

***The EU and Critical Crisis Transformation:
The Evolution of a Policy Concept¹***

By Sandra Pogodda, Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver Richmond

Abstract

While often caused by conflict, crises are treated by the EU as a phenomenon of their own. Contemporary EU crisis management represents a watering down of normative EU approaches to peacebuilding, reduced to a technical exercise with the limited ambition to contain spillover effects of crises. In theoretical terms this is a reversal, which tilts intervention towards EU security interests and avoids engagement with the root causes of the crises. This paper develops a novel crisis response typology derived from conflict theory, which ranges from *crisis management* to *crisis resolution* and (*critical*) *crisis transformation*. By drawing on EU interventions in Libya, Mali and Ukraine, the paper demonstrates that basic crisis management approaches are pre-eminent in practice. More promising innovations remain largely confined to the realms of discourse and policy documentation.

Keywords

Crisis management, crisis transformation, conflict theory, EU, Libya, Ukraine, Mali.

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Introduction

With the first two decades of the twenty-first century marred by a series of crises, politicians and academics alike have become increasingly interested in the question of how crises emerge and how they can be managed or resolved.² The European Union has found itself involved in a series of continuously morphing and deepening internal crises.³ Developing a sound understanding of effective crisis response in the face of complexity is thus vital for the very survival of the EU as a legitimate political project.

More importantly for this research on external crisis response, EU interventions in crises abroad have recently followed a distinct crisis response process.⁴ Yet, the underlying rationale of crisis interventions and the tools used in its pursuit may vary greatly. In keeping with the core-periphery aspect of EU policy, key concepts used in EU institutions represent an attempt to shape politics in crisis and conflict areas. Through the EU's institutionalist lens, conflict tends to carry less risk, the greater the distance between the knowledge-power-language nexus of the EU framework of institutions (i.e., the EU's 'normative' and strategic power) and the crisis location. According to the EU's own characterisation,⁵ crisis is not measured by the severity of its damage to the affected society in the periphery, understood via ethnographic and emancipatory approaches⁶ but by its potential to affect the EU's interests and objectives.

This spatial weakening of EU perceptions and policy has received increasingly sophisticated theorisation:⁷ policies designed for distant crises tend to be based on the

perceptions and interests of the core *habitus*⁸ as well as the organisation's capacities and goals, rather than on the dynamics or political claims of the peripheral conflict. Policy is discursively powerful in the core, practically weak where it is actually applied in the periphery, and often mismatched against local political claims. This undermines the legitimacy of EU engagement even as it becomes discursively more sophisticated. Most of the academic and policy literature focuses on security related technical or bureaucratic issues, often without investigating history, culture, epistemology, or ethnographic methodological matters – and thus lacking contextualised insights into conflicts and the posture of responding institutions. In practice, we can see the application of different strategies depending on the geographical and political distance of the crisis context. Remote crises afford EU policy-makers the opportunity to avoid a 'crisis of crisis management', in which the very forces that could help to overcome a crisis are paralysed by the complexity and severity of the crisis itself.⁹

This article investigates crisis response largely from a theoretical perspective. It reflects on the question, what crisis response could learn from conflict theory and its typology of conflict interventions. Accordingly, this paper develops a typology for crisis response, which encompasses *crisis management*, *crisis resolution*, and (*critical*) *crisis transformation*. In order to flesh out these new classifications, the paper draws on the EU's external crisis response in its neighbourhood and extended neighbourhood. While the term 'crisis management' had long been used interchangeably with CSDP interventions at large, EU crisis response has developed a distinct process since 2013¹⁰: 1) political decision to intervene in a crisis; 2) deployment of the Department for Crisis Response and Operational Coordination for a first assessment and coordination with EEAS organs; 3) activation of the EEAS Crisis Response System, which includes the Crisis Platform, the EU Situation Room and the Crisis Management Board. We will draw on this distinct understanding of crisis response in our empirical analysis.

Accordingly, the article begins with a theoretical background that conceptualises crises

and postulates that the EU currently has four related crisis response attitudes. This section suggests that a fifth crisis response stance should also be considered in future policy design. The second section unpacks the four generations of theory development on *conflict* response in order to pave the way for a discussion of more advanced possibilities of *crisis* response. We then draw on examples of contemporary EU crisis interventions in Libya, Ukraine, and Mali in order to examine whether similar classifications can be introduced for *crisis* response. We conclude by evaluating our conceptualisation of a critical version of this concept and policy framework.

Theoretical Background

Conflicts and crises are intrinsically linked but differentiated, among other factors, by positionality, subjectivity and politics. While its material conditions (scale, duration, nature and intensity of violence) allow *conflict* to be identified even by the unaffected outsider, *crises* tend to lie in the eye of the beholder (a specific group, the state, the EU, NATO, the UN, and so on). Defined as events with the ‘potential to cause large detrimental change to the social system’,¹¹ crises differ from conflicts in so far as only actors within the social system under threat are likely to identify those events as a crisis. Hence, war constitutes a crisis for conflict-affected populations, but not for countries that are far removed, unless crucial security or economic networks are affected. Since large-scale and persistent conflicts are difficult to contain within national borders, regional or international actors tend to identify them as crises, if large-scale spillover effects from a conflict occur or have to be expected. Given this *de facto* overlap between crisis and conflict, analysis of EU policy needs to focus on the Union’s discourse and deployed interventionary toolbox in order to identify cases of crisis response. Within the EU, crisis response involves a distinct set of decision-making processes and institutions as well as access to specific resources.¹²

Crises provide windows of opportunity as the imminent threat tends to remove political, economic or democratic constraints on policy-makers.¹³ Defining a crisis and designing responses to it thus bestows power on policy-makers.¹⁴ Once a crisis has been defined, a lack of constraints often precipitates a lack of proportionality between cause and consequence,¹⁵ rendering crisis a make-or-break point for the legitimate authority of leadership.¹⁶ In the case of EU crisis response, the window of opportunity could be two-fold: externally, the EU's position in crisis response is relatively strengthened in comparison to a crisis-affected government. Hence, the onset of a crisis could facilitate previously blocked EU interventions, if linked to offers of support. Internally, if distinct crisis protocols are established, response policies may be able to bypass the complex structures of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and its drawn-out process of mission deployment. Yet, the EU's comprehensive approach to crisis response activates a complex mechanism of its own.¹⁷

