#### Polycrisis fake

Daniel W. Drezner 23, Professor of International Politics at the Fletcher School, author of Drezner's World, "Are we headed toward a 'polycrisis'? The buzzword of the moment, explained," Vox, 1/28/2023, https://www.vox.com/23572710/polycrisis-davos-history-climate-russia-ukraine-inflation

So maybe Niall Ferguson has a point; what some are calling a polycrisis could just be history rhyming with itself.

Those warning about a polycrisis vigorously dispute this. They argue that the growing synchronization and interconnectivity of systemic risks increases the chance of a polycrisis. As one recent New York Times op-ed co-authored by Homer-Dixon explained, “complex and largely unrecognized causal links among the world’s economic, social and ecological systems may be causing many risks to go critical at nearly the same time.”

These concerns are borderline Malthusian. Thomas Malthus famously warned that the human population would exponentially outstrip mankind’s capacity to grow food. This proved to be spectacularly wrong, but the power of Malthusian logic remains. Neo-Malthusians are less concerned about food specifically and more about human civilization outstripping other necessary resources.

In the same op-ed, Homer-Dixon and co-author Johan Rockström worry that “the magnitude of humanity’s resource consumption and pollution output is weakening the resilience of natural systems.” The WEF report ranked a “cost-of-living crisis” as the most severe global risk over the next two years.

Concerns about climate change should not be minimized. At the same time, there are ways in which the notion of a polycrisis obfuscates more than it reveals.

Looking at the charts above makes it seem as though little can be done to prevent a polycrisis. Indeed, the Cascade Institute paper is written as though the polycrisis has already happened.

This sort of framing is bound to generate a sense of helplessness in the face of overwhelming complexity and crisis. In The Rhetoric of Reaction, Albert Hirschman warned about the “futility thesis” — the rejection of preventive action due to a fatalistic belief that it is simply too late.

It is far from obvious that there will be a polycrisis (let alone that we’re already in one). As the economist Noah Smith pointed out in his rejoinder to Tooze, its proponents underestimate how much “the global economy and political system are full of mechanisms that push back against shocks.” Indeed, for all the concerns that have been voiced over the past two years about global supply chain stresses and rampant inflation, both of those trends appear to have reversed themselves quite nicely. Complaints about scarce container ships and computer chips that dominated 2021 have turned into stories about gluts in both markets.

On the sociopolitical side of the ledger, it is noteworthy that as societies emerge from the pandemic, indicators of social dysfunction might start to subside. Political populism has actually been trending downward for the past year or so. Even skeptics of democracy have noticed that autocracies have been facing greater challenges as of late than democracies.

Malthusian arguments rest on producers being unable to keep pace with growing demand, and modern history suggests that the Malthusian logic has been proven wrong time and again. Homer-Dixon in particular has been a strong proponent of neo-Malthusian arguments, positing for decades that resource scarcity would lead to greater international violence. So far, the scholarly research testing his claim has found little empirical support for the hypothesis.

#### More ev

Daniel W. Drezner 23, Professor of International Politics at the Fletcher School, author of Drezner's World, "Are we headed toward a 'polycrisis'? The buzzword of the moment, explained," Vox, 1/28/2023, https://www.vox.com/23572710/polycrisis-davos-history-climate-russia-ukraine-inflation

Predicting the unpredictable

The deeper flaw in the polycrisis logic is the presumption that one systemic crisis will inexorably lead to negative feedback effects that cause other systems to tip into crisis.

If this assumption does not hold, then the whole logic of a single polycrisis falls apart. To their credit, the Cascade Institute authors acknowledge that this might not happen, but they posit: “it seems more likely that causal interactions between systemic crises will worsen, rather than diminish, the overall emergent impacts.”

At first glance, this seems like a plausible assumption to make. Remember, however, that the proponents of a polycrisis also assert that the systems under stress are highly complex, leading to unpredictable cause-and-effect relationships. If that is true, then presuming that one systemic crisis would automatically exacerbate stresses in other systems seems premature at best and skewed at worst.

Indeed, over the last year there have been at least two examples of one systemic crisis actually lessening stress on another system.

China’s increasingly centralized autocracy generated a socioeconomic disaster in the form of “zero Covid” lockdowns. Xi Jinping kept that policy in place long after it made any sense, accidentally throttling China’s economy. The timing of China’s lockdown was fortuitous, however, as stagnant Chinese demand helped prevent an inflationary spiral from getting any worse. China’s exit from zero-Covid will likely also be countercyclical, jump-starting economic growth at a time when other regions tip into recession.

Another weird, fortuitous interaction has been the one between climate change and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. As Europe aided Ukraine and resisted Russia’s blatant, illegal actions, Russia retaliated by cutting off energy exports. Many were concerned that Russia’s counter-sanctions would make this winter extremely hard and expensive for Europe.

Climate change may have provided a weird geopolitical assist to Europe, however. The warming climate is likely connected to Europe’s extremely temperate fall and winter. That, in turn, has required less electricity for heating, leaving the continent with plenty of energy reserves to last the winter. Russia’s ability to wreak havoc on the European economy has been circumscribed.

None of this is to say that systemic crises cannot exacerbate each other. Just because a polycrisis has not happened yet does not mean one is not on the horizon. Just as one buys insurance to guard against low-probability, high-impact outcomes, policymakers and elements of civil society need to guard against worst-case scenarios.

As a term of art, however, “polycrisis” distracts more than it adds. It mostly seems like a device to make people care about the Really Bad Things that climate change can do, without turning people off by warning them yet again about the hazards of climate change.

#### Alternative

Mathis Wackernagel 24, Global Footprint Network founder, "The Polycrisis Paradox: A lens that limits," 11/26/2024, https://www.wackernagel.info/post/the-polycrisis-paradox-a-lens-that-limits

The polycrisis concept states the obvious. Yes, there are several crises happening simultaneously. Yet, there always have been. History is full of moments where different crises have intersected, such as wars, pandemics, economic collapses, and social unrest. Today’s experience may simply be another chapter in this ongoing saga. The crises are real, but the fact that they are happening at the same time isn’t particularly novel.

Maybe the current “polycrisis” is unprecedented in geographic scale, its creeping, decades long expansion, its global existential threat, or the novelty of technologies from AI to persistent pollutants and nuclear bombs. Yet, there has also been stickiness: for the last half century, there has not been much shift, for instance, in how humanity powers itself, in the resource dependence of its ever-expanding infrastructure and cities, or in the global income distribution.

