

**ISCKMC 2020****International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IN THE SYSTEM OF  
CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL RISKS**

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**Abstract**

The article represents theoretical interpretation of the contemporary system of risks and global risks in particular. Conceptual approaches to risk study have been analyzed. It has been suggested to understand a global risk not only as an economic aspect, suggested by the researchers of the World Economic Forum but as an interdisciplinary phenomenon. Contemporary classifications of global risks have been analyzed. The authors distinguish three types of risks: risks as a result of globalization but having impact within one state; risks starting at a local level but having a global impact; risks whose reasons and results are global. As a primary global risk, a risk of pandemic is considered, that is different diseases covering the globe and the humanity on the whole. Analyzing such a risk as COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, the authors suggest understanding a contemporary global risk as threats affecting all spheres of life in the society, impairing the safety of the civilization and influencing the existence of the humanity in the global world. Analyzing global risks the authors assume that the risks appear differently in the modern world and have their specificity. Moreover they include many dubious contradictions. On one hand, increase of these contradictions can constrain the risk; on the other hand it can become a starting point of the society development. The conclusion has been made, that studying the coronavirus pandemic as a global challenge requires consolidated efforts of all scientists to estimate and forecast its implications for the world and humanity.

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*Keywords:* Challenge, riskology, risk society, global risk, COVID-19, coronavirus pandemic



## **1. Introduction**

A global worldview is affected by a global risk. The level of risk which directly affects the humanity is very high. The issue of the global risk is a key factor in estimating the future of the humanity. Already in 2016 the experts from the Future of Humanity Institute in Oxford University called a threat of nuclear war and global pandemic as the most likely risks (GKR, 2020).

In this connection there is an acute necessity to conceptualize theoretically the issues of a global risk which has become intense in the crisis situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This context causes a new system of global risks appearing as a reaction to challenges of the changing world. Risks have become a natural component of non-linear socio-cultural dynamics in global-local society, a way of life (Kravchenko & Krasikov, 2004).

A wide spread of the risk evidences a basic peculiarity of the world where humanity lives. The society is such a dynamically developing system which can produce dangers and become a victim of different risks, threats and challenges. Riskogenics of the changing social reality becomes a potential source of new social risks (Zubok & Chuprov, 2017).

Many problems overcome the boundaries of one state, as in case with the pandemic, and become global. So, a crisis caused by appearance and wide spread of the coronavirus resulted in threats to human health overcame national boundaries and became global.

## **2. Problem Statement**

As A. Camus said, “We have to reconsider our perception of the world”, in the conditions of the coronavirus pandemic. The global risk brought direct challenges to the world society. Social and humanitarian sciences must help find solutions to them. They should conceptualize the tendencies of the “coronavirus world”. Researchers today think that the COVID-19 pandemic will change the conventional world order and the businesses of the world.

## **3. Research Questions**

A direct global risk (coronavirus pandemic) in the classification of challenges and risks produced by the contemporary social reality.

1. A global risk as an interdisciplinary science category.
2. Coronavirus pandemic as a direct global risk.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

Contemporary social and humanitarian sciences almost have no fundamental works where the coronavirus pandemic was studied as a separate global risk. The purpose of the article is to determine the concept a “global risk”, describe its nature and content, classification, as well as study a coronavirus pandemic as a direct global risk.

## 5. Research Methods

The study combines the following methods and approaches: an interdisciplinary method as integration of the scientific knowledge, which determines a risk as an interdisciplinary category; riskology approach, which is acute in a new reality, where risk is a foundation of the modernity; the systemacity principle considers global risks of the modernity in their interconnection; a comparative method is a basis for comparing different classifications of the global risks.

## 6. Findings

*Conceptual approaches to risk study.* There are several important stages of dealing with this problem in the research practice. Social and humanitarian sciences have a wide theoretical and methodological basis for studying risks, which allows distinguishing riskology as a separate area of studies. At first, the works by: Beck (2000), and his “risk society”; Luhmann (1994), who considers risk as a characteristic feature of any social action; Giddens (2004), who thinks that the modern world is structured mostly by risks caused by a human; Douglas (1994), who interprets a risk as a violation of the cultural norms, as deviant behaviour of certain people and social groups.

