions.

Table 8 No: of troops as grounds for predictions

“Until 500,000 Russian troops are in a position to invade, I will continue to assume that Putin is bluffing on Ukraine”
“I have argued all along that 130K troops are too few to invade Europe's largest country (IC disagrees)”
“Agree that Putin's overriding objective is to conquer the Ukraine, but for that, he needs an army he does not have not of 200K troops but 500K, otherwise he would only start an endless low-intensity war. (BTW: the evacuation of US diplomats from Kiev is a horrible mistake)”
“My assertion that Putin would not invade Ukraine because he lacks the (min 500,000) troops was not (of course) shared by the (no history/ no languages) "Intel community”
“With max 265K soldiers (including field dentists) within operational reach of the northern + eastern borders of the Ukraine, the Russian army could station tanks in city centers, control airports etc & start taking casualties from volunteers having a go”
“To invade Europe's largest country with less than 200,000 troops would not end the crisis victoriously for Russia”

In summary, gurus have used the same cues differently for their own defense. This is because of their retrospective change in analysis. Cues are e equivocal, meaning the same cue can lead in opposite directions, especially during crisis situations.

Theme 05: Cognitive dissonance

Introduction

Constantly, gurus have rejected the predictions of others, including those of the intelligence community that are supported by reliable satellite data. I identified dissonance as a significant behaviour among gurus, which has greatly influenced their sense-giving approach.

Empirical Findings

The expert knowledge and experience they possess is a contributing factor to cognitive dissonance. Here, I observe that gurus view themselves as the most trustworthy predictor compared to others. Cognitive dissonance, i.e., selective attention to information, plays a crucial role here, despite the fact that gurus have been widely regarded as individuals who incorporate all pertinent information for decision-making purposes. This is an intriguing finding, given that gurus have been widely regarded as individuals who incorporate all relevant information for decision-making purposes. Only one of the strategy specialists was against the common norm of Putin is losing, and he explains why in the quote below.

"Ukraine war stakes: "[W]e all have been far too quick to decide that Putin has already lost. He hasn't. If he ends this phase of this war with the battle lines anywhere close to where they are right now, it will have been a significant, if extraordinarily costly, victory for Russia and it will be portrayed as such. If we want Putin to lose, and I think it's very important that he does lose, then the Ukrainians are going to have to liberate a lot more of their territory and we'd have to help them. So I actually think the jury's still out on that. And that's one of the reasons why Putin keeps fighting. And it's one of the reasons why he's not interested in negotiating on any serious terms right now, because he still thinks he can win."

(Guru 02)

As discussed in the previous themes, gurus have their own strategies, cues, ways of interpretation, etc. Each of these elements is seen as a reason that leads to cognitive dissonance because the gurus use this information as a tool to defend their predictions and anything that does not align with their chosen aspects is ignored and rejected. Here, I argue that people especially, gurus in a field who see any threats to their self-esteem and self-preservation can avoid acknowledging inconsistent thoughts of another party in the process of sense-giving. The below quote is one situation where a guru is criticising a prediction made by the CIA. This guru relied hardly on history to make predictions for the future and therefore argues that the CIA lacks a historical understanding of the situation.

"Those who built up an empire such as the Romans, or maintained one for centuries like the Byzantines, never succeeded without following this logic. Those clueless Pentagon and CIA 'experts'"

(Guru 03)

However, the data indicates that due to cognitive dissonance, the predictions made by gurus were subjected to challenges from many different viewpoints. Nevertheless, gurus have exhibited a reluctance to modify their opinions, and any data that challenges their prior predictions were disregarded and leveraged for their own advantage, which may be regarded as a contributing element to maintaining control in the prediction process. The statement below demonstrates how a guru altered their predictions by strategically assigning responsibility to another party when their predictions failed. Here, I argue that the guru attempts to demonstrate the significance of their strategic and practical approaches to action-taking, in contrast to the actions of the US and its allies which have resulted in provoked aggression.

“My assertion that Putin would not invade presumed that deterrence would not be undermined by counterproductive moves by the US and its allies”

(Guru 01)

The phenomenon of cognitive dissonance has a significant influence on the prediction process. This factor played a crucial role in the decision-making of gurus who accepted or rejected information necessary for conducting analyses and making predictions.

Theme 08: Pragma-heuristic approach

Introduction

In general, gurus make decisions or attempt to better understand the reliability of decisions based on their practical decision-making abilities and extensive experience. And consistent with the mentioned themes, strategy gurus have their own interpretations of data based on their own rules of thumb. This has enabled gurus to make meaningful interpretations during the process of sense-giving and to use it as a defense mechanism against contradictory claims. Statements that fall under this theme were isolated from other themes during the coding process when they involved both practical problems/decisions and practical solutions. For the purposes of coding, the actual meaning was disregarded and only the context was taken into account; the decision of a third party evaluated by experts was also taken into account.

Empirical Findings

Based on the available data, it appears that the majority of statements made by gurus pertain to the effective management and handling of practical situations. The varying beliefs and strategies employed by strategy gurus have

resulted in the presentation of practical solutions that reflect their individual rules, regardless of the level of creativity involved. The focus of this research is on the pragmatic and heuristic approaches to inheritance utilized by gurus in their analysis of situations. Upon thorough examination of the available data, it was found that various experts held differing perspectives on the matter. Despite these differences, each guru provided compelling and pragmatic justifications supported by tangible evidence. The present observation suggests that the interpretation of a situation by experts is significantly impacted by the way they frame it. The following statement made by a strategy guru highlights the correlation between state actions and individual actions and suggests measures that could have been taken to minimize associated risks.

