

Geopolitics, Disasters, and Supply Chain Resilience/ Electives / 2026

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FACULTY INFORMATION

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FACULTY BIO



Harwin de Vries is Associate Professor at the Technology and Operations Management department at RSM. His research focuses on logistics in extreme contexts and situations, with a particular focus on disaster relief logistic and pharmaceutical supply chains. Harwin has collaborated closely with more than twenty humanitarian/ health organizations, studying how key decisions in health/ humanitarian supply chains affect patients or beneficiaries and how they could be improved. He also explores what businesses grappling with the consequences of supply chain disruptions can learn from humanitarian organizations. Harwin's current teaching portfolio includes courses on Health & Humanitarian Logistics (MSc), Geopolitics, Disasters, and Supply Chain Resilience (MBA), Business Analytics (EMBA), and Decision Science (ptMiM).

ABSTRACT

Recent years brought an almost continuous flow of supply chain disruptions and revealed that many supply chains are vulnerable. Rising geopolitical tensions and natural and man-made disasters will put supply chains under even more pressure in the future. Making supply chains more resilient has therefore become a key priority for businesses, the general public, and even national governments. In this course, you will be introduced to the field of supply chain resilience, explore how businesses can make supply chains more resilient, and what business can learn from leading organizations – especially humanitarian organizations, which have decades of experience in preparing for and responding to low-probability, high-impact events, and “building things back better”.

➤ Additional Info

The Iran war, Red Sea attacks, burgeoning trade wars, the Panama canal drought, port congestions, semiconductor shortages, the Baltimore bridge crash, raw material shortages, the Ukraine war, the Suez canal blockade, Covid-19, Brexit, increasing numbers of natural disasters... Recent years brought an almost **continuous flow of supply chain disruptions** and revealed that many supply chains are vulnerable. Consequently, supply chain resilience has become a key priority for businesses, the general public, and even national governments.

While several industries offer good examples of resilient supply chains, **humanitarian organizations might provide one of the best models**. Groups such as the World Food Programme (WFP) and Doctors without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières – MSF) specialize in preparing for and responding to low-probability, high-impact events. In fact, they have decades of experience in getting life-saving supplies to people who need it, despite collapsing governments, broken infrastructure, and war.

Their logistics challenges are essentially **extreme versions of logistics challenges commercial organizations face**: in terms of uncertainties and operating conditions, scarcity of resources, and consequences. For example, managing disaster response is like organizing the next Olympic Games without knowing where it will take place, when it will take place, and how many people will come. Though this may seem impossible, humanitarian organizations have strongly professionalized the way response is being prepared and managed. **Making supply chains resilient is humanitarian organizations' core business, and commercial organizations can learn a lot from them.**

Building upon the MBA core course Operations Management, this course introduces you to the **field of supply chain resilience**, explore how businesses can make supply chains more resilient, and what business can learn from leading organizations – especially humanitarian organizations, which have decades of experience in preparing for and responding to low-probability, high-impact events, and “building things back better”. Topics we will cover include: What are recent and upcoming supply chain trends that affect risk? How to identify and assess risks? What strategies exist to mitigate risks? How to build a risk management culture? How to segment suppliers into risk categories and justify a risk mitigation strategy for each?

As a secondary aim, the course introduces the important field of **Humanitarian Logistics** and corresponding UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and explore what companies striving to make their supply chains more resilient can learn from humanitarian organizations. You will learn about the goals, stakeholders, operating context, and challenges of the humanitarian system, the role of logistics in addressing them, and key logistics challenges. Examples include: How to strengthen preparedness? How to design processes that are flexible enough to deal with unforeseen circumstances? How to design resilient logistics networks?

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

The main objectives of this course are 1) to introduce core concepts and methodologies from the field of supply chain resilience and 2) to explore what business can learn from the way humanitarian organizations prepare their supply chains for low-probability, high-risk events. Upon completing this course, students can:

Learning areas	Learning outcomes
I. Content- related	Explain recent supply chain trends and how they affect supply chain risks, the concept of supply chain resilience, the “business case” for supply chain resilience, the process of making supply chains more resilient, and key risk mitigation strategies and their pro’s and con’s,
	Explain the general goals the humanitarian system aims to achieve, how the system works, the big challenges it is facing, the role of logistics in addressing these challenges, and the similarities and differences between humanitarian logistics and supply chain resilience,

