

Chapter 3

Infrastructure Wars: The Politization of Everything



The natural world obeys no sovereign boundaries, and neither does the worsening ecological crisis...It is time to govern the world as if the earth mattered. What the world needs is a paradigm shift in U.S. foreign policy and international relations—a shift that is rooted in ecological realism and that moves cooperation on shared environmental threats to center stage. Call this new worldview ‘planetary politics.’...¹

It does it by contrasting four very different perspectives: Short-Term Technical, Long-Term Technical, Long-Term People-Oriented, and Short-Term People-Oriented. Not only do they illustrate the intense divides due to sharp differences regarding how different Personality Types approach the issue of Infrastructure, but how it’s become deeply politicized as well. As such, it’s a stand-in for all other Hot Button Issues facing us.

Importantly, each of the different perspectives has a different take on the Clusters of Chaps. 1 and 2.

Even though none of the four perspectives are able to realize their intended aims without the intense cooperation and support of the others, they are critical in illuminating the great Political Divide that separates us. In short, they are not only illustrative of the Politization of the Mind, but of everything. Bridging them if one can is a challenge of the highest order.

Infrastructure is of course just one of many issues on which we are bitterly divided. In particular, the results help shed additional light on the reactions to the Mandates for the wearing masks.

Most important of all, it shows the critical roles that the different perspectives play in overcoming the arguments/claims with regard to not getting vaccinated.

Even though the House of Representatives has given its go-ahead on the first part of the Infrastructure Bill, it does not take away from the fact that the whole matter is and will likely remain highly politicized, indeed for years to come. In fact, there is no aspect of our existence that is not. The persistent arguments over Infrastructure

¹Stewart M. Patrick, “The International Order Isn’t Ready for the Climate Crisis; The Case for a New Planetary Politics,” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2021, p. 166–167.

are a textbook example of the intense divisions that divide us. Not only is Infrastructure a pressing problem in and of itself, but it's a metaphor for what ails us in general.

While the opposing arguments are not necessarily fallacious, at least not in the same ways that those in first two chapters are, they fall seriously short in others that are just as serious. While they typically consider themselves to be superior to and totally independent of their counterparts, none of them can succeed without the intense cooperation and support of the others. They are more dependent on one another than they are both willing and able to admit. But this is only part of the problem.

There is another important reason for examining them. At the end of Chap. 2, we stressed the need to strike a balance between performing “honest, realistic assessments” of the fears associated with Covid 19 versus addressing the deep emotions behind them, namely how much of the Truth people can bear to hear and thus accept. As such, they need to work together, not in opposition. Working towards such a balance is one of the chief aims of the chapter.

Four Perspectives

No matter what the issue, large or small, four very different perspectives are constantly battling for supremacy. With regard to current events, the situation has become so bad that they've hardened into opposing camps. Their followers demand nothing less than complete allegiance to their respective positions. In this sense, they share a great deal in common with the issues of Chaps. 1 and 2.

The first is Short-Term Technical; second, Long-Term Technical; third, Long-Term Human-Centered; and fourth, Short-Term Human-Centered. Those who are familiar with the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator (MBPTI) will immediately recognize these as four of the major Personality Types: Sensing-Thinking or ST for short; Intuitive-Thinking or NT; Intuitive-Feeling or NF; and Sensing-Feeling or SF.

For those whose personalities is governed by a Short-Term Technical or ST perspective, Infrastructure is not just “primarily,” but “solely Physical.” It consists only of Physical Structures such as Roads, Bridges, and Buildings. Nothing else even comes close, and thus qualifies in any way.

For those whose personalities is governed by a Long-Term Technical or NT perspective, Infrastructure is Systemic. It not only includes Roads, Bridges, and Buildings, but most important of all, it encompasses all of the diverse means by which we connect with one another in a world that is totally interconnected. Broadband is thereby not only an integral, but an essential component in today's world. It's especially concerned with ensuring that new technologies are not only allowed to flourish but are protected from nefarious actors who can bring down the entire System. In this way, Cyber-Security is of paramount importance. It's also deeply concerned with the Physical Health of the planet as a whole. Climate Change is thus a major concern as well.

In short, whereas ST focuses on details and getting them right, NT focuses on Seeing The Big Picture.

For those whose personalities is governed primarily by a Long-Term Human-Centered or NF perspective, Infrastructure includes the wide range of Social Support Services that are absolutely necessary for communities as a whole not just to function, but to thrive. The focus is strictly on human, not technical, connectedness. It not only includes expanding Child Care for working parents, but added support for Seniors. It also includes support for Education from K-12 through college and beyond. In short, the primary emphasis is on the Collective Mental Health and Well-Being of entire communities, if not Society as a whole.

In this way, NF also focuses on Seeing The Big Picture, but it's not an impersonal, but a highly personal one.

Finally, for those whose personalities is governed primarily by a Short-Term Human-Centered perspective, Infrastructure pertains primarily to one's immediate Family and close circle of friends. That is, how do better roads, etc. improve *my* individual, personal Quality of Life. Anything else is too abstract and pie-in-the-sky!

It's important to note that each of these is not only defined by what it affirms, but equally by that to what it's opposed. Thus, from its perspective, Short-Term Technical is not only down to Earth and supremely practical, but all of the others are completely impractical, self-centered, totally unrealistic. In turn, the others consider it to be narrow-minded, too preoccupied with itself, and cold-hearted. These are merely samples of the intense arguments that not only define, but divide them.

It should come as no surprise that Conservatives generally favor Short-Term Technical and Short-Term Human-Centered while Liberals generally favor Long-Term Technical and Long-Term Human-Centered. More generally, Conservatives and Liberals have very different interpretations of each of the various perspectives.

