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**RISK-ORIENTED GOVERNANCE IN CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION: A COMPREHENSIVE THEORETICAL,
METHODOLOGICAL, AND INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS**

**РИЗИКООРІЄНТОВАНИЙ ПІДХІД ДО ОРГАНІЗАЦІЇ УПРАВЛІННЯ В
СУЧАСНОМУ ПУБЛІЧНОМУ УПРАВЛІННІ: КОМПЛЕКСНИЙ
ТЕОРЕТИЧНИЙ, МЕТОДОЛОГІЧНИЙ ТА ІНСТИТУЦІЙНИЙ АНАЛІЗ**

This research presents a comprehensive analysis of the transition toward risk-oriented governance in contemporary public administration, an evolution necessitated by the shift from post-war stability to systemic vulnerability. By reconceptualizing risk as a foundational category of governance rather than a technical variable, the study explores how modern institutions can enhance strategic capacity and reflexivity. A central pillar of this analysis is Ulrich Beck's "Risk Society" thesis, which posits a transition from the distribution of "goods" to the distribution of manufactured "bads", challenging the "organized irresponsibility" of traditional bureaucratic structures. The analysis incorporates the International Risk Governance Council (IRGC) framework, providing a multi-stakeholder pathway for managing systemic risks through interlinked phases of pre-assessment, appraisal, and evaluation.

Methodologically, the work advocates for pluralism, integrating quantitative data-driven models with qualitative expert insights to bridge the gap between objective indicators and subjective contexts. It also introduces "Evidential Pluralism" (EBP+) for robust policy evaluation. To address the 2024–2025 "polycrisis" landscape – characterized by compounding climate, geopolitical, and digital threats – the research utilizes the OECD's FIELD/SCOPES and the "AAA" (Antifragile, Anticipatory, Agility) frameworks to institutionalize proactivity. Economic flexibility is further addressed via Real Options Theory, treating public investments as dynamic options to manage uncertainty. Finally, the study warns against the "state of exception", where crisis-driven governance may normalize

exceptional executive powers, and instead proposes an ethical framework built on ex ante accountability and integrated cross-sector resilience.

Keywords: *risk-oriented governance, public administration, polycrisis, systemic risk, institutional resilience, anticipatory governance, risk society, methodological pluralism.*

У цьому дослідженні представлено комплексний аналіз переходу до ризикоорієнтованої організації управління в сучасному публічному управлінні – еволюції, зумовленої переходом від післявоєнної стабільності до системної вразливості. Переосмислюючи ризик як фундаментальну категорію управління, а не як технічну змінну, у дослідженні розглядається, як сучасні інституції можуть підвищити свій стратегічний потенціал та рефлексивність. Цей аналіз базується на тезі Ульріха Бека про “суспільство ризику”, яка передбачає перехід від розподілу “благ” до розподілу штучно створених “збитків”, кидаючи виклик “організованій безвідповідальності” традиційних бюрократичних структур. Аналіз включає рамки, запропоновані Міжнародною радою з управління ризиками (IRGC), що забезпечують багатосторонній підхід до управління системними ризиками через взаємопов’язані етапи попередньої оцінки, аналізу та оцінювання.

З методологічної точки зору в цій роботі відстоюється принцип плюралізму, що передбачає поєднання кількісних моделей, заснованих на даних, з якісними експертними висновками з метою подолання розриву між об’єктивними показниками та суб’єктивним контекстом. Також у ній наведено концепцію “доказового плюралізму” (EBP+) з метою здійснення надійної оцінки відповідної політики. Для вирішення проблем “полікризи” 2024–2025 років, що характеризується поєднанням кліматичних, геополітичних та цифрових загроз, у дослідженні використано рамки FIELD/SCOPEs та “AAA” (Antifragile, Anticipatory, Agility) ОЕСР задля інституціоналізації проактивності. Гнучкість економіки також розглядається крізь теорію реальних опціонів, яка трактує державні інвестиції як динамічні опціони для управління невизначеністю. Окрім того, дослідження застерігає від “стану винятку”, коли кризове

управління здатне нормалізувати надзвичайні виконавчі повноваження, і натомість пропонує етичну рамку, побудовану на попередній підзвітності та інтегрований міжсекторальній стійкості.