Crises can be categorised by the sphere in which they emerge (e.g. economic, fiscal, financial, political, social etc.) or their gravity (e.g. existential, structural, acute, contained etc.). The former analytical approach might stress the interdependence of different types of crisis, considering one type of crisis as the consequence of another. By contrast, the latter approach hints at the level at which crises can be addressed. If a crisis is able to cascade through different spheres, its underlying causes might be of a structural nature. In politics, however, crises are often treated as isolated shocks, whose causes are narratively reduced to a containable and ultimately manageable threat often through political or security tools. However, intervention is based upon previous concepts, drawn of other events, carrying a range of biases which then create a blind spot for the analysis of the new problem.¹⁸

In EU foreign policy, tensions between power, knowledge, and local claims have been dealt with in four main ways in the past:

- (1) a *realist* strategy with its emphasis on maintaining centralized states with hard boundaries and a focus on security issues has been applied to the EU's **extended neighbourhood and beyond** [e.g., in Afghanistan, Iraq and Mali].¹⁹ Here, European interests rather than norms and rights would be expected to determine the design of a crisis response strategy. Intervention in a conflict only occurs when threats or opportunities emerge within this international system.²⁰ Humanitarian crises can prompt short-term crisis responses in the form of humanitarian assistance. The latter aims to contain the effects of a crisis.
- (2) In its **neighbourhood** [e.g. Libya and Ukraine] the EU aimed for a *structuralist* approach. This was based on the recognition that stark welfare and economic differences between the EU and its neighbourhood had fuelled migration towards the internal market and its promises of welfare and income opportunities. Structuralist intervention was meant to tackle systematic marginalisation of and within the periphery. In order to tackle the underlying structural violence,²¹ the EU supported trade creation and governance reforms in order to stimulate development, gender equality as well as a half-hearted element of democracy promotion (mainly within the framework of trade relations). The EU European Neighbourhood Policy was constructed to help deliver stability and integration (in all but institutions) in order to create a security community of friendly, and reformist states on its periphery, but largely failed to do so. Despite the destabilisation of Europe's neighbourhood since 2011, EU policies have only changed incrementally and failed to tackle the root causes of recent conflicts.²² Given that the EU's neighbourhood is large and troubled – stretching from Ukraine to Syria and Libya – spillover effects of conflicts in the neighbourhood may prompt crisis intervention. Crisis response in those cases would be limited to containment and stabilisation.
- (3) As soon as countries were recognized as **accession countries**, they become subject to

the *liberal* strategy of building democratic representation, implementing institutional reform, extending rights and development beyond the state, reflecting what Manners has described as the EU's 'Normative Power' [e.g., Cyprus and its 'europeanisation']. EU membership can only be achieved through a process of unilateral institutional assimilation as accession countries have to adapt to the Copenhagen criteria and the *acquis communautaire*. During the accession process, the EU engages through diplomacy, adjustment programmes and association agreements. EU intervention in accession countries' crises occurs when institutions and trade are significantly threatened or if crises spread towards the EU's borders, threatening European stability.²³ At this stage, the EU might have more vested interests in crisis management, but still rejects any responsibility beyond assistance for the stabilization of crisis contexts.

- (4) The *welfarist* approach is reserved solely for **EU member countries**. Within its geographical and political core, the EU's institutional framework and its evolution reflects its Monnetist foundations in a system designed to promote solidarity between states, aiming at regional convergence and the extension of shared security, extended rights and material well-being (emancipatory forms of peace in other words). Crisis intervention is vital here, not only as a principle of solidarity²⁴ but due to the interdependence of all economies within the internal market. Hence, any conflict, instability or large-scale disaster on EU territory is bound to trigger a crisis response. Interventionary practices are cemented by a broad range of public goods at the regional and intergovernmental level, which are closely linked to internal stability and external security.²⁵

These four options might not be mutually exclusive as the intensity of the crisis - or political interests –could trump the political and geographical distance to the EU. A very severe crisis within the extended or immediate neighbourhood, for instance, might require interventions

traditionally reserved for inner-European crises. Normative stances within the European Council could equally overcome a clear determination of crisis responses. However, the case of Syria suggests that neither geopolitical nor normative concerns can push the EU to turn from containing the spillover effects of a crisis towards decisive action to end the conflict from which the crisis emerged.²⁶ A similar pattern was observed with the breakup of Yugoslavia. The more member states are of the opinion that the realist approach to crises is unacceptable, and that preference should be given to a liberal or welfarist approach, the more pressure builds for stronger EU crisis intervention outside the borders of the EU. Hitherto however, the EU has not sufficiently developed institutions able to do much more than work with the UN and the donor system. It often claims to be pushing towards the fourth approach (above) in policy documents,²⁷ but practice has rarely reflected this outside of its core states.²⁸

The limitations of these four key approaches has prompted interest in ethnographic evaluations of policy, local ownership, micropolitics, resilience, and indigenous or traditional practices: in other words the ‘local turn’, which is an attempt to engage with local political claims, to understand local politics better, and to establish more ‘authentic’ and just forms of peace.²⁹ As a result of the EU’s continuous confrontation with crises since 2009, a similar reconsideration of political strategies may occur at the European level. We argue that its crisis response approach could be usefully informed by critical theories in an interdisciplinary framework. Thus, our proposed approach of critical crisis transformation, would draw in the latest critical arguments and evidence and involve:

- (5) a blending of liberal-progressive and welfarist, feminist, post-colonial, post-structuralist and environmentalist critiques and approaches to the above four categories. This would enable a hybrid form of crisis response, which mobilises notions of historical and distributive justice (e.g. global justice) in order to fulfil localized demands that emerge

from legitimate localized politics.³⁰

Critical crisis transformation (CCT) would thus move away from the EU-centred conception of crisis, in which geographical proximity to the core shapes intervention. Instead, this notion is grounded in a sound understanding of relationality and shaped by local narratives of the crisis. In a CCT approach, local EU delegations would networked with local non-elite and elite actors, on which they can draw in times of crisis to jointly develop a locally legitimate response. CCT can apply humanitarian assistance in the short-term but is dedicated to tackling the root causes of a crisis. It recognises the pacific value of a multiplicity of elements (expanded human rights; local and regional, perhaps global justice; gendered and environmentally sensitive approaches to crisis response; local forms peacebuilding, democratization), but does not apply externally designed blueprints. It foregrounds social forces (their relationality, networks, and mobility) and points to the importance and salience of hybrid political orders.³¹

Theories of conflict

Peace and conflict studies has generated a literature covering four recent traditions that explain, and justify responses to, conflict. Critical crisis transformation draws on these traditions (their evolution, epistemologies, discursive and political justifications, and distinctions) as the next section outlines.

