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The refugee problem in modern diplomatic relations with the Middle East

Abstract. The study aimed to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the transformation of the refugee problem into an instrument of political pressure in the context of modern diplomatic relations with the Middle East. Based on a systematic analysis of international legal documents, official reports of international organisations and scientific publications, the study addressed the evolution of the international refugee protection system and its current challenges. The study analysed in detail the activities of key international institutions in the context of coordinating the global refugee protection system and finding durable solutions for persons under the mandate. The analysis of the use of the migration crisis as an instrument of hybrid warfare, on the example of the actions of Turkey and Belarus, demonstrated the systemic shortcomings of existing international protection mechanisms. Based on the analysis of empirical data, the study established that the current refugee protection system shows signs of structural inefficiency in responding to large-scale population movements. The study demonstrated that the instrumentalisation of the migration crisis leads to violations of refugees' rights and creates tensions in international relations. The experience of the EU countries in counteracting the use of migration flows as an instrument of political pressure was studied, and effective practices and gaps in the institutional provision of migration security were identified. The study analysed the legal mechanisms and policy instruments used by international organisations to protect refugees in the context of hybrid threats and assessed their effectiveness in crises. The study substantiated the need for systemic reform of the international system of response to migration crises through the introduction of new coordination mechanisms, strengthening the preventive component and ensuring a fair distribution of responsibility between states. Four strategic areas of reform were proposed: institutional transformation, financial sustainability, technological modernisation and legal harmonisation. The results of the study have practical implications for the development of international refugee policy, improvement of humanitarian diplomacy mechanisms and creation of an effective legal framework for managing migration crises

Keywords: hybrid warfare; migration; international legal mechanism; humanitarian crisis; political pressure

Introduction

The problem of refugees has transformed from a humanitarian issue into a set of geopolitical, security, and socio-economic challenges. Large-scale population movements from the Middle East as a result of the conflicts in Syria (2011-2023), Iraq (2003-2011, 2013-2017), Yemen (since 2014) and Libya (since 2011) have created a situation where the humanitarian crisis has become an instrument of political pressure. The European migration crisis of 2015-2016, the Turkish-European migration agreement of 2016, and the Belarusian-Polish crisis of 2021 show the ineffectiveness of traditional refugee protection mechanisms when states use migration for geopolitical purposes. The problem is particularly acute in relations with the countries of the Middle East. The international legal mechanisms created in the mid-20th

century are not sufficiently adapted to modern realities, where the refugee problem is becoming an element of geopolitical combinations.

A fundamental contribution to this issue was made by G. Jikeli (2024), proposing an anthropological approach to analysing the relationship between historical memory and modern migration processes. The study examined in detail how the historical experience of displacement of Syrian-Kurdish refugees influenced their perception of current events and identity formation in the context of forced migration. The study by M. Janmyr & D. Stevens (2020) further addressed the institutional aspects of refugee protection by offering a comprehensive analysis of regional regimes in the Middle East. They analysed the peculiarities of national legislation

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in the region, identifying commonalities and differences. L.P. Usata (2022) analysed the refugee problem as a global challenge and highlighted aspects of the Ukrainian experience in this context. The study addressed the legal aspects of migration policy and Ukraine's role in the international refugee protection system. The study by A.O. Lobova (2024) contributed to the research by analysing migration flows from the Middle East to the EU and the implications of these processes for regional security. K. Vaagland (2023) provided an innovative approach to the analysis of migration diplomacy in the context of donor perceptions of recipient state strategies. Using the example of Jordan, which received more than 675,000 Syrian refugees mainly in 2012-2018, the flow of which was directed to Turkey, Lebanon and partially to Europe, the author analyses in detail how donor countries interpret and respond to different strategies for managing migration flows. The study by F.N. Putri *et al.* (2023) significantly expands the analysis of the current migration crisis, offering a comprehensive analysis of the situation in Europe and Turkey. The study conducted a systematic comparison of different approaches to managing migration flows, assessing their effectiveness through the prism of both short-term results and long-term consequences. O. Sarsour (2022) significantly complemented the research on security issues by addressing the European context and analysing the impact of right-wing radical movements on migration policy. The study revealed in detail the mechanisms of anti-migration sentiment in European societies and their impact on political decision-making. The study addressed the relationship between the growing popularity of right-wing radical parties and the strengthening of restrictive elements in the migration policies of European countries. A new dimension to the study of the refugee problem was created by studies analysing the use of the migration crisis as an instrument of political influence. The study by B. Sambur (2021) revealed the impact of the Syrian civil war (2011-2023) on relations between Turkey and the EU, analysing the conflict that led to the emergence of 6.9 million refugees from Syria, which became the largest group of internally displaced persons in the world. The main recipient countries of Syrian refugees are Turkey (3.6 million), Lebanon (815 thousand), Jordan (675 thousand) and Germany (620 thousand), according to the UNHCR (Global trends report, 2025). The study by B. Sambur demonstrated the mechanisms of transforming a humanitarian crisis into a political tool.

However, there is a significant gap in research on the transformation of the refugee problem into an instrument of political influence. Studies focus either on humanitarian aspects or on individual examples of the use of the migration crisis as a political tool, without a comprehensive analysis of systemic mechanisms. The relationship between the security aspects of the refugee problem and diplomatic relations with the Middle East has not been sufficiently studied. The issue of improving international mechanisms to counteract the instrumentalisation of the migration crisis in the context of hybrid threats requires a deeper analysis. The study aimed to identify the peculiarities of transforming the refugee problem into an instrument of political influence and to develop recommendations for improving international mechanisms to

counteract such instrumentalisation. To achieve this goal, it was necessary to solve the following research tasks: to analyse international legal mechanisms and institutional coordination in addressing the refugee problem; to study the process of transforming the migration crisis into an instrument of political pressure on the example of Turkey and Belarus; to identify promising areas for reforming the international system of response to migration crises.

Materials and methods

The methodological basis of the research was a comprehensive approach to the study of the refugee problem in the context of modern diplomatic relations, which addressed the issue as a complex multidimensional phenomenon. The study was based on a systematic analysis of a wide range of sources, which can be divided into several main groups. The first group consists of fundamental international legal documents that form the basis of the modern refugee protection system. The key document defining the basic principles of refugee protection is the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol (n.d.), which sets international standards for the treatment of refugees and their fundamental rights. Institutional mechanisms for refugee protection are defined by the Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (1950), which outlines the mandate and powers of this organisation. The second group is formed by documents that define the current framework of international cooperation in the field of refugee protection. Of particular importance was the Global Compact on Refugees (2018), which establishes mechanisms for sharing responsibility between states and creating a more predictable system of response to mass displacements. The third group consists of regional documents and agreements that reflect the specifics of addressing the refugee problem in the European context. For the comparative analysis of Turkey's strategies, the following were used: the Türkiye Directive: Temporary Protection Regulation No. 29153 (2014), the information document "Facility for Refugees in Turkey" (European Commission, 2016), the official statement "EU-Türkiye Statement" (European Commission, 2020) and the audit report (European Court of Auditors, 2024). The strategy of Belarus was defined as an illustrative example of an artificially created migration crisis used for hybrid warfare, in contrast to migration processes from the Middle East to the EU, which were mainly humanitarian in nature. To analyse this strategy, European Council Conclusions on Belarus (2021), Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/1989 (2021), EU-Belarus Relations report (Przetacznik & Russell, 2021), official documents of the 28th Meeting of the OSCE (Sweden, 2022), and materials of the Warsaw human dimension conference (2024) were used. The fourth group included analytical materials and reports of international organisations, including annual reports of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (Global trends report, 2025) and reports on the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees (2018), which provided information on the state of the problem and the effectiveness of international mechanisms to address it.