Ключові слова: *ризикоорієнтований підхід до організації управління, публічне управління, полікриза, системний ризик, інституційна стійкість, проактивне управління, суспільство ризику, методологічний плюралізм.*

Problem statement. The administrative landscape of the twenty-first century is defined by a departure from the stability that characterized the post-war era. Contemporary public administration operates within governance environments that differ fundamentally from the bureaucratic structures envisioned by classical theorists. The prevailing conditions are marked by uncertainty, non-linearity, interdependence, and systemic vulnerability. These transformations are not merely peripheral; they challenge the foundational assumptions of traditional administrative models designed for hierarchical control and procedural certainty. Consequently, public administration must undergo a structural evolution to reconceptualize risk not as an external disturbance but as a foundational category of governance. This transition toward risk-oriented governance aims to enhance institutional reflexivity, strategic capacity, and long-term resilience.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Risk is a multidimensional construct that extends far beyond technical assessments of probability and impact. In the realm of public administration, risk functions as a lens through which uncertainty is interpreted, prioritized, and managed. It encompasses social perceptions, institutional responses, and normative judgments about public values. Risk propensity is not a stable characteristic of individuals or institutions but is deeply influenced by the socio-political context [11].

The most significant theoretical contribution to understanding this shift is the "Risk Society" thesis proposed by Ulrich Beck. Beck argues that modern society has transitioned from an industrial modernity, focused on the distribution of "goods" (wealth and resources), to a "second modernity" centered on the distribution of "bads" (risks and threats) [2]. These risks are

“manufactured” – they are unintended side effects of technological and economic progress [ibid.]. Unlike the natural disasters of the past, these hazards originate within the centers of rationality, science, and prosperity [ibid.].

Presentation of the main material. Classical bureaucratic models emphasized legal-rational authority, procedural certainty, and hierarchical coordination as the primary mechanisms for achieving administrative effectiveness. While these principles remain important, they are insufficient for addressing governance challenges characterized by rapid change, interdependence, and uncertainty. In such contexts, public administration must not only implement predefined rules but also anticipate, interpret, and manage risks that cannot be fully predicted or controlled.

Risk-oriented governance emerges as a response to these challenges. Rather than treating risk as an external disturbance or technical variable, this approach conceptualizes risk as an inherent feature of governance systems. From this perspective, governance is fundamentally concerned with making decisions under conditions of uncertainty and managing the consequences of those decisions for public values.

The risk society is characterized by “reflexive modernization”, a phase where the side effects of industrialization can no longer be ignored by the existing institutional framework [7]. A critical feature of this era is “organized irresponsibility”, where institutions intended to provide safety – the state, the scientific community, and the market – become the primary sources of unmanageable consequences [ibid.]. Because these risks often transcend human imagination and scientific determination, conventional standards of responsibility and monitoring fail [ibid.].

Conceptualizing risk as a structuring principle implies that risk considerations must permeate every stage of the policy cycle. In the past, risks were managed in a departmentalized manner – finance handled currency fluctuations, operations handled quality, and insurance handled liability [11]. Modern risk-oriented governance requires the integration of risk into the core of governance and compliance structures [ibid.]. This approach challenges silo-based structures, emphasizing the interconnected nature of policy domains.

The trajectory of public administration theory has moved through three distinct archetypes: Public Administration (PA), New Public Management (NPM), and New Public Governance (NPG) [13]. Each paradigm reflects a different orientation toward the management of uncertainty and the role of the state (*Table 1*).

Traditional Public Administration (late 19th century to the late 1970s) focused on administrative procedures, legal-rational authority, and equality of treatment through hierarchy. However, as public needs outstripped resources, this model came under fire [ibid.]. The subsequent rise of New Public Management (NPM) in the late 1970s introduced private-sector techniques, emphasizing efficiency, “hands-on” management, and the organizational distancing of implementation from policy-making [ibid.]. While NPM improved operational performance, its intra-organizational focus limited its ability to address complex, cross-sectoral risks [ibid.].