Conflict management

Conflict management constitutes the first generation-approach to ending conflict, commonly equated with political realism. It emerged from the realist tradition of statecraft and realpolitik.³² It rests on the assumption that conflict is a natural or inevitable state of affairs, and

focuses on the state at the expense of non-state actors and issues. Relationships between disputants are to be balanced, controlled, or modified by the insertion and presence of third parties. It modifies the classic friend-enemy distinction in favour of an externally managed balance between disputants. This provides third parties with a significant resource (and can allow third parties to cast themselves as neutral and disinterested arbiters who do not have responsibility for the cause or maintenance of conflict).³³

Conflict management tools are different generations of peacekeeping, and mediation as a diplomatic or quasi-diplomatic activity.³⁴ These approaches aim at the production of a basic minimum order without overt violence, or at least an ‘acceptable’ level of violence minimally disruptive to the state and international system. The related literature is concerned with issues like neutrality and impartiality, trust, the timing and form of intervention (whether it is diplomatic, in the form of mediation, or coercive, in the form of military intervention). Indicative of conflict management approaches and their underlying ontological, epistemological, and methodological frameworks is the literature on hurting stalemates and ripe moments.³⁵ This argues that there are windows of opportunity where conflicts can be settled through the production of a basic, negative peace.³⁶ Conflict management responses, and a tolerance of hurting stalemates, allow mediators, diplomats, and peacekeeping operations to mobilise.³⁷ Political realism (in terms of state interests and resources) also limits the extent of conflict management interventions in peacekeeping, mediation and external guarantees for peace processes.

Conflict resolution

Partly as a critique of conflict management’s limitations, a second generation of debates and stances crystallised around the concept of conflict resolution.³⁸ This took a more ambitious stance on peace, leading to the notion of a ‘win-win’ or a positive peace, as opposed to conflict

management's negative peace approach.³⁹ This approach perceived conflict to be psychological, sociobiological, or as a product of political, economic and social structures that deny or impede human needs.⁴⁰ As such, it moved many thinkers away from notions of inevitable forms of conflict. It was specifically focused on an understanding of the root causes of conflict. From this perspective conflict arises out of a repression of human needs, and is a social⁴¹ as well as a psychological phenomenon. Relative deprivation theory, for example, identifies a sense of injustice as a source of social unrest, and the frustration-aggression approach sees frustration as a necessary or sufficient condition for aggression.⁴² Human needs theory offered a framework for understanding what caused conflict and how it might be resolved, derived from a civil society-oriented discourse and aimed at constructing a positive peace in the context of transnational relations.

Human needs, identity, political participation, and security, were viewed as non-negotiable because they are founded on a universal ontological drive.⁴³ From this assertion it was a short step to the realisation that the repression and deprivation of human needs is the root of protracted conflicts,⁴⁴ along with structural factors, such as underdevelopment. This equated both development and civil society discourse with peace. Debates about conflict resolution evolved towards 'multi-track diplomacy', peacebuilding, and contingency approaches and connected with liberal arguments about human security and the 'democratic peace'.⁴⁵

The underlying ontology of conflict resolution is heavily predicated upon the understanding that individual agency should and can be exerted to assuage human needs and lead to social justice. From a global perspective, this 'cosmopolitan turn' in conflict resolution⁴⁶ empowered non-state actors and NGOs to assist in the development of peace based on the identification and allocation of human needs according to the voices of non-state and unofficial actors. Thus, conflict resolution while widely applied in conflict-affected societies from Cyprus to Northern Ireland, provides a radical perspective of a positive peace dependent upon the

agency of the individual and civil society which is also both complementary and in tension with the acceptance of liberal norms. However, conflict resolution underestimates how entrenched structural violence or global injustice have become.

Conflict transformation

Conflict transformation can be regarded as the most emancipatory of the conflict management – conflict resolution – conflict transformation approaches to conflict. It pays more attention to the individual and the local, and believes that the structural bases of conflict can, and must, be addressed in order to truly deal with conflict causes and not merely conflict manifestations. Conflict transformation pays attention to issues of identity and believes that through self-examination, education and positive contact with the other, parties to a conflict can engage in reflective processes that consider conflict causation and maintenance factors. As such, conflict transformation places responsibility for addressing conflict on all participants – not just political or military actors. Unlike many other approaches to peace, it emphasises relationality and affect.⁴⁷ The whole-of-society approach makes conflict transformation potentially radical, costly, and time-consuming.

Where it has been attempted, conflict transformation has often been operationalised by international organisations and their proxies as complex multi-dimensional interventions. As a result, the good intentions of conflict transformation are often rendered into standardised and shallow formats that might use the language of rights and peace but are delivered in technocratic and limited ways. Conflict transformation, operationalised as part of the contemporary liberal peace project, has a basis in a version of Kant's democratic peace argument and its focus on democratisation,⁴⁸ and thus elides with development and marketisation, and the rule of law and

human rights. This argument has been extended in practice by the recent UN documentation on ‘sustaining peace’.⁴⁹

The peacekeeping operations in Namibia, in Cambodia, Angola, Mozambique and El Salvador seemed to offer the hope that a conflict-transformation-inflected peace could go beyond merely monitoring cease-fires and would instead contribute to the democratisation of failing and failed states. But UN missions, even versions that showed aspirations to become more emancipatory and expansive, became subsumed in the wider liberal peace, meaning that interveners (peacekeepers, NGOs, donors, and officials) were now required to focus on democratisation, human rights, development, and economic reform. This became the blueprint in Cambodia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, DR Congo, and East Timor. Lederach’s vision of a people-centric conflict transformation became, instead, a hollowed-out version marked by ethical compromise.⁵⁰

Conflict transformation influenced the development of comprehensive, third generation ambitions for peace, but also raised questions about the nature of the universal peace that they imply. The liberal peace requires multiple forms of intervention, which the theories of peacebuilding supply: UN peace operations, mediation and negotiation, development and humanitarian relief, and specialised reforms aimed at meeting international standards in areas from the security sector, the economy, the environment, border controls, human rights, and the rule of law. This effectively means that the liberal concept of peace revolves around the reform of governance, is interventionist, and has a rational and mechanical, problem-solving character.⁵¹

Yet, out of all UN attempts at democratisation since the end of the Cold War, around half had suffered some form of authoritarian regime within 15 years. In addition, the role of IFIs has effectively driven economic structural adjustment and development projects through

neoliberal strategies which have failed to provide the sorts of economic opportunities and welfare that would be expected within a liberal state (and indeed within the EU itself).