II. Skills-related	Assess and appraise risks in supply chains using the cause-driven and consequence-driven approach
	Design tailored strategies to enhance supply chain resilience
III. Attitude-related	Work together in teams to address the managerial challenge of decision making in complex or chaotic situations (i.e., crisis leadership)
	Reflect upon how humanitarian logistics knowledge/ theory/ practices/ tools can help enhance supply chain resilience in businesses

TEACHING METHODS AND WORKLOAD

Though the course covers some theory, the main focus will be on learning by doing through case studies, a simulation game, and individual and group exercises:

Description	Calculation	Total
In-Class sessions:	6 sessions x 3 hours	18 hours
Class Preparation:		20 hours
Team Assignment(s)		20 hours
Individual Assignment(s)		26 hours
Total Course Hours		84 Total hours
EC (Number of study credits)	3 EC x 28	84 Total hours

GRADING AND ASSESSMENT

Course: Humanitarian Logistics & Supply Chain Resilience	Assessment formats			
Educational goals per course (formulated using action verbs (Bloom's Taxonomy), should be copied from the Learning Goals mentioned in the course manual)	Prep assignments	Individual assignment	Group assignment	Total
After following this course, the student is able to:				
Explain recent supply chain trends and how they affect supply chain risks, the concept of supply chain resilience, the "business case" for supply chain resilience, the process of making supply chains more resilient, and key risk mitigation strategies and their pro's and con's,		X		
Explain the general goals the humanitarian system aims to achieve, how the system works, the big challenges it is facing, the role of logistics in addressing these challenges, and the similarities and differences between humanitarian logistics and supply chain resilience,		X		
Assess and appraise risks in supply chains using the cause-driven and consequence-driven approach	X	X	X	
Design tailored strategies to enhance supply chain resilience (i.e., supply chain resilience strategy development)	X		X	
Work together in teams to address the managerial challenge of decision making in complex or chaotic situations (i.e., crisis leadership)		X		
Reflect upon how humanitarian logistics knowledge/ theory/ practices/ tools can help enhance supply chain resilience in the commercial sector		X		
Weighting factor**	30%	30%	40%	100%
Minimum grade required	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5
When failed, resit option (Yes/No)	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Form of examination (e.g. MC, Open-book, etc.)	Assignment	Assignment	Assignment	
Group / Individual assessment (Group/Individual)	Individual	Individual	Group	

****For this course students will need to obtain a grade of 5,50 on the weighted average of the Prep Assignment and the Individual Assignment for a combined weightage of 60% in order to pass the course.**

In order to pass the course, each assessment or deliverable (component grade) with a resit option, needs to be at least 5.5. Components with no resit option bear no minimum grade required, but to pass the overall course, the final grade needs to be at least 5.5.

Grades are rounded according to the rounding provisions included in the Examination Regulations (ER) of the programme, and are expressed with 1 decimal point. Not meeting the minimum grade required for either a component grade or the overall course grade determines a fail for the course. Participants can resit a failed component only once. There is no capping of the grade for a resit examination, unless determined by the faculty. The only exception is when the nature of the failed assignment allows for an improvement effort of the same assignment (capped at 5.5 for that component).

For this particular course, the faculty has decided that **all assignments allow for an improvement effort**.

Grade penalties for unauthorized late submissions will be automatically imposed. Penalties for unauthorised late submissions range from 10% to 20% deduction from the examination component depending on the hours/days late. Unauthorised late submissions 4 days or longer after the deadline without prior notification and a reasonable explanation for the late submission, will not be accepted.

Attendance is mandatory and a requirement to pass the course. Missing classes and arriving late may result in grading penalties and even a fail for the course.

Fraud, Plagiarism / Self-plagiarism (Appendix B on Code of Conduct, Examination Regulations -ER-)

The Examination Board defines fraud as *“the action or negligence of a student because of which it is impossible, entirely, or partially, to form a correct judgment about the knowledge, insight, and skills of them or another student”* (ER, 2024-2025). Examples of fraud are cheating, cribbing, plagiarism, freeriding in a team assignment, availability of unauthorized (study) material during a test such as mobile phones, contract cheating/outsourcing/ghost-writing, unauthorized use of generative AI, identity fraud, theft.

Confirmed cases of fraud/plagiarism will lead to (appropriate and proportional) sanctions as defined by the Examination Board in the Rules and Guidelines section of the Examination Regulations (ER). Repetitive cases of fraud/plagiarism lead to expulsion from the programme.