Risk problems and their impact on the social and political processes are indirectly touched by the classicist of the sociological thought. Dealing with issues of social solidarity (especially in the transitive society), Durkheim (1996) touches on the appearing risks; the works by Schutz (2003) contain knowledge on relative perception of risks by different social groups. Parsons (2018) and Merton (1992) developed methodological grounds for risks analysis in the social processes. The works by Sorokin (2009) allow understanding risks, caused by social, cultural, economic, political and other fluctuations in the context of objective and subjective factors.

Modern situations show that riskogenics and uncertainty are a norm for management on the whole and political management in particular. A synergetic approach to risks is very important as it is based on the understanding of the initial instability and uncertainty of the complex systems’ development. More comprehensive information can be found in the fields of politology, social philosophy and sociology. The works by Russian political experts Pankratov (2012), Shestopal and Selezneva (2018) devoted to contemporary risks and challenges should be mentioned. To analyze safety in the modern society the most important are the theoretical and methodological grounds of the risk theory by Yanitskii (2019), the author of the first risk theory. The other Russian researchers of the risk theory are Zubkov (2003), Kravchenko and Krasikov (2004), Ust’yantsev (2012), who suggest an innovative approach to the sociology of risk. The theoretical-methodological analysis of social, psychological aspects of global challenges (natural, technological, economic, social, geopolitical) is given in the works by Nestik and Zhuravleva (2018).

The scientists in ISPR FCTAS RAS pay special attention to the transformation social political and cultural changes of the Russian society in anthropogenic space, which causes new threats and risks. Common theory of risk is studied in works by Volkov and Kurbatov (2000), Zubok and Chuprov (2017). Researchers use more different approaches to studying the pandemic, that is why, the works of scientists

who study peculiarities of the coronavirus COVID-19 in the system of global risks become more interesting (Gromyko, 2020; Ivanov, 2020).

*Concept of risk.* Let us turn to the key concept of “risk” which has no single definition in the social humanitarian science. Such field as riskology has been developing for more than 20 years in Western and national science. Risk is often defined as the state of danger and catastrophe in a broad meaning. In a narrow, sociological, meaning “risk” is defined as a characteristic of activity or environmental conditions of life activity of a person, group, society in passing from the state of stability to uncertainty and vice-versa, when there is a choice in estimating the possibility to achieve the proposed result, failure or deviation from the aim with the account of moral-ethic norms (Zubok & Chuprov, 2017). Accepting this definition of the concept “risk”, with the account of the purposes of the article, the important grounds for such understanding of risk were its two forms – objective (environmental risk as life surrounding) and subjective (pragmatic risk).

According to Luhmann (1994), risks are the uncertainty caused by the consequences of human decisions, it differs risks from dangers caused by external environmental, natural forces. According to Giddens (2004), there was no conception of risk in the Medieval Ages. It was absent in other traditional cultures, as author thinks people did not need it as it was connected with active analysis of danger from the point of view of further consequences. Basing on this he states that the idea of risk got a foothold in XVI-XVII centuries, its authors were Western researchers, who travelled round the world. It is “widely used only in the society, oriented to the future”; “the concept of risk needs a society which tries to finish up with its past, and it is the main characteristic of the industrial civilization of the new and the newest time” (Giddens, 2004, p. 161, 167).

As it has been mentioned this concept has many definitions in science. Zubok and Chuprov (2017) think that it refers to the period of first geographic discoveries and of Spanish origin (Spanish cliff or reef). According to Giddens (2004), “the word ‘risk’ came from the Spanish or Portuguese language and denoted sailing in unknown, unmapped waters. In other words, it denoted the space at first. Later, risk became a temporary category...” (p. 112).

Shestopal and Selezneva (2018) underline that in the social sphere “risks can arise from structural dysfunctions of the society (professional, ethnic, demographic or other disproportions in the structure of the society), and stem from social-psychological processes (dispositions, anxiety, fears, expectations and so on), which lead to social conflicts, protests, dissatisfaction, destabilizing” the society and state, “weaken its controllability”.

Basing on the mentioned above, we can make a preliminary conclusion that risk should be considered as a concept of social humanitarian theory, expressing one of the characteristic features of the modern society.