Critical Approaches to Peace

Critical approaches to peace represent a fourth generation of peacebuilding, which introduced a new reflexivity and more relational dimensions into the discussion of a sustainable peace. In some ways they were faithful to the original aims of conflict transformation. They criticized peacebuilding, statebuilding, and conflict resolution for being unable to overcome insidious practices of intervention upon host and recipient communities⁵² and ignoring local claims and voices. Critical approaches advanced a pluralist, critical and self-reflective approach⁵³ to peace, order and security, as well as a local turn.⁵⁴ Institutions, once moulded upon exported ideas of a state, had to be opened up to the political dynamics of the local environment in order to have a beneficial impact on the everyday lives and needs of the conflict-affected individual, as well as being cognitive of the external drivers of war. Critical theory pointed to issues of historical, distributive, social, and environmental justice as integral to any sustainable form of peace.

This required a hybridised form of peacebuilding that allowed for mediation between the local and the international over peacebuilding praxis and social, political, and economic practices that both deem plausible and acceptable.⁵⁵ A few significant hints of such an approach- for all its weaknesses- might be found in Northern Ireland, along with its EU Peace funding, which invested enormously in civil society, material improvement, and attempted to move away from the frameworks that fed nationalism and sectarianism (such as centralised power, territorialism, and hard borders).

EU crisis response in theory and practice

The categorisations above (management – resolution – transformation – critical approaches) have substantial levels of overlap and are best seen as a spectrum, moving from the most conservative type of intervention (conflict management) to the most radical (critical approaches to peace). In complex peace operations, the first three types of intervention may be in operation simultaneously, or they operate sequentially. Transferring this conceptual progression to crisis response, the framework that this paper develops becomes: crisis management – crisis resolution – crisis transformation.

Any categorisation exercise will struggle when directed towards a complex and dynamic series of processes like EU crisis response. While the contribution of this paper lies in its theoretical categorisation of crisis response, it will attempt to flesh this out empirically as this may assist conceptualisation and the analysis of the EU's normative ambitions in crisis response. Analysing interventions, interests that shape the translation of policy into practice, rationalities and political economies that attend policy delivery, and the reception of policies, will help to examine the gap between institutionalist perspectives and the more socially-framed, critical peace and conflict perspectives. The latter encourages us to think about the reception of EU crisis responses and the extent to which they meet with agency, resistance, and hybridisation.

Crisis Management

Mirroring the logic of conflict management outlined above, crisis management (CM) aims at the stabilisation or containment of a crisis, and is also often used as a generic term for all types of intervention in crises.⁵⁶ It recognises that a crisis is on-going and aims to prevent further deterioration, contagion or spill-over into other forms of crises. The principal aim is limited: to

prevent crises from spreading, destabilising regions or inflicting harmful repercussions on the EU. Crisis management works through short-term or limited-ambition interventions, but rejects long-term engagement with the underlying causes of the crisis, other than through balancing and stabilisation activities. Depending on the nature of the crisis, this can work at all levels, from elite diplomacy to on-the-ground activity involving a displaced population. Hence, the crisis management toolkit encompasses humanitarian assistance, budgetary support, mediation, donor conferences, border management missions, the establishment of no-fly zones and humanitarian corridors, while domestic crisis management may require ceasefire negotiations, security interventions, curfews and financial concessions. In prolonged crises, external crisis management can also stretch to sanctions, and short-term military interventions.

The world-view that informs crisis management is a realist perspective, which analyses crises through the prism of national interests and power relations. Security is a transnational concept in a globalised world, rendering national security vulnerable to contagion and spill-over effects of conflicts and crisis abroad. Yet, crisis management regards the state with its border regimes and defence mechanisms as a bulwark against negative effects of security interdependence.

The notion of ‘management’ suggests power relations in which the manager (in this case the EU) regards itself as in a position to manage (control) the effects of the crisis. In reality, the EU is likely to be acting in concert with other actors (or was essentially subservient to other actors as was the case with Libya), while a crisis is likely to be beyond the control of any actor or concert of actors. Many of the tools used are thus aimed at containing the harmful repercussions of a crisis. Crisis management can be seen as a first step that paves the way for more ambitious forms of intervention to follow. In some situations, however, crisis management is all that is possible over the longer-term and crisis mode becomes a semi-permanent stance.

EU engagement with conflict-related crisis has generated mainly crisis management responses. For instance, EU policies to mitigate the complex security crises in Libya (the lawlessness due to rebel infighting after the overthrow of Muammar al-Gaddafi, compounded by international sponsorship of a proxy war) and Mali (the combined devastation of a secessionist uprising in the north, a military coup and a jihadist insurgency) demonstrated a narrow border management and security focus, which failed to respond to local security needs.⁵⁷ In both contexts, crisis management was moulded on a Euro-centric rationale of threat containment. While the Libyan and Malian populations have been suffering from the infighting and general lawlessness of militia rule, economic instability and a lack of services, the EU was mainly concerned about weapons trafficking, jihadists crossing borders and migration to Europe. Prioritising its own interests, the EU authorised a border assistance mission (EUBAM) in Libya in May 2013 and several border management programmes in Mali.⁵⁸ This stands in stark contrast to a more conflict-sensitive approach to both countries, which needed to include the promotion of a national dialogue as well as local agreements on how to share power and responsibilities, demobilise militias, build legitimate political institutions and create the environment for a growing legal economy.⁵⁹ In addition, EU border management strategies failed to understand the complex border economies in both countries.⁶⁰ In Libya, EUBAM's blueprint for integrated border management was impossible to achieve in the Libyan context of disintegrated state authority.⁶¹ Equally poorly conceived remained the EU's mission EUNAVFOR Med. Its objective of boarding, seizing, searching and diverting human traffickers' vessels off the Libyan coastline was so mismatched with the political issues on the ground that it could neither achieve a UNSC mandate nor an invitation from the Libyan authorities.⁶²

