# Αντί Επιλόγου
# Coordinated polysolutions for global polycrises

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## The polycrisis era

But first, what makes a crisis... a polycrisis? Where does these words come from?

Journalist Trevor Timpson wrote: The Greek verb krino meant "judge or decide", and from it came the noun krites that means "judges" - from which we get critic, and kriterion, aka "a test to judge by". The related word "krisis" signified the preference of one alternative over another.

A crisis is usually a point of uncertainty before events move on, a transitional phase leading to something. Think of dipoles such as war or peace, illness or recovery, fortune or ruin, the rise or fall of a government.
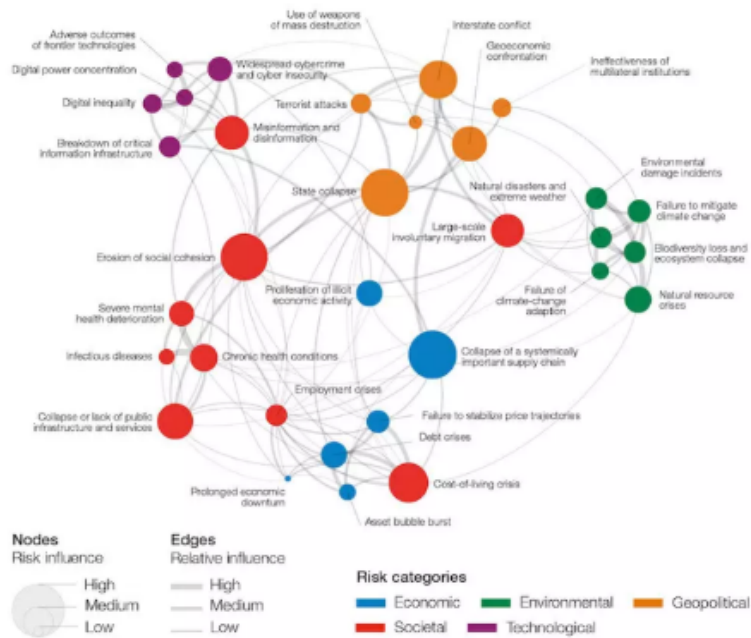
Jean-Claude Juncker, ex-President of the European Commission, used in his 2016 speech the Greek word "polycrisis" to invoke the overlapping challenges facing the European Union, such as the monetary and energy crises, the refugees and migrants influx, the rise of populism and Brexit.

The polycrisis emerged stronger as a global phenomenon in 2022-2023. Dozens of environmental, social, technological, and economic stressors are interacting with increasing velocity. Their combined impact is causing unpredictable future shocks of greater intensity. Most experts think it is something new in terms of the number and intensity of intersecting forces and the chaos they are creating.

According to historian Adam Tooze "A polycrisis is not just a situation where you face multiple crises. It is a situation...where the whole is even more dangerous than the sum of the parts."



The World Economic Forum, Global Risks Report 2023, uses the term "polycrisis" to describe how "present and future risks can also interact with each other to form a...cluster of related global risks with compounding effects, such that the overall impact exceeds the sum of each part."

The main interconnected stressors/threats are **Environmental** (i.a. climate crisis, plastics pollution, ocean warming), **Social** (i.a. population growth, resource scarcity, terrorism), **Financial & Economic** (i.a. inflation, global debt, unsustainable economic growth), and **Technological** (i.a. uncontrolled technologies, cyber threats, electromagnetic frequency pollution).

In Nouriel Roubini book, entitled [Megathreats](), in addition to the traditional ones, such as economic, monetary, and financial risks, it also deals with political, geopolitical, environmental, health, technological, trade, and globalization-related ones. Because we live in an integrated world in which economics interact with politics and geopolitics, and vice versa. Of course, technology has massive economic and even social and political implications.

Each one of these stressors/threats affects the other and is affected back. Some people now call it the term "polycrisis" as opposed to "megathreat." We have a bunch of risks and threats, and they are all interconnected with each other.

The polycrisis looks and feels different everywhere. It does not have a single name or explanation. Biologists speak of "the 6th great extinction". Politicians describe "cascading crises". In Latin America it's called "eco-social collapse". The French speak of "collapsologie". Others call it "the Great Unraveling", "the Great Turning", "the Great Simplification" or "the end of the world as we know it."

Another aspect of the human mind that hinders crisis management is that we tend to think that bad things only happen to others, so when they do happen to us, we have a hard time believing it. "Why did this happen to me?", "Why was I so unlucky?" we ask ourselves.

