

The Constrained and the Unconstrained Strategist: A View of the Firm

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ABSTRACT

With many views of the firm (e.g., resource-based, knowledge-based, strategy-based, and entrepreneurial), there been little discussion, if not at all, regarding the strategists and their view of the firm. Strategic leaders' view of the firm ultimately directs strategies and business models with either flexibility or rigidity. This research extensively described constrained and unconstrained strategists and their view of the firm under the auspices of market uncertainty. These two contrasting views of the strategist, regardless of their perceived merits or demerits, can have advantageous or devastating effects on strategy and market positioning in the long and short run. Effective strategic leadership requires a commitment from the organizational ranks (e.g., upper echelon) to resources, human and social capital, and psychological risks. The goal was to build a theory for academics and provide insight for the practicing strategist.

Keywords: *Constrained and unconstrained strategy, strategic flexibility, strategic leadership, management*

INTRODUCTION

Management and strategy theorists have often explained the actions of the firm without considering the strategist's vision and his or her impact on a firm's strategic type, flexibility, approach, and market decision or trajectory. Relatedly, it was once said that a strategy "walks on two feet, one deliberate, the other emergent" (Mintzberg & Waters, p. 271). To date, management and strategy theories need a categorization of strategists to illuminate the differences between a constrained strategist and an unconstrained strategist and their vision and ideological impact and response to enterprise flexibility and or direction of the business firm (Grote, 2019). Because strategy can be thought of as deliberate or emerging, this notion implies there are differences between strategists. With this dichotomy between a constrained and an unconstrained strategist, the current study attempts to develop a theory that provides insights into those who create, control, direct, and lead strategic initiatives in the firm.

To date, there have been proponents of the resource-based view of the firm (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984), knowledge-based theory of the firm (Grant, 1996; Sveiby, 2001), entrepreneurship of resource-based theory (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001), and strategy theory of the firm (Phelan & Lewin, 2000). However, strategic management theory does not acknowledge the implicit views of strategic choices and types that are manifest by strategists' views (Shoemaker et al., 2018). It is theorized in the current paper that, indeed, it is the strategist's view and his or her perceptions, visions, assumptions, and values that underlie his or her view of the firm, which impacts the strategy of a firm. Dichotomization of the strategist's decision making, interpretation, vision, and view as affecting the firm's implicit or explicit trajectory has been implied

and never elaborated in the strategic approach and decision making of the firm in the long-standing management and strategic literatures (Miller, Kets De Vries, & Toulouse, 1982; Miller & Toulouse, 1986; Mintzberg, 1973; Peterson, Smith, Martorana, & Owens, 2003; Shoemaker et al., 2018; Grote, 2019).

Minzberg and Waters (1985) and McCarthy (2003) referenced actions derived from management as being entrepreneurial. Giberson et al. (2009) referred to them as charismatic leaders. If we fast forward, now firms call for continuous increase in performance, thus requiring all levels of the firm to be innovative and entrepreneurial. This current paper addresses how to dichotomize strategists based on their explicit or implicit vision as it relates to a view of the firm, which is centered on its strategic risk tolerance. Strategists might be entrepreneurial, but if their risk tolerance is low, they will have a constrained view of the firm direction and constrained actions derived from this view of the firm. How do organizations make critical market evaluations that align with strategic decisions has been questioned by a few theorists (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985; Grote, 2019). Can these views assist in understanding the nature of strategic flexibility or risk-averse behaviors? Therefore, it is this study's objective to define, frame, and place into context a nascent theory called the constrained and unconstrained strategists' view of the firm.

The current research uses strategic leadership, upper echelon theory, and enterprise flexibility as the theoretical bases for developing a conception of a strategist's view and its implications on a firm's strategic approach. Mintzberg and Waters (1985) saliently provided seven types of strategies that are used as reference: planned, entrepreneurial, ideological, umbrella, process, unconnected, and imposed. While Mintzberg and Waters described the types of strategies, they did not dichotomize the views that distinguish the view of the strategist. For example, if a firm's

leadership is approaching a strategy type—be it planned, imposed, ideological, or entrepreneurial—do the strategists already have a preconceived view? Does their constrained or unconstrained view inform the choice of strategy type, direction, resource allocation, and/or market trajectory? The constrained and unconstrained view of the firm theory informs and builds on the strategy types developed by the conceptualization of enterprise flexibility both by Mintzberg and Waters (1985), Volberda (1999), and Sharma and Jain (2010).

