

The Politics of Crisis Management

Crisis management has become a defining feature of contemporary governance. In times of crisis, communities and members of organizations expect their leaders to minimize the impact while critics and bureaucratic competitors make use of social media to blame incumbent rulers and their policies. In this extreme environment, policymakers must somehow establish a sense of normality and foster collective learning from the crisis experience. In the new edition of this uniquely comprehensive analysis, the authors examine how strategic leaders deal with the challenges they face, the political risks and opportunities they encounter, the pitfalls they must avoid, and the paths toward reform they may pursue. The book is grounded in decades of collaborative, cross-national, and multidisciplinary case study research and has been updated to include new insights and examples from the last decade. This is an original and important contribution from experts in public policy and international security.

ARJEN BOIN is Professor of Public Institutions and Governance at the Institute of Political Science, Leiden University.

PAUL 'T HART is Professor of Public Administration at the Utrecht School of Governance, which he joined in 2001. Since June 2011 he has also been Associate Dean at the Netherlands School of Government in The Hague, a position he also held between 2002 and 2005.

ERIC STERN is Professor of Political Science at the College of Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security and Cyber-Security at University at Albany (SUNY) and senior fellow at CRISMART, Swedish Defense University and the Disaster Research Center, University of Delaware.

BENGT SUNDELIUS is Professor of Government at Uppsala University and the Swedish Defence University, and Strategic Advisor to the Director General of the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-11846-1 – The Politics of Crisis Management
2nd Edition
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

The Politics of Crisis Management

Public Leadership under Pressure

Arjen Boin

Universiteit Leiden

Paul 't Hart

Universiteit Utrecht

Eric Stern

University at Albany (SUNY)

Bengt Sundelius

The Swedish Defence University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
4843/24, 2nd Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, Delhi – 110002, India
79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107118461

© Arjen Boin, Paul 't Hart, Eric Stern, and Bengt Sundelius 2017

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2017

Printed in the United Kingdom by Clays, St Ives plc

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Boin, Arjen, author. | Hart, Paul 't, author. | Stern, Eric, author. | Sundelius, Bengt, author.

Title: The politics of crisis management: public leadership under pressure / Arjen Boin, Universiteit Leiden, Paul 't Hart, Universiteit Utrecht, Eric Stern, the Swedish National Defence College, Bengt Sundelius, the Swedish National Defence University.

Description: Second edition. | New York : Cambridge University Press, 2016. | First edition entered under title.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016023870 | ISBN 9781107118461 (Hardback) | ISBN 9781107544253 (Paperback)

Subjects: LCSH: Crisis management in government.

Classification: LCC JF1525.C74 B65 2016 | DDC 352.3– dc23 LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016023870>

ISBN 978-1-107-11846-1 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-54425-3 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> vii
<i>List of Tables</i>	viii
Introduction to the Second Edition	1
1 Managing Crises: Five Strategic Leadership Tasks	3
1.1 Crisis Management and Public Leadership	3
1.2 The Nature of Crises	5
1.3 The Origins of Crises	9
1.4 The Challenges of Strategic Crisis Management	12
1.5 The Five Critical Tasks of Strategic Crisis Leadership	15
2 Sense Making: Grasping Crises as They Unfold	23
2.1 What the Hell Is Going On?	23
2.2 Barriers to Crisis Detection	24
2.3 Barriers to Understanding an Unfolding Crisis	32
2.4 Effective Sense Making	39
2.5 The Ubiquity of Surprise	43
3 Decision Making and Coordinating: Shaping the Crisis Response	49
3.1 The Myth of Top-Down Command and Control	49
3.2 Crisis Leaders as Decision Makers	51
3.3 Crisis Teams and Group Dynamics	54
3.4 Crisis Responses on the Ground	57
3.5 Crisis Coordination: Challenges, Forms, and Fault Lines	62
3.6 Nurturing Crisis Coordination	71
3.7 Deciding and Coordinating: Conclusions	74
4 Meaning Making: Constructing a Crisis Narrative	78
4.1 The Politics of Crisis Communication	78
4.2 Framing Contests	80
4.3 Crafting a Winning Frame	86
4.4 Effective Meaning-making	97
5 Ending a Crisis: Managing Accountability	102
5.1 It Ain't Over Till It's Over	102
5.2 How Crises End: Two Scenarios	103