But also, not everyone shares the view that we are stuck in such crises. For instance, the current US president-elect still advocate for fossil fuel expansion, explicitly using slogans like “drill, baby, drill,” even as hurricanes and wildfires—exacerbated by climate change—wreak havoc. There is no common understanding.

Perhaps most unhelpful about the polycrisis lens is that it globalizes problems, rather than painting them as context. Polycrisis thereby conjures the belief that only central control can counteract it. This undermines any sense of personal, community, or even country agency. When we’re told that everything is interlinked in an overwhelming web of complex global crises, it’s easy to feel powerless and paralyzed. It breeds fatalism and defeatism.

Would a polycrisis lens have benefited us in the past?

Historical examples like World War II may help us understand the limitations of the polycrisis lens. This was by any definition a polycrisis, with deep social tensions and resentments, within and among colonial empires. The tensions not only led to brutal battles and genocides, but also went hand in hand with widespread famine, poor healthcare, educational decline, persistent racism and discrimination, economic chaos. These crises were interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

Yet, even with this complexity, most people didn’t understand the war through a lens of “polycrisis.” Such a lens may not have been particularly helpful either. The primary focus emphasized the war effort, and people acted within that context. This suggests that while recognizing interconnected crises is useful, emphasizing core issues (like the war in the 1930s and 1940s or planetary overuse today) may provide a clearer sense of pathways, priority, and purpose. The polycrisis lens risks diffusing focus, complexifies opportunities to engage, and is making it harder to mobilize collective action.

Learning from the airline industry: A more constructive lens

What alternative lenses could be more productive? One area we might learn from is the airline industry. Aviation is complex and potentially dangerous, but the industry has established a culture of meticulous study and analysis of breakdowns. And what makes it unique and transformative: they study errors (mostly) without assigning blame. When a plane crash or near-catastrophe occurs, the industry’s primary focus is on understanding what exactly happened, what factors contributed, and thereby learning how to prevent it from happening again. Of course, sadness and rooting out the source of the breakdown are involved, but the main focus is the objective of understanding so that future catastrophes will be prevented. This emphasis on problem-solving, rather than on despair or blame, could serve as a useful model for addressing current crises.

In this context, we could imagine a shift in the way we discuss our global challenges. Rather than focusing on the enormity of the problems we face, we could acknowledge the major forces at play and spend more time on discussing potential responses. “What’s your response? What’s mine? Where can we synergize?” These are the types of questions that invite participation and foster a sense of agency. When people feel like they have a say, and that their action contributes also to their own resilience, they are far more likely to engage actively and positively.

From crisis to thrill: Finding joy together in our response

An even more radical departure from the polycrisis mindset would be to reframe the way we think about crisis altogether. Instead of feeling crushed by the weight of multiple, interlinked disasters, what if we just acknowledged the predictable future and found exhilaration or at least entertainment in experimenting with new possibilities and intriguing responses to ready ourselves? What if, instead of viewing crises as something overwhelming to fear, we acknowledge what is and use this context as opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and even adventure?

There is a long history of human beings finding meaning and fulfillment in responding to challenges. In the face of the predictable future of more climate change and resource constraints, for example, there is tremendous potential for communities to come together, for new friendships and alliances to form, and for people to experience the satisfaction of working toward meaningful responses. There is even potential for excitement, for a sense of thrill, in trying something new—whether that’s building resilient infrastructure, rethinking energy systems, or creating new forms of social organization.

In short, the “polycrisis frame” may do more harm than good by overemphasizing complexity and reducing a sense of personal agency. We need alternative lenses that encourage exploration, jumping in, experimenting with responses, and through that find the joy of collaboration. Yes, it is helpful and necessary to be able to describe our context adequately. That’s the starting point, not the point of the inquiry. Recognizing context gives support to my personal question: “what is my response?”. This then automatically opens the door to “What’s possible when we work together?” In doing so, we can move beyond a sense of helplessness and embrace the opportunities along the way. In that journey, we might even find joy.

#### Cap K

Farwa Sial 23, Research Fellow at the University of Manchester in the UK, "Whose Polycrisis?" Developing Economics, 1/27/23, https://developingeconomics.org/2023/01/27/whose-polycrisis/

In spite of the current use of the term, the origins of the Polycrisis date further and can be more sparsely contextualised. However, there is no doubt that it has now become an important neologism for conventional western media and policy institutes, especially adopted by Bretton Woods Institutions, as well as other leading investors.

Civil society has also used this term as a neat summary, however, theirs is a critical response and is not interchangeable with how powerful International Financial Institutions (IFIs), policy think-tanks and investors use the term. In this sense, the instrumentalisation of this neologism, seems to have more value than its meaning, with the discernible possibility that any perceived political mileage of the Polycrisis, is a complete transformation away from its intellectual roots. Nonetheless, as an artefact, the intellectual roots and the political role of the Polycrisis merits an integrated analysis beyond its instrumentalisation.

A remarkable feature of liberal thought is the tendency towards identification of social phenomena through the selective elevation of their key distinguishing features, which are abstract enough to form ‘systems’ and neutral enough to subsume the inherent contradictions of capitalist development. Pandemics, climate breakdown, wars and global deflationary pressures are not mere externalities of the capitalist system but intrinsic to its operations- long predicted by a diverse group of thinkers. That these events converge in time is a political outcome, subject to planetary limits, not abstract systemisation, as the Polycrisis seems to imply.

Critical responses to the Polycrisis have pointed towards its disregard in accounting for the long and sustained crisis of the capitalist world order and a resort towards ‘brute empiricism’ to conceptualise things as they appear to be, rather than questioning what is occurring beneath mere appearances. Prima-facie accounts often seek to capture the zeitgeist in the endeavour to simplify things. However, there is a need to differentiate between simplification and reductionism. As a concept, the Polycrisis is simultaneously all-encompassing as well as abstract.

In an attempt to grasp both these aspects, this short blog starts with a focus on three messages of the Polycrisis: a) the qualitative nature of change, b) the drivers or causes of crises and c) the role of Bretton Woods Institutions in adopting the concept. In addition, the blog proposes an alternative way of understanding the contemporary crisis, which hinges on the decline of the western capitalist model, followed by some thoughts on multipolarity and geopolitics.

a) Understanding what has changed

The multifaceted ‘Polycrisis’ and its disparate manifestations convince us of something, which is qualitatively different, compared to previous crises. The nature of the disruption is hard to understand; on the one hand, Polycrisis is about disparate crises haunting the world, whilst on the other, it remains inexplicable why a single European war should trigger a global disruption of such magnitude. After all, if we are talking scale, since 2001 to date, the extremely expensive War on Terror ravaged entire countries, without any degree of comparable or even suggested global turbulence. For an Afghan, Yemeni or Haitian child aged 10 or so, the world has always been a continuum of so-called Polycrisis. Any turbulence in global capital and stock markets and commodity prices, would be a minor and irrelevant addendum to the ongoing dearth of access to life, in the majority of the non-Western world.

b) Poly perpetrators?