The study used a set of scientific methods that provided a comprehensive analysis of the problem. The systematic approach was used to address the refugee problem as a

complex set of interrelated elements in the context of modern international relations. The historical method was used to analyse the evolution of international legal mechanisms for the protection of refugees and their transformation under the influence of modern challenges. Comparative analysis was used to study different approaches to solving the refugee problem in the study of Turkey's and Belarus' strategies to use the migration crisis as an instrument of political influence. The institutional approach assessed the effectiveness of existing mechanisms of international coordination in the field of refugee protection, in particular European control systems such as the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and Frontex. The methods of political analysis were used to study the transformation of the refugee problem from a humanitarian issue into an instrument of geopolitical influence. The prognostic method was used to develop recommendations for improving international mechanisms to counteract the instrumentalisation of the migration crisis. A comprehensive methodological approach was used in a comprehensive study of the problem and the development of practical recommendations for improving international mechanisms for responding to current migration challenges.

Results

International legal mechanisms and institutional coordination in addressing the refugee problem. The current system of international legal regulation of refugee protection is based on fundamental documents adopted under the auspices of the United Nations (Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1950). This system has undergone a significant evolution, expanding its mandate and adapting to the new challenges of global migration. The key institutional mechanism in this system is the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which provides international protection and durable solutions for persons under its mandate. It is noteworthy that since its establishment, UNHCR has significantly expanded its scope of activities to include not only traditional refugees, but also internally displaced persons and stateless persons (UNHCR's mandate..., 2024). In the process of analysing international legal mechanisms and institutional coordination in addressing the refugee problem, a multi-level system of refugee protection was identified, covering the global, international, regional and national levels of the international refugee protection system (Table 1).

Table 1. System of international legal mechanisms and institutional coordination in addressing the refugee issue

Level of coordination	Key mechanisms	Institutions	Functions
Global	- International refugee protection - Coordination of humanitarian aid - Finding long-term solutions	- UN General Assembly - UNHCR - Economic and Social Council	- Defining international standards - Coordinating global efforts - Resource mobilisation
International	- Interagency coordination - Assistance programmes - Technical support	- World Food Programme - UNICEF - WHO	- Providing specialised care - Coordination of programmes - Monitoring the situation
Regional	- Adapting global strategies - Coordination across geographical areas - Crisis response	- UNHCR regional offices - Regional organisations - Coordination centres	- Implementation of programmes - Coordination of actions - Rapid response
National	- Development of legislation - Administrative procedures - Integration programmes	- National governments - Local authorities - UNHCR offices	- Protection of refugees' rights - Provision of services - Integration measures

Source: compiled by the author based on M. Alqashouti (2021), A. Drescher *et al.* (2021), M. Likaj & A. Marku (2023), F.N. Putri *et al.* (2023)

Each level is characterised by specific mechanisms, institutions involved, regulatory framework and functions. At the same time, the division of powers and responsibilities between different actors improves coordination efficiency of refugee protection efforts. The effectiveness of such a system depends largely on the coordinated interaction between all levels and components. M. Alqashouti (2021) noted that such a legal protection structure provides a comprehensive approach to solving the refugee problem through a combination of diplomatic efforts at different levels. In the context of international relations, the problem of protecting displaced persons is emerging as a global challenge to interstate cooperation, covering several critical aspects. The 2020 ruling of the EU Court of Justice against Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic for refusing to comply with asylum-seeker distribution quotas has revealed the tension between supranational law and national sovereignty, and numerous studies have shown significant differences in the application of international legal norms among Middle Eastern countries. The problem of fair distribution of responsibility is manifested in the

Pact on Migration and Asylum (2024) with its system of "mandatory solidarity". At the same time, statistics show that Jordan, with a population of about 10 million, has taken in 675,000 Syrian refugees (6.75% of the population), while the EU, with a population of 447 million, has taken in only 1 million (0.22%). The coordination of humanitarian aid remains problematic, as evidenced by the Regional Refugee Crisis Response Plan for Syria, which was funded in 2022 at only 46% of the required 5.6 billion USD, leading to a 50% reduction in food aid, creating tensions between donors and recipients (Jacqué, 2024). The search for long-term solutions is complicated by the policies of individual states, such as the Lebanese "voluntary repatriation" of Syrian refugees in 2023, despite documented human rights violations (Petillo, 2023). Particularly acute is the artificial migration crisis organised by Belarus in 2021, which is analysed in the literature as a new form of "hybrid warfare" (Przetacznik & Russell, 2021). The current challenges associated with large-scale migration flows, in particular from the Middle East to Europe, require a review of the effectiveness of existing international legal

mechanisms and institutional approaches to addressing the refugee problem. In this context, the experience of Turkey as the country that has received the largest number of Syrian refugees is particularly illustrative. Turkey's refugee legal framework, represented primarily by the Temporary Protection Regulation No. 29153 of 2014, establishes a comprehensive system for protecting persons arriving in large numbers in Turkey from countries where armed conflicts or massive human rights violations are observed. This regulation defines the legal status of persons under temporary protection, regulates their rights and obligations, and establishes institutional mechanisms for assisting (Türkiye: Temporary Protection..., 2014). Notably, this regulation was subsequently amended in 2019 (Regulation on amendments..., 2019). This demonstrates the dynamic nature of legal regulation of Turkey's migration policy in response to the changing circumstances of the migration crisis. The practical implementation of this regulatory framework is reflected in the activities of the Mechanism for Refugees in Turkey, which has become a key instrument for the implementation of the 2016 Turkish-European Migration Agreement. As noted in the Special Report (European Court of Auditors, 2024), this mechanism was established to coordinate and optimise EU assistance to refugees in Turkey with a budget of 6 billion EUR for the period 2016-2019. The report demonstrates both achievements and significant shortcomings in the functioning of this mechanism. On the one hand, the mechanism has mobilised significant resources and ensured refugees' access to basic services, including education and healthcare. On the other hand, the report found insufficient coordination between different projects, problems with monitoring the effectiveness of the use of funds, and a lack of a clear strategy for the transition from humanitarian assistance to long-term solutions. The report emphasises the sustainability of the results achieved after the end of EU funding, which indicates systemic challenges in the field of international coordination of efforts to address the refugee problem (European Court of Auditors, 2024). The experience of the Refugee Mechanism in Turkey is a good example of how international legal instruments and institutional mechanisms are often insufficiently adapted to political realities, where the refugee problem is used as a tool of geopolitical influence. The analysis of the practical implementation of the Turkish-European migration agreement shows that even with significant financial resources and a detailed regulatory framework, the effectiveness of international coordination remains limited due to political factors and institutional barriers. A. Drescher *et al.* (2021) also emphasise the importance of cooperation between different institutions, especially in the context of responding to the needs of refugees from the Middle East. M. Likaj & A. Marku (2023) emphasised the importance of effective interaction between UNHCR regional offices and local coordination centres for rapid response to crises. At the same time, F.N. Putri *et al.* (2023) noted that the national level remains critical for the practical implementation of refugee protection and integration programmes.

