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"THE PERFECT STORM": INTERACTION OF CRISIS FACTORS ON A GLOBAL SCALE

In a world where crises are becoming the norm, understanding the "perfect storm" becomes a necessity.

The relevance of this research lies in its reflection of the modern reality of global challenges facing contemporary society. Understanding and analyzing the "perfect storm" is crucial for developing crisis management strategies, ensuring sustainable development, and international security.

In the world of popular science literature and analytical research, the term "perfect storm" is often encountered.

A "perfect storm" refers to a situation where several negative factors coincide simultaneously, leading to the emergence of a difficult or crisis situation. In such cases, the combined impact of these factors exceeds their individual influences, resulting in serious consequences [1, 352].

In other words, this term is used to describe a situation where multiple different negative factors coincide in time, creating a complex, threatening situation or crisis. The perfect storm can arise in various spheres, such as the economy, politics, social aspects, and the environment. In a perfect storm, each individual factor may be significant enough, but their combination has a more significant impact than simply the sum of their separate consequences.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, humanity has been facing significant challenges. Climate change, economic recessions, rapid technological changes, pandemics, and political conflicts – these problems, seemingly unrelated, spill into a common crisis of global scale.

The climate change crisis poses a threat to economic stability and social security. Ukraine is particularly vulnerable to climate change. The average global temperature has already risen by 1,2% compared to the pre-industrial era. This disrupts agricultural patterns, increasing the frequency of droughts that threaten crops. Ukraine is the world's 5th largest exporter of wheat, and such events directly affect global food security. Instability in food production and rising prices exacerbate social unrest in vulnerable

regions, as seen during the "Arab Spring" uprisings linked to food shortages. Additionally, rising sea levels threaten coastal communities and infrastructure, forcing people to relocate and incurring significant economic costs.

Technological changes are a powerful force shaping our world, offering enormous potential but also presenting challenges. Technological progress has contributed significantly to productivity growth. According to the OECD report for 2022, labor productivity in OECD countries has been increasing on average by 2,5% annually since the 1990s, primarily due to technological innovations.

Progress also fosters economic growth by creating new industries, products, and services. A McKinsey Global Institute study in 2020 showed that by 2030, artificial intelligence alone could contribute up to \$15.7 trillion to global GDP. However, such automation replaces jobs in many sectors. A McKinsey Global Institute study in 2017 suggested that by 2030, automation could lead to the loss of up to 800 million jobs, especially in manufacturing and transportation sectors.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the vulnerability of an overly interconnected world. The rapid spread of the virus strained healthcare systems, leading to mass deaths and economic downturns. As of March 12, 2024, there have been over 703 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 and over 7 million deaths worldwide [3]. The pandemic has highlighted existing inequalities in access to healthcare and social safety nets. It has also fueled vaccine hesitancy and political polarization, complicating global efforts to eradicate the virus. The long-term consequences of COVID-19 remain uncertain, adding another layer of uncertainty to the global outlook.

Lastly, but no less importantly, is the full-scale war in Ukraine. This brutal and senseless conflict has sent shockwaves throughout the international system. The UN Refugee Agency estimates that over 14 million Ukrainians have fled their homes due to the war, with over 6 million becoming refugees in neighboring countries. Millions more are internally displaced within Ukraine. Additionally, the UN has documented over 9,700 civilian deaths as of September 2023, with the actual number likely higher.

The war has inflicted massive damage on Ukrainian infrastructure, including homes, buildings, bridges, and roads. The World Bank estimates reconstruction costs in the hundreds of billions of dollars [4].

According to the World Food Programme, the number of people experiencing acute hunger could increase by 47 million due to the war, with some of the most vulnerable regions heavily reliant on Ukrainian wheat. The war has also revealed many countries' dependence on Ukrainian agricultural exports, underscoring the need for a more diversified global food supply.

The war has also led to increases in global energy prices, further inflation, and economic instability. Apart from the immediate human and economic losses, the war has had significant geopolitical implications, straining international relations and raising concerns about wider regional conflict.

These seemingly disparate crises are not isolated phenomena but interconnected components of a complex global mosaic. Climate change disrupts food production, leading to economic instability and social unrest. The pandemic exacerbates existing inequalities, while the war in Ukraine continues to undermine supply chains and threaten food security.

Navigating this perfect storm requires a paradigm shift. Business as usual is no longer an option. We need a global response that recognizes the interconnectedness of these issues, necessitating international cooperation on multiple fronts.

These challenges, which may seem exceedingly complex, also present an opportunity for profound systemic transformation. By recognizing the interconnectedness of these issues and fostering international cooperation, we can navigate through this perfect storm and build a more resilient and equitable future for all. A world grappling with food shortages, economic crashes, social unrest, and escalating conflict is a future we must strive to avoid.

References

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