Another crisis management tool that the EU has deployed in several cases is the use of sanctions and conditionalities. In Libya, sanctions against specific individuals among the

country's political elites, for instance, managed to remove some high-level resistance against the centralisation of political authority under the Libyan Political Agreement of 2015.⁶³ Individual EU sanctions were also applied to put pressure on Russia's annexation of Crimea – here, however, with less tangible outcomes.⁶⁴

Crisis resolution

The increasing duration of crises as permanent situations have paved the way for more ambitious strategies of dealing with crises. In crisis resolution (CR), political ambitions stretch beyond crisis management to include human needs. This fits the ethos of EU engagement better than crisis management. Aside from stabilising the situation, the ambition is to 'resolve' the crisis, involving not only diplomatic, political and militant elites but also civil society. Crisis resolution is focused on the needs of crisis-affected populations and considers economic marginalisation, conflicts and 'bad governance' as root causes of crises. An EU-sponsored programme on the restoration of local governance and reconciliation in crisis-affected areas of Ukraine provides an example for the latter.⁶⁵

On the ground needs assessment – with a broader mandate but similarly localised as the 2012 needs assessment mission in Libya - can provide a good starting point. Accordingly, tools would focus on civil society-led debates in order to comprehend the complexity of local political economies, societal divisions and local power structures. Such complex understandings would feed into crisis resolution processes and elite-led diplomacy. Crises resolution may require burden-sharing agreements between the government at the epicentre of the crisis and neighbouring countries or international actors with an interest in regional and global stability, according to human needs provisions (now understood as human security).

However, the underlying approach to development remains constrained by neoliberal concepts of economic growth, which tend to centre on trade relations, governance reforms and investment climate, while its inclusion of civil society is limited to internationally operating actors and INGOs. Consequently, crisis resolution keeps crisis-afflicted economies locked into a precarious path towards development even if it highlights civil society processes.

The deal-making involved in crisis resolution raises questions of recognition and legitimacy. As formal agreements are being made, and as states and international organisations are often party to these agreements, issues of legitimacy are likely to arise at state and society levels. Thus, crisis resolution suggests a longer-term and broader perspective on the crisis and its underlying causes.

There is limited evidence for crisis resolution strategies among EU interventions.⁶⁶ Civil society involvement may seem like a time-consuming endeavour to crisis responders. Yet, only the involvement of different societal perspectives on crises could help the EU to avoid designing responses that appear biased or self-interested, damaging its legitimacy on the ground. One of the few exceptions to this rule are EUCAP's training programmes in proximity policing in Mali. Here, police forces are trained to work with local communities on their security needs.⁶⁷ In the context of the Malian security crisis, such an approach is particularly valuable as the ethnic biases of state security institutions have in the past undermined attempts at statebuilding.⁶⁸

Crisis transformation

Crisis transformation (CT) represents a more advanced form of crisis response, and one which closely resembles the goals of the EU on paper⁶⁹ if not in practice. It recognises the pitfalls of short-term reactions and elite level deal-making and goes beyond the satisfaction of immediate needs in crisis-afflicted populations. It seeks to deal with the underlying causation and maintenance factors behind a crisis, building a framework for emancipation from crisis conflict

dynamics. Primarily, it aims to lend rights to affected populations, respond to their political claims and pave the way for sustainable forms of peace and order. A good example for this approach was the EU's Border Assistance Mission in Rafah, which sought to create trust between the withdrawing Israeli Defence Forces and the Palestinian administration in Gaza. Confidence-building combined with improving the capacity of Palestinian border control was supposed to be a genuine emancipatory measure, laying the groundwork for a Palestinian state in accordance with the Road Map.

Rather than dealing with the fallout of a crisis as if its immediate effects could be easily and quickly reversed, crisis transformation considers the new contexts created by crises as permanent and seeks to accommodate those new realities. Mass exodus of refugee populations from conflict-affected regions, for instance, inflicts more than a short-term strain on host populations and government. Beyond housing and feeding those populations, a crisis transformation approach would offer host governments incentives to extend rights to refugees. An example of this approach could be seen in the EU's relaxation of its rules of origin in the EU-Jordan Association Agreement to benefit industrial production in Jordan that employs Syrian refugees,⁷⁰ if the agreement were complemented by measures to create job growth in the Jordanian economy.

Crisis transformation includes non-elite actors in attempts to understand and tackle the crisis. In practice, this means that in order to develop an appropriate response strategy, crisis transformers in the EU have to involve a wide range of local perspectives on the crisis and its root causes.⁷¹ Among the cases studied in this paper, the Support Group for Ukraine (SGUA) constitutes the most serious attempt at crisis response coordination. SGUA was established to liaise between different EU aid efforts in Ukraine and those of its member states, while also facilitating the cooperation with other donors. However, SGUA lacks credible links to its local

counterparts,⁷² making it unproductive and disqualifying it as a genuinely transformative crisis response.

While offering assistance in the heat of a crisis, crisis transformation considers the long-term effects of intervention: crisis response networks would incorporate local knowledge and offer capacity-building in return; its strategy aims to expand from the short-term to the medium and long-term based on the understanding that path dependency (either with the institutionalisation of intervention or with the power structures on the ground) could undermine the outcome if based on a misguided understanding of the crisis. Hence, it builds regular review and monitoring milestones into its strategy in order to ward off negative long-term effects of short-term crisis response measures. It is a more long-term and costly response that operates at all levels of government and society.

Critical Crisis Transformation

The logical outcome of the thrust of EU policy,⁷³ combined with the evolution of peace and conflict studies, along with the critical strands of EU studies indicates the possibility of more critical forms of crisis transformation (CCT). CCT would draw on the post-colonial, feminist, and welfarist strands of thinking about the nature of peaceful order, expanded rights and political sustainability across society and the region,⁷⁴ and fourth generation thinking about conflict and peace. It would combine the discursive and civil society approach of crisis resolution, with the more multi-dimensional and inclusive approach of crisis transformation and positive hybridity⁷⁵ in intervention-related institutions, crisis analysis and policies. In such an approach, crisis responses would be jointly designed by the EU and its local networks of elite and non-elite actors at the epicentre of the crises, connected with regional and international organisations with the aim of sharing resources and coordinating crisis response strategies.