In the context of refugees and migration crises, it is necessary to analyse the role of Ukraine, which occupies a special place in the regional and global migration system. As a state that has ratified the 1951 Convention

relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol, Ukraine is actively involved in the international refugee protection system (70th anniversary of..., 2021). Until 2022, Ukraine acted as a host country, a subject of diplomatic efforts and a party to migration crises, which makes its experience valuable for forming a comprehensive notion of modern migration processes. Ukraine actively joined the international refugee protection system by ratifying the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol back in 2002 (About UNHCR in Ukraine, n.d.). This created a basic legal framework for the development of a national system of protection for forced migrants. National legislation was adapted to international standards through the adoption of Law of Ukraine No. 3671-VI (2011). A substantial step was Ukraine's participation in the Global Compact on Refugees (2018), although the document is not formally legally binding. As part of the implementation of the Compact's principles, national programmes have been developed to support the integration of refugees, including access to education, healthcare and the labour market. According to UNHCR, in 2018-2021. Ukraine has significantly improved its asylum application procedures and expanded opportunities for local integration of recognised refugees, including through language training and vocational training programmes (Usata, 2022). Ukraine's diplomatic position on the use of migration as an instrument of political pressure has been shaped by regional challenges and its own experience. Ukraine has consistently supported the principle of not using vulnerable groups to achieve geopolitical goals, as reflected in official statements by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and speeches by Ukrainian diplomats at international forums. This position was especially clear during the Belarusian-Polish migration crisis of 2021. The Ukrainian government officially condemned the actions of the Belarusian regime to organise an artificial migration crisis as a form of hybrid aggression against the European Union. In an official statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on 10 November 2021, it was emphasised that "the use of migrants as an instrument of hybrid warfare is unacceptable and contrary to the fundamental principles of humanitarian law" (Lobova, 2024). Ukraine's response to the migration crisis on the Belarusian-Polish border in 2021 was comprehensive and multilevel, in solidarity with Poland and other EU countries on the inadmissibility of using migrants as an instrument of hybrid warfare (Sweden, 2022). During the Belarusian-Polish crisis in 2021, Ukraine showed solidarity with Poland and other EU countries, supporting their position on the inadmissibility of using migrants as a tool of hybrid warfare. Ukrainian diplomacy officially condemned the actions of the Belarusian regime and strengthened the protection of its border with Belarus to prevent such provocations (Ukraine strengthens..., 2021). Following a decision by the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine in November 2021, additional forces of the Border Guard Service and the National Guard were deployed on the country's northern border. In total, more than 8,500 border guards and 15 helicopters were deployed to patrol Ukraine's northern border to prevent the possible redirection of migration flows from Belarus to Ukraine (Lobova, 2024). Ukraine has also actively cooperated with Frontex and other European structures

in combating illegal migration and refugee instrumentalisation (Warsaw human dimension conference, 2024). Representatives of the Ukrainian Border Guard Service participated in joint exercises and information exchange with their Polish counterparts, which contributed to strengthening regional security (Przetacznik & Russell, 2021). At the same time, Ukraine's role in regional migration processes has undergone a significant transformation. For a long time, Ukraine was mainly a transit country for migrants from the Middle East and Central Asia heading to the European Union. However, since 2014, after the outbreak of the conflict in the east of the country, Ukraine has faced an unprecedented internal displacement crisis, which has significantly affected its migration policy and approaches to addressing refugee issues (Khudolii, 2017). Ukraine's experience in overcoming the internal migration crisis and managing massive population movements has become a valuable contribution to the development of regional approaches to solving similar problems.

The United Nations and its specialised agency, UNHCR, are central in the global refugee protection system, forming a comprehensive framework for supporting and coordinating international assistance. Their activities, based on the provisions of the Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (1950), cover a wide range of functions and mechanisms aimed to provide international protection and finding durable solutions for people forced to flee their homes due to persecution, conflict or violence. UNHCR implements its mandate through a complex system of coordination mechanisms, interacting at the global level with the UN General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other key UN bodies. This interaction not only ensures political support and legitimacy for the organisation's work but also mobilises the necessary resources to fulfil its mandate. At the international level, UNHCR coordinates its activities with other UN agencies, including the World Food Programme, which provides food assistance, UNICEF, which addresses the needs of refugee children, and the World Health Organisation, which is responsible for the medical aspects of assistance. Of particular importance is the regional dimension of the organisation's work, where UNHCR's network of offices adapts global strategies to the local context and coordinates activities in specific geographical areas. This is particularly substantial in cases of mass population displacement, as is the case with the Syrian refugee crisis. At the national level, the organisation works through its offices with governments to help develop and implement national refugee protection systems, including legislative frameworks and administrative procedures. UNHCR's funding system is based on voluntary contributions from UN Member States and private donors, which can be used in the organisation to develop sophisticated planning and resource allocation mechanisms for rapid emergency response and long-term assistance programmes (Global trends report, 2025). At the same time, the organisation is constantly improving its methods of work, introducing innovative approaches to assistance, including digital transformation through the introduction of biometric technologies for refugee registration and the transition to a cash assistance system that ensures independent determination of refugee priority needs (Global Compact on..., 2018).