The hard truth of the matter is that all of them need to work together for by themselves none of them can address all of the challenges facing us, let alone achieve their individual goals. While historically Infrastructure has been limited to Physical matters exclusively, it's been necessarily broadened by the complexities of a modern world. Indeed, it grows more complex with every passing day. For this reason, Coping with Complexity is one of the overarching themes of the book.

The biggest barrier standing in the way is us. At lower levels of Consciousness, one's preferred Psychological Outlook is the only acceptable one. All others are completely lopsided and wrong, if not dangerous. The extreme Politicization of everything in contemporary life has only made things worse.

One of the best, if not only, ways of getting beyond the stranglehold of the Pure Positions is by getting representatives of each perspective who are willing to come together to work in forming a Synthesis Position that incorporates the concerns of all of the perspectives but is not completely beholden to any of one of them. It requires a Higher Level of Expanded Consciousness before one can break the stranglehold of believing that one's basic stance is the only legitimate one, thereby recognizing that all of them are needed to form a comprehensive picture of how things really are.

The Toulmin Argumentation Framework (TAF)

With regard to the arguments/claims of the first two Chapters, ST and NT are key in providing hard facts and multiple perspectives in counteracting the fears that are the driving forces behind the major arguments/claims. But NF and SF are especially critical in assessing how much of the Truth, let alone which kinds, people can bear to hear, especially that which goes against their most fervent beliefs.

A special framework is especially helpful in this regard. In The Uses of Argument,² the eminent Philosopher Stephen Toulmin introduced the following schema for analyzing arguments. It's known as The Toulmin Argumentation Framework or TAF for short. It consists of Claims, Evidence, Warrants, Backings, and Rebuttals.

All arguments terminate in a Claim, the end conclusion of a chain of reasoning. Claims are typically of the form, "Given that the case for X has been established beyond all reasonable doubt, therefore, we need to do Y in order to respond to it." Thus, "Given that Masks and Vaccines have proven highly effective in combatting Covid 19, they need to be Mandated!"

If the Claim is the end conclusion of an argument, then the Evidence is the Evidentiary or Factual Base upon which the argument is built. In short, the Evidence is the complete set of Facts in support of the Claim. Thus, in the case of Covid 19, the Evidence is the thousands of trials that have been successfully conducted in developing the vaccines and establishing their efficacy. It's bolstered further by the fact that the vaccines have been given safely given to millions with remarkably few bad outcomes. It's also been shown that those who have not been vaccinated are some nine times more likely to contract Covid 19 and eleven times more likely to die as a result. All of which is key in supporting the Claim that Masks and Vaccines are absolutely essential in combatting the Virus and thereby in curtailing its spread.

The Warrant is one of the most critical parts of an argument. It's the key component that allows one to go from the Evidence to the Claim. In other words, it's the Bridge between the two. In short, it's the If-Then or Because part of an argument. Thus, If the Evidence is True, Then the Claims follows Because....

In the case of Covid 19, given that the process of developing the vaccines has adhered to long-standing, well-established Scientific procedures, the Warrant ensures that the same standards have been adhered to in this case as well. Thus, we are justified in generalizing from a limited sample of people who've been successfully vaccinated to the necessity of vaccinating the entire population as a whole.

The Backing is the underlying support for the Warrant. No matter how strong they are on their surface, all Warrants are only as strong as that which props them up.

In the case of the Virus, the Backing is the general body of Science and that of Epidemiology in particular. That is, the Warrant is justified because it's backed up the general body of Scientific Knowledge. The reputations of eminent scientists such as Dr. Anthony Fauci are also key parts as well.

²Stephen Toulmin, The Uses of Argument, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2003.

In effect, the Backing is equivalent to a Guarantor. That is, by following accepted procedures, it guarantees that we will collect the right Evidence, interpret it in the right ways, use the right Warrant correctly, and thus arrive at the right, conclusive Claim.

Finally, the Rebuttal is all of the counterarguments and challenges to every part of the main argument. Thus, the Rebuttal argues why the Claim makes no sense at all, is not fully supported by the Evidence, is illogical, etc.; why the Evidence is flawed, flimsy, and weak; why the Warrant is not sufficient to support the Claim; why the Backing is deficient; and why the Rebuttal is more commanding than any of them.

In effect, Chaps. 1 and 2 are Rebuttals to every one of the chief arguments/claims for not getting vaccinated for Covid 19. In terms of the MBPTI, the Rebuttals are primarily ST/ NT. Again, while absolutely necessary, they unfortunately do not move the vast majority of people, especially those who are staunchly committed to their respective positions.

SF/NF takes a completely different tack. While beholden to ST/NT for uncovering key Evidence, it uses highly personal pleas from persons similar to those opposing the vaccines. In other words, the Rebuttals are highly personal stories delivered by those in whom one has implicit trust. While making fundamental use of ST/NT, SF/NF do not deliver them in impersonal terms.

Sadly, the most effective Rebuttals are from those who are full of deep regret for not having taken the vaccines. It's because either they or a loved one is dying. Whatever the case, they are full of regret and remorse. They wished that they had listened to the likes of Dr. Fauci.

It cannot be said enough. All of the perspectives need to work together if any of them are to be effective. They fail to do so at our peril.

Reflections

In terms of the descriptions of the MBPTI in the chapter, which ones describe you best? Which ones are most different from you? Which ones do you have the most difficulty in understanding and thus in communicating with? Does the discussion change your notions of Infrastructure? Why, why not?

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