

EU INSTITUTIONS AND CRISES

PROFESSOR AMELIA HADFIELD

A SLEW OF CRISES?

- 2008 Eurozone Crises
- 2014 Invasion of Crimea by Ukraine
- 2015 Migration Crisis
- 2016 Brexit Referendum
- 2020-21 Brexit Negotiations
- 2020 & 2021+ Covid
- 2021+ Poland/Hungary Rule of Law
- 2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine
- 2022+ Energy Crisis/Standard of Living

WHAT MAKES A CRISIS?

Challenges to the political system of such a kind and degree that the persistence of the system is threatened.

The system is facing a potential breakdown, and this breakdown is likely to occur unless the system itself or its environment is fundamentally changed.

Political crises occur in a wider sense than mere government crisis: they may lead to substantial changes in policies, or the entire political order, or on a smaller scale, to a mere replacement of personnel.

A change that requires some governmental innovation and institutionalization.

A challenge to the authority of a given structure, its norms and values, and/or the composition of its decision makers.

A means of protest on a scale sufficient to threaten the incumbents' ability to maintain order and continued occupancy of authority roles.

Challenges that threaten the constitution of the polity, i.e. the established rules of the game for allocating authority and rewards.

WHAT'S THE EU'S 'CRISIS MO'?

- Reactive
- Active
- Progressive
- Old Policies/ New Implementation
- New Policies/Standard Implementation
- New Everything

A SLEW OF RESPONSES?

- **2008 Eurozone Crisis:** The European sovereign debt crisis was intertwined with the 2007-2009 financial crisis and put grave pressure on the euro area, stressing the financial sector and bloating public budgets. Member States needed financial assistance from the EU, the euro area and the IMF after losing access to financial markets. Poorly handled, with grave north/south divisions, vs. increasing power devolved to the European Central Bank.
- **2014 Invasion of Crimea** by Russia: some sanctions, coordination with the US, little strategic within NATO.
- **2015 Migration Crisis:** panic initially, division among member states, little coordination with institutions; leader vs laggard approaches to accepting the problem; ‘securitization of migration’, followed by both individual MS approaches to supporting / capping migrant numbers and EU measures to improve its control over external borders and migration flows. The EU and its member states are intensifying efforts to establish an effective, humanitarian and safe European migration policy.
- **2016 Brexit Referendum:** shock; followed by acceptance: "We have always deeply regretted the UK's decision to leave but we have always fully respected it, too. The agreement we reached is fair for both sides and ensures that millions of EU and UK citizens will continue to have their rights protected in the place they call home." Result: Trade and Cooperation Agreement (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/Brexit>)

YET MORE RESPONSES?

- **2020 & 2021+ Covid:** limiting the spread of the virus, ensuring the provision of medical equipment. promoting research for treatments and vaccines. supporting jobs, businesses and the economy.
- **2021+ Poland/Hungary Rule of Law:** The European Commission has threatened to withhold €22 billion of EU cohesion funds that Hungary desperately needs until the Hungarian government reinstates its commitments and meets the conditions related to judiciary independence, journalistic and academic freedoms, migration and asylum rights, as well as LGBTQI rights.
- **2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine:** European Peace Facility (EPF), the EU has committed €3.6 billion to date in military assistance financing for Ukraine, including for lethal equipment (€3.1 billion) and nonlethal supplies (€380 million). Sanctions, coordination with NATO, US, UK.
- **2022+ Energy Crisis/Standard of Living :**the EU has **fundamentally reframed its energy policy** in response to the energy crisis, broadening its focus from just climate to now also consider geopolitics, global industrial competitiveness and energy poverty. This paper outlines energy crisis measures taken by the EU so far as well as further planned initiatives.

WHO RESPONDS?

- EU institutions: Council, Commission, EP, EEAS, EU Agencies
- EU Member States
- **The EU civil protection mechanism:** “aims to: **foster cooperation among national civil protection authorities.** increase public awareness of and preparedness for disasters. enable quick, effective, coordinated assistance to affected countries.”
- Taken together? The integrated political crisis response (**IPCR**) **arrangements support rapid and coordinated decision-making at EU political level for major and complex crises.**
- **In practice:** “EEAS Crisis Response & Operational Coordination Department” is responsible for the activation of the **EEAS Crisis Response System** (in 4 areas: Crisis Platform, EU Situation Room, Crisis Management Board), and plays a central role in ensuring both swift and effective mobilisation of actors and instruments across the EU system as well as coherence of policies and actions throughout the various phases of the crisis life cycle.

PRINCIPLES: SPEED AND COHERENCE

- A guiding principle of Lisbon Treaty provisions, which lie at the heart of the very purpose of the EEAS, is the desire to achieve a substantial increase in 'responsiveness' to the opportunities and challenges that exist beyond EU borders. Adequate EU action during external emergencies, which require ad-hoc decision making, is no exemption to this.
- Crisis response implies the immediate mobilisation of EU resources to deal with the consequences of external crises caused by man-made and natural disasters.