A substantial aspect of the institution is the integration of refugee assistance programmes into broader host community development strategies, which promotes social cohesion and reduces tensions between refugees and the local population. However, the UN and UNHCR face serious challenges, including a chronic lack of funding and dependence on voluntary contributions, which limits the organisation's ability to respond to all refugee needs (Vaagland, 2023). The difficulty of obtaining the consent of states to accept refugees and ensure their protection, especially in the context of growing anti-migration sentiment, creates additional political constraints. Security challenges associated with the need to operate in conflict and fragile zones pose risks to staff and complicate the provision of assistance (Indicator report, 2023). In addition, the coordination of multiple actors involved in assisting refugees often leads to duplication of efforts or gaps in service delivery (UN General Assembly Resolution 71/172, 2015). An analysis of current trends indicates the need to strengthen preventive activities and increase attention to preventing situations that lead to mass displacement. A substantial area of development is the expansion of partnerships through more active involvement of the private sector and civil society in refugee assistance programmes, as well as the localisation of assistance through the transfer of more responsibility and resources to local organisations and communities hosting refugees (Indicator report, 2023). Further digitalisation and the introduction of new technologies will help to increase the efficiency of assistance and improve coordination between different actors. To improve the system, it is necessary to create stable funding mechanisms that are less dependent on voluntary contributions, develop more effective mechanisms for sharing responsibilities between states for hosting refugees, and strengthen coordination between humanitarian assistance and development programmes (UN General Assembly Resolution..., 2021). Particular attention should be paid to improving the system of data collection and analysis for more effective planning and resource allocation, as well as to expanding opportunities for legal resettlement of refugees and their integration in host countries (Pact on Migration and Asylum, 2024). The current activities of the UN and UNHCR in the field of refugee protection face several fundamental challenges that need to be addressed systematically. These challenges cover various aspects of the organisations' work and have a significant impact on the effectiveness of refugee assistance. The most acute problem remains financial instability, as the funding system is based mainly on voluntary contributions from governments and private donors. This creates significant uncertainty in planning long-term programmes and limits the ability to respond quickly to new crises. Political opposition from governments also poses a serious challenge, as anti-immigration sentiment is on the rise, with many countries tightening border controls and complicating asylum procedures. Security risks significantly complicate the organisation's work, especially in areas of active conflict, where there are direct threats to staff and limited access to refugees. Coordination complexity is manifested in the need to coordinate the actions of numerous international organisations, national governments and NGOs, which often leads to duplication of

efforts or gaps in service delivery. The duration of modern refugee crises requires a shift from short-term humanitarian assistance to long-term solutions, which creates additional challenges for the existing humanitarian aid system. The information complexity associated with collecting accurate data on the number and needs of refugees, especially in the context of massive population movements, also significantly complicates the planning and evaluation of the effectiveness of assistance programmes (Indicator report, 2023). Despite the many challenges, the role of the UN and UNHCR in coordinating refugee assistance remains critical to the functioning of the international refugee protection system. The organisations continue to adapt to changing conditions and develop new approaches to addressing refugee issues, demonstrating their indispensability in the global humanitarian system.

The institutional structure for the protection of refugee rights is characterised by a multi-level coordination system, with UNHCR being central. The effectiveness of this structure can be assessed through the prism of its ability to respond to large-scale crises such as the Syrian crisis. Following the mandate, this organisation has two main functions: to provide international protection for refugees and to find durable solutions to their problems. Compared to other international organisations, UNHCR has a unique mandate and capacity to coordinate global refugee protection efforts. Coordination of efforts with governmental and non-governmental organisations is crucial to facilitate the voluntary repatriation or successful integration of refugees in their new countries of residence. The legal framework for refugee protection is formed through the interaction of different levels of international law. At the universal level, there are general human rights protection mechanisms that apply to refugees as a special category of persons in need of international protection. The analysis demonstrated that these mechanisms include a system of human rights treaties, among which the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) are of key importance. Critical reflection on this system reveals both its strengths (universality, comprehensiveness) and weaknesses (lack of effective enforcement mechanisms, dependence on the political will of states). The analysis of the effectiveness of international legal mechanisms shows that their efficiency largely depends on the existence of a system of control over the fulfilment of obligations by states. Different control systems exist within individual countries, including judicial, administrative and independent monitoring mechanisms (Janmyr & Stevens, 2020). An illustrative European example is the German multilevel system, where decisions of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) are subject to judicial review by administrative courts, and the Constitutional Court ensures that migration policy complies with fundamental rights (Pact on Migration and Asylum, 2024). France has established a specialised National Asylum Court (CNDA), which annually reviews more than 60,000 cases, with appeals against its decisions to the Council of State (Likaj & Marku, 2023). Independent monitoring bodies, such as the Swedish Ombudsman Institute and the British Independent Commission for Borders and Immigration (ICIBI), which conduct regular inspections

and publish reports on the observance of refugee rights, are also critical (Global trends report, 2025). A comparative analysis of various monitoring systems shows that the UN conventional bodies that oversee the observance of refugee rights within the general human rights protection system have limited capacity to enforce their decisions (The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, n.d.). Although the special treaties on the status of refugees do not provide for the establishment of separate supervisory bodies, the function of overseeing their implementation is entrusted to UNHCR, which creates certain institutional limitations (Statute of the Office..., 1950).

Assessing regional refugee protection mechanisms, it is worth noting their growing role in addressing local crises. At the level of individual regions, additional protection instruments and standards are being developed that incorporate the specific problems and needs of refugees in a particular geographical context (Janmyr & Stevens, 2020). A comparative analysis of regional refugee protection systems reveals significant differences in approaches and the effectiveness of their implementation. For example, the European refugee protection system demonstrates a higher level of institutionalisation and standardisation of procedures compared to mechanisms in other regions (UN General Assembly Resolution..., 2021). Coordination between various international organisations and UN agencies is of particular importance in the context of the current refugee crisis. Critical analysis shows that the protection of refugees' rights requires a comprehensive approach that covers various aspects from meeting basic needs to long-term integration. The assessment of the effectiveness of interagency coordination reveals both positive examples of cooperation and cases of duplication of functions and inefficient use of resources. This includes close cooperation between UNHCR and other specialised agencies such as the World Health Organisation, UNICEF, and the International Labour Organisation (Drescher *et al.*, 2021). An analysis of cooperation with non-governmental organisations such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), and Danish Refugee Council (DRC) demonstrates their growing role in the refugee protection system. Compared to government agencies, NGOs often demonstrate greater flexibility and efficiency in providing direct assistance to refugees on the ground. A striking example is the work of Médecins Sans Frontières during the Syrian conflict, which has provided medical care to millions of refugees in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey since 2011, setting up mobile clinics in camps and providing access to healthcare in settings where state structures did not have the resources or capacity to respond quickly. Similarly, the Norwegian Refugee Council has provided educational programmes for more than 250,000 refugee children from Syria, filling gaps in the formal education systems of host countries (Syrian conflict timeline..., 2021). Evaluation of practical experience shows that such cooperation improve efficiency of implementation of international protection standards and a better response to the needs of refugees in specific situations. In the context of the problem of refugees from the Middle East, the issue of coordination of efforts between countries of origin, transit and destination is of particular

relevance. A critical analysis shows that the role of the UN and its specialised agencies, especially UNHCR, is crucial in coordinating international assistance to refugees from this region. At the same time, the effectiveness of this assistance is often limited by political tensions between refugee-receiving countries and humanitarian aid donors. Practice shows that recipient countries often face insufficient funding and resources to properly support refugees, which puts an additional burden on their social systems.