"Washington has backed Putin into a corner, forcing him to take drastic measures to protect Russian minorities in Ukraine. That in turn forced Europe's leaders into Washington's camp, and within 48 hours, the European discourse has shifted away from economic cooperation with Russia to a possible boycott of Russian gas."

(Guru 04)

Experienced strategists, commonly referred to as gurus, approach situations with a strategic perspective when developing strategies. The evaluation of the strategy of action typically aims to demonstrate the practical implications of the decision. It has been observed that heuristics possess the characteristic of mental models being effective solely within one's specialized domains. Strategy gurus are known for their ability to identify contradictions within a strategy before anyone else. Although beneficial, the utilization of this approach may result in the neglect of relevant factors or the formation of decisions solely predicated on heuristics and pragmatics.

"On Putin taking the "long view" in Ukraine: "Putin has been in office for 20 years now, 22 years. He's been waging this war, as you noted, since 2014. Actually, he's been setting conditions for even longer than that. He's taking a long view here. And the territory in Ukraine that he's occupied would leave Ukraine strategically vulnerable to a future Russian attack and economically crippled. That would leave Russia in a much more advantageous position for a renewed attack in the future than it had at the start of this."

(Guru 02)

Pragmatics and heuristics also highly impact situational information. As most of the gurus were predicting the situation incorrectly, the situational evaluation prompted biases. As gurus did not predict an invasion, they have seen the

war as something that is a result of provoked factors. Because heuristics especially look at how well the situation is fit with the person's mental models, it can be also argued as a reason that assisted gurus to ensure control over the storytelling process. Below, a guru explains what the hidden motivation of Russia was to conquer the Kremlin.

“Well, the war was an intellectual war, in the sense that the idea was generated within the Kremlin and the people connected to the Kremlin -- that this was the moment for Russia to continue on the path of imperial recovery.”

(Guru 01)

Therefore, my findings highlight the significance of heuristics and pragmatics in relation to strategy gurus. This finding is crucial and cannot be disregarded.

4.4 Conceptual Framework

The next step of my study was to identify the relationship between my second-order themes that emerged. When coding my data, I first realized the sense-making and sense-giving theories because the texts collected were either giving meaning to a future event, analysis, and interpretation of information or arguing about the predictions and statements of others. According to Gioia's study, a conceptual framework is developed from the second-order themes to show how they are related to theoretical dimensions and their interconnections. The framework will also be used to display and answer the research question of how gurus retrospectively change narratives. Here, I explain how gurus use sensemaking to make predictions and use sense-giving strategies to challenge and change predictions. As discussed above and displayed below, gurus make sense prospectively and retrospectively that are transmitted through strategic sensemaking. Here, gurus filter information as a result of “cognitive dissonance” that is a result of their guru expertise and power. Gurus provide senses or communicate predictions through identity-based meaning-making, semiotic interpretive approach, metaphoric framing, and pragma heuristic approach.

