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# Aequilibrium In Crisis

## Crisis Response & Risk Steering

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An Introduction

April 2026

## The Work

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Aequilibrium In Crisis works with organisations on crisis response and risk steering.

Two related challenges. The first: the capacity to manage critical incidents and crises — situations where uncertainty is high, time is compressed, and the decisions taken carry lasting consequences. The second: building a coherent relationship with risk before pressure arrives.

Three areas of practice: preparing organisations and their teams, supporting those carrying an active response when a situation is already moving, and addressing the risk governance structures that shape both.

The sectors vary — humanitarian, corporate, and public-sector organisations. That challenge does not. Deciding well under acute pressure is the same problem regardless of what caused it.

What follows is an account of how this work is approached, what it involves in practice, and the background it draws on.

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## The starting point

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The question that has organised most of my work on crisis preparedness and response is not how to build a better structure at an entry point. It is what makes a good decision possible when the picture is incomplete, time is short, and the stakes are real.

There is a starting point. A good decision in crisis depends on a reasoning dynamic that holds under pressure: the capacity to observe what is actually happening rather than what was anticipated, to analyse without certainty, and to decide with a clear sense of what is known, what is not, and what is being risked.

Structures and methods either serve that dynamic or they substitute for it. The difference matters. When they serve it, they support the people carrying the response. When they substitute for it — when the procedure becomes the goal rather than the means — they hold until the situation moves faster than the structure can follow. At that point, what carries the response is not the framework.

This is not a critique of structure. Good structures are necessary. But they are not sufficient. I have found that starting from the dynamic — from what the people inside the structure actually need to be able to do — produces something more useful than starting from a standard model.

It also shapes what preparation can honestly claim to deliver. Not every gap can be closed. The goal is to develop the capacity to hold the reasoning process when pressure peaks — and to be clear, before the crisis, about where the real margins for improvement are.

One thing this framing makes visible: the question is not specific to security crises. A reputational situation, a financial threat, a governance failure — the nature of the problem changes. The difficulty for the people responsible for it does not. Decisions must be made under uncertainty, with time compressing, and with consequences that are not easily undone. The approach holds across sectors because the underlying challenge does.

## Three areas of work

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### *Building crisis management capacity*

Crisis structures depend on the people inside them. The work starts there — developing the capacity to reason and decide well under pressure, not adding layers to the structure itself.

Two dimensions: the cognitive — how individuals process and decide when the picture is incomplete — and the organisational — whether the structure around them supports or undermines that capacity.

- For crisis management teams: programmes of two to five days, built around the organisation's own context and scenarios. The focus is the reasoning process — what coherent crisis management actually looks like when the situation is moving.
- For decision-makers: focused modules on the specific demands of carrying final responsibility — the cognitive and relational weight of authority in an acute situation, and the structures that protect the quality of judgment at that level.
- For operational teams: programmes of two to five days, calibrated to role and operational responsibility. The work develops the capacity to observe accurately, report with precision, and act coherently within the broader incident management structure. Content varies with the responsibilities each participant actually holds.
- For organisations that want to step back first: workshops on decision mechanisms and the realistic margins for improvement. Not an audit. An honest conversation about where reasoning tends to hold and where it tends to break — and what that implies for preparation.

### *Advisory support in active crisis*

For organisations navigating a situation that is already serious and moving. The role is advisory — alongside the response.

In practice: reviewing the picture as it develops, stress-testing the analysis before decisions are taken, identifying where the reasoning may be compressing or where important information is not reaching the right level. Sometimes this means working directly with the crisis management team. Sometimes it means sitting closer to the decision-making authority.

The decisions remain with the organisation. What the advisory role offers is someone whose only task is to support the quality of the thinking — when the pressure to react is most acute, and the temptation to replace reasoning with action is real.

### *Risk steering advisory and training*

How an organisation responds to a crisis is shaped long before the crisis begins. In its governance structures. In its day-to-day relationship with risk. In the gap — or the coherence — between what it says about risk and how it actually functions.

This work looks at that relationship. It can take the form of a diagnostic, a review of frameworks against the organisation's actual context, or the development of internal capacity to maintain a coherent approach to risk over time. The starting point is always what already exists. The aim is to understand where the gaps are — and to address them in a way the organisation can sustain.

Every engagement begins with a conversation. No standard packages — scope, format, and duration are defined together, based on what is actually needed. All engagements are handled with strict confidentiality.

## Background

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Pierre Kernen spent fourteen years at MSF, moving from field coordination in conflict contexts to security advisory. From 2017, head of the Security and Risk Management Unit at headquarters — directing a global team, supervising risk management across field operations, and leading or advising on major crisis activations.

Before founding AIC, he served as Emergency and Security Manager at Wallenius Wilhelmsen Group, a global maritime corporation. He has worked as an independent consultant since 2022. Across this trajectory, twelve years have been dedicated to crisis response for organisations.

He has trained and supported crisis management teams in more than twenty countries — at headquarters and at the operational level — and has been part of crisis cells for periods ranging from a few days to several months, as team leader or adviser, depending on the needs and the context.

The approach is built from practice. Every element included in the training has been developed from real situations and held against them before being used in delivery. That remains the condition for including anything: it must have held in practice, not just in theory.

Aequilibrium In Crisis is registered in Norway (AS) and works with humanitarian, corporate, and public-sector organisations.

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