A key feature of the current crisis, which remains unaddressed by the Polycrisis concept are the substantive drivers of the crisis. While the Polycrisis is keen to explore the multiplicity and complexity of the current global order, the implicit causes of the seemingly conjectural crises appear as nebulous, automated and self-perpetuating. For example, the discussion paper by Lawrence et. al., describes a global Polycrisis as a situation when ‘crises in multiple global systems become causally entangled in ways that significantly degrade humanity’s prospects.’

This methodology is reminiscent of modelling, as in the natural sciences, such as in the discipline of physics. In fact, all definitions of the Polycrisis although focusing on systems, are seemingly bereft of any identifiable agency.

Citing causal entanglements in political decision making is a strange analysis, diminishing the role of the powerful and the hierarchy of geopolitics. In describing a situation, which is no longer under any implicit control, we remain not quite sure about any obvious poly-perpetrators.

Who are they and what is their precise role in all of this?

c) The Bretton Woods hijacking the crisis?

The Bretton Woods Institutions have effectively adopted the Polycrisis as an explanatory lens for the contemporary situation. The labelling of the crisis as too complex and multifaceted aligns with their on-going gospel of ad-hoc solutionism to political problems, and the linear mantra of debt-ridden liquidity for vulnerable countries.

The unwavering acceleration of private-sector led solutionism, may well be described as the availing of crisis as an opportunity. The coinage of the term Polycrisis unto itself had no substantial impact on the Bretton Woods Institutions’ conventional operations but rather, the term went solely to the further substantiation of their ongoing technocratic approach to poverty. The metanarrative of all official reports by these institutions builds on themes of complexity, multiple and uncontrollable drivers of impoverishments. This is also similar to a host of excuses used by financial investors, facing this seemingly unsolvable Polycrisis.

Alternative hypothesis

An alternative hypothesis of the current crises is the possibility that declining uni-polar world order does not necessarily equate to an elimination of imperial power and that the drivers of the current crisis are an essential outcome thereof. This hypothesis would suggest that we start our analysis from the crisis of the Western capitalist order and understand the recent implications of its global export.

1. Dynamics of declining uni-polar world order –entrenching extraction.

The pandemic was revelationary in highlighting the structural weaknesses of key developed economies in the West; stimulus packages to ameliorate the domestic impact of the pandemic were either inadequate and/ or profiteering at the expense of populations. In the run-up to the emergence of the Polycrisis narrative, in nearly every instance, the domestic private sector of most developed economies has consistently been bailed out disproportionately, as opposed to their citizenries. To remedy this decline, Western economies have attempted to crudely pastiche China’s Belt Road Initiative (BRI) and sought to bandwagon on the drive towards external infrastructure connectivity, as a solution to their economic woes; a remedy which was both too little and too late (See Table 1).

While these various infrastructure projects seek to further subsidise opportunities for the Western domestic private-sector, they remain fully oblivious to the unwillingness or inability of Western developed economies to decisively address the monopolistic and monopsonistic mutations in the OECD rent-seeking banks and merchantry, which represent a structural malaise and economic malignance that very much has global consequences.

To summarise: in addition to the implementation of global connectivity projects, which subsidise the western private sector, the role of the corporate and financial sector also needs attention in driving of global inflation.

Two obvious examples on food and energy prices:

On food prices and global hunger: The trend of rising food prices, precedes the Ukraine invasion and in fact remains unhinged from the basics of demand and supply, raising the simple question of what is driving prices?

As investigated by Lighthouse Reports through freedom of information requests, and detailed by journalists at The Wire, the transformation of food into an asset-class is led by the concerted speculative practices of international banks. As countries in the South are slowly being engulfed by hunger, the profiteering investors originating in the Global North remain without accountability.

On energy prices: The logical inference to be drawn from the Polycrisis is a case against poly-opportunists, where the vacuum resultant of the decline of traditional hegemons, is rapidly capacitated by the emergence of previously impassive, globally competitive, private-sector actors.

When the outcome of the prompt of a global energy crisis, is solely rampant profiteering and market abuses perpetrated a few energy companies, as identified even by the liberal bastion of President Biden in his vocal complaints about ‘war profiteering oil companies’, the case for regulatory and particularly fiscal intervention very certainly crystallises, yet remains very far from forthcoming.

How does the Polycrisis account for this crisis of western capitalism which accelerates both domestic and global extraction?

2. The world in the making: On multipolarity and geopolitics

From a global perspective we must also ponder why the emergence of multipolarity- (progressive or regressive) should equate to a Polycrisis?

An interesting development in the current US-China-Russia analysis, is the now compulsive suggestion that ‘geopolitics’ is an all-encompassing and defining feature of contemporary politics. That the Global South has been the site of proxy-war throughout modern history stands peripheral to this and so the Polycrisis posits war and peace, as an exclusively Western binary, which fails to acknowledge the states of perpetual crisis and war in many developing countries. This is important because wars entail sustaining the process of existing capitalist order as well as reorder.

Consider the selectivity and uni-polarity of the consensus on contemporary sanctions, which are immiserating ordinary people’s lives. The militarisation of finance may have taken a seemingly new and unique route with Biden’s misadventures in Ukraine but as the gross and perverse inequity of the global debt situation attests, this militarisation is historical, and even now remains an intrinsic part of US strategy in different regions such as Afghanistan and is in fact very far from novel.

The rise in contemporary attempts to circumvent the dollar in different iterations including swap lines and the implementation of long debated proposals for a common currency is not simply a moment of crisis for many countries- but an opportunity. The recent discussion on the contours of a New International Economic Order (NIEO), beyond a mere reformatory agenda and one which would inevitably be marked by a state of permanent insurrection speaks of a new world order which will remain in flux but also contains the possibility of monetary relief for developing countries through a new multilateralism. Whether we like it or not, a dispersal of power is not equivalent to chaos if it leads to opportunities for more levelling between states.