Conceptual Framework

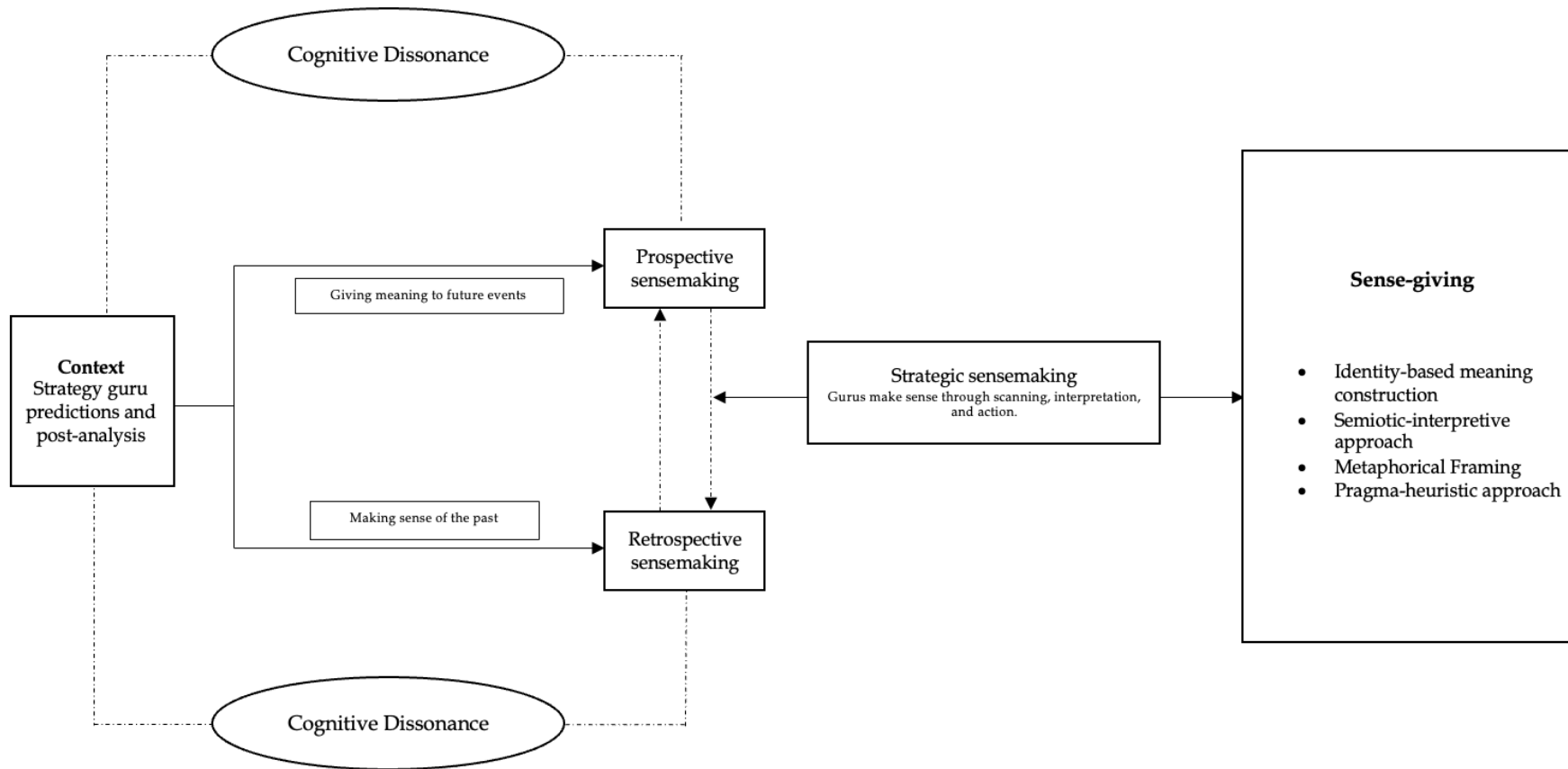


Figure 4 The cognitive process of sense-making and sense-giving in relation to predictive and retrospective analysis

As per the conceptual framework developed above by the author adopted by Lanke et al., (2022) from their study based on the interplay of sense-making and sense-giving. The authors highlight that “the process of sense giving is a cyclical process where the sense maker and sense giver are both essentially trying to make an influence and an understanding” (Lanke et al., 2022, p. 430) leading to a discussion of the importance of understanding the process when making and giving the sense, especially when both sense maker and sense giver is the same person.

The gurus predict future events using prospective sensemaking (looking into the future), retrospective sensemaking (making sense of past events), and strategic sensemaking (scanning, interpreting, and acting). As the data were collected from 2004 to 2022, and as it was a lengthy process of predictions and explanations, the experts maintain control of their narratives by employing four strategies during the sense-making process (these strategies will be discussed in section 5.5 of Chapter 5). Nevertheless, there were instances in which gurus exhibited "cognitive dissonance" by ignoring the predictions of others (in this context, intelligence officials, allies and partners, states, etc.) because they did not align with their own prediction styles. To better understand my data, themes, and theory and to have a better outlook on guru speaking styles, I have developed a table that includes codes along with representative quotes from the data for each code (See APPENDIX 2).

The themes identified were mostly terms and concepts derived from sense-making models and theories. Therefore, it is important to understand what these terms theoretically mean to better understand the conceptual framework designed. The table below contains definitions for the themes quoted from similar studies for further comprehension.

Table 9 Themes Emerged vs. Respective Operational Definitions

Themes	Operational Definitions
1. Strategic meaning-making	<p><i>“Strategy meaning-making is an ongoing semiotic process in which the interplay between visual and discursive practice influences subsequent actions within the strategy process” (Knight et al., 2018, p. 896).</i></p> <p><i>“Sensemaking processes of scanning, interpretation, and action and how those activities are linked to performance”(Thomas et al., 1993, p. 239)</i></p>
2. Identity-based meaning construction	<p><i>“Who people think they are in their context shapes how they see the world”(Lockett et al., 2014, p. 1104)</i></p>
3. Semiotic-interpretive approach	<p><i>“Only some cues will be extracted from the perceptual environment because they have salience within the frame provided by the discursive practices used” (Vaara & Whittle, 2022, p. 763)</i></p>
4. Cognitive dissonance	<p><i>“A motivational state that impels the individual to attempt to reduce and eliminate it”(Wicklund & Brehm, 2013, p. 1)</i></p>
5. Metaphorical Framing	<p><i>“Involves talking and, potentially, thinking, about one thing in terms of another, where the two things are different but some similarities or correspondences can be perceived between them”(Semino, 2021, p. 50)</i></p> <p><i>“Linguistic metaphors are generally defined as cross-domain mappings in the meaning of word and Conceptual metaphors are defined as clusters of cross-domain mappings in thought”(Brugman et al., 2019, p. 42)</i></p>
6. Pragma-heuristic approach	<p><i>“Interaction is governed by underlyingly rational principles “ and “Pragmatic processes involve heuristics”(Park & Clark, 2022, p. 178)</i></p>

7. Retrospective meaning making	<i>"Sense is made of future events by imagining that they have already occurred and then infusing this "elapsed" experience with meaning (Gioia & Mehra, 1996)</i>
8. Prospective meaning making/ Anticipatory meaning construction	<i>"The conscious and intentional consideration of the probable future impact of certain actions, and especially nonactions, on the meaning construction processes of themselves and others" (Gioia et al., 1994, p. 378)</i>

In summary, the chapter aimed at demonstrating the key findings of this study. Accordingly, I have identified 14 first-order codes that led to 8 second-order themes and 2 theoretical dimensions. Thus, the data structure was developed in line with Gioia methodology. In addition, the chapter discusses key theories related to sense-making and strategies of sense-giving used by the gurus when making predictions and their relationships through a conceptual framework.