The connection between strategic leadership and enterprise flexibility was alluded to by McCarthy (2003) who presupposed that power, personality, crises, and life cycle changes inevitably produce strategy formulation. To add, strategic theorists have not examined organizational leadership ideology related to strategic decision-making (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985). As long as there are differences between leaders' ideals and philosophies, direction, power structure, use of resources, and strategy type, in many firms, there arises a conflict of visions (Sowell, 2007). This conflict in ideologies has implicit and explicit impact on future strategic approaches, strategic choices, and view of the firm. A constrained and unconstrained—approach to strategy formulation and differences in views have real disparities in implications for the firm. The dearth of literature linking strategic leadership and enterprise flexibility from the strategists' view of the firm elicits more attention both theoretically and practically.

This literature review offers insights on strategic leadership, constrained and unconstrained views, a theoretical framework, discussion and propositions, and conclusion. This literature review describes and operationalizes constrained and unconstrained strategists and their view of the firm. It also reveals a careful examination and explication for further theoretical development.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

The purpose of this study is to propose that strategists possess a basic view of the firm that is dichotomized as either constrained or unconstrained, which influences the firm's strategic decisions and direction. The objective of this paper is to envelop the importance of a CEO's vision and view of the firm as a driver of strategic conceptualization that leads to tactical marketplace action (Mintzberg, 1978; Semuel, 2017) or, as McCarthy (2003) described—strategy as activities that entail doing things creatively and competitively. With that, this paper attempts to link strategic leadership with constrained and unconstrained views of the firm in the contexts of uncertainty and competitive business environments (Barbuto, 2016).

A second motivating factor of this study is derived from Sharma and Jain's (2010) contention that there is a gap in strategic flexibility literature concerning the role of strategic leadership as the primary driver of firm-level performance and strategic trajectory. The reason for such a gap relates to the issue of leadership (i.e., style, thinking, and vision), which remains one of the least recognized areas in the managerial and flexibility literature (Volberda, 1999; Malewska & Sajdak, 2014; Andersen, 2019). If leadership is a major driving force on the capacity on strategic flexibility, then the culture (i.e., barriers and resistance to flexibility) can hinder or cultivate capacity of flexibility (Trice & Beyer, 1993), if it has the support by upper echelon and subordinates (Giberson et al., 2009; Schein, 2004). The third motivating factor of this paper is to understand to what degree market signals influence strategists' decision to either optimize or maximize the firm's resources and, based on the interpretations of market signals, how they conceptualize either a constrained or unconstrained view of the firm.

The top management team operates as the intellect of the firm with their primary role to craft tactics with needed foresight to adopt changes to new business environments (Eggers & Kaplan, 2009; Shin, 2013). The strategist's reasoning develops through education, experiences, knowledge acquisition, functional role, age, and leadership abilities. Top managers make strategic trade-offs based on education, role, and experience, even more so in uncertain business environments, with the use of intellectual abilities (Buyl, Boone, & Matthyssens, 2011). These intellectual abilities and personal qualities are important when thinking strategically (Finkelstein, 1992) and making strategic decisions (Miller & Droge, 1986) in general. Consider, top management members who value change are most often those who initiate change when dissatisfied with the status quo. Henceforth, upper echelon perspectives on change have significant impact on whether or not deductive or inductive initiation of change in strategy is executed within a firm (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). Change, change performance, and dealing with uncertainty is not viewed the same across management. Finkelstein (1993) proclaimed that CEOs' cognitive abilities and personality act as powerful vehicles to transform the firm and increase performance outcomes during uncertain times (Waldman, Javidan, & Varella, 2004).