New Public Governance (NPG) emerged at the start of the twenty-first century as a response to the limitations of NPM. NPG emphasizes pluralistic, communitarian, and participatory elements within a governance regime [ibid.]. It views policymaking and service delivery as collaborative processes within complex networks, prioritizing transparency, social justice, and interdependence [12]. This paradigm is particularly suited for risk-oriented governance because it acknowledges that modern “wicked problems” cannot be solved by the state alone; they require collaborative action and co-production with non-state actors [13].

Table 1. Features of Public Administration Paradigm

Paradigm	Governance Focus	Role of the State	Management Logic
Public Administration	Hierarchy & Law	Centralized Provider	Procedural Rule-Following
New Public Management	Efficiency & Markets	Purchaser/Regulator	Private-Sector Managerialism
New Public Governance	Networks & Pluralism	Facilitator/Partner	Collaboration & Co-production

Source: compiled by the author

To bridge the gap between technical risk assessment and democratic governance, the International Risk Governance Council (IRGC) developed an integrated analytic framework [15]. This framework provides guidance for the early identification and handling of risks characterized by complexity, uncertainty, and ambiguity [6].

The IRGC framework breaks down the risk process into four interlinked elements, supported by cross-cutting aspects such as communication and stakeholder engagement:

Pre-assessment: This stage involves identification and framing. It requires an early warning system and the involvement of relevant actors to capture diverse perspectives on the risk and its associated opportunities.

Appraisal: This consists of two parts: a technical risk assessment (evaluating impacts and severity) and a concern assessment (gathering knowledge about how people perceive the risk and its socio-cultural consequences).

Characterization and Evaluation: Decision-makers judge the significance and acceptability of the risk by comparing appraisal outcomes against specific criteria. This stage determines whether the risk is acceptable, tolerable, or intolerable.

Management: This involves designing and implementing actions to avoid, reduce, transfer, or take the risk. It requires managing trade-offs between risks and opportunities (Table 2).

Table 2. IRGC Framework

Framework Element	Key Components	Objective
Pre-assessment	Framing, Early Warning	Set boundaries and identify stakeholders
Risk Appraisal	Risk & Concern Assessment	Synthesize technical and social knowledge
Evaluation	Judgment of Acceptability	Determine need for management intervention
Risk Management	Implementation, Monitoring	Apply mitigation or adaptation strategies
Cross-cutting	Communication, Engagement	Ensure transparency and inclusive participation

Source: compiled by the author using [6]

The IRGC framework is uniquely equipped to handle “systemic risks” – the probability of breakdowns in entire systems (e.g., global financial systems, energy grids, or the biosphere) due to high connectivity and non-linear interactions. Systemic risks challenge established modes of governance that rely on compartmentalization [16]. They require “whole-of-society” approaches where insurers, banks, governments, and civil society coordinate using shared data and integrated models.

To understand why regulation varies across different policy domains, Christopher Hood, Henry Rothstein, and Robert Baldwin introduced the “risk regulation regime” approach [4]. A regime consists of the institutional geography, the rules, and the practices associated with a particular hazard. This meso-level analysis sits between society-wide theories (like Beck’s) and single-case studies.

Components of a mentioned regime [4] include:

Institutional Geography: The organizational setup, which can be international, national, or local, and can range from single-agency control to fragmented, overlapping systems.

Rules: These vary in formality, from statutory codes to unwritten “club” rules, and in their targets (inputs, processes, or products).

Practice and Animating Ideas: The professional biases, the rigor of enforcement, and the preferred policy instruments (e.g., market incentives vs. command-and-control).

The variation in these regimes is typically explained by several forces [4]:

The Nature of the Hazard: Some risks require specialized expertise to recognize or are collective in impact, influencing the regime’s complexity.

Market Failure Hypothesis: Regulation is often sized to correct market failures, such as externalities or information asymmetries.

Opinion-Responsive Government: Regimes are frequently shaped by public attitudes and media salience. Governments adjust regulation based on whether “lay” and “expert” views are aligned.