5 DISCUSSION

This chapter examines the methods employed by strategy gurus to formulate predictions and offer retrospective analyses. The study's results were in line with the sense-making and sense-giving theories, which were analysed using the Gioia approach grounded theory. The research was to find out the methods employed by strategy gurus to maintain control over the prediction process, even in situations where the outcomes deviate from the initial predictions. This study examines the existing themes and relationships and explores how sense-giving is achieved through the interplay of various linguistic elements and their relationship with sense-making. Thus, I claim that the strategies of sensemaking and sense-giving are employed by gurus in order to maintain the credibility and consistency of their narratives over an extended duration.

5.1 Guru Sense-making and Sense-giving

"Theory construction is an ongoing pragmatic process of "puzzling out" and problem-solving that grows on existing ways of understanding what the phenomenon is a case of" (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 167). Based on the research findings, it is clear that strategy gurus conveyed their forecasts through a thorough procedure of analysing and interpreting comparisons. The study of predictions regarding the Ukraine-Russia war offered a valuable opportunity to examine the methods used by experts in forecasting future events and interpreting current ones. The communication of predictions was done through the use of narrative structures. This study examined the keywords frequently utilised by gurus in their discourse. The identified keywords include "history," "human characteristics," "general news," "number of troops," "strategy, aim, target," "past records," "premature prediction warnings," "policies, agreements, NATO," etc. (see APPENDIX 01). The gurus have consistently made predictions over a period of time, without interruption, even in instances where the predictions appeared to be incorrect.

The process of "information gathering and interpretation" is a significant factor in the response of gurus to predicted events, in addition to their predictive abilities. According to Schneider's (1997) perspective, there exists a loose coupling between data collection and interpretation. This implies that decisions or actions taken may not be solely derived from the data collected or interpreted at various levels. Hence, thoughts may manifest in broad ways contingent on the

individual and their perception of the circumstance. Gurus are commonly acknowledged as pioneers in a particular domain and as a group of experts who assert their claims through their personal expertise and by conducting extensive research.

Making sense of predictions is a crucial factor in accelerating progress and development in a society. Accurate estimations are crucial for strategic decision-making, even in uncertain environments. Previous studies have indicated that the "authoritative power" of gurus plays a crucial role in establishing trust among readers and in influencing their decision-making processes (Greatbatch & Clark, 2005; Huczynski, 1992, p. 18; Sperber, 2010, p. 590). As per the findings in section 3.1, it can be inferred that authority power is derived from reputation and, to a significant extent, from past accomplishments that have been acknowledged. The reliability of strategy gurus' narratives has been closely linked to the presence of authoritative power. The ability to maintain control over predictions is a notable aspect that gurus possess.

The process of making predictions also has gained widespread acceptance in various fields and is recognised as a rigorous procedure that involves adherence to established standards and progression through multiple stages. In a study by Ryu (2013, p. 64), it was found that accurate predictions can be made when sufficient information is utilised. The prediction of human behaviour has become a fascinating research topic for many scholars. According to his statement, there are five key principles that can be applied to predictive research. Firstly, even a small amount of prediction can have a significant impact. Secondly, data is always predictive and can be used to make informed decisions. Thirdly, induction involves reasoning from specific facts to make general predictions. Fourthly, ensembles can help to compensate for limitations in data and improve the accuracy of predictions. Finally, the outcomes of persuasive techniques can be predicted through careful analysis and observation.

Theoretical analysis has revealed that the cognitive processes of gurus distinguish them from other professionals, including intelligence officers. Understanding the type of information utilised by experts to construct a narrative is crucial. The data showed that gurus have a tendency to make predictions on a regular basis, regardless of their accuracy. Despite this, they have managed to maintain their reputation throughout the process. Utilising the grounded theory methodology, the findings reveal that the second-order themes illustrate the strategies employed by experts to sustain their level of expertise. The themes that

have been discovered will be utilised in this chapter to explain and analyse the significance of comprehending guru predictions.

In order to establish the credibility of their predictions, gurus often employ various techniques such as sense-making and sense-giving. These methods involve drawing upon past examples and connecting them to current events, as well as influencing the predictions of others during the prediction-making process and shaping the narrative around their predictions after the fact. This reciprocal pattern of behaviour helps strengthen the guru's own reputation and enhance their perceived reliability. Numerous occurrences have been identified that have provoked the act of providing meaning during the prediction and explanation of war events.