3. Roads which don’t lead to Davos

Janet Roitman’s book the Anti-Crisis, speculates on the multiplicities of crisis in a different way. Importantly, it outlines the role of the problematization of what is described as a crisis, particularly in order to pre-empt intervention. This is a helpful approach in mapping the alignment of the Polycrisis with the Western multilateral response – a lending bonanza fuelled by high interest rates and the paucity of aid coupled with the ascendency of World Economic Forum (WEF) as an exclusive corporate hub for the policy making of poverty amelioration. In a non-executive, non-treaty based Davos, as both the developed and non-developed world struggles to put food on the table, the incessant reference to the Polycrisis, seems to posit it as a vacuous catchall to describe all that impeding the elite’s vociferous demand for further financialisation.

Undoubtedly the current crisis is caused by the transformational role of financial and digital capitalism and the imminence of climate-change led human extinction. However, these are not anomalies to capitalism but part of its design, of which the consequences and spill-overs are unevenly distributed across the World. For example, even with its global permeation, as financial capitalism bereaves the working classes in the developed North, it continues to deepen extraction in the Global South, both actively and passively. Moreover, the global corporate takeover by big tech is not devoid of the footprint of digital colonialism. The consistency in the commodification of nature leading to the breaking-point of extinction, cannot rationally be separated from the general extractive activities of capital.

Unless the Polycrisis, seriously questions the drivers of power and finds ways of challenging them, it risks becoming yet another neoliberal policy buzzword.

#### Pessimism

Colm Murphy 24, Lecturer in British Politics at Queen Mary University of London, "The polycrisis diagnosis and its problems," The Politics of Polycrisis, edited by Patrick Diamond & Ania Skrzypek, Foundation for European Progressive Studies, 2024

Scary stuff, right? When one bundles these challenges together and narrates them in this way, the polycrisis can seem terrifying. It’s revealing that, when Tooze deploys the concept, he liberally uses words such as ‘disorientating’, ‘nerve-wracking’ and ‘precarious’, and has talked about polycrisis thinking as a kind of ‘therapy’ (Tooze, 2022; Tooze, 2023).

That might be important. In this chapter, I want to suggest that thinking in terms of a ‘polycrisis’ risks disabling the agency of progressives to transform the world around them. It is hard to argue that the analysis is too pessimistic, exactly. However, if progressives turn to ‘polycrisis’ thinking, they will have to rely on intellectual maps that are, fundamentally and inevitably, characterised by mazelike circularity and intimidating complexity. Using a map like that is not necessarily wise: it might be hard to work out where one is supposed to go.

There are a few reasons for this. Firstly, the ‘polycrisis’ is a description (albeit a formidably complex one) of a single moment of uncertainty, danger and disorder (the early 2020s). As such, it is not a ‘turning point’: there is no obvious way out, no clear ‘end point’, and nor is there a ‘root cause’ or ‘underlying logic’. In other words, there is no temporal directionality or causal primacy in ‘polycrisis’ thinking. The point that Tooze and polycrisis advocates seek to make is not just that historical change is complex and involves multiple factors operating on different timescales and interacting in a contingent way. That is always the case.2 Instead, they assert that it is not at all obvious, from our vantage point, what factors are driving our disorder, and which will define the future. There are simply too many problems, too much chaos (Tooze 2022c). Tooze comes close to implying that our moment is unprecedented in all modern history. There are, of course, strong grounds for rejecting a naïvely linear view of the ‘progress of history’. We remember the hubris of Western policymakers in the 1990s, who drank from the ‘end of history’ KoolAid. Nonetheless, polycrisis thinking is at the opposite extreme and it has disturbing implications for those engaged in actual politics. It gives a politician absolutely no idea of where to act or intervene to achieve lasting and positive change. Nor does it offer any historical parallels from which to draw cautious lessons. In the situation of a polycrisis, where should the progressive or social democrat apply special political pressure, devote more organisational resources, or focus policymaking efforts? By intellectual design, there is no answer to that question.

As a result, thinking of our moment as a polycrisis may end up promoting managerial and reactive governance over transformative and strategic governance. It is revealing that the term ‘polycrisis’ was adopted by Juncker, a veteran elite fixer, and that it is now described as ‘apt’ by the centrist US Democrat Lawrence Summers and bandied about at the World Economic Forum at Davos. Managers of the existing configuration of power and wealth in our societies find the concept of ‘polycrisis’ intellectually attractive because they recognise that the world-spirit of the 1990s (globalisation and liberal democracy) has stalled. But the polycrisis allows them to describe this breakdown without seriously addressing any of the structural inequalities or injustices embedded within the unipolar, market-liberal world of the recent past.

Critics of the term have noted this, such as Inderjeet Parmar (2023), who has called the concept a ‘liberal buzzword’. The perceptive and pugilistic American writer John Ganz has pinpointed the problem. While recognising its descriptive power, Ganz suggests that the word does not really conceptualise the problem in the way that social theory should: it is too baggy, too imprecise, and too shy of making analytical choices. As a result, he suggests that the ‘polycrisis’ frame fails to offer a progressive strategy, and instead only legitimises a politics of technocratic management. For Ganz, the polycrisis is the ‘Keynesianism of Despair’ (Ganz, 2023).

This is, one might add, a rather inopportune time for progressives to despair. In Europe, the Americas, south Asia and elsewhere, the authoritarian, illiberal right are on the march. They seem to have little compunction about asserting that some crises are more important, or more real, than others. They have diagnosed a select number of evils: migration, ‘wokeness’, the decline of ‘traditional values’ and the erosion of national sovereignty. In response, they advocate disturbing policy agendas, from the marginalisation of ethnic and religious minorities and the brutalisation of migrants to attacks on the free press, democratic institutions and the rule of law.

We do not need to ignore the gaping contradictions or the morally disgusting implications of their policies (Garland, 2023) to grasp that the stories they tell motivate their grassroots and help organise their elite behaviour. Crucially, these stories alight not on the complexity of the ‘polycrisis’ but rather on the simplicity of perfidy. Liberal elites in Brussels/London/Washington, they tell their prospective voters, have demeaned, deceived and betrayed you, and you should fight back. In this light, it is especially dangerous for progressives and social democrats to trap themselves in a position in which all they can do is talk about how difficult everything is. To respond to the threat of the far right, the liberal left will need to mobilise coalitions of support and enact tangible policy agendas, and that will require clear, directional thinking.

