

## THE CONCEPT “CRISIS” IN MODERN MEDIA DISASTER DISCOURSE

КОНЦЕПТ «КРИЗА»  
В СУЧАСНОМУ МАСМЕДІЙНОМУ ДИСКУРСІ КАТАСТРОФ

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This study explores the concept of "crisis" in contemporary English-language media discourse, examining its linguistic representation, semantic dimensions, and rhetorical functions. The research identifies how crisis terminology manifests across diverse contexts through extensive analysis of major publications, including *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *Financial Times*, *The Independent*, and *The Guardian*. The investigation reveals three primary semantic domains where crisis language predominates: military and international conflicts, migration challenges, and domestic political tensions. Beyond dictionary definitions, crisis-related terminology in media serves both descriptive and powerful rhetorical purposes that shape public perception and policy responses. The study demonstrates that media outlets employ crisis framing to emphasise urgency and significance, particularly when covering international conflicts, humanitarian situations, and political instability. Related terms like «catastrophe», «predicament», «plight», and «quandary» function distinctively in media narratives, often carrying stronger emotional connotations than the more neutral «crisis.» Comparative analysis across various contexts reveals that while military and international crises are framed through security and humanitarian lenses, domestic political crises often invoke constitutional concerns and democratic principles. The research further examines how crisis terminology in economic reporting interweaves with political frameworks, particularly in coverage of situations like Venezuela's challenges. This multidimensional analysis illuminates how crisis language in English-language media describes challenging circumstances and functions as a sophisticated rhetorical mechanism that establishes the perceived urgency and significance of global challenges, ultimately influencing international discourse and policy formation. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how media representation mediates between political realities and public comprehension of critical global situations.

**Key words:** concept, crisis, disaster discourse, media, political discourse, semantic analysis, rhetorical functions.

У цьому дослідженні розглядається концепт «криза» в сучасному англomовному медіадискурсі, аналізується його лінгвістична репрезентація, семантичні виміри та риторичні функції. Шляхом ґрунтовного аналізу провідних видань, включаючи *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *Financial Times*, *The Independent* та *The Guardian*, дослідження виявляє, як термінологія кризи проявляється в різноманітних контекстах. Результати визначають три основні семантичні домени, де переважає мова кризи: військові та міжнародні конфлікти, міграційні виклики та внутрішньополітична напруженість. Поза межами словникових визначень, термінологія, пов'язана з кризою, у медіа виконує як описові, так і потужні риторичні функції, що формують суспільне сприйняття та політичні рішення. Дослідження демонструє, що медіа використовують фреймування кризи для підкреслення невідкладності та значущості, особливо при висвітленні міжнародних конфліктів, гуманітарних ситуацій та політичної нестабільності. Споріднені терміни, як-от «катастрофа», «скрутне становище», «складне становище» та «дилема», функціонують своєрідно в медійних наративах, часто несучи сильніші емоційні конотації, ніж більш нейтральна «криза». Порівняльний аналіз різних контекстів виявляє, що в той час як військові та міжнародні кризи розглядаються крізь призму безпеки та гуманітарних аспектів, внутрішні політичні кризи часто апелюють до конституційних питань і демократичних принципів. Дослідження також розглядає, як термінологія кризи в економічних повідомленнях переплітається з політичними рамками, що особливо помітно у висвітленні таких ситуацій, як проблеми Венесуели. Цей багатовимірний аналіз висвітлює, як мова кризи в англomовних медіа не лише описує складні обставини, але й функціонує як витончений риторичний механізм, що встановлює сприйняття невідкладності та значущості глобальних викликів, зрештою впливаючи на міжнародний дискурс та формування політики. Результати сприяють глибшому розумінню того, як медійна репрезентація опосередковує взаємодію між політичними реаліями та суспільним осмисленням критичних глобальних ситуацій.

**Ключові слова:** концепт, криза, дискурс катастроф, ЗМІ, політичний дискурс, семантичний аналіз, риторичні функції.

**Problem statement.** The concept of «crisis» has become a fundamental element of modern political and social discourse, evolving significantly from its etymological origins to its current multifaceted usage in contemporary media. In the rapidly changing landscape of global communications, how crises

are portrayed and discussed in publicistic discourse has become increasingly important for public understanding and policy formation.

The English-language media's treatment of crisis-related concepts reflects broader societal developments and challenges in the modern world. This

is particularly evident in the extensive coverage of international conflicts, economic instability, humanitarian challenges, and domestic political tensions. The linguistic representation of these crises in major media outlets informs public perception and influences policy responses and international relations.