"In August 1968, when the Soviet Union decided to invade Czechoslovakia (one-fifth the size of modern Ukraine), it sent some 800,000 troops to invade from East Germany, Poland, Hungary, and westward from Ukraine. By the first night of the invasion, there were occupation troops everywhere, ready to stifle any Czech resistance. But Putin, until 2022 a careful poker player who won territories without any fighting at all, became a reckless gambler. He invaded Europe's largest country with a very small army of some 130,000 (including field dentists), hence he had no powerful combat forces ready to intervene when the Kyiv air assault gambit failed" (Guru 01)

Periodic shifts in theory

"Sensemaking begins when people experience a violation of their expectations, or when they encounter an ambiguous event or issue that is of some significance to them" (Turner et al., 2023, p. 5). The present study is based on the grounded fundamental theory of "sensemaking theory". This theory highlights that individuals tend to make sense of unique events or situations when their comprehension is disrupted, such as when things do not align with their expectations or perceived norms. The study found that guru sense-making is an ongoing process that undergoes periodic changes over time, as evidenced by the collected predictions. The process is carried out regardless of the accuracy of the statements. The identification of a central argument was acknowledged during the examination of the data. Core arguments serve as the foundation for making predictions, and various gurus have developed their own unique methods for presenting these arguments. These approaches are used to interpret events and adjust predictions in a systematic manner, thereby enhancing the accuracy and dependability of the predictions. These distinctions between predictions and post explanations using core

argument can be further discussed using sample narratives of the strategy guru, Edward N. Lutwark.

Predictions:

- i. *“Until 500,000 Russian troops are in a position to invade, I will continue to assume that Putin is bluffing on Ukraine,*
- ii. *“I have argued all along that 130K troops are too few to invade Europe's largest country (IC disagrees)”*

Post-explanations:

- i. *“War is only a great teacher for those who fight it, and the new Russian troops – perhaps 200,000 will show up of the 300,000 recalled – will have to catch up with the Ukrainians, who have been studying war all year. So, Putin will soon need to send more troops, at the risk of more popular resistance at home. But if Putin can persist, we should fight the war in true 18th-century fashion: with the most vigorous material support of Ukraine’s war, but not necessarily with every possible sanction, to keep some in reserve to deter Russian retaliation that may weaken our allies’ resolve. Ukraine itself imports and pays for Russian gas every day”*
- ii. *“In August 1968, when the Soviet Union decided to invade Czechoslovakia (one-fifth the size of modern Ukraine), it sent some 800,000 troops to invade from East Germany, Poland, Hungary, and westward from Ukraine. By the first night of the invasion, there were occupation troops everywhere, ready to stifle any Czech resistance. But Putin, until 2022 a careful poker player who won territories without any fighting at all, became a reckless gambler. He invaded Europe’s largest country with a very small army of some 130,000 (including field dentists), hence he had no powerful combat forces ready to intervene when the Kyiv air assault gambit failed”*

The analysis of the above examples suggests that the forecasts made by gurus are unambiguous and rely on their professional background and expertise among other factors. The significance of predicting war outcomes based on troop numbers has been a recurring argument made by the guru across various time frames and contexts. This argument has been consistently emphasised as a crucial factor in understanding military conflicts. The previous claim has been utilised in post-analysis to explicate the rationale behind the central argument and its significance in comprehending and predictions. The identified themes are crucial in this scenario as they serve as the foundation for the core arguments and

analysis. The study examines the methods utilised by gurus to alter their predictive direction, including the use of retrospection and extracted cues. Additionally, the study highlights the significance of the gurus' confident expression of true opinions. As an example, a guru who strongly opposed implementing sanctions against Russia prior to their implementation is now offering contradictory feedback on the effects of such sanctions (refer to APPENDIX 03 for additional similar statements).

“Secondly, they are producing all the wrong food, all the round food, and all the round energy, they don't import oil and LNG like China does, they don't they have the round and they don't import food. When Russia goes to war and you put all the sanctions against Russia that means that in Moscow you cannot buy Louis Vuitton handbags. Right?”

“All over Russia, the sanctions have been felt in all sorts of ways because the country was actually more internationalised than anyone realised. (I arrived in Tomsk at 6am one winter morning, the temperature minus infinity, and the one place to eat was McDonald's.)”

To conclude, the study emphasises the significance of comprehending the impact of communication styles, linguistics, and heuristics on the process of sense-giving and sense-making. Based on the available data, it appears that the narratives presented by strategy gurus have been consistently regarded as trustworthy throughout all stages of the process, regardless of their level of accuracy. This trend has resulted in an ongoing and continuous process.

5.2 Theoretical Contribution

This study aimed to investigate the methods employed by strategy gurus to comprehend events by establishing and preserving control over the process. Overall, the research findings indicate that gurus employ sense-making and sense-giving strategies to attribute significance to various occurrences. Furthermore, the study emphasized the significance of analyzing the communication and language utilized by strategy gurus in the context of sense-making and sense-giving research. The study's results indicate the identification of three second-order themes under the sense-making theory and five second-order themes under the sense-giving theory and the research demonstrates the role of communication, particularly language, in facilitating guru sense-giving and sense-making. This area of sense-making research has received limited attention, and my study will address this gap by contributing to the integration of sensemaking research and communication. Whittle, Vaara, and Maitlis conducted a study on sense-making research and found that cognitive linguistic elements, patterns of language use in social interaction, and discursive structures can have varying effects on sense-making. Their research suggests that these factors can impact sense-making in both positive and negative ways (Whittle et al., 2023). Thus, my results of the study suggest potential avenues for investigating the relationship between language and various aspects of human experience, including identity formation, metaphorical expression, pragmatic communication, problem-solving strategies, cognitive processes, and semiotic interpretation.