Today, every crisis, even if it's taking place on the other side of the globe, has a direct effect on us. Just like the butterfly effect in the chaos theory, a small change in one state can result in large differences in a later state. Thus, we need to pay attention more to what's going on beyond the region we live in, beyond our borders, and our continents. We have the capacity to anticipate and prepare for a crisis, but for that we need to truly grasp what globalisation is all about.

We live in a globalised and interconnected world, and, as a consequence, we have to face multiple challenges at the same time. We can't escape the polycrisis – simply put, it is life as we know it in these times. We can seek to reduce the impacts of these intersecting crises and develop more positive outcomes. Whatever comes, we inevitably need to navigate it.

**We need a Polysolution to fix a Polycrisis: Taking a More Integrated and Coordinated Approach to Solving the Crises**

Navigating the world of intrinsically linked polycrises demand a polysolution:

1. **Interlinked Threats Require a Coordinated Solution**: Empathy, adaptability and resilience are the keywords

The lack of coordination and complementarity is a huge problem given the severity and urgency of the crises. The past two years tested people's humanity as well as adaptability and resilience capacities. As new information was coming in every day, rules changed quickly; this required individuals and organisations alike to adapt accordingly. Here, open, transparent and constant communication by the health authorities and governing bodies was key. There was little to no time to reflect and assess; societies, governments and companies, first and foremost, focused on solidarity, flexibility and acting fast. Yet another fascinating aspect of the crisis is how every country responded to the crisis. It showed governments have a mission to take care of their citizens, even low-income countries. In fact, the discussions during these harrowing times revolved mostly around threats to society, inequality, the state of health systems, and the importance of empathy; most societies decided to choose the health of their population over the economy.

2. **Global Goals Share a Common Approach**: The motto "Together we are stronger" is true

Another lesson we can draw from the crises is that we can find strength in numbers and in alliances. extraordinary situations call for extraordinary measures. For small countries, membership in larger alliances proved to be essential. The EU was adamant about the fact that "every man for himself" wouldn't work when dealing with the COVID-19 crisis; Member States had to navigate it together. In the aftermath of the lockdown, it's now clearer than ever that we can't ignore our neighbouring countries.

Member States also came together under the EU umbrella to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic. With a multinational approach, the European Commission used existing crisis management elements, which were put in place from previous crises, so that Member States could allocate more funding to companies to avoid their bankruptcy.

3. **Fixing what we can control**: While Linkages Exist, the Frameworks Are Siloed

Multiple interlinked global emergencies have been unfolding simultaneously. Crises, as the COVID-19 pandemic, showed us the need to focus on what we can control and fix things that are technically complex, but don't present wicked trade-offs. By fixing them now, we can better prepare ourselves for future crises.

Sometimes we easily discard or ignore what we think will no longer serve us. But the reality is that we don't know what we don't know. Incomplete projects can make a comeback at a later stage, and that's the reason of not throwning away our hard work.

4. **Playing Catch Up in a Race Against the Clock**: Taking lessons from the past seriously… but not too much

In a nutshell, the issue isn't so much to balance the future and the present, but to actually dissolve the future into the present. We have finite financial resources, time, and political will to address multiple, interlinked crises that present existential threats to life on earth. We must not forget what we have learnt from past events. Nevertheless, we should not mix up old and new challenges either. Instead, we should reflect on the old wisdoms and how they can be applied into the present, while taking into account the uniqueness of the current situation.

The interconnectedness of the world also means interconnectedness of crises and that's part of the new normal. We live in a time of "polycrisis", where moving from one state of emergency to another isn't enough. It's also true that we can't solve the world's problems right away and at the same time — we must pick our battles and tackle them step by step.

In a nutshell, the issue isn't so much to balance the future and the present, but to actually dissolve the future into the present. Solving today's problems, or trying to, requires a reconciliation of future goals and present imperatives.

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**"How to solve a polycrisis": A reply by the Copilot AI agent**

When facing a polycrisis, consider these strategic approaches:

1. **Holistic Perspective**: Rather than tackling each crisis in isolation, adopt a holistic view. Understand how crises interact and identify common underlying factors.
2. **Systems Thinking**: Analyze the systems architecture that contributes to the crises. Address root causes and interconnectedness, not just surface-level events.
3. **Leverage Points**: Identify high-leverage intervention points. These are areas where a single action can have a significant impact across multiple crises.
4. **Multi-Objective Solutions**: Seek solutions that address several crises simultaneously. A well-formulated approach might do multiple good things at once.

Remember, solving a polycrisis requires creativity, collaboration, and a willingness to think beyond traditional boundaries.