Contemporary dictionary definitions provide a foundation for understanding the concept, ranging from «time of intense difficulty or danger» to more specific contextual applications in political, social, and medical domains. However, the actual usage in publicistic discourse often extends beyond these basic definitions, incorporating nuanced meanings and implications reflecting modern global challenges' complexity.

The role of mass media in mediating between state and society adds another crucial dimension to this analysis. Major news outlets such as The Washington Post, The New York Times, Financial Times, The Independent, and The Guardian are primary sources for examining how crisis-related terminology is deployed in real-world contexts. These publications' coverage of various types of crises – from military conflicts to humanitarian disasters, from political upheavals to economic instability – provides rich material for understanding how the concept of crisis operates in contemporary discourse.

**The aim of the research** is to analyse and categorise the usage patterns and semantic variations of the concept «crisis» in English-language publicistic discourse, with particular attention to its relationship with disaster-related terminology.

**The subject of the research** is the linguistic and semantic manifestations of crisis-related concepts in English-language media discourse.

**The object of the research** is articles and publications from major English-language news outlets focusing on crisis-related topics and terminology.

**The tasks of the research are** to analyse dictionary definitions and semantic groupings of crisis-related terminology, to examine the usage patterns of crisis-related concepts in political discourse, to identify the relationship between crisis and disaster terminology in media coverage, to evaluate the contextual variations in crisis-related language across different types of reporting, to assess the impact of crisis terminology on public perception of events.

**Presentation of the main material.** The analysis reveals several key patterns in how major English-language media outlets conceptualise and deploy crisis-related terminology. Crisis language clusters primarily around three main contexts: military and international conflicts, migration issues, and domestic political tensions. In military and international

contexts, the term «crisis» frequently appears in coverage of conflicts like those in Syria, emphasising both the immediacy of threats and humanitarian concerns. For instance, coverage of chemical weapons investigations in Syria demonstrates how media outlets use crisis framing to underscore the gravity of international incidents.

The European migrant situation offers another illuminating example of crisis terminology in action. While British media outlets maintain some distance from the immediate impacts of migration due to the UK's geographical position and stricter entry policies, they still frequently employ the phrase «migrant crisis» when covering events across continental Europe. This framing helps shape public understanding of migration as an urgent challenge requiring immediate attention and policy responses.

Domestic political coverage, particularly in American media, shows another distinct pattern in crisis terminology. The research found that publications like The Washington Post increasingly frame domestic political tensions through the lens of crisis, mainly when covering constitutional challenges or threats to democratic institutions. This represents a notable expansion of crisis terminology beyond its traditional usage in describing acute emergencies or disasters.

Economic contexts provide yet another dimension where crisis terminology plays a crucial role. The research shows how media coverage of situations like Venezuela's economic challenges demonstrates the interweaving of political and economic crisis terminology, illustrating how these concepts often reinforce each other in public discourse. The study found that related terms like «catastrophe» «predicament,» «plight,» and «quandary» serve distinct functions in media coverage. These terms tend to appear more frequently in coverage of domestic political issues and humanitarian situations, often carrying stronger emotional connotations than the more neutral term "crisis."

The research ultimately demonstrates that crisis-related terminology in English-language media serves as a descriptive tool and a powerful framing device that shapes public understanding of global events and influences policy discussions. The media's deployment of crisis terminology helps establish the perceived urgency and significance of various challenges facing the modern world [4].

The concept «crisis» in English is represented quite widely, confirmed by the vast number of synonyms of the concept «crisis» that can be found in dictionaries. In our work, we consider this concept from the political discourse point of view, which

limits the number of synonymous concepts under consideration.

In the Oxford Dictionaries, we find the following definitions of the concept of «crisis» is a time of intense difficulty or danger, a time when a difficult or important decision must be made, the turning point of a disease is when a significant change occurs, indicating either recovery or death [2].

Cambridge Dictionary gives the following definitions: 1) a time of significant disagreement, confusion, or suffering; 2) an extremely difficult or dangerous point in a situation; 3) a crisis point, a moment during a serious illness when there is the possibility of suddenly getting better or worse.

Having studied these definitions, we have formed groups. The first group includes the most extensive «crisis», presented in a political context.

The second group conveys a state of instability or danger in social, political and international affairs, leading to decisive changes (*catastrophe, predicament, plight, quandary*).

