

THE MAIN FORCES DRIVING THE SPREAD OF HUMANITARIAN CRISES IN THE MODERN GLOBAL ECONOMY

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Abstract. The rapid growth in demand for humanitarian aid, which is becoming less effective and efficient, highlights the need for contemporary scientific research to identify the main factors of humanitarian crises and review the existing system of international humanitarian aid. Analytical reports from international organisations, research agencies and institutes provide an information base for determining the sources and directions of humanitarian aid, its effectiveness and development. The aim of this article is to systematise the main factors contributing to the spread of humanitarian crises. In the course of the work, the following tasks were formulated and defined: to characterise the main factors contributing to the spread of humanitarian crises in the modern global economy (it has been proven that the driving force behind humanitarian crises is the rapid spread and escalation of conflicts between different countries around the world, and are the result of the intensification of contradictions and rivalry between the largest states), climate change (manifested in increased anthropogenic impact and environmental crimes; the spread of extreme weather events and natural disasters, leading to numerous human casualties and material losses, etc.); socio-economic instability (resulting from inequality, internal conflicts, low levels of socio-economic development, etc.). These factors are interrelated and overlap, creating an extremely complex humanitarian landscape. The spread of humanitarian crises ensures a constant increase in demand for humanitarian aid, the scale of which is growing rapidly in terms of both the number of countries and the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance.

Keywords: humanitarian crises, conflicts, climate change, socio-economic instability, humanitarian aid

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The rapid growth in demand for humanitarian aid, which is becoming less effective and efficient, highlights the need for contemporary scientific research into revising the existing system of international humanitarian aid. Directions for the development of a general mechanism for coordinating humanitarian aid are considered in studies by Baker J. (Baker, 2014). By defining and specifying the obligations to be assumed by humanitarian organisations and governments (Harmer, A., Stoddard, A., and Sarazen, A.,2018) consider the principles of providing adequate humanitarian aid in numerous conflict situations. Analytical reports from research agencies and institutes (Stoddard, A., Harvey, P., Czwarno, M., and Breckenridge, M.-J.,2020) provide an information base for identifying sources and directions of humanitarian aid, determining its effectiveness and directions for diversification and development, etc. Existing scientific research highlights the need to identify the main factors contributing to the spread of humanitarian crises in the global economy that influence dynamic changes in the financing of international humanitarian aid, and to identify the main donors of humanitarian aid. The rapid growth in demand for humanitarian aid, which is becoming less effective and efficient, highlights the need for contemporary scientific research to review the existing system of international humanitarian aid.

As a result of crises, the ability to meet human needs is significantly reduced, requiring an appropriate response and humanitarian support. Such crisis situations may be related to natural phenomena or be man-made (Table 1). This division of crises into natural and man-made can be considered rather arbitrary, as drought and famine are caused by climate change, but the latter is the result of human impact on the environment. It should be noted that some researchers classify wars as a separate category, as humanitarian organisations do not usually intervene during hostilities (Van Wassenhove, 2006).

Table 1. Causes and nature of crises

Nature of development	Cause	
	Natural hazard	Anthropogenic danger
Spontaneous development	earthquake, hurricane, tornado, tsunami	terrorist attacks, civil unrest, war, epidemics, industrial accidents
Slow development	drought, famine, poverty	political crisis

Among the main characteristics of humanitarian crises, the following are particularly noteworthy (Natsios, A. S. 1996):

- internal political crisis in the country, including the complete collapse of central authority,
- armed conflicts accompanied by widespread human rights violations,
- deterioration of the security situation in the country (exacerbation of food insecurity, restrictions on the satisfaction of basic human needs),
- exacerbation of the economic situation in the country (unemployment, hyperinflation, rapid decline in GDP, economic crisis),
- mass migration of internally displaced persons, refugees, etc.

In each specific case, the forms and intensity of these characteristics may vary. However, their combination leads to a rapid increase in the suffering of the population due to the inability to meet urgent needs, state institutions prove incapable of solving these problems and, as a result, there is an acute need for external support. These elements define the most general characteristics of a humanitarian crisis (Dijkzeul, D., Griesinger, D.,2020). The humanitarian situation is associated with human suffering, which in turn requires appropriate assistance/support on a large scale. Such a situation may be associated with natural disasters and catastrophes, conflicts and other emergencies, and therefore requires a rapid response and assistance. There are 404.3 million

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people in need of humanitarian assistance (Global Humanitarian Assistance Report, 2023). The number of countries with high humanitarian needs, where more than 1 million people need humanitarian assistance, rose to 51 in 2022.

