



OPPORTUNITY

36

SCOPE **WITHIN REACH**

UNCERTAINTIES

Collaboration, Systems

MEGATRENDS

Future humanity

TRENDS

Digital communities
Government Agility
International Collaboration

SECTORS IMPACTED

Agriculture & Food
Automotive, Aerospace & Aviation
Communication Technologies & Systems
Consumer Goods, Services & Retail
Cyber & Information Security
Data Science, AI & Machine Learning
Digital Goods & Services
Energy, Oil, Gas & Renewables
Financial Services & Investment
Government Services
Health & Healthcare
Immersive Technologies
Infrastructure & Construction
Insurance & Reinsurance
Logistics, Shipping & Freight
Manufacturing
Materials & Biotechnology
Metals & Mining
Professional Services
Travel & Tourism
Utilities

What if foresight was a form of diplomacy?

AMBASSADOR OF SCENARIOS

Formal intergovernmental cooperation and mechanisms for scenario planning and foresight facilitate global cooperation to pre-emptively address global challenges by integrating futures and futures studies into global negotiation and diplomacy.





Foresight is already part of the strategic planning and policymaking process of many governments around the world

UAE's Ministry of Cabinet Affairs

UAE's Government Development and the Future Office

Policy Horizons Canada

Centre for Strategic Futures in Singapore

Government Office for Science (GO-Science) in the United Kingdom

Foresight Network in the EU

National Research and Technology Foresight Project in South Africa

African Union's Agenda 2063

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

Global challenges such as climate change, sustainable energy, and pandemics require multipronged approaches involving both science and foreign policy, or science diplomacy.⁷³⁵ This concept involves integrating scientific expertise into policymaking and has led to structural changes in governments which have adopted this approach.⁷³⁶ By utilising science and innovation, anticipatory science diplomacy often engages with non-state actors (such as technology companies, civil society, and international organisations) to foster partnerships and attract investment.⁷³⁷ However, recent trends have highlighted a gap between science and foreign policy, marked by cultural and professional divides between scientists and diplomats.⁷³⁸

The same could be said when it comes to futures. Global scientific and technology networks that increasingly address complex global future challenges need to better engage with national, international, and multilateral organisations that work on local and global challenges.⁷³⁹ Likewise, in higher education programmes and research, the majority of political science and international relations research, particularly in the United States, remains anchored in studying the past, often overlooking the potential their research might have on shaping the future.⁷⁴⁰ Academic publications in major journals predominantly focus on empirical evidence rather than addressing complex future-oriented questions.⁷⁴¹

Nevertheless, there are already some examples of futures embedded in diplomacy and global action. The SDG Lab organises discussions with United Nations member states and international organisations that raise awareness of future science trends and build bridges between relevant actors and innovators in anticipation of predicted challenges.⁷⁴² Other examples include existing future-oriented multistakeholder consultation mechanisms that support global policymakers, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI).⁷⁴³

In addition, foresight is already part of the strategic planning and policymaking process of many governments around the world through horizon scanning of future threats and opportunities and navigating complex technology, science, and sustainable development landscapes. Examples include the UAE's Ministry of Cabinet Affairs⁷⁴⁴ and the Government Development and Future Office,⁷⁴⁵ Policy Horizons Canada,⁷⁴⁶ the Centre for Strategic Futures in Singapore,⁷⁴⁷ the technology horizon scanning service under the Government Office for Science (GO-Science) in the United Kingdom,⁷⁴⁸ strategic foresight within the European Commission and the EU-wide Foresight Network,⁷⁴⁹ the National Research and Technology Foresight Project in South Africa,⁷⁵⁰ and the African Union's Agenda 2063.⁷⁵¹



OPPORTUNITY

While foresight is already part of many governments' strategic planning and management, the practice of foresight more broadly implemented across nations could improve negotiation and coordination towards a common, long-term view.⁷⁵²

Countries could coordinate forward-looking bilateral and multilateral cooperation through a formal, intergovernmental mechanism to regularly evaluate drivers of change and imagine futures. Through the leveraging of varied backgrounds, countries could work together to develop anticipatory solutions and policies and advance coordination on solutions for complex challenges. This aids policy development and advances collaboration by promoting shared goals of growth, prosperity, and well-being before global challenges become acute,⁷⁵³ and that is diplomacy.

BENEFITS

From climate change to evolving global supply chains, envision various potential futures with others around the world to prepare for significant, unforeseeable changes that countries might not otherwise anticipate on their own.⁷⁵⁴ Futures diplomacy institutionalises evidence-based and proactive international cooperation, providing lasting solutions to current and future challenges that benefit countries.

RISKS

Improper use of foresight tools and models, together with country bias and preferred futures results in ineffective solutions, casting doubt on the effectiveness of foresight diplomacy.