#### Word bad!

Bishoy L. Zaki 25, Department of Public Governance and Management, Ghent University, Belgium, "Beyond the Buzzword: Rethinking Polycrises in Public Policy and Administration Research," RHCPP, vol. 16, no. 2, 06/01/2025, https://doi.org/10.1002/rhc3.70015

Hence, despite headlining in a substantive amount of research and sparing a handful of contributions, the concept of polycrisesis approached in three main ways that are insufficient in the genuine analytical sense. First, being a tempting novel and catchy semantic label, the concept of is often casually employed to “re‐package” already existing analytical approaches in cases where the existence of polycrises might not be reliably ascertained. Thus, the concept has become gradually stretched, and in many cases unfittingly utilized (see Henig and Knight 2023;Zaki et al. 2024a). Second, polycrises are also often treated as exogenous contextual conditions that encapsulate policymaking and governance processes. This is without explicit reflection on how particular features of what constitutes a polycrisis influence such processes. For example, aspects such as the interaction between types of constituent crises, and their features such as conflicting social constructions, feedback loops and mechanisms, spillovers, speeds of accumulation and closure. Hence, in many cases, polycrises are fundamentally still approached as situations where concurrently occurring, yet primarily separate crisis events exert simultaneous pressure on policymaking and governance processes. This is however, without thoroughly addressing the cumulative and interconnected nature of constituent crises, or the emergent properties that result from their coexistence or intersections (i.e., what makes such situationsactual polycrises). Third, and as a result, despite their complex, dynamic, intricate and multi‐component nature, polycrises often feature in research as monolithic and static objects of blunt force trauma, inflicting pressure over policymaking where the narrative of “the polycrisis caused this or that” or “due to the polycrisis” is dominant (see e.g. critiques by Helleiner 2024; Zaki et al. 2024a).This is without the ability to neither disentangle varieties or configurations of polycrises, tracing how they contribute to par-ticular outcomes, nor trace – to an acceptable degree of confidence – how proclaimed polycrises outcomes manifest as a result of the interactions and spillovers therein. An issue that casts concerns over the validity of our attribution of policymaking and governance outcomes to polycrisis events.

#### Entrenches managerlaism

John Ganz 23, New York Times best-selling author, His work has appeared in the New York Times, Washington Post, New Republic, New Statesman and other publications, "Have you heard about 'the polycrisis,' yet?" Unpopular Front, 2/10/2023, https://www.unpopularfront.news/p/have-you-heard-about-the-polycrisis

I propose that the polycrisis is fundamentally a worldview of management and amelioration. It reflects the strains on the minds and abilities of technocrats like Juncker and the Davos-attending elite. Adam Tooze is a Keynesian and the polycrisis is the Keynesianism of Despair. Basically, one could summarize the Keynesian perspective as saying the following:

1) The inherent dynamics of civil society (i.e., capitalism) give rise to periodic social and economic crises;

2) These crises are highly dangerous, and can lead to a civilization-destroying event;

3) Fortunately, intelligent interventions by a state helmed by properly trained experts, equipped with a robust but flexible theoretical perspective unclouded by rigid ideology, can understand and manage them.

Keynes wrote during the Great Depression: “We have involved ourselves in a colossal muddle […a polycrisis?], having blundered in the control of a delicate machine, the working of which we do not understand.” Like the polycrisis, Keynes’s conception implied not only an objective interpretation of the world, but also a practical and subjective disposition, an attitude. Keynes wrote: “I am convinced that Great Britain and the United States, like-minded and acting together, could start the machine again within a reasonable time; if, that is to say, they were energised by a confident conviction as to what was wrong. For it is chiefly the lack of this conviction which to-day is paralysing the hands of authority on both sides of the Channel and of the Atlantic.” You can see how this would spiritually jibe with FDR’s instinctive belief that bold action and optimism were the remedy to the Depression.

The polycrisis seems to me to be Keynes without the courage of his convictions, namely the belief that an expert bureaucratic class could do it if they put their mind to it. For Tooze and Morin, bureaucrats can merely cope, and the interventions themselves will probably make things worse: “The more successful we are at coping, the more the tension builds,” Tooze writes. In fact, the idea is so relentlessly downbeat that Tooze basically says it was found in the garbage: “Not only does polycrisis describe a messy situation and register our surprise and dismay at the degree of the confusion. It is a concept that was itself found amongst the wreckage - in Jean Claude Juncker’s musings about the EU’s situation in 2015/6. It is a “found concept”, an idea “picked up” off the intellectual sidewalk and deposited in our conceptual carrier bag.”

I think the managerial and technocratic impetus of the underlying idea is worth stressing again. Tooze is particularly dismissive of attempts to divide the world into explicitly political oppositions like “democracy vs. authoritarianism.” As the sociologist of knowledge Karl Mannheim wrote: “The fundamental tendency of all bureaucratic thought is to turn all problems of politics into problems of administration.” The polycrisis conceives of the world as a set of problems to be addressed by central bankers and the like, but also expresses dismay and a lack of confidence in their abilities. In this sense, I sort of prefer it to some of Tooze’s critics, who just sunnily insist on the capacity of the professional planners to deal with the issues. In After Virtue, published in 1981 and written as the Keynesian consensus fell apart and the neoliberal era began, Alasdair MacIntyre described bureaucratic experts as “the central character of the modern social drama,” and their pretense to special competence as a form of play-acting. One could call this type of fellow the “spicy bureaucrat”: depicted in lots of late 20th century movies, he’s often a spy, or a fed, or an especially brilliant office worker; he’s full of ingenuity, gumption, self-confidence and savoir faire. But what Tooze is offering us here is the sad bureaucrat, perhaps something out of the world of John Le Carré. Another way to think about is as an intellectual correlate for the problem of office worker “burn out.”

I want to return for a moment to the Hegelese that Tooze used. Is the polycrisis a big-C Concept in the Hegelian sense, even of the “admittedly weak kind,” that Tooze wants it to be? For Hegel, a Concept provides a higher-order explanation, a whole that resolves parts of a situation that were only apparently contradictory until a broader understanding showed that they were actually part of a unified system. In this way, Concepts are said to sublate — simultaneously preserve and cancel, or “aufheben” — previous conceptions as their elements. We can say that the polycrisis fits this bill, in a sense, since it subordinates other ways of conceptualizing the world to a larger whole; on the other hand, this larger whole is not much more than a kind of Pandora’s box of difficult issues that are both intellectually and practically insoluble. The “polycrisis” does not really say, “here is the essential issue, of which I will show these others are just parts.” It seems like a philosophy of containers and containment barely able to cope.