vi	Contents	
	5.3 To End a Crisis: What Role for Leadership?	107
	5.4 Crisis Accountability: A Contest of Explanations	110
	5.5 Managing the Accountability Contest	115
	5.6 Accountability, Blame Games, and Democracy	120
6	Learning and Changing: From Crisis to Reform	126
	6.1 Never Again!	126
	6.2 Learning from Crisis: Lessons from the Literature	128
	6.3 From Crisis to Reforms?	132
	6.4 The Tension Between Crisis Management and Reform Leadership	139
	6.5 Ambivalent Opportunities: From Crisis-Induced Reforms to Reform-Induced Crises	141
7	How to Deal with Crisis: Lessons for Prudent Leadership	145
	7.1 Navigating Crises	145
	7.2 Grasping the Nature of Crises	145
	7.3 Improving Crisis Sense Making	148
	7.4 Improving Crisis Decision Making and Coordination	153
	7.5 Improving Crisis Meaning Making	158
	7.6 Improving Crisis Accounting	160
	7.7 Improving Crisis Learning and Reform Craft	163
	7.8 Being Prepared	166
	7.9 Prudent Crisis Leadership	168
	<i>References</i>	172
	<i>Index</i>	198

Figures

5.1 Four Ideal-Typical States of Crisis Closure	<i>page</i> 108
5.2 Actor Choices in Crisis-Induced Blame Games	122
6.1 Alternative Post-Crisis Futures	137

Tables

3.1 Types of Organizations in Disaster Response Processes	<i>page</i> 68
5.1 Playing the Blame Game: Argumentative Tactics	119

Introduction to the Second Edition

The original edition of this book was published in late 2005. Ten years on, the salience of its topic is undiminished. In the past decade, the world has seen many natural catastrophes, industrial accidents, high-profile acts of terrorism, crowd tragedies, cyber scares, infrastructure break-downs, mass shootings, migration flows, and humanitarian emergencies. There is a growing awareness that in an increasingly interconnected world, crises do not stop at borders and can span entire regions or even assume a global scale.

Public expectations of governments and their leaders in times of crisis remain high. Public leaders are expected to be prepared for a wide variety of contingencies; they must “ramp up” their performance when a crisis emerges. At the same time, it is becoming increasingly clear that the tasks of crisis leadership require more than organizing an effective response. Leaders must build and support transboundary collaboration and transnational institutions that can effectively deal with the borderless nature of contemporary crises.

Much has happened over the past decade in the world of crisis management. It is fair to say that crisis management has become a profession, an industry, and a growing community of practice and research. In many governments and corporations, there are now more dedicated roles, high-level bodies, training and exercise programs, conferences, and high-tech command and communication facilities than there were a decade ago. A cross-disciplinary array of researchers, consultants, software developers, and manufacturers push the trends toward professionalization, propelled by ever-growing demand from both the corporate and the public sectors. This is perhaps what one might expect in the risk societies that the advanced nations have become. Citizens, markets, media, and politicians expect that risk is minimized, threats are mitigated, and crises are effectively combated. Leaders who fail to take this seriously will lose credibility, support or even their job when caught by a crisis.

2 Introduction

The response to the first edition of the book neatly dovetails this trend. It has struck a chord, both with students and practitioners. As authors of the book, we were fortunate enough to receive invitations to speak to, train, exercise, and evaluate crisis managers from a wide range of countries and sectors. Even today, the book continues to be widely used in courses worldwide and in several languages. The feedback we have received during the many encounters with practitioners, students, and colleagues has been inspiring. It has become part of the industry. Due to the continuing demand, we owe it to our readers to produce a thoroughly updated edition that takes into account what has happened in the last decade, both in practice (new cases, new phenomena, new challenges) and in the world of crisis research (new concepts, new empirical research, new insights).

The text before you is the outcome of this effort. We have retained the basic structure of the previous version with five strategic challenges of crisis leadership as the backbone and organizing principle. But we have thoroughly updated and revised the substance of our arguments in each of the chapters, reflecting what we hold to be the current state of the art in crisis research. We have also introduced many new case examples.

The rewriting of this book has been a team effort. We are deeply grateful for the help and support of many excellent students and colleagues, too numerous to name here. We single out a few people who have been instrumental. David Schelfhout at Utrecht University helped to mine the post-2005 crisis literature. Lavinia Cadar at Crisisplan provided much-needed editorial support in highly efficient fashion. John Haslam at Cambridge University Press responded positively to our proposal for an update and waited patiently for us to deliver. Margaret Puskar-Pasewicz provided the final copy editing of our manuscript. We thank our colleagues at the Utrecht School of Governance, Leiden University's Institute of Political Science, Crisisplan, the Disaster Research Center at the University of Delaware, and the CRISMART team at the Swedish National Defence University. We thank the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) for financial support.

These colleagues have been part of our "crisis environment" and provide ongoing reminders that we are not alone in this line of inquiry. We have benefited greatly from the progress they have made in their own studies on crisis management over the last decade, and we hope this new edition does justice to their endeavors.

ARJEN BOIN, PAUL 'T HART, ERIC STERN, BENGT SUNDELIUS

December 2015