Since crisis response necessitates quick intervention, this approach would require strong pre-established local networks that crisis responders could draw upon. A limited example for this could be the branching of PARSEC (an EU-supported pilot project in Mali) into the provision of basic social services.⁷⁶ Conceived of in Bamako and not Brussels, this initiative changed perspectives by focusing on local needs, rather than international security imperatives. It is based on the understanding that European interests in Malian border management depend crucially on the population's loyalty to and trust in the state, which in turn requires that state institutions provide socio-economic services. By contrast, the drafting of the 'Political Framework for a Crisis Approach' by the European External Action Service in 2014 for the Libyan crisis demonstrated a concerted effort to bring together all EU-internal expertise on Libya, critically assess EU strategy in the country, identify threats and outline strategies for crises response. This Political Framework could have been one step towards developing a hybrid crisis transformation framework. Yet, the lack of a systematic inclusion of Libyan partners and thus of EU-local consensus building in crises response disqualified the Political Framework as a transformatory approach. Documents such as "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe"⁷⁷ suggest EU policy evolution as much as claims it has made about its goals in the Western Balkans and elsewhere, and the work that has gone into developing ECHO or multitrack forms of diplomacy.

Associated practices would be based on dynamics of historical and distributive justice and the realisation of the relationality of global crises,⁷⁸ avoiding core-periphery style discrimination as well as the limited goals of crisis management. It would recognise the materiality of needs as well as the importance of opening up to a multitude of local discourses in the attempt to understand and later resolve crises.⁷⁹ Indeed, critical crisis transformation would try to distil its analysis of the causes of a crisis from a large variety of local and expert perspectives. Through such consultation processes, it might avoid the premature narrowing of

the crisis narrative, which is likely to set crisis response on the wrong path and facilitates the cascading of crisis through different spheres.⁸⁰ It would also point to the need for broad institutional approaches, identifying institutions and instruments of crisis intervention in cooperation with local partners. Such a hybrid approach negotiates northern biases through localised claims and accepts that mobility is a legitimate mode of crisis response.⁸¹ Most importantly, this would recognise that localised crises are often manifestations of wider structural and global justice oriented issues, which require the renegotiation of power relations.⁸² This is where the EU might be most useful: to lend its weight to attempts to rectify these imbalances, which allow crises to resurface in different regions with devastating consequences for the affected societies.

It should be stressed that the elements of the CM-CR-CT-CCT framework might be seen as gradations along the same path or part of a more complex hybrid. Acute urgency and time limitations may constrain policy towards crisis management, but as situations become more protracted, it may begin to incorporate the longer-term goals and processes implied by crisis resolution and transformation.

Advancing the framework

The advantage of the CM-CR-CT-CCT framework is that it enables the examination of the actions and stances of the EU (and its partners, proxies and competitors) and the epistemologies and politics that lie behind them. Given the more advanced claims of EU policymaking, underpinned by critical and interdisciplinary thinking, a critical crisis transformation (CCT) framework as outlined above may be plausible. The framework pronounces on whether EU crisis response instruments and practices are orientated towards states, institutions and the maintenance of international security or towards people and societies. Its different categories

can also be distinguished based on their compatibility with other strategies, their inclusiveness, needs- and rights-focus as the table below shows.

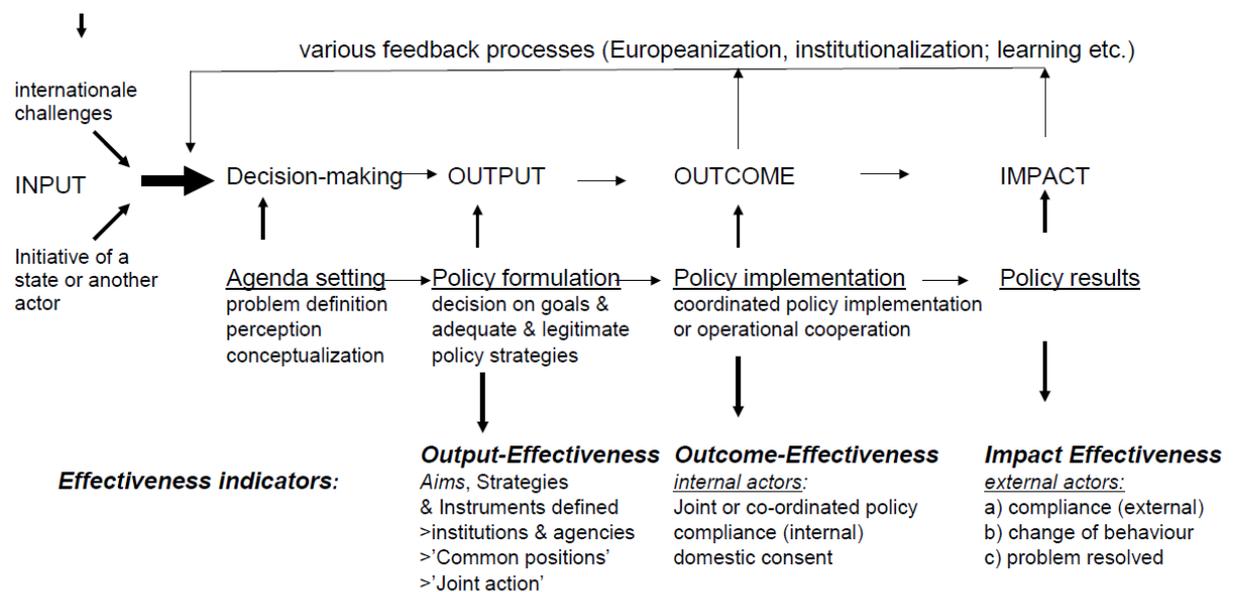
	Operates in conjunction with other strategies	Is system compliant or system challenging	Extends beyond top-down actors	Satisfies needs of conflict-affected societies	Extends rights to conflict-affected populations
Conflict/crisis management	(-)	compliant	(-)	(-)	(-)
Conflict/crisis resolution	(+)	compliant	(+)	short-term	(-)
Conflict/crisis transformation (Critical Crisis Transformation)	(+) (+)	Challenging [re-structuring]	(+) (+)	medium / long-term short to long term	(+) (+)

Of course, the evidence above points to the prevalence of crisis management approaches, rather than more advanced response patterns. More important conceptually, crises are understood more from the perspective of the EU rather than from the perspective of the individual's or community's security and rights.