English synonym dictionaries, unlike German dictionaries, do not single out the synonym group with the meaning «threat» and pay more attention to people's everyday lives and the sphere of medicine, which can speak about the importance of the concept of «crisis» for ordinary people.

Since the mass media play a unique role in maintaining relations between the state and society, as practical material for further research of the concept «crise», we use the articles of Internet sites [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com), <http://www.nytimes.com>, <http://www.ft.com>, [www.independent.co.uk/](http://www.independent.co.uk/), <http://www.theguardian.com/uk>, which present current news not only from the USA, Great Britain but also from all over the world. The structure of the sites allows us to select the required topic and date and look at examples of the use of the words we have chosen to analyse. The reader can choose any article in electronic form on the topic of his interest: politics, economy, health care, sports, culture, and regional news. Also, there is a catalogue of current topics in alphabetical order. It should be remembered that context plays a vital role in interpreting the shades of meaning of a word.

The concept of «crisis» is widely used in political discourse and speaks of the complexity of the current situation, which has to do with both foreign and domestic policy. The USA and Great Britain are today advanced countries world leaders, which determines their active foreign military policy, which they conduct rather rigidly:

In the newspaper Independent, we read that the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

has launched an investigation into the alleged use of chemical weapons: Syria crisis: Chemical weapons agency sending team to the site of the *attack*.

The UK intends to respond to the alleged chemical attack in Douma: *Theresa May calls urgent cabinet meeting over Britain's response to escalating Syria crisis* [5].

In addition, English-language publications also cover developments in other countries of the world in the field of military policy:

Stockholm is concerned with the deterioration of the security situation in the Baltic Sea region over the past few years due to Russia's increased military operations there. *Sweden is distributing an updated version of a Cold War-era civil emergency advice booklet to some 4.8 million households about what to do during a crisis, including war* [1].

The Gaza Strip is still in a dire situation and has serious humanitarian problems: *The jarring split-screen images of violence in Gaza and the ceremony at the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem this week were a reminder that American leadership to address the Gaza crisis remains critical* [10].

In English linguoculture, the singling out of migrant problems on a European scale is also evident. Fortunately, the UK has been least affected by the flow of refugees, on the one hand, due to its northern location, and on the other hand, due to a stricter entry policy. Nevertheless, the term 'migrant crisis' appears in the British and American press:

In the French town of Calais, there was a clash between migrants: *The shootout came at a time of rising tensions over the situation in Calais, a symbol of France's struggle to manage its part of Europe's migrant crisis* [10].

In the Italian town of Macerata, a far-right activist killed several migrants: 'At the grass-roots level, the so-called European migrant crisis resulted in an escalation in symbolic and physical violence, including street confrontations, attacks against refugee camps and punitive expeditions against migrants.

Despite the firm position of the U.S. in the global community, the domestic policy of the country's government today raises many questions among both the population and the opposition:

The Washington Post newspaper voices its dissatisfaction with Trump's policies and says that he and his team are busy poisoning the faith of many Americans in the rule of law and their leaders: *Trump is busy laying the groundwork for not just a legal crisis, or even a constitutional crisis, but a crisis of the American people; If President Trump fires the bane of his legal troubles, he could spark a legal and constitutional crisis; Stop waiting for the constitutional*

crisis that President Trump is sure to provoke. It's here [9].

In the Washingtonpost we read about the political crisis in Venezuela, which also entails an economic crisis:

Serious crisis leads to apathy in Venezuelan elections: *But despite impassioned pleas by the candidates, the current campaign seems almost sad by comparison and marked by apathy as mounting daily problems like shortages of everything from water to medicine go unresolved amid a grim economic crisis; Maduro, who presents himself as the political heir of Chavez, promises to unveil plans after his re-election for rescuing Venezuela from its crisis, which he blames on U.S. «imperialists» and their conservative lackeys in Latin America* [1].

Today, the notion of ‘crisis’ is most often used in military policy and describes the states of various regions. In English linguoculture, a ‘humanitarian crisis’ is also used to describe a consequence of military conflicts. In addition, this concept is used in texts related to dissatisfaction with the internal policy of the US government and in the economic context.

This group of words («catastrophe», «predicament», «plight», and «quandary») is most often found in contexts describing domestic political problems related to the activities of the current US president. The expressions «plight» and «catastrophe» are used in these contexts:

*The Washington Post newspaper is outraged that US President Donald Trump is more interested in the NFL protests than the storm in Puerto Rico:*

*Washington Post reporters have documented the island's plight, with people desperate for aid not finding much* [3].