Migration crises as a political tool: Challenges and ways to reform the international system. The use of the migration crisis as an instrument of political pressure has become one of the defining characteristics of modern international relations, and the example of Turkey is particularly illustrative in this context. The country's geographical location at the crossroads of migration routes between the Middle East and Europe, combined with the large-scale Syrian crisis, has created unique preconditions for turning the migration issue into a potent tool of foreign policy influence. The historical context of this situation dates to 2011, when the outbreak of civil war in Syria led to an unprecedented flow of refugees to neighbouring countries. Turkey, initially guided by humanitarian considerations and a "zero-tolerance" policy, opened its borders to Syrian refugees. Over the following years, the country received the largest number of refugees in the world - more than 3.6 million Syrians, which put a significant strain on the country's social infrastructure and economy (Kurdolii, 2017). The migration crisis of 2015-2016, caused by the escalation of the civil war in Syria, the deterioration of conditions in refugee camps in neighbouring countries, and the weakening of control at the borders of transit countries, was a turning point in the transformation of the migration issue into an instrument of political influence (Sambur, 2021). Hundreds of thousands of refugees have begun to cross Turkey to Europe in large numbers. This led to a landmark agreement between the EU and Turkey in March 2016. Under this agreement, Ankara agreed to curb the flow of irregular migrants by strengthening the coast guard, deploying border patrols, taking back migrants who had illegally entered Greece, and accommodating refugees in special centres in Turkey (European Commission, 2016). However, over time, Turkey began to use this agreement increasingly active as an instrument of pressure on its European partners. This manifested itself in various forms: from direct threats to "open the borders" and "let millions of refugees into Europe", as President Erdogan stated in November 2016 (Boronbaeva, 2022), to the actual relaxation of border controls at critical moments. The situation in early 2020 was particularly illustrative when Turkey announced the temporary suspension of the migration agreement with the EU (Dursun-Özkanca, 2022). This decision led to the accumulation of tens of thousands of migrants on the Turkish-Greek border, creating a serious humanitarian crisis and tensions with European partners (European Commission, 2016).

Turkey's strategy to use the migration issue as leverage had several key goals. First, it was to obtain additional funding from the EU for refugees, as the initially allocated funds were insufficient given the scale of the crisis. Secondly, it was to make progress on issues relevant

to Turkey, including visa liberalisation and EU membership negotiations. Third, it is to ensure European support for Turkey's policy in Syria and other regional issues. The use of the migration crisis as an instrument of political pressure has had serious consequences at various levels. At the international legal level, it undermined the fundamental principles of refugee protection, turning a humanitarian issue into a subject of political bargaining. At the regional level, it created tensions between countries and complicated the development of effective mechanisms for managing migration processes. At the humanitarian level, such actions worsened the situation of refugees themselves, who became hostages to political interests and lost access to adequate protection. Such policies had a direct impact on refugees. The use of their vulnerability as an instrument of political pressure led to violations of their fundamental rights, deterioration of living conditions and increased uncertainty about their future. It has also led to negative attitudes towards refugees in host societies, increased xenophobia and complicated integration processes. The situation has also had serious implications for European refugee policy. The EU's dependence on cooperation with Turkey to curb migration flows revealed the vulnerability of European migration policy and the need to develop more sustainable mechanisms for responding to migration crises. This included the need to reform the Dublin system, create effective mechanisms for sharing responsibilities between EU member states, and develop a comprehensive approach to migration management. The experience of Turkish-European relations in the context of the migration crisis also demonstrates the need to rethink the international refugee protection system. The current mechanisms established in the mid-twentieth century are not effective enough to respond to large-scale population movements and prevent the political instrumentalisation of migration crises. The basis of these mechanisms is the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol (n.d.), which were developed to address the problems of European refugees after World War II and are based on an individual approach to asylum, without providing for mechanisms to respond to massive population movements. The institutional framework of the system is represented by the UNHCR, which has a limited mandate and resources to coordinate the actions of states, as it was historically created as a temporary structure without sufficient leverage over national policies (The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, n.d.). A new approach is needed that would ensure a fair distribution of responsibilities between countries, guarantee the rights of refugees and minimise the possibility of using humanitarian crises as an instrument of political pressure. The prospects for solving this problem largely depend on the ability of the international community to develop more effective mechanisms for managing migration processes and ensure a fair distribution of responsibility between countries. This requires not only technical solutions, but also the political will to cooperate and recognise the shared responsibility for protecting people forced to flee their homes due to conflict and persecution.

The situation with the instrumentalisation of the migration crisis by Belarus is a particularly illustrative example of the use of vulnerable groups as an instrument

of hybrid warfare against the European Union. As stated in the official conclusions of the European Council (European Council Conclusions..., 2021), unlike Turkey, which has become a transit country for refugees due to its geographical location and regional conflicts, Belarus has deliberately created an artificial migration crisis in response to EU sanctions. Starting in the summer of 2021, according to a study by the European Parliament (Przetacznik & Russell, 2021), the Belarusian authorities began an organised process of attracting migrants from the Middle East, mainly from Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan. This process included simplifying the visa regime, increasing the number of flights from migrants' countries of origin, and creating tourist packages that were in fact a cover for organising illegal migration. It is worth noting that these activities were conducted at the state level using official structures and institutions. As confirmed in the official decision of the EU Council (Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/1989, 2021), the state-owned travel company Tsentrikurort and other Belarusian travel agencies actively advertised "tours" to Belarus in the Middle East. The Belarusian authorities not only facilitated the arrival of migrants, but also actively coordinated their movement to the borders with Poland, Lithuania and Latvia, creating organised pressure on the border infrastructure of neighbouring EU countries. According to analytical materials of the European Parliament, the situation became particularly acute in the autumn of 2021, when thousands of migrants found themselves in makeshift camps on the border with Poland (Przetacznik & Russell, 2021). This situation was recognised by the European Council as a humanitarian crisis deliberately created by the Belarusian authorities to destabilise the situation in the EU (European Council Conclusions..., 2021). The European Union's response was comprehensive and multi-level. According to a decision of the EU Council, targeted sanctions were imposed on individuals and organisations involved in the organisation of illegal migration (Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/1989, 2021). These measures included restrictions on the activities of travel agencies, airlines and other entities involved in creating the migration crisis. As noted in the documents of the European Parliament, the crisis demonstrated the need to strengthen coordination between EU member states in countering hybrid threats and protecting the Union's external borders (Przetacznik & Russell, 2021). It was recognised that such instrumentalised migration crises require new approaches to border management and a common migration policy. The consequences of this crisis have been multifaceted. It has led to tighter border controls on the EU's eastern borders and a revision of the mechanisms for responding to such threats. The crisis helped to consolidate the position of European countries on the need to counter hybrid threats and the use of migrants as an instrument of political pressure. Most migrants remained in the border area of Belarus in makeshift camps, where they were subjected to ill-treatment by Belarusian security forces, who forced them to storm the border (Sweden, 2022). EU countries, including Poland, Lithuania and Germany, provided humanitarian aid through international organisations, but refused to accept migrants who arrived through Belarus not to legitimise the migration route created by the Lukashenko regime. Some of the migrants were repatriated to their

countries of origin through special flights organised by Iraq and other countries with the mediation of international organisations, while others remained in Belarus, which, facing international pressure, was forced to move them to temporary accommodation centres away from the border (Warsaw human dimension conference, 2024).