The root of the German word for concept, begriff, means “grip,” or “handle.” Does polycrisis help us get a grip or handle on anything at all? (I mean this as a sincere question.) Also, I would ask: is it really of a qualitatively higher order than previous conceptions of post-history or post-modernism? Those also question the possibility of a single, overarching explanation of the world and talk about the exhaustion and frustration of our self-conceptions. So, what’s new here? To me, “the polycrisis” feels like a bit of a hedge, an idea careful not to say too much but also wanting to say everything at once, hesitant to make a confident series of predictions or interpretations that could make one look mistaken or even foolish. This is probably why it’s favored among the chastened and demoralized Davoisie. But, as Hegel once said, “The fear of error is error itself.” I think we still need a bolder vision.

#### Masking!

Edward Akong'o Oyugi 23, Professor, holds a PhD in Psychology and Paedagogy from the University of Cologne, "Capitalist Decolonization: A Metaphorical Stabilization of Capital System's Social Metabolic Disorder of a Civilization in Crisis," Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, 02/04/2023, https://www.pass.va/en/publications/studia-selecta/studia\_selecta\_10\_pass/oyugi.html

Most of the crises we witness today have always occurred before in one way or another. Neither are they necessarily a farcical repeat of what has been experienced in different parts of the world. But not necessarily in a chain of equivalence, conflating or aggregating in a concertina of crises in a coherent string that may reveal the historical path of a trajectory of events with the necessary internal consistency needed to disclose where we, as a society and peoples of the world, are coming from and which direction we are headed as actors in a specific social formation. In an ideological itinerary characterized by false consciousness, the poly-crisis comes close to resembling what Professor Danny Ralph of Cambridge’s Centre for Risk Studies refers to as the biblical famines, inter-community wars, pestilence, etc., all of which are assumed to occur without any contextual connection with the broader meta-narratives of the historical process in question.[5]

What has changed, and will continue to change in the foreseeable future, and with far-reaching implications for the transformation of historical necessity into a democratic reality, is the relentlessness with which these dystopian events have been hitting us afresh with an intensifying frequency and unrelenting severity. Those who, for one reason or another, have gotten rid of these words from the staple of their vocabulary and ideological orthodoxy might delude themselves that the time will come when they will fix the problem once and for all and possibly get back to normal. The fact of the matter, however, is that the drive for wars (proxy or otherwise),[6] carefree attitude towards economic vulnerability to ecological calamities, widespread prebendalism, the callous proclivity towards social upheavals, and the itchy propensity toward territorial conquests equate easily to political-economic or social-cultural domination of other nations and peoples; a good part of it caught under the virulent grip of the geo-political spell of a Thucydides’ trap.[7] It also amounts to the predictable piling up of several but interlocked predicaments of capitalism that are germane to and benefit capitalist virtues of individualistic disorder, anchored firmly on the principle of utility that makes both the natural world and social sphere cast away their emotional brilliance and, by that same token, exacerbate the metabolic rift that Marx had eloquently written about (more than four centuries ago) with the remarkable insights of a peerless telepathist. Under the circumstances, even mother nature, like every being in the social sphere, can only defend its dear existence, leave alone that of the others, before the tendentious court of capital. And that is the tragedy of our times, which has far-reaching implications for peace in a world teetering at the brink of a social catastrophe.

The economically advanced countries of the North that had been deluding themselves that, by dint of the Westphalian accord[8] nearly seven centuries ago, they had, with peremptory finality, overcome the historical obstacles of the national question (as manifestations of neo-liberal capitalism in crisis), have had to deal with a rude shock that, with all the delusion of the orthodoxy in respect to the national-democratic foundation of sovereignty of the post-

The Westphalian nation-state, having been a general historical treasury of democratic consciousness and a revolutionary arsenal for the struggle to consolidate the national democratic gains, they have not been able to deal effectively with the race, culture, language, and identity-political questions wrought by neo-liberal globalization. In the cards are questions of the mistreatment of refugees seeking dignified accommodation in the global Northern societies, with the potential risk of turning out to be egregious collateral victims of a dysfunctional liberal multi-culturalism in which the incredible mobility of capital is grotesquely poised against geographically chained labor – with geo-political barricades erected between the capital saturated/concentrated North and capital-anemic/fleeing South within a neo-liberal framework in which capital is getting used to reproducing itself outside the typical labor market but in a labor-hostile environment, the capital-infested and speculative apparition of finance capital.

So what the hell is a poly-crisis? The quick and unambiguous answer is that it is the turgid conflation of diverse systemic shocks that arise from and signal the end of the long historical trajectory of capitalism as an ideological framework of organizing society based on class conflicts. In doing so, it has produced imperialism, occasioned slavery, begotten colonialism, anticipated the inevitability of decolonization, and, at the same time, spared no energy neutralizing the national-democratic effects of decolonization through the neo-colonial diversion of national liberation energies into social-democratic despair under the intense pressure of neo-liberal globalism. And in the process, it has generated a series of crises that have, in turn, triggered the agony of the prevalence of abject poverty, inequality, and widespread precarity worldwide. It is the crisis of capitalism masquerading as simple development policy failures arising from governmental incompetence and systemic failure of neo-liberal capitalism. Yet it is not just an economic and political crisis. It is, in fact, a crisis of the philosophical foundation of social science which has been reluctant to call the crisis by its proper name and not resort to a slew of diversionary monikers. The question we need to pose is: how can such a periodic dance with disaster be allowed to reach a juncture of such great danger?

It has been convenient for apologists of status-quo neo-liberal capitalist order to paper over such connections as it precariously saves the agony of dealing with the existential challenges of the looming alternatives to and mutations of capitalism. Such obscure jargons, like overlapping emergencies, ecological crises, cost-of-living crises, etc., are invoked conveniently – and rightly so – to describe and give a name to the complexity of the situation, the ambiguity of the human condition, and the misapprehension of their apocryphal provenance. Yet, they serve, with or without intention, to conceal the culprit, namely the totality of capitalist social relations and the nearly impenetrable social-metabolic Geist of capital. Even in situations deemed to have overcome the obvious historical maladies of capitalism and social sectors considered to be immunized against the social-metabolic malignity of capital, including the spiritual sector where morbid fundamentalism rains occult violence on the secular and ecumenical populations.

### AT: PIKs Bad---2NC

#### Our interp is that the aff is responsible for defending both the plan and their justifications for it---the neg must disagree with one or both.

#### This is best---it forces the aff to build well-defended 1ACs that account for the justifications they’ve used---all of our framework arguments prove their interpretation inculcates a limited and politically fatal vision of politics that doesn’t critically interrogate the frames that seem reasonable at the outset.

