The constant threat of crises such as disasters, riots and terrorist attacks poses a frightening challenge to western societies and governments. Although the causes and dynamics of these events have been widely studied, little is known about what happens following their containment and the restoration of stability. This volume explores “postcrisis politics”, examining how crises give birth to longer-term dynamic processes of accountability and learning characterised by official investigations, blame games, political manoeuvring, media scrutiny and crisis exploitation. Drawing from a wide range of contemporary crises, including Hurricane Katrina, 9/11, the Madrid train bombings, the Walkerton water contamination, the destruction of the space shuttles Challenger and Columbia and the Boxing Day Asian tsunami, this groundbreaking volume addresses the longer-term impact of crisis-induced politics. Competing pressures for stability and change mean that policies, institutions and leaders may occasionally be uprooted but often survive largely intact. This volume explores why and under what conditions preservation trumps reform in the wake of crisis.

Arjen Boin is Director of the Stephenson Disaster Management and Public Administration Institute and Associate Professor of Public Administration at Louisiana State University.

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Paul ‘t Hart is Professor of Political Science, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, and Professor of Public Administration, Utrecht School of Governance, Utrecht University.
Dedicated to our children,
Charlotte, Désanne, Kim, Lalla, Naomi, Paul,
Sarah and Steven
“Too many are unprepared to handle crisis; still more are ignorant of postcrisis dynamics. This book allows us to understand the issues involved and to choose the appropriate roadmaps in the postevent phase. Do not miss these illuminating case studies: they could – tonight or tomorrow – tip the balance between fiasco and success”.

– Patrick Lagadec  
Director of Research, École Polytechnique, Paris

“This volume laudably focuses on a relatively neglected topic, the specially political dimensions of crises and disasters. The authors also make a good case that political elites and organizations more than citizens have to be held accountable for their behavior, since they are the locus of precrisis policy decisions. Another worthwhile emphasis is on the differential effects of crisis management on politicians and public officials”.

– E. L. Quarantelli  
Emeritus Professor of Sociology, University of Delaware
Contents

List of illustrations
List of tables
Contributors

Introduction
1 Governing after crisis
Arjen Boin, Allan McConnell and Paul ’t Hart

Part I Crisis-induced accountability

2 Weathering the politics of responsibility and blame: the Bush administration and its response to Hurricane Katrina
Thomas Preston

3 A reversal of fortune: blame games and framing contests after the 3/11 terrorist attacks in Madrid
José A. Olmeda

4 Flood response and political survival: Gerhard Schröder and the 2002 Elbe flood in Germany
Evelyn Bytzek

5 The politics of tsunami responses: comparing patterns of blame management in Scandinavia
Annika Brändström, Sanneke Kuipers and Pär Daléus

6 Dutroux and dioxin: crisis investigations, elite accountability and institutional reform in Belgium
Sofie Staelraeve and Paul ’t Hart
## Contents

### Part II  Crisis-induced policy change and learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The 1975 Stockholm embassy seizure: crisis and the absence of reform</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Dan Hansén</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The Walkerton water tragedy and the Jerusalem banquet hall collapse:</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>regulatory failure and policy change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Robert Schwartz and Allan McConnell</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Learning from crisis: NASA and the <em>Challenger</em> disaster</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Arjen Boin</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>September 11 and postcrisis investigation: exploring the role and</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>impact of the 9/11 Commission</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Charles F. Parker and Sander Dekker</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Conclusions: the politics of crisis exploitation</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Arjen Boin, Paul ’t Hart and Allan McConnell</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Conclusion

11  Conclusions: the politics of crisis exploitation  285

*Arjen Boin, Paul ’t Hart and Allan McConnell*

### Index

Index  317
Illustrations

3.1 Number of visits and pages of daily newspapers viewed on the Internet or TV/radio Web sites and day, March 10–15, 2004  
3.2 Symbiosis of new and old media for increasing oppositional frame resonance  
3.3 Credibility – net evaluation of confidence in Prime Minister Aznar, 2000–2004  
4.1 Total articles about the Elbe flood, 2002  
4.2 Course of theme frequency  
4.3 Framing of the Elbe flood, 2002  
4.4 Course of government popularity during the Elbe flood, 2002  
4.5 Time series analysis for western Germany  
4.6 Time series analysis for eastern Germany  
5.1 Constructing blame by framing political crises  
11.1 Does blame management work? Leader behaviour and leaders’ postcrisis fates
Tables

3.1 The frames of political actors page 78
4.1 Crisis chronology 89
4.2 Classification scheme of the theme analysis 97
4.3 Classification scheme of the framing analysis 100
5.1 Tsunami crisis – similarities and differences in Scandinavian responses 124
5.2 Content analysis on the severity dimension 128
5.3 Content analysis on the agency dimension 131
5.4 Content analysis on attempts by actors to influence the temporal scope of accountability discussions 134
5.5 Content analysis on framing the event as incidental, nonrecurring or symptomatic/structural 135
5.6 Content analysis on the responsibility dimension 137
6.1 Context, process and impact of the Dutroux and dioxin crisis inquiries 171
7.1 Multiple streams, advocacy coalition framework and punctuated equilibrium in comparison 196
8.1 Strength of factors conducive to regulatory change in Walkerton and Jerusalem 220
8.2 Terrorism-related events in Israel during June 2001 226
11.1 Crisis outcomes: an overview 292
11.2 Crisis inquiries: a comparative overview 304

Appendices

4.1 Test statistics to augmented Dickey–Fuller and Phillips–Perron tests on stationarity of government popularity 111
4.2 Test statistics to augmented Dickey–Fuller and Phillips–Perron tests on stationarity of operational actions 112
Tables

4.3 Test statistics to augmented Dickey–Fuller and Phillips–Perron tests on stationarity of symbolic politics 112
4.4 Test statistics to augmented Dickey–Fuller and Phillips–Perron tests on stationarity of framing 113
4.5 Test statistics to augmented Dickey–Fuller and Phillips–Perron tests on stationarity of drama 113
Contributors

Arjen Boin Stephenson Disaster Management and Public Administration Institute, Louisiana State University
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