Interests and Lobbies: The distribution of power among business groups, NGOs, and professional experts significantly influences regime content.

Risk-oriented governance necessitates a departure from methodological monism. No single research method is inherently superior for studying the

dynamics of the risk phenomenon. Instead, a plurality of quantitative and qualitative methods is required to bridge the gap between objective indicators and subjective contexts (Table 3).

Quantitative risk analysis relies on verifiable data and statistical models to measure probabilities and financial impacts. It is essential for cost-benefit analysis and the prioritization of risks in monetary terms. However, it is resource-intensive and can be rendered inconclusive by insufficient or poor data.

Qualitative risk analysis relies on expert judgment, experience, and descriptive tools like risk matrices or scenario planning. It is faster and captures contextual nuances, such as organizational culture or human factors, that quantitative models might overlook. While subjective, it provides the “subject-object” pluralism necessary for building consensus among diverse stakeholders [8].

In the context of policy evaluation, “Evidential Pluralism” (EBP+) advocates for integrating heterogeneous evidence [20]. This involves establishing both correlation (that a policy intervention causes an outcome) and mechanism (the underlying process that explains the correlation). EBP+ ensures that science is integrated into the policy process by scrutinizing mechanistic evidence alongside randomized controlled trials.

Table 3. Quantitative vs. Qualitative Risk Assessment

Aspect	Quantitative Risk Assessment	Qualitative Risk Assessment
Data Type	Numerical, Metrics, Verified Statistics	Descriptive, Expert Judgment, Experience
Key Tools	Monte Carlo simulations, CBA	Risk matrices, Scenario planning
Advantage	Objective, supports financial decisions	Fast, captures cultural & human factors
Disadvantage	Complex; needs high-quality data	Subjective; prone to assessor bias
Output	Numerical values (e.g., % probability)	Severity rankings (e.g., High/Med/Low)

Source: compiled by the author

A new approach – anticipatory governance – is the systemic capacity to act on a variety of inputs to manage emerging technologies and global

challenges while such management is still possible [18]. It requires a transformative shift from reactive to proactive institutions.

The OECD identifies five key dimensions (FIELD) and six enabling factors (SCOPEs) for building anticipatory governance [19], given below.

Dimensions (FIELD):

Future-readiness: Ensuring the organization is prepared for various scenarios.

Innovation: The ability to develop new solutions for evolving challenges.

Endurance: Building resilience for policies to withstand long-term pressures.

Long-term perspective: Moving beyond short-term political cycles.

Direction: Establishing a clear sense of strategic purpose.

Enabling Factors (SCOPEs):

Support from leadership: Commitment from top-level decision-makers.

Competencies: Developing specific skills within the workforce.

Observation of trends: Monitoring emerging changes and “weak signals”.

Participatory processes: Engaging diverse stakeholders and the public.

Exchange of intelligence: Sharing data and good practices across silos.

Structures and procedures: Formal frameworks to integrate foresight into policy.

True institutional resilience is captured by the “AAA” framework: Antifragile, Anticipatory, and Agility [17]. Antifragility refers to systems that benefit and improve from shocks, focusing on the amplitude of potential consequences rather than just their probability. This requires organizational agility – the ability to recognize root causes and ready feasible options quickly – and a clear organizational “purpose” that acts as a North Star during crises.

In the planning of public infrastructure and policy, traditional Net Present Value (NPV) calculations are often insufficient because they assume investment decisions are “now-or-never” propositions. Real Options Theory (ROT) [9] offers a dynamic alternative, treating investment opportunities as options – the right, but not the obligation, to take action in the future.

Types of Real Options in Governance:

Option to Defer: The value of waiting for uncertainty to clear before committing to an irreversible expenditure.

Option to Expand: Designing systems today that can be scaled up if future demand is higher than expected.

Option to Abandon: The ability to stop a project to minimize losses if its value drops.

Switching Options: Designing flexibility into production or service systems to adapt to changing market conditions.

Incorporating real options maximizes the strategic value of public projects by providing the managerial flexibility to respond to uncertain environments.