#### And it teaches nuanced advocacy---letting debaters strategically agree with parts of the 1AC is essential to teaching us to parse through arguments and find the weakest points of the aff---the reason debaters can get desensitized to the real world is that we’re taught to constantly think in hyperbolic and exaggerated terms, which is a problem with the advantages we choose, not the plans---we should take time to think through the frames we’ve used to understand why policies are good!

#### And, their interpretation creates shallow debates because the aff is incentivized to write lazy and vague plans to skirt neg offense, since the neg is limited to the plan as a point of clash---it’s a no-cost option because nobody votes on vagueness and it’s empirically proven by people reading the same vague single-payer plan the entire year.

#### Our interp solves their offense---we can’t PIK out of random words in the 1AC---our interp forces the neg to disagree with huge chunks of the 1AC---their interpretation is more arbitrary because it pigeonholes the neg into refuting one sentence instead of allowing more nuanced disagreement

#### Their fairness offense is tautological---the reason their offense stems from the plan is because they decided it did, not because it’s some intrinsic condition for debate---voting negative forces the aff to write more comprehensive and better-defended 1ACs, and you should punish them for being lazy 1AC writers who can’t defend the reasons for their actions---not being able to offensively defend why you think the plan is a good idea isn’t a reason to restrict the neg, it’s a reason they’re bad advocates

#### You should have a high threshold for aff complaining---they set the terms for the debate and can choose whatever justifications they want---not having a defense of those justifications

### Reps First

#### Reps come first!!

Maggie Fitzgerald 22, Assistant Professor in Political Studies at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, "Care and the Pluriverse: Rethinking Global Ethics," Bristol University Press, 2022, ISBN 978-1-5292-2011-7

Given this, I suggest that the relation between ontology and epistemology, as explicated earlier, is even more primary from a political ontological perspective. On the one hand, it is through acts of worlding that we not only enact reality but also that we come to know reality. On the other hand, the frames we use to validate how we know reality likewise construct that reality. For this reason, this book suggests that the understanding of ontology implicit in the concept of political ontology may therefore be better captured by the term onto-epistemology, as it prioritizes the co-constitutive relationship between how we see and understand the world and the ways in which we claim authority for that particular understanding of the world. Onto-epistemology emphasizes the indivisibility of these two moves: seeing the world in a particular way cannot be separated from the framing used to claim validity for that world, nor can the framework used to validate a world view be separated from broader acts and practices which bring worlds – and ergo our understandings of worlds – into existence. The framework used to validate a world view is, itself, an enactment of worlds, and the world it enacts simultaneously constitutes the framework for validating said world. Throughout this book, the term onto-epistemology1 (instead of just ontology) is therefore used interchangeably with ‘worlds’; a world is defined according to a particular co-constitutive and continually enacted ontology and epistemology and can thus be conceived of as such.

#### Bracketing off political utility because of the plan’s supposed desirability coopts scholarly production and implodes its capacity to respond to existential threats

Jones 9 – Lee Jones, Lecturer in International Politics in the School of Politics and International Relations at Queen Mary, University of London, former Rose Research Fellow in International Relations at Lady Margaret Hall at Oxford University, holds an MPhil and DPhil from Oxford University, [“International Relations Scholarship and the Tyranny of Policy Relevance,” Journal of Critical Globalisation Studies, Volume 1, Issue 1, p. 127-130]

Having conceded where Nye has a point, let’s now consider the ways in which he may simply be wrong. His assumption is that the academic should be, needs to be, policy-relevant. As indicated above, this can be a very pernicious assumption. As an invitation to academics to contribute to discussions about the direction of society and policy, no one could reasonably object: those who wished to contribute could do so, while others could be left to investigate topics of perhaps dubious immediate ‘relevance’ that nonetheless enrich human understanding and thus contribute to the accumulation of knowledge and general social progress (and, quite probably, to those scholars’ research communities and their students). As an imperative, however, it creates all sorts of distortions that are injurious to academic freedom. It encourages academics to study certain things, in certain ways, with certain outcomes and certain ways of disseminating one’s findings. This ‘encouragement’ is [end page 127] more or less coercive, backed as it is by the allure of large research grants which advance one’s institution and personal career, versus the threat of a fate as an entirely marginal scholar incapable of attracting research funding—a nowadays a standard criteria for academic employment and promotion.

Furthermore, those funding ‘policy-relevant’ research already have predefined notions of what is ‘relevant’. This means both that academics risk being drawn into policy-based evidence-making, rather than its much-vaunted opposite, and that academics will tend to be selected by the policy world based on whether they will reflect, endorse and legitimise the overall interests and ideologies that underpin the prevailing order.

Consider the examples Nye gives as leading examples of policy-relevant scholars: Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski, both of whom served as National Security Advisers (under Nixon and Carter respectively), while Kissinger also went on to become Secretary of State (under Nixon and Ford). Kissinger, as is now widely known, is a war criminal who does not travel very much outside the USA for fear of being arrested à la General Pinochet (Hitchens, 2001). Brzezinski has not yet been subject to the same scrutiny and even popped up to advise Obama recently, but can hardly be regarded as a particularly progressive individual. Under his watch, after Vietnam overthrew the genocidal Khmer Rouge in 1978, Washington sent tens of millions of dollars to help them regroup and rearm on Thai soil as a proxy force against Hanoi (Peou, 2000, p. 143). Clearly, a rejection of US imperialism was not part of whatever Kissinger and Brzezinski added to the policy mix.

In addition to them, Nye says that of the top twenty-five most influential scholars as identified by a recent survey, only three have served in policy circles (Jordan et al, 2009). This apparently referred to himself (ranked sixth), Samuel Huntington (eighth), and John Ikenberry (twenty-fourth).2 Huntington, despite his reputation for iconoclasm, never strayed far from reflecting elite concerns and prejudices (Jones, 2009). Nye and Ikenberry, despite their more ‘liberal’ credentials, have built their careers around the project of institutionalising, preserving and extending American hegemony. This concern in Nye’s work spans from After Hegemony (1984), his book co-authored with Robert Keohane (rated first most influential), which explicitly sought to maintain US power through institutional means, through cheer-leading post-Cold War US hegemony in Bound to Lead (1990), to his exhortations for Washington to regain its battered post-Iraq standing in Soft Power: The Means to Succeed in International Politics (2004). Ikenberry, who was a State Department advisor in 2003-04, has a very similar trajectory. He only criticised the Bush administration’s ‘imperial ambition’ on the pragmatic grounds that empire was not attainable, not that it was undesirable, and he is currently engaged in a Nye-esque project proposing ways to bolster the US-led ‘liberal’ order. [end page 128] These scholars’ commitment to the continued ‘benign’ dominance of US values, capital and power overrides any superficial dissimilarities occasioned by their personal ‘conservative’ or ‘liberal’ predilections. It is this that qualifies them to act as advisers to the modern-day ‘prince’; genuinely critical voices are unlikely to ever hear the call to serve. The idea of, say, Noam Chomsky as Assistant Secretary of State is simply absurd.