Donald Trump's policies continue to focus on coal mining and laws related to it: *During the 2016 presidential campaign, Donald Trump talked about the plight of the American coal miner scores of times»* [9].

The unexpectedness of President Trump's victory in the presidential election is often attributed to his great desire to change the existing economic order. *The extent to which those arguments are the cause of Trump's win is debatable – exit polls showed that those worried about the economy broadly preferred Hillary Clinton – but the plight of the white working class became central to Trump's campaign narrative* [10].

During President Donald Trump's time in office, the African-American unemployment rate has fallen: *To hear Donald Trump tell it during the campaign, African Americans were suffering from a catastrophic employment situation, with more than half of young black people out of work* [10].

Foreign policy is more characterised by the expressions «predicament» and «quandary.»

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker urges the EU to avoid the same mistakes it made in the Greek debt crisis regarding Italy: *With regard to Italy's debt problem, Juncker made it clear that Italy should claim responsibility for its predicament and avoid blaming the EU* [8].

Singapore and China may be most affected by Malaysia's plans to delay significant infrastructure projects, but that does not mean that bilateral relations between the two Asian countries and Malaysia should be terminated, says Malaysian Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng: *I am sure as good neighbours and as friendly nations, they would understand our predicament and they would also want to help us out to resolve them* [6].

In issues related to migration policy, this group of words emphasises the plight of people forced to leave their homeland and in need of support from European states:

French police closed a migrant camp in Central Paris to prevent riots, sheltering refugees: *France's quandary is shared by other European nations seeking to manage the stream of new arrivals, which has ebbed since the mass Syrian refugee crisis a few years ago but remains a steady challenge* [1].

The same meaning of this group of words can be traced in the context of military policy:

The Sinai Peninsula is in a humanitarian crisis: *Such is the plight today of about 420,000 people in North Sinai, a governate of Egypt in the northern part of the Sinai Peninsula that is the scene of an Egyptian counterterrorism campaign against Islamic State militants* [6].

From the given examples, we can see that the expressions of this group describe the people's predicament and crisis, which was caused by some or other actions of political leaders.

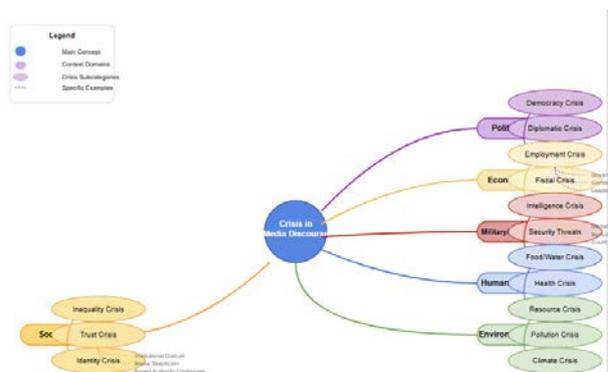


Fig. 1. The constituents of the concept «Crisis» in media discourse

This mind map visualisation shows how the concept of crisis branches into distinct but interconnected thematic areas in media discourse. The main branches represent the major contextual domains where crisis terminology appears, while sub-branches detail specific manifestations and examples within each domain. The structure highlights how crisis-related language adapts and varies across contexts while maintaining connected semantic threads. Each branch represents a key finding from the research about how English-language media conceptualises and deploys crisis terminology. The visualisation particularly emphasises how the basic concept of «crisis» extends into various specialised meanings depending on the context, from military conflicts to economic challenges to humanitarian situations.

**Conclusion.** The research demonstrates that the concept of crisis in English-language publicistic discourse functions as a sophisticated linguistic tool that goes beyond mere description. Its usage patterns reveal complex interactions between media rep-

resentation and public understanding of challenging situations. The study shows how crisis terminology has evolved into a crucial element of modern political and social discourse, serving both informative and rhetorical purposes. The analysis reveals that crisis-related language in publicistic discourse operates on multiple levels: descriptive, analytical, and rhetorical. This multilayered functionality enables media outlets to report on crises, frame public understanding, and influence policy responses. The relationship between crisis and disaster terminology emerges as particularly significant, with both concepts often conveying the complexity and urgency of modern global challenges. These findings have important implications for understanding how public discourse shapes responses to global challenges and how media representation influences public perception of critical situations. The research suggests that careful attention to crisis-related terminology in publicistic discourse is essential for media practitioners and consumers to navigate contemporary global challenges.

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