EU CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM: FIT FOR PURPOSE?

- **EAS Crisis Response System (CRS)** covers crises which may affect EU security and interests occurring outside the EU, including those affecting the EU delegations or any other EU asset or person in a third country. It equally covers crisis occurring inside the EU if those have an external dimension. CRS ranges from prevention and preparedness to response and recovery aiming to achieve a comprehensive EU crisis response and management capability.
- **The CRS** contributes to ensure coherence between various aspects of crisis response and management measures, in particular in the security, political, diplomatic, consular, humanitarian, developmental, space related, environmental and corporate fields.
- The secretariat of the CRS is supported by the **EEAS Crisis Response Department**, which plays a key coordinating role that facilitates translating the comprehensive approach into comprehensive action in crisis response and management.

EEAS CRISIS RESPONSE DEPARTMENT

- 1. Crisis Response Planning and Operations** is tasked with the overall planning, organisation and coordination of crisis related activities, including preparedness, monitoring and response. In particular, the Division has the responsibility:
 1. to assist the EU High Representative in his responsibility to ensure the coherence and coordination of the EU's external action specifically in the field of crisis management and response;
 2. to undertake specific missions in crisis areas
 3. to coordinate the work of the EU Crisis Platform
 4. to closely follow developments in the world in order to enable the EEAS to respond to potential and emerging crises at short notice
- 2. The EU Situation Room** is the EU's crises centre that provides worldwide monitoring and current situation awareness 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, all year round.
- 3. Consular Crisis Management** assists in consular policies across the EU and coordinates actions in times of crisis.

OVERHAULING THE EU'S SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY?

- “The EU is facing increasing threats and challenges, ranging from conventional to transnational threats including hybrid threats, cyber-attacks and pervasive and persistent instability and conflict in its immediate vicinity and beyond. At the same time, climate change is exacerbating conflicts and instability in fragile societies, while melting ice in the Arctic is turning the region into a geopolitical flashpoint, with the opening of new shipping routes and access to natural gas and oil deposits. To address a fast-changing geopolitical landscape, the EU needs a Common Security and Defence Policy fit for the future. This will require new efforts and sustained efforts, as well as more investment in capabilities and innovative technologies to develop cutting-edge military capabilities, fill strategic gaps and reduce technological and industrial dependencies.”

EU'S 2023 GLOBAL ROLE: PUNCHIER?

- A European ‘geopolitical awakening’?
- There has indeed been a shift in the EU’s approach to foreign policy which itself reflects the evolving international security environment and the growing complexity of the challenges facing the bloc. In view of the intensification of great power rivalry increasingly the hallmark of the 21st century, the EU has been attempting to reshape its diplomatic approach, positioning itself as an independent actor.
- **Result?** The concept of ‘**strategic autonomy**’ has become a major point of reference in policy debates on the EU’s global actorness this past year.
- **Hints:** High Representative Josep Borrell’s recent statements on the EU’s relations with other major world powers, particularly Russia and China. Borrell has repeatedly stressed how the Union must avoid creating new dependencies and offer its own alternative to partner countries, so as to balance other players: “we are certainly not interested in creating new dependencies... we will always have dependencies - we cannot go one day to another from open to closed markets, but we need a balanced approach – we need to learn how to adapt.” (Euractiv, 2023).
- **Outcome:** Borrell’s suggestions about aiming for a more ‘balanced diplomatic distribution’ not only applies to EU foreign affairs in general, but could have profound effects for how the EU thinks of itself as a strategic actor, capable of variants of autonomy.

EU: WALKING THE WALK, NOT JUST TALKING THE TALK?

- **Borrell's proposal:** that the EU should use its influence in world politics in “a more transactional way” suggests that the bloc is willing to use its leverage on economic, trade and energy matters more distinctly in the pursuit of strategic political goals.
- Introduced in the **EU's 2016 Global Strategy** as ‘principled pragmatism’, this more realist interpretation of EU foreign policy has gained traction in recent years.
- Borrell: “We're not an NGO, we have a certain political mindset, which cannot be imposed because then we risk a reaction to the rejection of the emerging world.” (Euractiv, 2023).
- This **shift to a more pragmatic approach** to foreign policy making does not indicate the rejection of liberal ideals - hence the term ‘principled’ (Biscop, 2016).
- In this light, **European foreign policy is guided by what is concretely, materially possible** as guided by founding principles, within a new consideration of what makes up its strategic environment.
- The combination of ‘soft’ civilian approaches to crisis management with more hard edged measures, enables the EU to project a flexible international identity – **a comprehensive power** rather than a **purely strategic or normative actor**.