The Strategic Leadership View of the Firm

Strategic leadership is defined as “the ability to combine visionary operational management and the ability to connect ideas in company operations while taking into account their limitations” (Kamila & Sajdak, 2014, p. 145). Grzesik (2011) explained strategic leadership as the ability to cope with situations that are difficult to predict, unmanageable, and often without clear paths to improve during turbulent times and competitive environments. Strategic

leadership focuses on the organization-wide mobilization of resources. At the individual level, strategic leaders mobilize resources by awakening, envisioning, innovation, and re-architecting processes, people, and parameters (Semuel, 2017).

Strategic leaders are creators and maintainers of culture and climate (Tichy & Sherman, 1993). This implies that cognition, personality, and identification of market opportunity is enveloped in strategists' reference point of the firm's marketplace position relative to competitors. Strategic leaders are well informed, share foresight, and think strategically about processes of reformulation and recombination of the firm's resources. Strategic leaders reframe situations directly or indirectly related to foreseen or unforeseen changes, because landscape changes serendipitously morph into emerging realities. Change in the competitive landscape invokes a level of uncertainty in strategic leadership commitment to preexisting business plans, which often are unaligned with preplanned courses of action based on preexisting reference points. One of the most salient traits of strategic leaders is their capability to provide a vision and convert their vision to action, realized or manifested in market tactics (Trott & Paul, 2008; Semuel, 2017). What is intended or unintended should be driven by a consist behavior exhibited by strategic leadership (Mintzberg, 1987; Andersen, 2019). Perhaps a strategist's flexibility or rigidity mirrors the ideology and sentiments of the firm's strategic leadership (Andersen, 2019). Hypothetically, if an unforeseen opportunity emerges, what action seems likely to take shape based on the strategist's view of the firm? These propositions are not an attempt to deemphasize the merits or demerits of a strategy planning process, because many (Barbuto, 2016; Mintzberg, 1994) have understood the planning process as an indispensable method that educates, explains, and directs external resources needed to pursue market-based action—ad hoc or otherwise. Strategic

planning derives from a strategic reference point (Fiegenbaum, Hart, & Schendel, 1996) that affects organizational view/vision of strategy relative to risk aversion, risk seeking, or risk tolerance behaviors; these risk factors are conceptualizations that affect future strategy types and directions of the enterprise. McCarthy (2003) pointed out that some managers have more or less risk tolerance than others, and the same rule applies to managers who are risk averse.

Strategic leadership serves as a critical component of the strategy development process, namely as the primary driver of human capital and the cognitive molder of future-oriented action of the firm. Changes in market dynamics directly and or indirectly impact a firm's strategic flexibility and strategic choices (Volberda, 1999). Strategic leaders' strict adherence or lack thereof to their firm's mission and use of resources is the corollary to the inevitable conflict of missions, visions, and the positive consequences of strategic flexibility, malleability, and adaptability between members of the upper echelon.

Strategic leadership has the unique role of shaping the input and implementation of the firm's values and strategic flexibility. The strategic leadership's reference point and nature of risk tolerance or flexibility influences their view of the firm, causing them to either push the envelope (i.e., Steve Jobs' return to Apple) or refocus on core competencies, decreasing innovation and concerns on application (i.e., Lou Gerstner at IBM; Montgomery, 2008). Table 1 displays the links between strategic leadership attributes/characteristics and a firm's strategy.

Table 1: *Strategic Leadership Attributes linkage to Firm's Vision*

<u>Strategic leadership attributes</u>	<u>Firm's vision</u>
Thinking strategically to create combinations and recombinations of resources or units toward a future vision.	Unconstrained
Connecting current visions with a historical perspective.	Constrained
Transforming a future-oriented vision combined with the firm's historical vision.	Unconstrained
Consolidating strategic activities to realign with the firm's preexisting vision.	Constrained

Constrained View of Strategy

The constrained view of strategy heavily emphasizes and strictly adheres to the planning process as the mechanism to defend competitive advantages. This view is in line with the classical theory of management (March & Simon, 1958; Minzberg, 1985; Parsons, 1960; Weber, 1958). Constrained strategists, despite market signals in the face of known competitive pressures, remain constant in the face of serendipitous occurrences. A constrained ideology shapes strategic direction and operates under a set of assumptions: well-defined tactics, intent farsightedness, limited acknowledgment of market forces, and risk averse in strategic tactics and positioning. To a large degree, the constrained

strategists seeks to find the fit within a given environment and environment by relying predominately on properly design subsystems (Deplazes et al., 2009). The fit is devised by a sound system and routinized processes distinguished by a demarcation of strategies, known or unknown. Under a constrained view, the foci are narrowly goal-oriented as they correspondingly relate to limited strategic choices.