The discursive power of strategy gurus is a significant phenomenon that has contributed to their ability to attract a substantial audience. In their recent research, Vaara and Whittle (2022), investigated the impact of power on sensemaking. Their findings suggest that individuals rely on power dynamics to interpret cues and make sense of their surroundings. Specifically, power appears to be a critical factor in the sense-making process. My study aimed to investigate the narrations of strategy gurus who have a close association with the chosen event (i.e., the war) and provide strategic guidance to the state. The study seeks to expand the sensemaking vocabulary by incorporating supplementary terms that can aid in comprehending the reasons behind the popularity of certain sense-making approaches. And my findings also discuss the mediating function of power in the second-order themes. The conceptual framework has the potential to be refined for a more comprehensive understanding of the mediating role of power in future research.

Lastly, I developed my conceptual framework based on the work of Lanke et al., (2022, p. 437), which explores the interplay between sense-making and sense-giving and how their balance can contribute to successful outcomes. According to research findings, the ongoing process of comprehending events involves both sense-making and sense-giving, which operate in a reciprocal manner. I explain how the communication skills and sense-making abilities of strategy gurus, specifically focusing on their sense-giving strategies and the balance they strike in coupling sense-making expertise.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

The present research exhibits several limitations that require attention in future research. The primary limitation of this research is the scope and generalizability of the sample. The study utilised data sourced from four individuals who possess expertise in military strategy development, as defined and categorised by the researcher. These individuals were selected based on their direct and indirect involvement in the military discipline. The study's predictions and analysis were focused solely on the Ukraine-Russia invasion, with no consideration given to other events. Therefore, further investigation is needed to determine the generalizability of these results. The research outcomes may have relevance to a limited population or particular circumstances, particularly given their connection to the broader concepts of sense-making and sense-giving. The limitations of the study population and design may restrict the generalizability of the research outcomes. Henceforth, it is recommended that future research efforts apply a multi-case study approach to investigate the interplay between sense-making and sense-giving.

Building on the previous limitation, observing, and investigating diverse events, particularly those from different geographic areas, might lead to the identification of cultural variations throughout the sense-giving process. This research is limited to Europe, and as such, the gurus analysed were primarily those who have been influenced by European culture. Consequently, the majority of the identified styles of providing meaning were identical. Cultural differences can have significant effects on communication styles, as culture is known to have a pervasive influence.

This research can provide valuable insights for future researchers interested in investigating the optimal methods for making predictions. The research

did not take into account the precision of the forecasts generated during the process of data coding. The research process is being aligned with the primary research question. The examination of the precision and imprecision of forecasts presents intriguing avenues for investigation, particularly within corporate settings. The use of statistical tools for prediction purposes has been widely acknowledged as a reliable approach. Therefore, it is of interest to develop a sensemaking model that can enhance the accuracy of predictions. The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented realities into sensemaking models is a potential area of exploration for researchers. This could involve investigating how these technologies can be effectively embedded into existing models to enhance sensemaking models. In addition, this study focused solely on the impact of cognitive dissonance on guru predictions, without taking into account their accuracy, future researchers may investigate the extent to which cognitive dissonance has influenced such predictions, taking into account potential biases.

Finally, the study conducted highlights the significant contribution of linguistics and communication in the process of sense-making and sense-giving. There is a limited amount of research available in this particular field. The exclusion of guru communication styles during the data coding process may result in reduced emphasis on 'guru communication during the prediction and analysis' when arriving at conclusions. Consequently, an examination of the function of communication in a scholarly and theoretical approach may result in meaningful conceptual frameworks of sense-making, sense-giving, and communication.

5.4 Practical Implications

Strategy gurus are a group of professionals who are responsible for devising and executing strategies for the government. Their expertise and insights are crucial in facilitating significant decision-making processes. The potential generalizability of the research findings suggests various implications for management that can be examined from multiple perspectives. First, it is crucial to acknowledge and respect the cognitive and communicative styles of individuals. The variability of these aspects across individuals can yield significant differences, where management can leverage diverse cognitive processes to their fullest potential.

Secondly, the impact of cognitive dissonance on the collection, interpretation, and transmission of information by strategy gurus is a crucial aspect of the sense-making and sense-giving process. Understanding the functioning of

cognition is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of communication. The research indicates that the strategy gurus overlooked a significant portion of technological forecasts, including those related to satellite data. The integration of technology in the process of sense-making and sense-giving can enhance the reliability and validity of prediction models, rather than hindering their capabilities. While an exclusive reliance on strategy guru predictions may introduce biases in decision-making, technology can act as an intermediary to provide balance.

Thirdly, it is crucial to investigate whether the narrative styles of the guru differ from those of other professionals in the strategy field. The comprehension of complex metaphorical framings, pragmatics, and heuristics, as well as the interpretation of historical events, may not be fully understood by a country officer who is responsible for evaluating and approving strategy. Hence, a comprehensive approach is required for the conversion of guru language and extraction of crucial elements inherent in their distinct styles.