In terms of lessons learned, the decision-making and feedback processes that attend EU foreign and security policy-making, including crisis response raise two main points.⁸³ The first is that the policy-making process has very limited scope for input from local actors (often the recipients or proposed 'beneficiaries' of crisis response). This has created a form of strategic paralysis with respect to peace. It means that EU crisis strategies are pushed back towards those associated with conflict management, leading at best to concurrence with recent 'stabilisation' frameworks.

A second point relates to the epistemologies and worldviews that lie behind conflict management, conflict resolution and conflict transformation and how they relate to the decision-making processes and assessment of 'success' and 'failure'. Crisis management as the most conservative of the perspectives is represented in Figure 1, where the setting of policy agendas and the requirement of consensus is limited to the EU, while external actors are expected to change their behaviour and comply.

Figure 1



© Heider/ Kleine/ Peters 2004 (based on Young & Underdal, 2002, 2004)

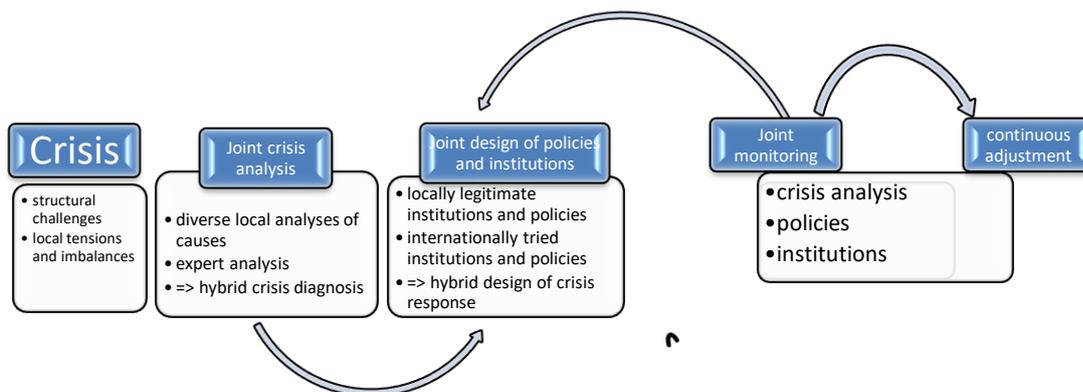
Conflict transformation, and particularly its critical versions, would sit most uncomfortably with this way of defining 'success' or 'failure' and the structures of domination that it represents. The emphasis in conflict transformation on bottom-up and organic processes, inclusion of minorities, mutual learning as well as meaningful emancipation and empowerment would struggle with the linearity and controlled nature of institutionalised and formal processes.

Figure 1 represents a simplification and abstraction of these complex issues. A crisis management approach is likely to value path dependency and assess effectiveness and success as fulfilment of externally set goals. A crisis resolution approach, and more particularly that

associated with crisis transformation, is more likely to be open to the analysis, agency and initiative of local actors. What appears to have arisen in EU engagements is a discursive framework that extends to and surpasses crisis resolution approaches, but in practice there exists a very traditional conflict and crisis management framework.

This represents a significant compromise on critical approaches to peace, which require that crisis diagnosis and the design of policy instruments would be carried out jointly in cooperation with diverse actors from the crisis-affected context as depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Critical Crisis Transformation



Engaging with a broader range of conflict dynamics as well as justice issues opens up the question of how crisis management would be framed through the eyes of the subalterns affected directly and indirectly by it, probably producing a hybrid version: still skewed toward the geopolitical and often euro-centric interests of the EU, but at least more cognizant of the demands connected to expanded rights, justice and sustainability in the conflict context rather than in Brussels.

Conclusion

We have outlined three sets of taxonomies of crisis or conflict response, in which crisis intervention could be modelled on the four generations of conflict response:

First – Second – Third – Fourth Generation Peacebuilding

Crisis Management – Crisis Resolution – Crisis Transformation- Critical Crisis Transformation.

Realist – Structuralist – Liberal – Welfarist Responses

Despite this potential for evolution, our empirical analysis demonstrates that contemporary crisis engagement represents EU security and political interests (in terrorism, migration, with weak common values), rather than those of disputant societies, or indeed of ‘subaltern’ actors. However, looking back in the institutional history of EU crisis response shows that crisis response does not have to be limited to realist, securitised and self-interested interventions as the EU’s Border Assistance Mission in Rafah from 2005 shows. The latter’s crisis transformation approach is a long way off from EUBAM in Libya and other recent border assistance policies, whose purpose reflects mainly the EU’s concern over issues of human trafficking and terrorism. Our case studies have shown a trend of EU crises responses towards crisis management with mostly unsuccessful or incomplete examples of further-reaching approaches.

If EU policies strive for a third and fourth generation of crisis transformation and a critical agenda for crises, our cases would suggest that broader approaches are needed. EU institutions would have to engage with alternative forms of legitimate political authority outside of the modern state, which would be less territorialised and more relational and networked across scales, and more focused on social assistance and consent. It would favour, in a somewhat contradictory manner, more external intervention if it were to be couched in such

terms. However, fatigue with intervention, and a related retreat to concepts such as ‘principled pragmatism’⁸⁴, subsidiarity and resilience, as a response to both material and normative overstretch has undermined the EU’s local peacebuilding authority and legitimacy in our cases.

We find no evidence for a graduated crisis response in our cases: strategies to contain risks in the EU’s neighbourhood are the same as the approaches used further afield. Crisis responses are not geared to the empirical, ethnographic dynamics of the conflicts, which have now been well documented and should be included in any responses. They are instead geared to the EU’s centralised view of what constitutes a crisis for its core actors and policies and to prevent challenges to its model for integration.

A more critical engagement with crises would offer the prospect of ‘democratising’ responses by working with and alongside local and non-elite actors, thus opening up opportunities for partnership and – ultimately – sustainable forms of peace. There are some signs of differentiated and modulated responses from the EU, and the range of actual and discursive responses covered in this article suggest room for a further hybridisation in crisis response – deftly changing the response in relation to an evolving crisis.

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² Callinicos, *Bonfire of Illusions*; Calhoun and Derlugian, *The Deepening Crisis*; European Commission, *State Aid*; Gamble, *Crisis Without End?*; Walby, *Crisis*; Kjaer and Olsen, *Critical Theories*.