At stake here is the fundamental distinction between ‘problem-solving’ and ‘critical’ theory, which Robert Cox introduced in a famous article in 1981. Cox argued that theory, despite being presented as a neutral analytical tool, was ‘always for someone and for some purpose’. Problem-solving theories ultimately endorsed the prevailing system by generating suggestions as to how the system could be run more smoothly. Critical theories, by contrast, seek to explain why the system exists in the first place and what could be done to transform it. What unifies Nye, Ikenberry, Huntington, Brzezinski and Kissinger (along with the majority of IR scholars) is their problem-solving approach. Naturally, policy-makers want academics to be problem-solvers, since policies seek precisely to—well, solve problems. But this does not necessarily mean that this should be the function of the academy.

Indeed, the tyranny of ‘policy relevance’ achieves its most destructive form when it becomes so dominant that it imperils the space the academy is supposed to provide to allow scholars to think about the foundations of prevailing orders in a critical, even hostile, fashion. Taking clear inspiration from Marx, Cox produced pathbreaking work showing how different social orders, corresponding to different modes of production, generated different world orders, and looked for contradictions within the existing orders to see how the world might be changing.1 Marxist theories of world order are unlikely to be seen as very ‘policy relevant’ by capitalist elites (despite the fact that, where Marxist theory is good, it is not only ‘critical’ but also potentially ‘problem-solving’, a possibility that Cox overlooked). Does this mean that such inquiry should be replaced by government-funded policy wonkery? Absolutely not, especially when we consider the horrors that entails. At one recent conference, for instance, a Kings College London team which had won a gargantuan sum of money from the government to study civil contingency plans in the event of terrorist attacks presented their ‘research outputs’. They suggested a raft of measures to securitise everyday life, including developing clearly sign-posted escape routes from London to enable citizens to flee the capital. There are always plenty of academics who are willing to turn their hand to repressive, official agendas. There are some who produce fine problem-solving work who ought to disseminate their ideas much more widely, beyond the narrow confines of academia. There are far fewer who are genuinely [end page 129] critical. The political economy of research funding combines with the tyranny of ‘policy relevance’ to entrench a hierarchy topped by tame academics.

‘Policy relevance’, then, is a double-edged sword. No one would wish to describe their work as ‘irrelevant’, so the key question, as always, is ‘relevant to whom?’ Relevance to one’s research community, students, and so on, ought to be more than enough justification for academic freedom, provided that scholars shoulder their responsibilities to teach and to communicate their subjects to society at large, and thus repay something to the society that supports them. But beyond that, we also need to fully respect work that will never be ‘policy-relevant’, because it refuses to swallow fashionable concerns or toe the line on government agendas. Truly critical voices are worth more to the progress of human civilisation than ten thousand Deputy Undersecretaries of State for Security Assistance, Science, and Technology.

#### Representations must precede policy discussion

Neta Crawford 2, Ph.D. MA MIT, BA Brown, Professor of Political Science at Boston University, “Argument and Change in World Politics,” 2002 p. 19-21

Coherent arguments are unlikely to take place unless and until actors, at least on some level, agree on what they are arguing about. The at least temporary resolution of meta-arguments- regarding the nature of the good (the content of prescriptive norms); what is out there, the way we know the world, how we decide between competing beliefs (ontology and epistemology); and the nature of the situation at hand( the proper frame or representation)- must occur before specific arguments that could lead to decision and action may take place. Meta-arguments over epistemology and ontology, relatively rare, occur in instances where there is a fundamental clash between belief systems and not simply a debate within a belief system. Such arguments over the nature of the world and how we come to know it are particularly rare in politics though they are more frequent in religion and science. Meta-arguments over the “good” are contests over what it is good and right to do, and even how we know the good and the right. They are about the nature of the good, specifically, defining the qualities of “good” so that we know good when we see it and do it. Ethical arguments are about how to do good in a particular situation. More common are meta-arguments over representations or frames- about how we out to understand a particular situation. Sometimes actors agree on how they see a situation. More often there are different possible interpretations. Thomas Homer-Dixon and Roger karapin suggest, “Argument and debate occur when people try to gain acceptance for their interpretation of the world”. For example, “is the war defensive or aggressive?”. Defining and controlling representations and images, or the frame, affects whether one thinks there is an issue at stake and whether a particular argument applies to the case. An actor fighting a defensive war is within international law; an aggressor may legitimately be subject to sanctions. Framing and reframing involve mimesis or putting forward representations of what is going on. In mimetic meta-arguments, actors who are struggling to characterize or frame the situation accomplish their ends by drawing vivid pictures of the “reality” through exaggeration, analogy, or differentiation. Representations of a situation do not re-produce accurately so much as they creatively re-present situations in a way that makes sense. “mimesis is a metaphoric or ‘iconic argumentation of the real.’ Imitating not the effectivity of events but their logical structure and meaning.” Certain features are emphasized and others de-emphasized or completely ignored as their situation is recharacterized or reframed. Representation thus becomes a “constraint on reasoning in that it limits understanding to a specific organization of conceptual knowledge.” The dominant representation delimits which arguments will be considered legitimate, framing how actors see possibities. As Roxanne Doty argues, “the possibility of practices presupposes the ability of an agent to imagine certain courses of action. Certain background meanings, kinds of social actors and relationships, must already be in place.” If, as Donald Sylvan and Stuart Thorson argue, “politics involves the selective privileging of representations, “it may not matter whether one representation or another is true or not. Emphasizing whether frames articulate accurate or inaccurate perceptions misses the rhetorical import of representation- how frames affect what is seen or not seen, and subsequent choices. Meta-arguments over representation are thus crucial elements of political argument because an actor’s arguments about what to do will be more persuasive if their characterization or framing of the situation holds sway. But, as Rodger Payne suggests, “No frame is an omnipotent persuasive tool that can be decisively wielded by norm entrepreneurs without serious political wrangling.” Hence framing is a meta-argument.