In conclusion, it is recommended that professionals working in the field of strategy should consider the significance of maintaining a balance between potential biases and the critical role of cognition. The achievement of this objective can be facilitated through a meticulous assessment of cognitive processes, incorporation of technological tools, and strategic transmission of communication.

6 CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to investigate the process by which strategy gurus interpret and analyse events that are subsequently translated into predictions and aim to investigate how gurus retrospectively alter their perception of events when faced with negative outcomes. The findings suggest that strategy gurus rely heavily on their own sensory perceptions to convey predictions and provide insights that challenge conventional thinking. The implementation of distinct strategies for sense-making and sense-giving has enabled gurus to comprehend events while simultaneously maintaining authority over the procedure. The discursive power of strategy gurus has played a significant role in facilitating the process.

While many gurus have gained a substantial base audience due to their claimed predictive abilities, not all have been successful in making accurate predictions. The Ukraine-Russia conflict is a complex issue that encompasses various political, economic, geopolitical, and ethical factors. Predicting the outcome of this conflict has proven to be a challenging task for even the most knowledgeable analysts. The gurus primarily relied on their professional and academic expertise to comprehend the occurrences, while also absorbing insights from past events. The purpose of the gurus' predictions was disregarded in this study to prevent potential bias in sense-making theories.

In accordance with the grounded theory - Gioia methodology the study's important reflection is the precise monitoring of informants' voices during theme development. The aim of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of how individuals make sense of their experiences and how these sense-making processes can be applied in various contexts. By examining these themes, this study expected to contribute to the existing literature on sense-making and sense-giving and provide insights for future research in this area. The study's findings revealed that the eight themes identified were associated with two primary theories: sense-making and sense-giving. The study identified second-order themes related to the evolution of predictions made by gurus, and how they maintain the authenticity and dependability of their narratives over time.

In conclusion, this study offers insights into the theories of sense-making and sense-giving. The results of the study provide insight into the interconnectedness of sense-making and sense-giving theories with the disciplines of linguis-

tics and communication. The results of the present investigation indicate that understanding and interpreting a particular group of individuals can take on diverse forms, as evidenced by the principal informants of this research, namely, strategy gurus, who exhibit considerable experiential and occupational expertise.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Keywords used during guru predictions and analysis

Key Word	Example texts
history	<i>"This is all informed by history, very much alive even today in the Russian collective unconscious."- Pepe Escobar</i>
human characteristics	<i>"And Ukraine I have been tweeting non-stop that Russians will not invade Ukraine. Because Putin's method is not to start desperado endless wars, but to get through" - Edward N Lutwark</i>
environment	<i>"Ukraine has some gas reserves but Russia has roughly ten times more, far more than it can transport without massive investments in infrastructure. Otherwise, Ukraine has no natural resources of note apart from farmland – and Russia already is the world's largest wheat exporter." - David P. Goldman</i>
number of troops	<i>"War is only a great teacher for those who fight it, and the new Russian troops – perhaps 200,000 will show up of the 300,000 recalled – will have to catch up with the Ukrainians, who have been studying war all year" - David P. Goldman</i>
strategy	<i>"Extra evidence that the Ukraine debacle is predominantly about money laundering – not competent military strategy – is Capitol Hill approving a hefty extra \$40 billion in 'aid' to Kiev. It's just another western military-industrial complex bonanza, duly noted by Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of Russia Dmitry Medvedev" - Pepe Escobar</i>

aim	<i>"Why does the US Gov relay Russian threats ? Putin's aim is to frighten Kiev into surrender" Edward N Lutwark</i>
target	<i>"Estonia and Latvia for all practical purposes are being touted as "Putin's next targets." And defending them from "Russian aggression" is NATO's new red line." David P. Goldman</i>
past records	<i>"Neither is congruent with Putin's record so far." Edward N Lutwark</i>
premature prediction warnings	<i>"I was a little premature about the end of Putin; we don't know yet." - Edward N Lutwark</i>
policies	<i>"When Amir-Abdollahian described Raisi's visit to Russia as a "turning point in the policy of good neighborliness and looking to the East," he was giving the short version of the roadmap followed by the new Iranian administration: "a neighbor-centered policy, an Asia-centered policy with a focus on looking to the East, and an economy-centered diplomacy." - Pepe Escobar</i>
agreements	<i>"If he stops the war without an agreement and simply unilaterally -- the way it happened de facto in regard to [South] Ossetia and Abkhazia, with a unilateral end, the sanctions remain" - Edward N Lutwark</i>
NATO	<i>"Now Putin attacks Ukraine, suddenly NATO becomes strong because Putin provided NATO with the only thing it didn't have." " - Edward N Lutwark</i>
risk	<i>"Putin's scacchic view of the world makes him predictable, and predictable opponents are dangers that can be defused. In this case defusing the risk requires clear delineation of spheres of influence; Putin is Lucky Luciano in this respect, not Hitler or Tamerlane. The West will have to allow Putin</i>

	<p><i>to “win” on certain issues, e.g. Crimea and Ukraine’s neutrality, in order to contain him.” - David P. Goldman</i></p>
CIA	<p><i>“The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is even more abysmal in terms of getting everything wrong, as recently demonstrated by its chief Avril Haines during her questioning on Capitol Hill. History shows that the CIA strategically blew it all the way from Vietnam to Afghanistan and Iraq. Ukraine is no different” - Pepe Escobar</i></p>