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⁷ Ferguson and Gupta, 'Beyond "Culture"', 6-23.

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¹¹ Walby, *Crisis*, 14.

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- ¹² Batora et al., 'EU crisis response'; Pietz, 'Flexibility and Stabilization'.
- ¹³ Gamble, *Crisis Without End?*, 30.
- ¹⁴ Hay, *Narrating Crisis*, 255.
- ¹⁵ Walby, *Crisis*, 14.
- ¹⁶ Gamble, *Crisis Without End?*, 32.
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- ¹⁸ Roitman, 'Stakes of Crisis', 17-34.
- ¹⁹ Goldgeier & McFaul, 'Liberal core', 1-26.
- ²⁰ Burton and Dukes, *Conflict*: introduction.
- ²¹ Galtung, *Violence, Peace and Peace Research*, 167-191.
- ²² Bouris and Schumacher, *Revised European Neighbourhood Policy*.
- ²³ Manners, 'Normative Power Europe', 235-58.
- ²⁴ Indeed, solidarity in cases of terrorist attacks, man-made or natural disasters is contractually mandated in Art. 222 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Treaty of Rome). Since the shape of this solidarity is not further defined though, this obligation cannot be enforced (see Batora et al., 'EU crisis response', 21).
- ²⁵ Whitman, *Civilian Power*.
- ²⁶ The crisis that emerged in Europe in 2015 as a consequence of the Syrian crisis is often mislabelled as a 'refugee / migrant crisis'. Yet, as Scopioni (2018) shows, it is more accurately identified as a political crisis that resulted from the EU's incomplete agreements, eroding its ability to deal with migration.
- ²⁷ See references to a 'comprehensive approach to external conflicts and crises', indicating a holistic and integrated approach which implies a broader analysis, set of instruments and capabilities (EEAS, Shared Vision; Council of the European Union, Integrated Approach).
- ²⁸ Mac Ginty, Pogodda, Richmond, *EU and Crisis Response*.
- ²⁹ Mac Ginty and Richmond, 'Local Turn'.
- ³⁰ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Theory from the South*.
- ³¹ Boege et al, *Hybrid Political Orders*; Albrecht and Wiuff, 'Simultaneity of Authority', 1-16.
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- ³⁴ Hammarskjöld, *Summary Study*.
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- ³⁶ Galtung, *Peaceful Means*; Diehl, 'Exploring Peace'.
- ³⁷ Zartman, 2003: 19; James, *Peacekeeping*.
- ³⁸ Dunn, *Power Politics*.
- ³⁹ Galtung, *Peaceful Means*; Diehl, 'Exploring Peace'.
- ⁴⁰ Isard, *Understanding conflict*, chapter 2.
- ⁴¹ Azar, *Protracted Social Conflict*; Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*.
- ⁴² Dollard, Miller, & Sears, *Frustration and Aggression*; Runciman, *Relative Deprivation*, chapter 2; Berkowitz, *Aggression*
- ⁴³ Azar, 'Protracted International Conflicts', 61-63.
- ⁴⁴ Azar, *Management*, 9-12.
- ⁴⁵ MacMillan, 'Whose Democracy', 19.
- ⁴⁶ Jones, *Cosmopolitan Mediation?*
- ⁴⁷ Lederach, *Building Peace*.
- ⁴⁸ Call and Cook, 'On Democratisation', 233-246.
- ⁴⁹ UN, 'High-level Meeting'.
- ⁵⁰ Lederach, *Preparing for Peace*.
- ⁵¹ Chopra, *Space of Peace*, 338; Chopra, *UN's Kingdom*; UN, 'Report'; Carnegie Council, 'Preventing Deadly Conflict', 2-3.
- ⁵² Debrix and Weber, *Rituals of Mediation*, xv.
- ⁵³ Patomaki, 'Critical Theories', 732; Bourdieu, *Theory of Practice*.
- ⁵⁴ Mac Ginty and Richmond, 'Local Turn'.

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- ⁵⁵ Galtung, *Peaceful Means*; Richmond and Franks, *Peace Transitions*; Boege et al, *Hybrid Political Orders*; Mac Ginty, 'Hybridity'.
- ⁵⁶ Brecher and Wilkenfeld, *Study of Crisis*.
- ⁵⁷ Ivanshchenko-Stadnik et al., 'Facing crises', 60-63; Boas et al., 'Mali', 17.
- ⁵⁸ Boas et al., 'Mali'.
- ⁵⁹ ICG, 'Fezzan'.
- ⁶⁰ Ivanshchenko-Stadnik et al., 'Facing crises', 16-19; Boas et al., 'Mali', 20-24.
- ⁶¹ Ivanshchenko-Stadnik et al., 'Facing crises'.
- ⁶² The mission was eventually launched half a year later. However, it had to be re-dedicated from anti-migration into anti-terrorism policy (Ivanshchenko-Stadnik et al., 'Facing crises', 31).
- ⁶³ Ivanshchenko-Stadnik et al., 'Facing crises', 24.
- ⁶⁴ *ibid*, 53.
- ⁶⁵ *ibid*, 47.
- ⁶⁶ Mac Ginty, Pogodda, Richmond, *EU and Crisis Response*.
- ⁶⁷ Boas, 'Mali', 22.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid*.
- ⁶⁹ See endnote 27.
- ⁷⁰ For details, see: European Commission, 'Supporting Jordan'.
- ⁷¹ Visoka and Doyle, 'Neo-Functional Peace'.
- ⁷² Ivanshchenko-Stadnik et al., 'Facing crises', 49.
- ⁷³ Tocci, EU Global Strategy.
- ⁷⁴ Richmond, 'Interventionary Order'.
- ⁷⁵ Richmond, 'Hybrid Peace'.
- ⁷⁶ Boas et al., 'Mali', 23.
- ⁷⁷ EU, 'Shared Vision'.
- ⁷⁸ Richmond, 'Interventionary Order'.
- ⁷⁹ Mac Ginty and Richmond, 'Local Turn'.
- ⁸⁰ Walby, *Crisis*.
- ⁸¹ Richmond and Mac Ginty, 'Mobility'.
- ⁸² Gamble, *Crisis Without End?*
- ⁸³ Peters, *Foreign Policy*, introduction.
- ⁸⁴ Multiple interviews and observations from our different case studies confirmed this argument.