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Subscriptions
Crisis Response Journal is published quarterly; it is available by subscription in hard copy or digital.
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Published by Crisis Management Limited, Sodes Place Farm, Westcott Road, Dorking RH4 3EB, UK

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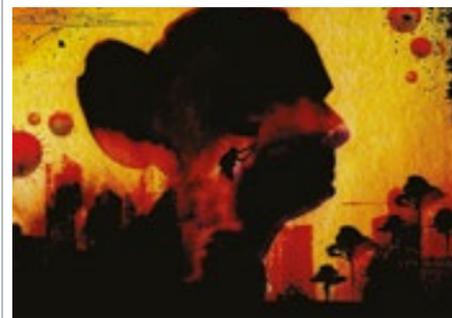
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Ann Kiernan

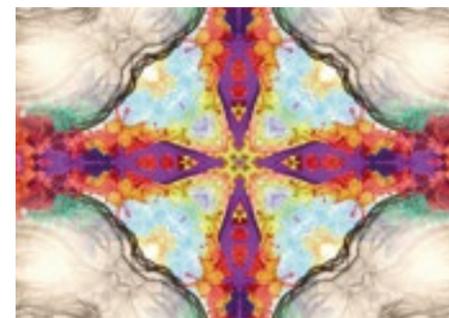
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Sergey Nivens | 123rf | Chris Pettican

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Maxim Usik | Ikon Images

Cover story: A year of cascading, complex crises
Cover image: Miles Cole

comment

This edition's front cover depicts some of the events that have occurred in 2020, which has most certainly been one of the most challenging and tumultuous years any of us will have experienced. We may be overworking the Pandora's box (or jar) analogy, but these last 12 months truly exemplify the myth of 'great and unexpected troubles'. Of course, many of these had been foreseen, or were heralded by clear precursors and signs. But unheeded warnings notwithstanding, these events have certainly combined to strain individual, professional, community, business, national and international resilience as never before.

Twelve months ago, CRJ's front cover warned leaders that: "All eyes are on you." In today's landscape of repeated shockwaves, cascading crises and, "instant systemic contamination that piles up challenges on multiple fronts," leadership across all disciplines – political, business, governance and institutional – is being scrutinised as never before. Sadly, reactions and responses to the pandemic have been, to put it politely, erratic in many areas.

Worryingly, we know that more shocks are on the way – wishful thinking will not magically sweep away the harsh onslaught of climate-related events. The "toxic polarisation, anti-scientific mindsets and retreats into alternative realities" mentioned on p14 are symptoms, not the cause of today's lack of coherence and solidarity in the face of global threats.

Yet, as with Pandora's box, there are glimmers of hope. Human innovation, creativity, business and science have combined to develop vaccines and deliver other life-saving products and services in record time. Stories of self-sacrifice, dedication and love abound. People are still caring for others.

All of us in society, but particularly our leaders and those responsible for the safety and security of communities, must not let the next wave of crises come to pass in a wilful paroxysm of inattentive blindness.

And here's hoping that 'deceptive expectation', which is the alternative interpretation of 'hope' in the Pandora myth, does not hold true.



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