For example, Kodak leadership pursued a narrow focus on film, while all along receiving market signals that the industry was moving in a different direction (Larish, 2012). It appears that Kodak's leadership had a constrained view of strategy. Kodak's constrained strategy was evidenced by their sluggish transition from film to digital in comparison to their competitors and industry changes. Very little of the constrained strategy's intricacies are altered, especially if the firm enjoys a competitive position in an existing market. Constrained strategists view structure as preceding strategy in every way possible, which creates internally cultivated strategic myopia and a moderate waste of resources because of misapplied absorptive capacity. The constrained strategists' aversion to becoming a first-mover remains high – but only if, however, these risk tactics come from within the firm's strict and narrow purview.

Constrained strategic leaders acknowledge that differentiation and change come at a cost (Porter, 1985). If differentiation is needed for growth, the idea generation starts with historical data justification first. Constrained strategists are bound by historical indicators and trends, as well as tradition, to a larger degree than unconstrained strategists. For example, before constrained strategists contemplate how to capture technological value, they analyze first its historical adaptiveness related to organizational and structural adsorption rates. The constrained strategist perceives employee behavior as fixed and unmalleable. A

technological value that proves to work with respect to the level of complexity, risk potential, and governance peculiarities more than likely will be examined for further analysis based on tolerance of risks. A constrained strategist asks *how* before implementing innovation.

The constrained strategist seeks to eliminate innovative behavior and flexibility as much as possible—inventiveness and serendipity are valued alternatively by the constrained strategist. The constrained view of innovative behavior understands first the costs of idea failures, because best practices and policies previously determined (i.e., in times of certainty and uncertainty) guide the strategic trajectory. Policies and actions are established by data—data precede action and data drive actions. Strategic action, adaptive or otherwise, need not proceed data, even when market signals are strong and apparent. Constrained strategists operate within the framework of logical incrementalism and optimizing resources to capture value through precise planning—to a much lesser extent capturing value via the entrepreneurial spirit. This value capturing and optimizing purview of constrained strategists comes from an inherent aversion to maximizing resources. Because of the long-term consequences of maximization, precedents are heavily considered before commitments regarding resource allocations are made.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Constrained View of the Firm: Optimization in the Face of Uncertainty

Despite unforeseen circumstances and competitive signals to operate under a change of business model, the constrained strategist interprets market signals as the need to optimize

preexisting resources, industry position, supplier relationship, or even strategic business units. While value proposition and profit are as much a consideration with any strategists (or strategic team), the constrained view of strategy focuses on vertical value creation—vertical value only created from within and not from an outside-in perspective. For this reason, these strategists are constrained as to the use and limits of resources when existing industries and markets are uncertain. Coordination of resources, human or otherwise, is transmuted more so either by way of a directional strategy—stability or retrenchment and/or parent growth strategy in terms of attaining profit.

For example, de Sola Pool (1977) reminded us that during the years 1877-1878, William Orton, president of Western Union, turned down the opportunity to purchase the Bell venture telephone (AT&T/Bell Systems) patent and stayed within the purview of his aging markets and changing industry, because he saw no real use in the “electrical toy” (p. 16). The least recognized constrained optimization is the detrimental realization of suboptimization, resulting from an internal myopic view of technology and resources in the face of uncertainty where ultimately the once-useful technology is no longer unconstraining the firm’s operations but has, over time, constrained them.

