

BOOK REVIEW

Mai'a K. Davis Cross, *The Politics of Crisis in Europe* (2017)

The current epoch of confusion in European history is one of its own. Economic integration among European nations from six to twenty-eight is the hallmark in modern western history. However, this integration now facing an existential threat. The Member states of the European Union urged to exit from the union. Destruction of the European economic model reverberates on different economic forums. Lack of cooperation between EU institutions and policy implications among member states leads to questioning of integration philosophy. Suspicion raises on EU's as an institution and its survival. It is leading to an enormous division between Eurosceptics and Europhiles. Differences in Political, economic, social, and cultural concerns, points EU integration in jeopardy.

Mai'a K. Davis Cross has addressed these existential threats in her latest book *The Politics of crisis in Europe* (2017) published by Cambridge University Press, UK. Dr. Cross is Edward W. Brooke Professor of Political Sciences and associate professor of political science and international affairs. She is also a Senior Researcher at the ARENA Centre for European Studies, University of Oslo. She is the author of three books on diverse EU subjects. Her book *Security Integration in Europe* has won the Best Book Prize from the University Association of Contemporary Studies in 2012.¹

Cross, in her book, discussed how, whenever a crisis hits the EU, immediately it rises questions on the existence of the EU. There are episodic existential threats faced by the EU. Cross called these periods as "integrational panic" (1). These integrational panics are not an unusual circumstance for Europe. It has a way long history, from its integration in 1957. Stretching from the beginning Empty Chair Crisis of 1965 to 2015 Refugee Crisis. Whatever the crisis is either an internal or external media, politicians, and commentators apply the "Doomsday scenarios" (2) on the EU and Europe. Cross argues that these outlets portraits a bleak picture of the crisis. These crises are another opportunity for deeper integration. Every crisis follows a pattern, which

¹ <https://cssh.northeastern.edu/people/faculty/maia-cross/>.

Professor Cross divided into five stages: Tigger, Buildup, Crisis Height, Catharsis, and Resolution. Firstly, the event that is considered a threat or triggers the crisis. Secondly, the sight of the crisis leads to tension and integrational panic. Mostly the journalist, commentators, public figures highlight it. Third, that follows up with Crisis height, where the end is near is predicted. Fourth, the catharsis leads to the tension subsiding stage with the new insight of crisis. Fifth and final is the resolution with the end of the crisis and renewed consensus (6).

Under Explaining Existential Crises, Cross emphasizes the role of "social narrative" (23) in interpreting crisis. Current media centres are an influential actor in filtering, reinterpreting, and amplifying the event. She points in order to comprehend the EU existential crisis three approaches explain best. The systematic/ structural perspectives examine the international system and the role of the institutions. Behavioral perspectives point behavior of the individuals in originating a crisis. The sociological perspective draws the social construction of the crisis. How crisis narratives are built by the elites in media even in academia. The crisis narratives are engineered and shaped the public sentiments.

To elucidate her point, Cross describes three significant crises that had cause integrational panic in Europe during the twenty-first century. The 2003 EU Iraq Crisis, the constitutional crisis of 2005, and the Eurozone crisis 2010. These crises have been under different chapters in the book.

The 2003 EU Iraq Crisis is vital in shaping the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The failure of the European Defense Community and the European Political Committee leads to the formation of new institution European Political Cooperation (EPC) in the 1970s. EPC did play a role in international politics during the Cold War. Substantial progress as an international player began in 1992 after the Maastricht Treaty when EPC transformed into CFSP. The event that catalyzes the crisis was the terrorist attack of 9/11 in the US. After the invasion of Iraq US, pressurized the EU for the coalition. EU felt the existential crisis under demanding circumstances. CFSP was new, not truly functional at that time of crisis. EU lacked one voice representation due to different Transatlantic relations with the member states. The catharsis of the crisis had a spillover effect internally and externally. The resolution of the crisis was new the development of new

strategies for security and defenses, new cooperation in the defense industry among member states and deeper integration for joint actions.

The next crisis that created the integrational panic was the Constitution Treaty Crisis in 2004. The 2004 Treaty was an attempt to improve "the democratic legitimacy of the EU" (109). More was a sort of constitution for the EU where more members can participate in the functioning of the EU institutions. The most pertinent constitutional change was the qualified majority voting (QMV) in different policy areas from the unanimity voting system. The process of ratification for the Constitutional Treaty referendum was required. French and Dutch EU citizens vote no. This No referenda, created the existential crisis for Europe. This crisis paved a smooth way for the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. Lisbon Treaty had similar components as this treaty. But the crisis narrative from elites and media created this panic.

Eurozone Crisis 2010-12 is the last case study in the book. The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 was the crucial phase in the economic and monetary union. The launch of the single common currency Euro in 1999 was another step milestone. The continuance of the Euro in the world currency market was well received. Euro gave a substantial boost to the EU's economic and commercial market. "Euro performed well from 1999 to 2009, with stable price levels, a strong value on the foreign exchange, and favorable economic growth across the Eurozone." (161) The Global Crisis of 2008-9 also hit the Eurozone. The Eurozone crisis was eventually the outcome of the global crisis. Greece was most affected by this Eurozone crisis. Greece only contributes two percent of the EU's economy. The whole Eurozone crisis questions the very existence of Europe. The media and the elites depict the end of economic integration as the gap between creditor north and debtor south increases.

The Politics of crisis in Europe is a valuable contribution to understanding contemporary European issues. This thought-provoking book gives an insight into the EU's economic and political structure in times of crisis. How media and elites are politicizing the crisis. Cross castigate the role of media in creating panic. How media politicize socially driven issues into an existential panic. Especially when the EU is facing challenges of Brexit and the gap between the North and South deficits. *The Politics of crisis in Europe*

commentary on the crisis renders another perspective utterly different from the mass media sources.

Rabia Mansoor
M.Phil Student, ASCE