*Global risk as a category of social and humanitarian sciences.* Different risks appear in the modern society – “traditional” and “new” but they are the reason for different crises. In this connection it is important to specify the following: the former are characterized by risk analysis based on the efficiency, the latter are not under control of it. The peculiarities of “new” risks are connected with globalization; they are complex, with dimension, latent, irreversible, temporal and cannot be calculated. That is why Banze (2003), basing on the peculiarities of new risks, talks about hypothetical risks. It

complicates understanding of new risks which are an objective reality and create uncertainty of our existence.

Existential risks are utmost global risks that are events resulting in vanishing of the humanity or drastic deterioration of living conditions (Nestik & Zhuravleva, 2018). New risks in modern/modernizing societies manifest differently and have their peculiarities. The concept “global risk” is used in science and expert literature, but its content is unclear and changes depending on the theme of the research.

The methodology of analysis of global risks is based on expert interviews and expert questionnaires which are developed annually by the researchers of the World Economic Forum in Davos. Having accomplished a massive selection of experts in different spheres, the researchers of WEF analyze the results and report them in “Global Risks”, based on economic understanding of risks. The peculiarity of the report is that it views global risks in their character and impact. WEF on 20–24 of January 2020 published the annual report on main risks which the world can encounter this year. The total picture of global risks according to the authors includes: geopolitical instability; problems of economic development; insufficient measures to climate changes; negative consequences of the biodiversity loss; ineffective control of the technologies development; dysfunctions in national systems of public health care (GKR, 2020).

Global risks are possible events or conditions which can cause serious loss to several countries or branches of the world economy simultaneously. Global risks are a combination of probability and consequences of unfavorable events, which can bring loss or do harm and are global by their character and impact. The criteria of global risks are global dimension, inter-industry relevancy, uncertainty, economic effect, plurality of the participants (GKR, 2020).

It should be noted that the report in 2020 mentions a slowdown in progress in health care system as a global risk. **It is stressed that despite the success at struggle with epidemics** and significant financing they cannot be completely coped with.

When analyzing global risks it should be expected that in modernizing societies they appear differently, have their specificity. Besides, they include many contradictions which have dubious character. On the one hand, increase of these contradictions can contain risk; on the other hand it is a starting point of the society development.

Thus, the authors suggest understanding global risks of the modernity as challenges and threats impacting all spheres of life in the society, reducing the safety of civilization existence and referring to the problem of humanity survival in the global world.

*Classification of global risks* is a complex issue due to their variety. Basing on the structural characteristics risks can be classified differently. There are many classifications in scientific literature. Underlining conventional distinction between closely connected risks, the authors of the most complete survey distinguish three main types of global (catastrophe) risks: natural risks, unintended consequences of human actions (pandemics), hostile acts. Later classification includes several types of risks threatening to demolish the whole world: civilization, technological, anthropogenic, risks of global economic instability, natural risks, such as pandemics (GKR, 2008).

Bostrom and Cirkovic (2008) suggest three grounds for risks classification: risks can be different in scale; differ in significance of consequences; can have different probability.

Talking about global risks we distinguish three types of risks: risks arising from globalization but appearing within the boundaries of one state; risks starting at the local level but having a global impact; risks whose sources and consequences refer to the global level.

We also share the point of view when global risks are classified into ecological, geopolitical economic, technological and social. As global risks are perceived as a threat by a certain social group they become social independent of the fact whether they are anthropogenic or partially natural by the origin (Nestik & Zhuravleva, 2018). Among social global risks a risk of pandemics is at the first place – different global diseases. Such diseases as a virus H5N1, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria proved destructive consequences in the existing global structure of the world. Ivanov (2017) refers diseases (pandemics) to social risks noting that insufficient tracking of new diseases, insufficient vaccine production result in uncontrolled infectious diseases insemination. Antibiotics resistant bacteria limit the possibility to control lethal diseases.

*Coronavirus pandemic as a direct global risk.* The greatest global risk in XXI century is COVID-19 pandemic, whose depth and scope are tremendous. Every from 7.8 billiards people living on the Earth is under threat of the crisis in health care system. It is relevant to remember a warning by Ursul (2019): If some global risk increases then it forecasts a catastrophic process of the global scale.