Henry Havemeyer, nicknamed Sugar King, once ruled the sugar industry but was faced with competition from an arch competitor in the coffee industry, John Archbuckle, owner of Archbuckle coffee. Archbuckle’s coffee company was one of the leading coffee manufacturers in the United States before the Civil War and one of the first companies to introduce roasting and packaging as a differentiator between coffee producers at that time (Cobb, 2017). At that time, the Sugar King was set on the diversification of products for his sugar manufacturing and refining firm and made several attempts to compete in the coffee

industry with Archbuckle by the creation and application of flexible production methods. When the results were poor or indifferent to his view of the firm and the magnitude of flexibility, the Sugar King reiled to his firm's core capability (i.e. sugar production) and remained constrained in attitude and action.

Unconstrained View of Strategy

The strategist with an unconstrained view tends to place extreme emphasis on wide-ranging and far-reaching external reference points as immediate targets. This view is akin to the postmodern ideal of management with an emphasis on a less rationale approach to competitive forces and market position strategies (Covin & Wales, 2012; Haberstroh, 1968; Miles et al., 1978). This strategist embraces the tumult of strategic flexibility—strategic thinking and entrepreneurial spirit stay on the forefront of strategic actions. The basic axiom of an unconstrained view of the firm deems strategic flexibility a dynamic process—strategic efforts remain malleable to the point that products and service models change and readapt to market demands on an ad hoc basis. The firm's mission, of course, plays a major role and serves as the firm's anchor; however, interpretation of the mission underscores the entrepreneurial spirit. Supporting the entrepreneurial spirit is expected when change is occurring and uncertainty is present; thus, processes are modified to respond to competitor's actions in the market and industry. Strategic thinking, in this case, is fluid throughout the firm because it increases absorptive capacity, which serves to expeditiously direct and/or redirect efficiency by tapping into slack resources.

Creative destruction, a term coined by Schumpeter (1942), explains the ethos of the unconstrained view in many ways. Schumpeter proposed that the entrepreneurial spirit “comes from

the new consumers, goods, the new methods of production or transportation, the new markets, the new forms of industrial organization” (p. 82). The unconstrained strategist embraces flexibility and embeds it into the firm’s long-term strategy. Unconstrained strategists view slack resources as a necessary condition to gain efficiency for tactical execution with the least amount of risk-averse behavior. From the top down, the ideology speaks to the spirit of creative destruction—arguably, a view that allows the firm to adjust and or readjust performance levels that adapt to any type of change trajectory and adaptivity (i.e., prospectors, analyzers, defenders, and reactors). Based on the Miles and Snow taxonomy, the unconstrained strategist executes adaptive tactics either as prospecting and/or analyzing. While under the Chaffee three-model strategy, the unconstrained strategist typifies the adaptive strategy in that the nature of the adaptive strategy maximizes opportunities and risks due to changes of landscape. The unconstrained strategists’ view of vision, mission, effective leadership, and fiscal responsibility is not more or less fuzzy than the constrained strategist; rather, an unconstrained ideology pursues tactics, profit goals, and performance outcomes differently. It is an ideology that permeates one’s interpretation of a business model, strategy direction, and optics in driving human capital.

Unconstrained View of the Firm: Maximization in the Face of Uncertainty

In the face of uncertainty, the unconstrained strategist supports growth as a process only in the sense of maximizing resources, market positions, human capital, or otherwise. Directional and parent strategies are the standard as strategists gain synergy and create value. This strategist tends to maximize

product and service offerings and innovative processes as they become realized. This strategist cultivates an internal climate that fosters the maximization of shareholder and stakeholder value and profitability. An unconstrained strategist emphasizes the importance of horizontal value creation— value created from within the firm, using dynamic capabilities, human capital, an inside-out perspective vision of the firm.

The Dichotomy Between the Constrained and Unconstrained Views of the Firm

Strategic leaders possess either a constrained or unconstrained view of strategy based on several factors, including industry, experience, position, resources, intuition, and size of the firm. The flexibility of a strategy is gauged and measured by the strategist view, because the constrained strategist asks how, and an unconstrained strategist asks when. Regardless of a strategy's flexibility or rigidity, the strategist view is the main determinate of whether to increase or decrease enterprise flexibility and internally creating value-added capabilities to sustain flexibility. Watson (1963), founder of International Machines Cooperation (IBM), displayed his strategic view and tolerance of flexibility embedded in his basic beliefs. Through his basic beliefs, it is clear that Watson saw flexibility as an unavoidable risk. But at some point in the firm's life cycle, depending on the market position, Watson knew a culture of beliefs and customs would necessitate a view to be incorporated in the longevity of his firm (constrained or unconstrained view) that was favorable in terms of the ability and capability to survive in the face of competitive forces. Watson's basic beliefs informed his unconstrained view of the firm: respect for the individual, best customer service, and the pursuit of happiness. Depending on the level of strategic flexibility initiated,

the rate and absorption of resources significantly impact the mobilization of firm-level resources coupled with the firm's value-added activities.

