

Why Even Good Intentions Are Failing Global Policy



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Across the world, leaders are acting under the pressure of constant crisis. Governments announce emergency measures, international summits follow one another in quick succession, and policy language is saturated with words such as resilience, security, sustainability, and stability. The intention behind these efforts is clear: to respond responsibly to a world that appears increasingly unstable.

Yet the instability persists

Conflicts continue without resolution. Climate commitments expand even as ecological damage accelerates. Economic interventions stabilize markets while leaving large populations insecure. Trust in institutions declines across political systems. Public discourse grows more polarized, less patient, and increasingly brittle. This is not because leaders or institutions lack concern. Many are working harder than ever. It is precisely this combination of effort and failure that makes the present moment so troubling. It raises a question that global policy rarely confronts directly: what if the problem is not the absence of good intentions, but the ground from which those intentions are translated into action?

We are living in a state of permanent emergency. Crises no longer arrive sequentially. Geopolitical tensions, ecological breakdown, economic uncertainty, technological disruption, and social fragmentation now unfold simultaneously.

Policymakers operate under constant pressure, limited time, and intense scrutiny. In such conditions, urgency becomes the dominant logic of governance.

Urgency demands action quickly, visibly, and decisively. Delay is treated as irresponsibility. Reflection appears as weakness. Decisions must be announced even when understanding is incomplete. Good intentions provide moral justification for this speed. Acting feels necessary, even when clarity is lacking. But speed carries a cost. Under sustained pressure, perception narrows. Decision-makers rely on familiar approaches, established frameworks, and inherited assumptions. Past solutions are applied to new conditions because they are readily available. Complexity is reduced to enable coordination and control. Very different crises are handled through similar responses, not because they share the same causes, but because institutional perception has become constrained.

Modern governance is highly capable of fixing problems. Policies regulate behaviour, incentives are adjusted, rules are enforced, and outcomes are measured. Systems are reorganised to improve efficiency. Yet fixing is not the same as understanding. Many of today's crises are not primarily technical. They are relational, psychological, and cultural. They involve fear, identity, mistrust, and a loss of meaning—dimensions that resist purely instrumental solutions. When policy operates only at the level of systems and outcomes, without examining how perception shapes those systems,

interventions remain partial. Symptoms are managed while deeper causes persist. In some cases, solutions intensify the very dynamics they were meant to resolve.

Policy is often presented as neutral and rational. In practice, it is shaped by identification. States act from national interest, institutions from organisational survival, and leaders from the pressure to maintain authority and control. These motivations are not exceptional. They are constitutive. Institutions, by their very nature, depend on continuity of mandate, clarity of role, and preservation of authority. Identification is not a deviation from institutional functioning. It is its operating condition.

This has a critical implication. Institutions cannot voluntarily abandon identification without ceasing to function as institutions. Asking them to act without identity, interest, or continuity is not reform; it is dissolution. As a result, institutions inevitably translate every crisis into terms they can recognise and manage. What cannot be absorbed into existing structures is postponed, externalised, or framed as unrealistic.

Identification divides the world into interests that must be protected and others that can be compromised. It legitimises harm when it is committed in the name of security, growth, or stability. Within this field, laws and values can operate only in a limited way. Laws restrain behaviour temporarily. Values regulate conduct selectively. Ethics become conditional. They manage consequences without touching the source.

This is why values so often lose their force. Compassion narrows to those within moral or political boundaries. Justice becomes positional. Ethics turn procedural. Corruption does not always appear as a violation of values. It often appears as their continuation in distorted form, where protecting the institution, the programme, or the national interest takes precedence over seeing what is actually happening.

Temporary order produced by such mechanisms is not order. It is containment. Ceasefires, emergency regulations, stabilization packages, and short-term political settlements create the appearance of control. Markets calm. Violence subsides. Institutions regain balance. But this order is fragile because it is imposed rather than understood. It holds only as long as pressure is maintained. When attention shifts or authority weakens, the same disorder resurfaces, often with greater intensity.