Plagiarism is presenting another person's work as one's own. Plagiarism includes any paraphrasing or summarising of the work of another person or group without acknowledgment, including submission of another student's work as one's own. Plagiarism frequently involves a failure to acknowledge the quotation of paragraphs, sentences, or even a few phrases written or spoken by someone else.

Using ideas from your own prior work (assignment) without referencing the work in your assignment is considered self-plagiarism.

Participants are required to adhere to the 6 principles outlined in the RSM AI guidelines with regard to the use of Artificial Intelligence Platforms such as ChatGPT and related software/tools. The unauthorised use constitutes violation of plagiarism/ fraud policy.

For this particular course, the faculty promotes **a restrained use of AI** for the prep assignments and the logbook of learnings, and stimulated use of AI for the group assignment, as long as contents are backed up by evidence/ sources.

For more information about academic integrity and AI please refer to the Programme's Examination Regulations and RSM AI guidelines documents on the Student Hub.

Assessment / Deliverable:	Individual or group:	(Due) date:	% of final grade:
Prep assignments (for session 3 & 4)	Individual	TBD	60 %
Individual Assignment: Logbook of learnings	Individual	TBD	
Group Assignment: Supply chain resilience strategy analysis	Group	TBD	40 %

For all Canvas submissions, please make sure to include the student name and programme name in the title of the file submission, as well as within the document itself (on the cover page).

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK(S) AND READINGS

The required literature and other materials used in class will be made available via Canvas.

SUGGESTED EXTRA READINGS, JOURNALS AND WEBSITES

The course will draw upon the following books:

- Tomasini, R. and van Wassenhove, L. (2009). Humanitarian Logistics. INSEAD Business Press and Palgrave Macmillan, UK
- Chopra, S., Meindl, P., & Kalra, D. V. (2013). Supply chain management: strategy, planning, and operation (Vol. 232). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Coppola, D. P. (2006). Introduction to international disaster management. Elsevier.
- Sodhi, M. S., & Tang, C. S. (2012). *Managing supply chain risk* (Vol. 172, pp. 3-332). New York: Springer.
- Sheffi, Y. (2015). *The power of resilience: How the best companies manage the unexpected*. MIT Press.
- Slack, N. and Brandon-Jones, A. (2018). Essentials of Operations Management (2nd edition). Pearson.

It is not necessary to buy these books to pass the course. Selected other reading materials (cases, articles) will be made available during the course.

DETAILED COURSE SCHEDULE

Session 1: Intro	
Topics:	The “business case” for supply chain resilience Intro to humanitarian logistics: - Disaster trends - Role of logistics - Humanitarian vs. commercial logistics Supply chain risk - Definition - Trends affecting it - Do companies care? - The process of managing it
In class exercises:	TBD
Readings:	TBD
Case:	TBD

Session 2: Risk assessment	
Topics:	Why many companies underinvest in SC risk management - Biases - Structural barriers - Leadership attention Identifying & analyzing supply chain risks - Cause-based approach - Consequence-based approach
In class exercises:	TBD
Readings:	TBD
Case:	TBD

Session 3: Risk mitigation in humanitarian logistics	
Topics:	Building blocks of logistics preparedness - Logistics & human resources - Knowledge & information management - Funding - Community Preparing cowboys vs. bureaucrats Approaches for decision-making under uncertainty What businesses can learn from humanitarian logistics
In class exercises:	Supply Chain Resilience
Readings:	TBD
Cases:	TBD

Session 4: Developing a risk mitigation strategy	
Topics:	Mitigating risks - Get the basics right - Add redundancy - Add flexibility - Derisk supply chain design - Developing a risk management culture Developing a risk mitigation strategy
In class exercises:	TBD
Readings:	TBD
Case:	-

Session 5	
Topics:	Humanitarian logistics simulation
In class exercises:	The logistics cluster: Organizing chaos in humanitarian logistics
Readings:	TBD
Case:	TBD

Session 6	
Topics:	Responding to a disruption - Charting the white space – How to manage information - Increasing the time-to-survive - Reducing the time-to-recover - Response phases and time pressure - Learnings from complexity management – The Cynefin framework Student presentations: Supply chain resilience strategy analysis Resilience as a competitive advantage
In class exercises:	TBD
Readings:	TBD
Case:	TBD

ASSIGNMENTS DESCRIPTION

More information about the assignments and grading rubrics will be made available on Canvas closer to the start of the course.