An analysis of current challenges in the field of refugee protection reveals the urgent need to reform the international system of response to migration crises. The existing system, created in the mid-20th century, is not flexible enough to respond to current challenges, especially in the context of large-scale population movements from the Middle East. There is a need to review the mechanisms for financing humanitarian aid, improve the system of distribution of responsibilities between states, and strengthen coordination between various international actors. At the same time, it is necessary to ensure compliance with the principle of non-refoulement and other fundamental rights of refugees, which requires constant monitoring and improvement of existing protection mechanisms. Thus, the current international refugee protection system is at a point of historical paradox. The international community has witnessed an unprecedented mobilisation in the field of humanitarian assistance: the scale of support for displaced persons, the diversity of international actors involved, and the duration of assistance have reached the highest level in the history of the international protection system. At the same time, it is during this period of maximum intensification of humanitarian efforts that the system is showing signs of a deep institutional crisis that requires its fundamental rethinking and transformation. The international community's response to the existing challenges is often limited to proposals of a restrictive nature. A striking example is the European migration crisis of 2022-2023 caused by the conflict in Sudan, when more than 800,000 refugees crossed the borders of the neighbouring countries of Chad, Egypt and South Sudan. In 2023, Italy introduced new legislation that significantly complicated the asylum procedure for African refugees, limiting the grounds for humanitarian protection and increasing the period of detention in identification centres to 18 months. Greece, which has become a transit country for Sudanese refugees on their way to Western Europe, has expanded the practice of "returning" boats with migrants to the high seas, which has been criticised by human rights organisations as a violation of the principle of non-refoulement (Sudan situation, 2025). Attempts to narrow down the criteria for determining refugee status, tighten the policy of detention in camps, or limit the scope of guaranteed rights reflect a tendency to simplify the analysis of a complex problem. Such approaches, despite their apparent attractiveness in the face of a growing migration burden, pose a fundamental threat to the very foundations of the international refugee protection regime and the humanitarian principles that underpin it.

The emergence of a new liberal consensus on refugee protection reform, while offering a more progressive view, also fails to provide the necessary breakthrough in addressing the existing problems. Instead of transformative change, this approach tends to preserve the dysfunctional status quo under the guise of moderate reforms. In this context, there is an urgent need to develop fundamentally

new approaches to reforming the international refugee protection regime that can strike a balance between preserving the humanitarian orientation of the system and increasing its effectiveness in the face of current challenges. Criticism of restrictive models of migration policy has a scientific basis. Administrative restrictions on migration flows not only violate fundamental human rights but also demonstrate a systemic failure to address complex migration challenges. A comparative analysis of different national approaches shows that restrictive strategies lead to paradoxical consequences: instead of reducing migration pressure, they provoke the criminalisation of migration processes, create preconditions for the emergence of illegal networks and increase social tensions. An alternative model of international refugee protection should be based on a fundamentally

new methodological framework. Its key element is an expanded interpretation of the causes of forced migration. Whereas traditional approaches focused mainly on political persecution, current challenges require considering multiple factors, from climate change to systemic economic crises. Centralised bureaucratic structures are proving to be decreasingly effective in the face of fast-moving and unpredictable migration processes. Instead, networked coordination mechanisms provide much greater adaptability. This implies the formation of horizontal links between various actors, from international organisations to local civic initiatives. The results of the analysis of promising areas for reforming the international migration crisis response system demonstrate the need for a comprehensive approach to transforming existing mechanisms (Table 2).

Table 2. Strategic directions for reforming the international system of response to migration crises

Reform direction	Current challenges	Proposed changes	Expected results
Institutional transformation	- Bureaucratisation of processes - Duplication of functions - Slow response time	- Implementation of network coordination mechanisms - Decentralisation of decision-making - Strengthening the role of regional centres	- Improving response time - Improved coordination - Efficient allocation of resources
Financial sustainability	- Dependence on voluntary contributions - Unstable funding - Uneven distribution of finance	- Creating stable funding mechanisms - Diversifying sources - Implementation of innovative financial instruments	- Predictability of funding - Sustainability of programmes - More efficient use of resources
Technological modernisation	- Outdated accounting systems - Limited data exchange - Ineffective coordination	- Implementation of blockchain technology - Development of artificial intelligence systems - Digitalisation of processes	- Transparency of operations - Improved coordination - More effective monitoring
Legal harmonisation	- Inconsistency of national legislation - Different protection standards - Legal conflicts	- Unification of legal standards - Developing new international standards - Strengthening control mechanisms	- Unified standards of protection - Improved legal certainty - Efficient protection of rights

Source: compiled by the author based on E. Aygün (2021), J. Crisp (2021), A. Oleimat *et al.* (2022), O. Dursun-Özkanca (2022), and K. Vaagland (2023)

A comprehensive approach to reforming the international migration crisis response system has helped to identify four key areas: institutional transformation, financial sustainability, technological modernisation and legal harmonisation. For each area, the current challenges, proposed changes, expected results and required resources are identified, which assesses the scale of the necessary reforms and their potential impact on the effectiveness of the refugee protection system. The economic dimension of reforms goes far beyond the traditional concept of humanitarian aid. The creation of integrated ecosystems of social integration is relevant. Such ecosystems envisage an interconnected network of institutions, programmes and services that ensure not only the satisfaction of refugees' basic needs, but also their full inclusion in the economic, social and cultural life of host communities through access to education, the labour market, financial services and entrepreneurial opportunities. International experience demonstrates the effectiveness of this approach. In Germany, which received more than 1.2 million Syrian, Afghan and Iraqi refugees in 2015-2020, investing 20 billion EUR in integration programmes, language courses

and vocational training, 49% of able-bodied refugees were employed within five years of arrival, which contributed to a significant increase in tax revenues (Woodward *et al.*, 2023). A similar success is demonstrated by Canada, which in 2016-2021 accepted 73,000 Syrian refugees, creating a comprehensive support system that includes public-private partnerships in refugee sponsorship. This employed 57% of adult refugees in Canada within the first two years (Aygün, 2021). Thus, investing in the economic adaptation of migrants has a powerful multiplier effect. Countries that view migrants as potential human capital gain significant long-term economic benefits. Technological innovations are opening fundamentally new opportunities for transforming migration systems. Artificial intelligence and blockchain technologies can not only optimise identification processes but also provide a fundamentally new level of transparency and accountability. For example, decentralised systems can guarantee the safety of refugees' personal data and prevent its manipulation.

