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Resilience Analysis of Industrial Systems under External Shocks: A Dynamical Approach

Yuna Emilio*

Department of Electrical Engineering, School of Advanced Technology, 1100 Notre Dame West, Montreal, QC H3C 1K3, Canada

Introduction

Industrial systems, as complex socio-technical entities, are increasingly exposed to a wide array of external shocks, ranging from natural disasters and pandemics to cyber-attacks and economic disruptions. These shocks challenge the robustness and stability of industrial infrastructures, supply chains and operational frameworks. As such, resilience the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance, reorganize and retain essentially the same function, structure and feedbacks has emerged as a critical attribute for sustainable industrial performance. A dynamical approach to resilience analysis offers an in-depth understanding of how these systems behave over time under the influence of shocks and how they transition between operational states [1]. A dynamical approach recognizes that industrial systems are not static. Instead, they evolve in response to internal feedback mechanisms and external pressures. Modeling these systems requires tools from systems dynamics, control theory and complexity science. Unlike traditional risk assessments that focus on the likelihood and consequences of specific hazards, dynamical resilience analysis emphasizes the system's trajectory following a perturbation, its recovery path and the possibility of adaptation or transformation [2]. At the core of this approach is the concept of state space, where the conditions of the industrial system are represented as points in a multidimensional space defined by key performance indicators, resource levels, operational capacities and other system-specific parameters. A shock pushes the system from its equilibrium or baseline state into a new region in the state space. The resilience of the system can be visualized and quantified as its ability to return to a desirable operating region or to stabilize within a new, acceptable regime. This entails an analysis of the system's basins of attraction zones in the state space that delineate where the system will ultimately settle and how these basins shift under external perturbations.

***Address for Correspondence:** Yuna Emilio, Department of Electrical Engineering, School of Advanced Technology, 1100 Notre Dame West, Montreal, QC H3C 1K3, Canada; E-mail: Emilio.yun@ens.etsmtl.ca*

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Description

Dynamical models can incorporate feedback loops, time delays, non-linear interactions and threshold effects, all of which are critical in real-world industrial systems. For example, a supply chain disruption caused by a natural disaster may initially affect only a few nodes but can cascade throughout the network due to dependencies and just-in-time inventory practices. A dynamical model captures these ripple effects and helps predict secondary impacts, as well as the time required for the system to recover or the conditions under which it may collapse into a degraded operational mode [1]. Moreover, resilience is not solely a function of returning to the status quo. In many cases, shocks reveal underlying vulnerabilities or inefficiencies that necessitate transformation. The dynamical approach accommodates this by including pathways of adaptation, such as redesigning workflows, decentralizing production, or integrating digital technologies. These adaptive responses alter the system's structure, potentially shifting it into a more resilient configuration in the long term. To effectively apply a dynamical approach, empirical data from past disruptions are critical. Time-series data, failure records, recovery timelines and intervention outcomes feed into model calibration and validation. Scenario-based simulations allow analysts to test the system's response under various shock intensities, durations and frequencies. Through this, decision-makers can identify leverage points, such as critical nodes whose fortification significantly enhances system resilience or policy measures that shorten recovery times [2]. Furthermore, industrial systems do not operate in isolation. They are embedded within broader economic, social and environmental contexts. A truly comprehensive dynamical resilience model considers interdependencies across sectors and scales. For instance, the resilience of an energy production facility is linked to transportation networks, labor availability, cybersecurity infrastructure and even community trust. Multilayered modeling frameworks such as coupled infrastructure systems or agent-based simulations can capture these cross-sectoral dynamics. Policy implications of such analysis are profound. Governments and industries can prioritize investments in redundancy, flexibility and early-warning mechanisms based on their modeled contributions to system resilience. Regulatory frameworks may mandate resilience assessments as part of operational licensing. Insurance models can be refined to reflect dynamic rather than static risk profiles. Training and education programs can be tailored to enhance organizational learning and adaptive capacity [1].

Conclusion

A dynamical approach to the resilience analysis of industrial systems under external shocks provides a powerful lens to understand, anticipate and manage disruptions in a complex world. It shifts the focus from reactive risk mitigation to proactive resilience building. By embracing complexity, modeling system evolution over time and exploring pathways of recovery and adaptation, stakeholders can enhance not only the survivability but also the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of industrial operations.

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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