Thus, a humanitarian crisis is defined as an emergency caused by natural or man-made influences that create a critically threatening and dangerous situation for a large group of people, which exceeds their ability to overcome the relevant difficulties and requires the intervention and assistance of others. Modern humanitarian crises are exceptional and ambivalent in nature. Ambivalence implies, on the one hand, a destructive impact on socio-economic development and, on the other hand, the formation of the foundations for new development. The exceptional nature is determined by the inability of people to overcome crisis phenomena on their own, which, accordingly, legitimises assistance from third parties. International humanitarian activity consists of assistance and protection and covers two components: first, ensuring that the basic needs of those in need are met, and second, protection itself.

The evolution of the humanitarian landscape of the global economy and the increasing frequency and intensity of humanitarian crises have contributed to the classic paradigm of humanitarian action (providing assistance and protection in accordance with humanitarian principles) has been supplemented by a paradigm of resilience, according to which a crisis is defined as a new normality, in which the growth of national capacity to respond to crisis situations takes on particular importance. Considering people’s ability to adapt and recover, responding to a crisis is more effective and rational.

At the beginning of 2025, as a result of conflicts, violence, human rights violations and climate change, there were 123.2 million people forcibly displaced, including 49 million children (UNHCR).

Table 2.

Number of displaced persons in the world, million people

	2020	2023	2024
Total number of displaced persons	89, 0	117	123,2
Refugees	26,4	31,6	31,0
Asylum seekers	4,1	6,9	8,4
Others in need of international protection	3,9	5,2	5,9
Internally displaced persons	55	71,2	73,5

Source: (UNHCR.Refugee Data Finder)

87% of all people in need of humanitarian assistance live in countries where there is currently a high level of conflict intensity or in countries experiencing high-intensity conflicts. In addition, 85% lived in socio-economically weak countries, and 58% in countries most affected by climate change. Of the 82 countries, 41% of the population faced acute food insecurity, including in emergency situations. Changes in circumstances in countries and regions of origin and adverse changes in countries of asylum are exacerbating trends towards the return of displaced persons. Contemporary crises tend to become more complex and overlapping due to the spread of conflicts, economic downturns, climate change and environmental degradation, the proliferation of health emergencies, etc. Accordingly, they stimulate a sharp increase in global humanitarian needs. While 77.9 million people needed humanitarian assistance in 2015, by 2024 that number had risen to over 305 million, representing a fourfold increase in aid requirements. Existing crises within countries are deepening, and accordingly, the number of countries experiencing prolonged crises and the number of countries with high humanitarian needs are increasing significantly. The main drivers of humanitarian crises are conflicts, climate change and socio-economic instability, which have recently overlapped, creating an extremely complex humanitarian landscape.

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Trade tensions, geopolitical rivalry, and supply chain vulnerabilities are catalysing a resurgence of economic nationalism and regionalisation, while the global financial crisis has been a turning point in the process of economic liberalisation. Trade fragmentation reduces the efficiency of specialisation and competition. As a result, public support for globalisation is declining worldwide. Geopolitical events (trade disputes between the US and China, Russia's invasion of Ukraine) and the COVID-19 pandemic have accelerated geo-economic fragmentation, with countries prioritising national security and economic stability over the efficiency of globalisation.

From the point of view of sustainable development, governments are increasingly using regulatory competition instruments (Panchenko V., Reznikova N., Bulatova O.,2020). Resource nationalism, as a key component of economic nationalism and patriotism (Reznikova N., Panchenko V., Bulatova O., 2018.), is increasingly being used to counter foreign economic expansion. Understanding the close relationship between resources, instability and conflicts, new global uncertainty about resource pricing, scarcity and access is prompting a rethinking of existing security concepts. In view of this, international cooperation, including in the field of humanitarian aid, involves the combined efforts of many stakeholders representing both poor and rich countries, international institutions, etc. Such a multilateral and multi-level combination of all interested parties will help to overcome current challenges, including those related to the transformation of the humanitarian system.

Thus, the main forces and factors contributing to the spread of humanitarian crises in the modern global economy are: conflicts (which are rapidly spreading and intensifying around the world between different countries and are the result of heightened tensions and increased rivalry between the major powers, the most dramatic manifestation of which was the war on the European continent); climate change (manifested in increased anthropogenic impact and environmental crimes; the spread of extreme weather events and natural disasters, leading to numerous human casualties and material losses; the failure of governments and large companies to implement policies to mitigate the effects of climate change, etc.); socio-economic instability (resulting from inequality, internal conflicts, low levels of socio-economic development, etc.). These factors are interrelated and overlap, creating an extremely complex humanitarian landscape. The spread of humanitarian crises ensures a constant increase in demand for humanitarian aid, the scale of which is growing rapidly in terms of both the number of countries and the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance.

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