The geopolitical context requires a rethinking of the very concept of sovereignty. The traditional concept of territoriality is decreasingly relevant to the realities of

the globalised world. Instead, the paradigm of global mutual responsibility is coming to the fore. This implies the formation of new international legal mechanisms of solidarity that would go beyond narrow national interests. The balance between humanitarian principles and national security is crucial. A reformed system should offer mechanisms that simultaneously guarantee the rights of refugees and consider the security needs of host countries. It is a complex dialectic of interaction, not a simple dichotomy of “either human rights or state security”. A comparative analysis of different national migration policy models shows that the most effective approaches are those based on the principles of mutual integration. Countries that view refugees not as a temporary burden, but as potential full-fledged members of society, achieve much better results. To summarise, reforming the international system of response to migration crises requires not partial changes, but a fundamental transformation of the institutional architecture. It concerns transition from administrative and restrictive models of migration policy based on strict border control, criminalisation of irregular migration and restriction of refugee rights, as demonstrated by Hungary’s practice of building a border fence in 2015, transit zones for refugees in 2018 and Denmark’s measures in 2016–2021 to confiscate refugees’ valuables and cut social benefits to make the country less attractive to asylum seekers (Trisonia *et al.*, 2024). These restrictive approaches have proven to be ineffective, as they do not reduce migration flows but only change their routes and provoke humanitarian crises, and therefore need to be replaced by flexible, human-centred mechanisms of global support. A key condition for such a transformation is the formation of a new culture of international solidarity based on the recognition of the fundamental interdependence of the modern world. The prospects for such a transformation are directly related to the ability of the international community to overcome the inertia of outdated institutional practices and to form a fundamentally new paradigm of global migration governance.

Discussions

The study of the transformation of the refugee problem in the context of modern diplomatic relations with the Middle East has revealed several fundamental trends and patterns that require in-depth analysis and comparison with the results of other researchers to form a comprehensive notion of current challenges in the field of refugee protection. The first relevant set of conclusions concerns the instrumentalisation of the migration crisis as an element of hybrid warfare. The findings of the study on the systematic use of the migration crisis as an instrument of political pressure are substantially confirmed in the studies of A. Boronbaeva (2022). Analysing the transformation of migration flows from Turkey to the EU after 2015, the author identified clear patterns of using the migration issue to achieve political goals. The conclusions regarding the change in Turkish migration policy from a humanitarian approach to instrumentalisation are fully consistent with the results obtained. At the same time, this study significantly expands the notion of this phenomenon through a comparative analysis of the strategies of Turkey and Belarus, demonstrating the evolution of methods of using

the migration crisis as an instrument of hybrid warfare. The second relevant aspect of the study’s findings relates to the mechanisms of transforming a humanitarian crisis into an instrument of geopolitical influence. In this context, the findings largely correlate with the conclusions of O. Dursun-Özkanca (2022), who conducted a fundamental study of the dynamics of relations between Turkey and the EU through the prism of international relations. The analysis of the processes of politicisation of the migration issue and its impact on Turkey’s European integration prospects confirms the conclusions about the systemic nature of using the migration crisis as a lever of political influence. However, the study significantly complements its conclusions by analysing new forms of hybrid threats, especially in the context of Belarus’ actions, which demonstrates a qualitatively new stage in the development of this phenomenon.

Of value is the analysis of the relationship between domestic political processes in recipient countries and their refugee strategies. C. Peptan (2020) conducted a multilevel analysis of the relationship between security challenges and refugee issues in the Middle East. The study examined this problem in the context of various dimensions of security: from traditional military and political threats to issues of social cohesion and economic stability. The study also proposed a methodology for multifactorial assessment of security risks, which can be used for systematising and classifying threats associated with mass migration according to the degree of their impact on various aspects of national and regional security. A.A. Khudolii (2017) studied the transformation of Turkey’s foreign policy in the Middle East, including the impact of the refugee problem on regional geopolitical processes. The study confirmed that Turkey’s migration policy has gradually transformed from humanitarian to pragmatic, with a clear use of the status of the recipient country of the largest number of Syrian refugees as an instrument of pressure on the European Union. It is especially necessary to compare the results obtained on the effectiveness of international legal mechanisms for the protection of refugees with the research of K. Petillo (2023). The study substantiated an innovative approach to analysing the transformation of Syrian refugee policy in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, in particular the concept of transition from assistance to inclusion, which confirms the study’s conclusions about the need for a fundamental change in existing approaches. At the same time, this study adds a critical security dimension to this issue, demonstrating how the protection of refugee rights can be complicated by their instrumentalisation for geopolitical purposes. The systemic shortcomings in the European system of response to migration crises identified in the study are strongly confirmed in the work of M. Likaj & A. Marku (2023). The study of the relationship between the refugee phenomenon and extremist threats to the EU demonstrates how the lack of effective mechanisms for sharing responsibility between member states creates additional risks to European security. This analysis contributes to the research by examining how such vulnerabilities can be exploited by external actors to destabilise European unity.

A substantial confirmation of the conclusions on the need to incorporate socio-cultural factors in the formation

of migration policy can be found in the study by L. Trisohnia *et al.* (2024). By analysing Hungary's different positions on Muslim and non-Muslim refugees through the prism of identity, culture and security, the researcher demonstrates how domestic political factors can affect the effectiveness of international refugee protection mechanisms. The study significantly extends this notion by analysing how such internal features can be exploited by external actors to exacerbate divisions within the EU. The approach proposed in this study to reform the international migration crisis response system through the introduction of more flexible, human-centred mechanisms is supported by S.M. Gabbay (2024). An in-depth analysis of the status and rights of the Palestinian diaspora in the Middle East and North Africa demonstrates the need for a comprehensive approach to protecting the rights of refugees, which would incorporate both the legal and socio-economic aspects of their integration. This study complements these findings by analysing the security dimension of such a transformation and developing specific mechanisms for its implementation. It is particularly valuable to compare the findings with those of A. Woodward *et al.* (2023) conducted a large-scale analysis of the response of health systems to the needs of Syrian refugees in eight host countries. The conclusions on the need for systemic changes in approaches to refugee assistance and the importance of international coordination are fully consistent with the study's recommendations. At the same time, the analysis further demonstrates how these systems can be adapted to the conditions of hybrid threats. A substantial confirmation of the study's conclusions on the need to improve international coordination mechanisms can be found in the study by M. Inhorn & L. Volk (2021), analysing the adaptation processes of Middle Eastern refugees in different cultural contexts. The conclusions on the importance of creating inclusive mechanisms to support refugees correlate with the recommendations in this study on the need for more flexible approaches to managing migration processes. A substantial extension of the regional specifics of the refugee problem is offered by the study by H. Fujibayashi (2021), analysing the historical context of the formation of the international refugee protection regime in the Middle East, which further demonstrates the current challenges and limitations of existing protection mechanisms. This study complements these findings by analysing the current transformations of this system under the influence of new forms of hybrid threats.