As governance becomes more risk-oriented, the ethical framework of public administration must adapt. Accountability is shifting from *ex post* blame to *ex ante* responsibility, where public officials are encouraged to identify and manage risks proactively.

One of the primary risks of crisis-oriented governance is the “normalization of exceptional powers” [3]. Governments often justify temporary limitations on rights by invoking urgent threats (terrorism, migration, pandemics). This can lead to a “state of exception” where the boundary between emergency and norm becomes blurred, resulting in an expansion of executive authority at the expense of legislative and judicial oversight. Institutional actors must remain vigilant to ensure that extraordinary measures do not become a stable governing paradigm [4].

Ethical governance ensures transparency, integrity, and public trust, which are essential for the legitimacy of public institutions [1]. Public administration relies on a hierarchy of ethics: personal morality (the fundamental sense of right and wrong), professional ethics (standards specific to public service roles), and institutional ethics (codes of conduct and transparency mechanisms within agencies). Adhering to these principles ensures that public administrators prioritize collective welfare over narrow political or personal gain, even under the pressure of rapid change and uncertainty (*Table 4*).

Table 4. Principles of Public Administration and their Role in Risk Governance

Principle	Role in Risk Governance	Outcome
Transparency	Open disclosure of risk data	Builds public trust and credibility
Accountability	Answerability for risk-taking	Deterrence of corruption and negligence
Meritocracy	Expert-led assessment	Enhances accuracy of technical analysis
Rule of Law	Legal constraints on emergency power	Prevents abuse of authority during crises

Source: compiled by the author using [1]

The mid-2020s have been defined by the emergence of the “Polycrisis” – a system of interconnected and compounding crises where risks from climate change, geopolitical conflict, pandemics, and technological disruption reinforce one another [10]. These crises challenge traditional emergency management that focuses on isolated events.

In a polycrisis, disruptions transmit through interconnected financial, logistics, and social systems. For instance, a climate-driven weather event can impact supply chains, pressure costs, and increase cyber exposure simultaneously. Because data drives modern systems, a single attack on a critical vendor can send shockwaves across an entire ecosystem [14].

Governance of the polycrisis requires “Integrated Risk Governance” – a proactive approach that replaces fragmented risk management with cross-sector collaboration [5]. This includes:

Shared Data and Common Resilience Goals: Insurers, banks, and regulators working together on joint stress-testing.

Network-Based Modeling: Capturing supply chain and ecosystem dependencies.

Ethically Defensible Trade-offs: Addressing conflicting societal goals (e.g., economic growth vs. climate stability) through inclusive participation.

Conclusions. This article has provided a comprehensive theoretical and methodological analysis of risk-oriented governance in contemporary public administration. The consolidation of risk-oriented governance within public administration theory and practice marks a fundamental shift in administrative

rationality. Reconceptualizing risk as a foundational category rather than a technical variable allows public institutions to develop the strategic capacity and institutional reflexivity necessary for the twenty-first century.

The findings of this analysis underscore the importance of:

1. Integrating Risk Governance: Moving beyond siloed departments to a holistic, “whole-of-government” approach where risk permeates the entire policy cycle.

2. Embracing Methodological Pluralism: Utilizing both quantitative precision and qualitative depth to capture the socio-cultural and indeterminate dimensions of risk.

3. Institutionalizing Anticipation: Building capacities for strategic foresight and experimentation to shift from reactive to proactive governance.

4. Strengthening Ethical Safeguards: Maintaining accountability and the rule of law to prevent the normalization of exceptional powers during crises.

5. Navigating the Polycrisis: Recognizing the systemic nature of contemporary risks and fostering global, cross-sectoral coordination to build shared resilience.

The evolution toward risk-oriented governance is not merely an administrative choice but a structural necessity for the survival and legitimacy of public institutions in an era of deep uncertainty and systemic vulnerability. The findings underscore the necessity of integrating risk-oriented governance into administrative reform, policy design, and institutional development. Future research should focus on comparative and longitudinal studies examining how different administrative systems institutionalize risk-oriented governance and how such approaches affect governance outcomes under uncertainty.

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