

## **BOOK REVIEW**

Elizabeth FERRIS & Kemal KIRISCI, *The Consequences of Chaos: Syria's Humanitarian Crisis and the Failure to Protect*  
(New York, Brookings Institution Press, 2016)

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# The Consequences of Chaos: Syria's Humanitarian Crisis and the Failure to Protect

**Elizabeth FERRIS & Kemal KIRIŞCI**

*Brookings Institution Press, New York, 2016, 224 pages, ISBN: 0815729510*

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*The Consequences of Chaos: Syria's Humanitarian Crisis and the Failure to Protect* is a comprehensive and sophisticated collection of Elizabeth Ferris and Kemal Kirişçi's previous scholarly work on Syrian refugees. The book offers a multi-dimensional account of the root causes, evolution, and consequences of the Syrian civil war. Those interested in forced migration will find this book well written, easy to read, and informative.

In the first chapter, Ferris and Kirişçi provide valuable information on past global forced-migration movements; expand on the root causes of these humanitarian crises, giving particular attention to those movements that have taken place in the Middle East, such as those involving Palestinian and Iraqi refugees; and discuss why the Middle East is inclined toward these types of movements. The authors then move on to discuss the current refugee crisis that originated in Syria due to civil war and provide in-depth analysis regarding how the civil war itself began. In their analysis of how Syria's ethnic and religious composition shaped the war, Ferris and Kirişçi find that non-state actors and radical groups intervened throughout its duration. In the final section of the first chapter, they present the official balance sheet of the Syrian humanitarian disaster, which makes note of those who lost their lives or became either internally displaced persons (IDPs) or refugees.

The second chapter of *The Consequences of Chaos* focuses more heavily on the effects of this forced migration. Ferris and Kirişçi first examine official records to assess how many people fled from Syria and to determine in which neighboring countries they sought asylum. They then discuss the ways in which the Syrian humanitarian disaster has politically, socially, and economically affected neighboring countries, including Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, which host the largest number of Syrians. In addition, they delve into how these host states and their respective citizens have responded to these acute refugee movement, explaining how they have cooperated with international organizations and communities in order to more effectively manage them. At the close of the second chapter, Ferris and Kirişçi look at the reasons why some Syrian refugees chose to make their way to Europe, and how the EU's bifurcated policies were designed both to restrict the arrival of Syrian refugees at Europe's borders and to address the needs of the Syrians arriving in host countries. In both of these early chapters, Ferris and Kirişçi underscore the importance of burden sharing in the management of this humanitarian tragedy.

The third chapter concentrates on the IDPs located within Syria's borders and explains their rights according to international law. The authors examine official records to assess the number of Syrian citizens who have been internally displaced, which permits the authors to further underscore the magnitude of the crisis. This also allows Ferris and Kirişçi to consider the types of problems that IDPs experience as they live under the shadow of war and assume risks that the refugees who left Syria do not face. The authors train their focus on particular groups of IDPs, such as religious minorities and former Syrian and Kurdish refugee groups, who have experienced the trauma of war more intensely than others. In this context, Ferris and Kirişçi offer detailed accounts of the international organizations operating within Syria and the difficulties that IDPs have as they attempt to access the humanitarian aid that these organizations offer. The authors also discuss the importance of creating a safe zone for the Syrian refugees, which they argue is necessary to increase the security of all involved parties, including host countries, refugees, and the region as a whole. In this discussion, the authors also note the clear shortcomings associated with the formation of a safety zone.

The concluding chapter, in which Ferris and Kirişçi share their honest opinions about why the Syrian refugee crisis has dragged on for as long as it has without resolution, is the most powerful. The authors suggest that failure has been due largely to the ineffectiveness of international organizations and bodies such as Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the European Union. The authors do not merely suggest fault, however; they share a comprehensive plan through which the international community might create more durable and viable policies aimed at enabling Syria's refugees to better access basic needs and services, and relieve host communities of their respective burdens, which have required those countries and their citizens to make considerable sacrifices. Here, the authors again emphasize the importance of burden sharing in the management of this humanitarian crisis.

*The Consequences of Chaos* is timely and should be considered a must-read book for those interested in literature pertaining to the Syrian refugee crisis. However, it has two shortcomings. First, Ferris and Kirişçi do not offer sufficient information regarding the ways in which 5.6 million Syrian refugees have affected neighboring countries. They also offer too little information regarding the types of problems that Syrian refugees have experienced in their host states per the refugees' own narratives. A second shortcoming has to do with the overall focus of the book. Throughout the book, the authors argue that their focus is primarily on how Syria's civil war began and its regional and global effects. Yet the book fails to offer a sufficiently detailed account for readers in search of specific knowledge or a more in-depth discussion of these issues. Still, scholars and other readers interested in migration and refugee studies, especially those involving Syrian refugees, will find this study informative and useful.