In 2003, then IBM CEO, Sam Palmisano, held an unconstrained view of the firm's core values and strategically designed a 72-hour top-down meeting to openly discuss and reimagine IBM's core values. Roberts and Stockport (2009) pointed to the fact that Palmisano's IBM ValuesJam session was strategic flexibility at its best. Relatedly, Roberts and Stockport (2009) suggested that strategic flexibility and strategic choices available to the firm are related and determine the firm's ability to exploit these choices. Choice of strategy means a potential reorientation of an existing strategy, which implies that new ideas require new learning (Palmisano, 2004; Grzesik, 2011). For example, Amazon's strategic leadership exemplify the continuous movement of the S-curve by reimagining the future needs of customers. They force the S-curve to cross the chasm even in the discontinuity phase of their S-curve, which disallow incumbent firms to pose any threat. This might be described as strategic entrepreneurial leadership.

Strategic leaders primarily concern themselves with human capital, combination and recombination of resources, connecting visions with a reality, and the transformation of visions during tumult and uncertainty. Since there are predictable and unpredictable strategic triggers that enable a firm's flexibility, the constrained view sees strategic enablers as only options to exercise if there is a transition between strategic phases or substantive market changes; even then, the enabling levers are not activated due to reaction from competitors. A constrained strategist seems likely to defend rather than prospect the frontier of a business landscape for changes or to create changes. Initiating strategic flexibility in an ad hoc climate is the natural unconstrained methodology during a planning process. The unconstrained

strategist cultivates a climate and spirit of innovative support so that the firm stays ahead of current external trends and changes identified as threats or opportunities.

Table 2: *Distinctions between Constrained and Unconstrained Strategists*

Constrained strategist	Unconstrained strategist
Pedantic	Innovative
Reactive	Responsive
Rigid	Flexible
Low tolerance for risks	Challenge risks (high tolerance)
Historically bound	Making/shaping history
Systems-oriented	Process-oriented
Closed-system-oriented, rational decision-making style	Open system-oriented decision-making style
Value-free perspective	Value-laden perspective

DISCUSSION AND PROPOSITIONS

Figure 1 depicts two divergent views of strategy—constrained and unconstrained. Both views acknowledge that strategy initiates at the upper echelon level before driven by mid-level subordinates—the *modus operandi* of many firms. Typically, strategic views or attitudes encompass more than just one designated individual (the strategists) and often are supported through all levels of the firm (i.e., top management teams); therefore, both views (constrained and unconstrained) consider

any strategy and business model development as a multi-actor function that accumulates multiple visions utilized to create activities to optimize and/or maximize performance, resources, and market position and to sustainably compete (Yukl, 1989; Finkelstein, Hambrick, & Cannella, 2009; Kriger & Zhovobryukh, 2013).

Additionally, Figure 1 shows the strategic leadership concept as highly significant and associative with the strategist's (constrained and or unconstrained) view of the firm. The figure explicitly shows that all ideas and future projections start with the strategist's view of the firm, and the flexibility and/or trajectory of decisions extends to the firm from the outpouring of the strategist view. To a degree, both types of strategists think strategically, plan combinations and recombinations, connect visions with reality, and transform visions to combine with the firm's mission.

