

IEUSS REVIEW OF BOOKS

Mac Ginty, R., Pagoda, S. and Richmond, O. (Eds.) [The EU and Crisis Response](#). Manchester University Press, 2021

The book provides new insights into the EU's response to crises by applying an innovative framework to a range of fascinating case studies, such as Kosovo, Mali, Iraq, and Afghanistan. It considers why and how the EU responds to crises, including which mechanisms have been developed to do so. It touches upon cross-cutting themes like local ownership, conflict sensitivity, the comprehensive approach and liberal peacebuilding. The research uncovers the EU's conflicting norms, interests, and ambitions and – at its core – it asks whether the EU acts in the interest of European security or in the interest of populations affected by conflict.

The distinctive analytical framework builds on literature from Peace and Conflict Studies and Organisational Studies, which is a unique approach to the subject and allows the book's contributors to explore the EU's crisis response from a new and original angle. It adapts the framework of crisis response for it to include four elements: crisis management, crisis resolution, crisis transformation, and critical crisis transformation. This framework reflects four generations of approaches to crises response and has been designed specifically for the EU context. It includes conservative crisis management approaches in line with political realism, as well as – corresponding to the EU's normative power ambitions – a focus on positive peace, human needs, emancipatory approaches and – in the case of critical crisis transformation – a more reflective, 'hybridised form of peacebuilding'.

The second chapter delivers a solid framework, which is then convincingly applied in subsequent chapters. It also offers much-needed conceptual clarification on the related terminology. Given the existing ambiguity of such concepts as international crisis management/response, this chapter provides a welcome and persuasive interpretation of key concepts and as such presents a valuable overview of the development and thinking in this field beyond the EU context. In so doing it should therefore be useful to anyone studying international crisis responses. The framework then spurs discussions about the ambitions, interests, and perceptions of the EU's response to crises in subsequent chapters.

The book explores the EU's response to crises in its immediate neighbourhood, extensive neighbourhood, and 'further afield', and hereby unpacks conceptual questions around the complexity of the notions of the local, international, regional, and the state. Throughout the empirical analyses, the book investigates the factors that have shaped the EU's crisis response mechanisms, how they are perceived, and which impact they have. It asks the question whether the EU's actions reflect crisis management or transformation and finds that the EU shows a growing emphasis on security (crisis management) at the expense of an emancipatory human needs approach (conflict resolution/transformation). To contextualise developments in the EU, the book compares the EU's integrated approach to the policies of other international organisations involved in crisis response, such as the UN, NATO and the OSCE. It provides a valuable overview of key documents, institutions, and approaches of these organisations, which will benefit not only those studying the EU's actorness in this field, but also other key players.

The case study chapters are real page-turners and provide a wealth of information due to the extensive empirical data gathered through field work and interviews. The chapter on Kosovo, for example, finds that the EU did show traces of conflict transformation but has reverted to a stronger focus on conflict management in the last decade. The subsequent chapters focus on Mali, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and explore the EU's obstacles to crisis response and the extent to which EU efforts can be considered effective. For anyone interested in peace operations, conflict resolution and crisis response, these chapters provide eye-opening data about the operational realities and how they tie in with discourse and operational design. The most remarkable case study looks at migration and emphasises how the EU's crisis response to migration has wide-ranging implications for a range of cross-cutting issues. The chapter also queries how migration became labelled as a crisis in the first place, before concluding – in line with other chapters – that the 2015 'migration crisis' weakened the EU's good governance ambitions with a regained focus on security and crisis management. The book would have benefited from a concluding chapter to bring findings across case studies together, provide some food for thought on further research, and offer a closing statement on the state of the EU and crisis response.

In sum, the book makes a valuable contribution both conceptually and empirically. The innovative framework and clear conceptual discussions, in combination with a wealth of empirical information from a range of diverse case

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studies makes this book valuable to anyone with an interest in international responses to crisis and conflict not just in the EU context, but also beyond.

Dr. An Jacobs
Nottingham Trent University
Royal Military Academy Sandhurst

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