Let us give a statistics of cases with coronavirus infection. According to the official data on 25 of June 2020 more than 8 million people are infected with COVID-19, more than 460 thousands are dead. Human organism has no immunity which can resist any virus. The existing storage of antivirus medicine does not allow fighting effectively a global pandemic. It also necessary to take into account that travelling round the world distributes deathly viruses.

By the WHO estimations, if the virus alters and will transfer from a human to a human, then it will become a real world threat and will undermine economy and result in a huge number of human deaths, equal to pandemics in 1918–1919 when half the population of the world was infected and 40–50 million people died. According to the WHO estimates, the population mortality in case of COVID-19 can be from 2 to 3 million people. This forecast does not take into account the possibility of mutations of this virus.

Distribution of COVID-19, caused a global crisis in the health care system as well as economic and political spheres. The pandemic can slow down global political processes and ignite new crises. Studying the influence of the coronavirus COVID-19 on the international relations, Gromyko (2020) underlines that all multifaced palette of international life became invisible due to coronavirus epidemy which grew into the global disease. The world is in the situation similar to the “ideal storm” due to the overlapping of so many negative factors. On the whole a new pandemic cripples the whole social-economic sector destroying the existing interaction mechanisms, limiting opposing abilities and showing weak spots in different systems. No catastrophe consequences can be avoided: the delivery-trade flows are destroyed; financial disbalance increases; partial desurbanization is possible when people will leave big cities as a consequence of migration from one region to others.

According to the estimations of foreign specialists such a scenario can have social and economic consequences similar to those of the Great Plague in Europe in 1348 year when European social-economic relations were drastically transformed. A third of European population died which caused lack of labour force and undermined the economy.

We can agree with the Russian specialist in riskology O.B. Ivanov who studying the impact and consequences of the coronavirus pandemic underlines that “nowadays, epidemics and pandemics can be referred to global uncontrolled risks, whose impact is exceptional. Sudden, widespread and damaging blow ruined the world economy, claimed the lives of hundreds of people, and changed the mental state of people on the Earth, cancelled the perspectives of safe collaboration of the states. The humanity received a warning that the apocalypses can be unexpected (Ivanov, 2020).

In this study the works by the researchers from the Southern part of Russia, who analyze the Russian society in the coronavirus threat, are of special interest. Volkov and Kurbatov (2000) call as one of the trends of the post coronavirus world formation of the post coronavirus world as the society of global risk, where preceding global risks of global warming, the third World War, international terrorism become secondary for some time.

Having studied the social immunity of the Russian society under the coronavirus threat, the South-Russian scientists reasonably distinguish six groups of innovative risks for socio-cultural trauma: society changes in the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic; electoral risks for Russian social-political system; institutional risks which can result in social risks due to value – norm changes (devaluation risks in the popular consciousness of the population); changes in economy reality and drastic increase in social inequality; social unemployment; changes in social feelings and mood of Russian population (Gafiatulina et al., 2000).

Global risk is connected with the existence of global phenomena, processes, tendencies and solutions, able to impact big number of countries, regardless their spacial closeness. To manage global level of risk there are different international organizations and institutions which collaboratively by the member-states work out acceptable solutions for the global society, rationally redistribute funds and resources for those in need and so on.

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic the modern world has encountered a new global challenge, no developed country could independently win COVID-19, relevant international organizations, such as World Health Organization, turned out little capable. According to the academic of RAS M.K. Gorshkov “the pandemic became catalysis of serious processes”. Moreover, this global risk showed a low level of integrity and interconnectedness of the modern world.

## **7. Conclusion**

It is evident that the coronavirus pandemic and its consequences will have a huge impact on the global and Russian economy and politics. Negative effects will be evident for several years after it. It is evident that we need system measures which will immediately go through the virus, save life and health of people and offer a balanced plan of actions for normalisation of the crisis situation. The world society should think about a new model of the humanity development on the principle of the sustainable development and careful attitude to the planet.

The analysis proves the interaction between the global risks and their consequences – crisis situations. They can become a trigger for risks in other spheres, as a result states and the world society encounter a complex of direct and potential threats appear undermining their national security.

Thus, a study of the coronavirus pandemic as a global risk of the modernity requires consolidated efforts of the scientists in all scientific spheres for estimating and forecasting its possible consequences for the world and humanity.

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