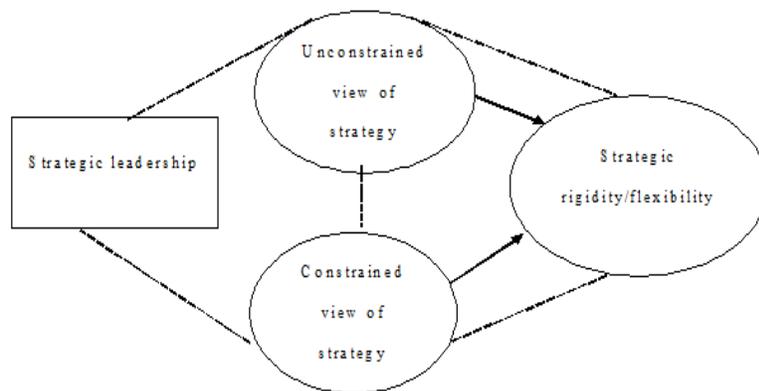


Figure 1. Theoretical framework of the constrained and unconstrained view of strategy.

This acknowledgment of a strategic leadership view of a firm provides insightful additions to theory and practical strategy

development, mainly to determine the effects on strategy and strategy planning. Not to mention, this paper closes the gap between the mainline characteristics of effective strategic leadership and strategic action. The dimensions, characteristics, and model of strategic leadership explain their importance in shaping a firm's strategic trajectory, and the likelihood that strategists engage in a sort of action in time of uncertainty—either constrained or unconstrained.

P¹: Strategic leaders' constrained view of the firm positively impacts the performance of the firm.

P²: Strategic leaders' unconstrained view of the firm positively impacts the performance of the firm.

P⁵: Strategists' with a constrained view lower the risk tolerance of the firm.

P⁶: Strategists' with an unconstrained view increase the risks tolerance of the firm.

CONCLUSION

Strategic leaders' view of the firm plays a vital role when they envisage the direction of strategic planning. Strategist views impact the direction of strategy and can create contention because operationalists vie for competing interests, which creates a conflict of visions (Sowell, 1987). Also, this impact influences strategist views in such categories as the industry life cycle (temporal), firm life cycle (market position), and absorptive capacity (ACAP) (firm-level acquisition of critical knowledge). Even the notion of matching strategists to a strategic function leaves out the fundamental void that strategists possess an ideology that directly

influences strategy itself and, if unnoticed, brings about either positive or negative operational results despite a perfect match.

Thus, strategic leadership involves making changes related to the direction of the firm, directly and indirectly, based on a long- or short-term vision, either individually or with members of the top management team, whose role entails developing critical paths and formulating steps that implement vision into a strategy based on a constrained or unconstrained view of the firm. The notion that organizational flexibility does not require employee motivation is unfounded and nonsensical if looking through the perspective of leadership and adapting to a change in circumstances. There is no conceivable way to achieve flexibility with employees who are unsatisfied and demotivated to pursue their goals. Organizational flexibility is dynamic and pervasive in the sense that it requires people, processes, and managerial support to cultivate employees' capabilities to quickly and responsively adjust and readjust to market demands, internal challenges, and innovative opportunities (Bran & Udrea, 2016). There are numerous types of organizational flexibility (technical, strategic, etc.); but whatever the type favored by the nature and multiplicity of diversity in various markets and then employed, there is a cause and a consequence of organizational flexibility. The unintended causes of flexibility are due to reactions from deviating from a status quo.

The consequence is resistance to change and, ultimately, a reverberation to and from the initial change state—flexibility. When there is a change of state, from one form to the next and back to the original form, flexibility has occurred. With that, the strategist's view either accounts for changes in strategy without changes in value or the strategist accounts for the changes in the values and becomes flexible but eventually reverts to an original state (i.e., a recoiling effect). Flexibility increases the complexity and quantity of ideas, which creates new experiences, innovative

behaviors and creativity, and intelligences, which might add burdens on the recoiling process (Ouedraogo & Koffi, 2018).

On net balance, the practical and theoretical need for a dichotomy between strategists' view of the firm is to place greater emphasis on the human side of strategy making and directing that might explain the antecedent of strategic outcomes. Therefore, these propositions need to be tested empirically to account for the inclination that, in fact, the constrained and unconstrained strategies are two categorizations that can explain how strategists' views of the firm might explain the outcomes of a firm's strategic trajectory in the marketplace.

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