This pattern repeats across global systems. Stability is achieved, celebrated, and then lost. Disorder is postponed, not ended.



Reform plays a central role in sustaining this cycle. Reform reassures publics that problems are being addressed. It restores legitimacy to institutions under strain. It renews faith in governance without questioning its psychological foundation. Each reform promises correction while quietly reaffirming the authority of the reformer. In this way, reform does not interrupt fragmentation; it modernizes it. It updates language, revises procedures, and expands scope while leaving the centre intact. Reform fatigue emerges not because change is resisted, but because change does not reach the root.

In response to cascading crises, policy discourse has also grown increasingly sophisticated. Systems thinking, complexity theory, adaptive governance, resilience frameworks, ethical charters, and moral codes now dominate global conversations. Each offers a broader view, a richer vocabulary of interdependence, and a promise of holistic understanding. Yet despite this conceptual expansion, the underlying movement of disorder continues. These approaches refine thought, but they do not interrupt it. They offer better maps, but they do not question the mapper.

The same centre remains intact. It is the one who analyses, optimises, intervenes, and corrects. Whether operating through morality or strategy, values or models, this centre continues to act from identification, memory, and fear. Thought becomes more inclusive, more systemic, and more refined. Fragmentation persists because the source of fragmentation remains untouched. Collective intelligence does not resolve this. Aggregating perspectives does not dissolve division. Multiple centres negotiating with one another do not produce wholeness. They reproduce fragmentation at scale. Dialogue multiplies positions. Participation amplifies interests. Consensus manages conflict without ending it.

As long as the centre remains, disorder can only be managed, not resolved. The consequences of this are no longer abstract. The planet is not merely under stress; it is overheated. Ecological systems are breaking down faster than political processes can respond. Forests, oceans, and climate systems no longer have sufficient time to recover between interventions. Feedback loops are tightening. Thresholds are being crossed.

Much of sustainability discourse still assumes reversibility: gradual transitions, learning curves, and long timelines. Increasingly, these assumptions no longer hold. Ecological breakdown is proceeding according to physical limits that do not wait for governance reform. The Earth's regenerative capacity—its ability to absorb damage and heal—is being exceeded.

What is being encountered, then, is not a failure of policy design or institutional coordination, but a limit that runs across all modern domains. The same structure of identification shapes governance, economics, law, technology, and even ethical discourse. Each operates with greater sophistication, speed, and scale while remaining rooted in the same divided perception. This is why crises appear simultaneously across sectors, reinforcing rather than correcting one another. What is unfolding is not a temporary disruption within an otherwise stable order, but a civilisational impasse, where the mechanisms that once produced stability now accelerate instability.

This introduces a final constraint that policy rarely acknowledges: time. The crisis is not only severe; it is incompatible with the pace of reform. Thought continues to plan for futures that ecological reality is already foreclosing.

In this context, neither better models nor stronger laws are sufficient. As long as human action is driven by identification, fragmentation continues. Growth is justified over life. Violence is justified over peace. Extraction is justified over regeneration. The language changes; the pattern remains.

Leadership failure, in this light, is not primarily personal.

Leadership roles demand decisiveness, authority, and certainty—qualities that suppress perception. Leaders are structurally compelled to act before understanding is complete. The limitation lies in the role itself, not the individual who occupies it.

The crisis persists because its psychological root remains unaddressed.

This does not call for abandoning governance, cooperation, or responsibility. It calls for a deeper understanding of responsibility itself. Responsibility does not begin with intervention. It begins with perception: seeing how fear shapes decisions, how identity limits intelligence, and how thought perpetuates the problems it seeks to solve. Global policy debates usually ask what strategy should be adopted, what framework should be scaled, and what reform is feasible. Perhaps a more fundamental question now demands attention: from what state of mind are we responding to the crises we face?

Until that question is faced directly, good intentions will continue to fail, not because they lack care, but because they arise from incomplete seeing. In a world saturated with action, restoring the capacity to perceive may be the most practical and responsible step global policy can take. ■