The study by S. Bhattacharya *et al.* (2021) is fundamental in analysis of the role of humanitarian diplomacy in addressing the problems of vulnerable groups, demonstrating how diplomatic instruments can be effectively used to protect the rights of vulnerable groups in crises. Of value is the developed methodology for assessing the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions, which confirms the study's conclusions about the need for a systematic approach to protecting refugees' rights. The researchers also highlighted the importance of international coordination in the provision of humanitarian assistance, which is fully consistent with the study's recommendations for improving international cooperation mechanisms. J. Tolay (2023) further addressed these processes in a critical analysis of the narrative of migration diplomacy as a

mechanism for legitimising the use of the refugee problem to achieve foreign policy goals through the construction of the language of "protection", "shared responsibility" and "humanitarian necessity", which has expanded the theoretical framework for analysis of this phenomenon. The substantial regional dimension of the problem is revealed by A. Darussalam *et al.* (2021), analysing the attitudes of Muslim states towards the problem of Middle Eastern refugees. Their study demonstrates how religious and cultural factors influence refugee policymaking in different countries of the region. The study analysed Islamic principles of hospitality and refugee protection, which adds a substantial cultural dimension to the notion of the problem. Their conclusions about the need to consider the cultural context when developing refugee protection mechanisms fully correlate with the study's recommendations for adapting international standards to regional specifics. An in-depth analysis of the psychosocial aspects of the refugee problem is offered by A. Khalaf (2022), who examines the traumatic experience of Syrian refugees. The study analysed the long-term effects of forced displacement on the mental health and social adaptation of refugees. Particularly valuable were the observations on the intergenerational transmission of traumatic experience and its impact on integration processes in host societies. The results of a study by A. Khalaf confirm the recommendations of the study on the need for a comprehensive approach to refugee protection that would incorporate not only basic needs but also psychological aspects of adaptation. An innovative approach to analysis of the social challenges associated with the integration of refugees is proposed by C. Neto *et al.* (2022). Their study of the phenomenon of xenophobia through the prism of behavioural analysis reveals the underlying mechanisms of prejudice and discriminatory practices against refugees. Of value is the analysis of the factors that influence the formation of negative attitudes towards refugees and the recommendations developed by the authors to overcome these barriers. These conclusions confirm the study's observations on the need for systematic work with host societies to ensure the successful integration of refugees. A fundamental contribution to the notion of regional refugee protection mechanisms is made by K.P. Norman (2020), who conducted a critical analysis of refugee reception mechanisms in the Middle East and North Africa and revealed the complex dynamics of interaction between different actors in the process of managing migration flows. The researcher analysed institutional constraints and political factors affecting the effectiveness of the refugee protection system. The conclusions regarding the need to improve regional coordination mechanisms are fully consistent with the recommendations in this study.

Z. Şahin-Mencütek & G. Tsourapas (2023), analysing refugee repatriation policies in the Middle East, provided a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing refugee return decisions. Of particular value are their findings on the relationship between political stability, economic opportunities and the success of repatriation programmes. These observations support the recommendations on the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing the refugee problem. E. Aygün (2021) conducted a detailed empirical analysis of the situation of Syrian refugees in Turkey,

which provides a substantial factual basis for analysis of the scale and complexity of the problem. The study by E. Aygün revealed specific challenges faced by both refugees and the host state, including access to education, healthcare and the labour market. The study analysed the effectiveness of various refugee support programmes and their impact on the socio-economic situation in the country. The conclusion of E. Aygün on the need for a more systematic approach to the integration of refugees is fully consistent with the recommendations of this study. To summarise, the analysed studies emphasise that effective solutions to refugee-related problems require not only short-term assistance measures, but also long-term, systemic solutions aimed to ensure stability, integration and sustainable development.

Conclusions

The study of the refugee problem in the context of current diplomatic relations with the countries of the Middle East has led to several substantial theoretical and practical conclusions regarding the transformation of the international refugee protection system and its use as an instrument of political pressure. The study demonstrated that the current international refugee protection system, despite significant institutional development and coordination mechanisms under the auspices of the United Nations, is in a state of deep crisis. This crisis is characterised by the inability to respond effectively to large-scale migration challenges and to prevent the instrumentalisation of the refugee problem for geopolitical purposes. An analysis of the activities of UNHCR and other international organisations has revealed significant shortcomings in the coordination of humanitarian assistance and the provision of durable solutions for refugees. Three key trends in the use of the refugee issue in international relations with the Middle East were identified. The systemic transformation of the humanitarian crisis into an instrument of political pressure has been established, which was manifested in the actions of Turkey and Belarus in using migration flows as a means of influencing the European Union. The article reveals an institutional crisis in the international refugee protection system, which, despite the strong mobilisation of resources, demonstrates an inability to respond effectively to current challenges and prevent the instrumentalisation of migration crises. A critical analysis of current migration processes has shown a growing trend of using the migration crisis as an instrument

of hybrid warfare. The example of Turkey's actions demonstrated how the geographical location and the presence of many refugees can be transformed into a lever of political influence on European partners. The situation with Belarus has revealed an even more threatening trend of deliberately creating an artificial migration crisis as an element of hybrid aggression against the EU. The study has confirmed that the instrumentalisation of the migration crisis has complex negative consequences at various levels. At the international legal level, the fundamental principles of refugee protection are being undermined, and the humanitarian issue is being transformed into a subject of political bargaining. At the regional level, additional tensions are created in relations between countries, and the development of effective mechanisms for managing migration processes is complicated. At the humanitarian level, the situation of refugees themselves is worsening, as they become hostages to political interests and lose access to adequate protection. Analysis of the European experience of responding to migration crises has revealed significant shortcomings of the existing system, including dependence on cooperation with third countries to curb migration flows and the lack of effective mechanisms for sharing responsibility between EU member states. This confirms the need to reform the Dublin system and develop a comprehensive approach to migration management. The results demonstrate the need to move from administrative and restrictive models of migration policy to flexible, human-centred mechanisms of global support. Promising areas for further research include the development of specific mechanisms for implementing the proposed changes, studying the potential of the latest technologies for coordinating humanitarian assistance, analysing regional refugee protection mechanisms, exploring ways to strengthen the role of international organisations in countering the instrumentalisation of crises and creating early warning systems for migration threats.

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