Appendix 2 – Expanded data structure

Representative informant voice	1 st order codes	2 nd order themes	Theoretical dimensions
<i>“Insulting press articles will not stop him”</i>	Recommendations and solutions grounded in professional expertise and individual reflection.	Identity-based meaning construction	Sense-giving
<i>“But Putin also has a second path before him”</i>	Identification and exploration of alternative options grounded in professional expertise and individual reflection.	Identity-based meaning construction	Sense-giving
<i>“Political risk of recalling 300,000 reservists”</i>	Comprehensive analysis grounded in professional expertise and individual reflection.	Identity-based meaning construction	Sense-giving
<i>“An ice-cream warhead can still kill”</i>	Metaphorical meaning construction for enhanced comprehension and interpretation	Metaphorical Framing	Sense-giving
<i>“In the meantime, the Intelligence community is in the hysteria business: they will invade Ukraine. tomorrow! (Only a fool invades EUR's largest country with less than 500,000 troops & P is no fool)”</i>	Causal inference for predictive modeling	Cognitive Dissonance	Sense-giving

<i>"Russian troops too few to control the country"</i>	Exposing discriminative cues as evidence for prediction accuracy	Semiotic-interpretive approach	Sense-giving
<i>"If Russians do invade and individual Ukrainians start killing Russian soldiers"</i>	Performing contextual interpretation to establish the validity of narrative representations.	Semiotic-interpretive approach	Sense-giving
<i>"What I did not anticipate was that ir-resolute US diplomats & generals would help Putin"</i>	Interpreting and deducing the intended meaning from the context	Pragma-heuristic approach	Sense-giving
<i>"They are all in favor of regaining the Ukraine for Russia, but rightly assert that Europe's biggest country cannot be dominated"</i>	Creating meaning through the examination and situational framing	Pragma-heuristic approach	Sense-giving
<i>"Neither is congruent with Putin's record so far"</i>	Using historical analysis to predict future outcomes	Retrospective sense-making	Sense-making
<i>"The Russians succeed in strategy"</i>	Scanning and interpreting strategy	Strategic sense-making	Sense-making
<i>"Putin's method is to pluck only the ripest fruit"</i>	Scanning and interpreting personal approaches to actions	Strategic sense-making	Sense-making
<i>"I will continue to assume that Putin is bluffing on the Ukraine"</i>	Exploring potential events through reasoning and assumptions	Prospective sense-making	Sense-making
<i>"I was sure that Putin would threaten but not invade"</i>	Prospective forecasting through threat identification and trigger event analysis	Prospective sense-making	Sense-making

Appendix 3 - Narratives Before and After

Guru	Prediction stage	Post-explanation stage
Edward N Lutwark	<p><i>“Now why does the Russians have made the mistake of starting a war without declaring war? Or without mobilizing the army? Without having an army, this 130,000 people invading Europe's biggest country. No chance that has been trying to catch up ever since now. What did the Russians have? Well, at the level of grand strategy, not tactics, no one happens in the battlefield today or tomorrow they have the following they have the world's biggest country and most big country reaches many parts of the world without going anywhere”</i></p>	<p><i>“But Russia still has sheer magnitude on its side. With many more people than any other European country, unless Putin changes his mind or loses power, he can keep trying and failing in Ukraine until he gets it right. Of its two million reservists, only 300,000 have been recalled to serve, of which 200,000 might reach the front. But 200,000 are enough to double the forces now fighting at the front, and once they catch up in combat experience, they could stop Ukraine's victories. In other words, Russia's mass means that it can lose many battles and yet still keep fighting”</i></p>
Fedrick N kegan	<p><i>“However, the close look at what such an invasion would entail presented in this report and the risks and costs Putin would have to accept in ordering it leads us to forecast that he is very unlikely to launch an invasion of unoccupied Ukraine this winter”</i></p>	<p><i>“On Putin taking the "long view" in Ukraine: "Putin has been in office for 20 years now, 22 years. He's been waging this war, as you noted, since 2014. Actually, he's been setting conditions for even longer than that. He's taking a long view here”</i></p>
Pepe Escobar	<p><i>“So military force needed to be subordinate to diplomacy, a less costly means of avoiding or resolving conflict. And here we can make a fascinating connection with today's Russia, led</i></p>	<p><i>“Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir “the new Hitler” Putin is in absolutely no hurry to end this larger than life drama that is ruining and rotting the already decaying west</i></p>

	<i>by President Vladimir Putin and his diplomacy chief Sergei Lavrov"</i>	<i>to its core. Why should he? He tried everything, since 2007, on the "why can't we get along" front. Putin was totally rejected. So now it's time to sit back, relax, and watch the Decline of the West"</i>
David P. Goldman	<i>"No one wants Ukrainistan, least of all Vladimir Putin"</i>	<i>"Washington has backed Putin into a corner, forcing him to take drastic measures to protect Russian minorities in Ukraine. That in turn forced Europe's leaders into Washington's camp, and within 48 hours, the European discourse has shifted away from economic cooperation with Russia to a possible boycott of Russian gas"</i>