

War and Tourism

War and armed conflicts have always been among the most significant sources of instability in human societies, leaving extensive impacts on the economy, culture, security, and international relations. In this context, the tourism industry, as one of the most sensitive yet influential economic and cultural sectors, is affected by the consequences of war more than many other fields. Tourism is an industry built upon a sense of security, peace, and trust, and any form of insecurity, political tension, or military conflict can rapidly disrupt travel flows. In times of war, the first noticeable consequence is the sharp decline in the number of tourists entering conflict-affected countries or even their neighboring regions. Travelers generally choose destinations that enjoy political stability and social security, and news related to war, insecurity, and violence quickly shapes their perceptions. Even when conflicts are limited to only part of a country, media coverage can portray the entire destination as unsafe, causing a nationwide downturn in the tourism industry. On the other hand, wars often inflict severe damage on tourism infrastructure as well. Hotels, accommodation centers, roads, airports, museums, and even historical and cultural heritage sites may be destroyed or rendered unusable during conflicts. This issue not only leads to a decline in travel but also affects local economies, employment, and the livelihoods of communities dependent on tourism. In many countries, tourism constitutes a significant share of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and damage to this sector can make economic recovery even more difficult. Nevertheless, the relationship between war and tourism is not limited to negative impacts alone. The experience of some countries has shown that tourism can become a tool for economic, social, and even psychological reconstruction after war. If supported by targeted planning, effective management, and coherent policymaking, war-affected regions can utilize tourism capacity to revive local economies and attract investment. The presence of tourists in such areas, in addition to generating income, can also symbolize the return of stability and trust within society. In this regard, the role of the media and the way war is represented are of great importance. Media outlets can create a crisis-ridden image of a destination by emphasizing insecurity, or conversely, through responsible and professional reporting, they can reflect the restoration of peace and security. In today's world, where public opinion is heavily influenced by social media and international media networks, managing the image of a tourist destination has become as important as managing the crisis itself on the ground. Many countries, after overcoming military crises, have sought to present a new and secure image of themselves to the world through tourism diplomacy and targeted promotion. From a cultural and humanitarian perspective, tourism can also play a role beyond that of a purely economic activity. Tourists traveling to affected regions may represent a form of human solidarity and symbolic support for local communities. Furthermore, the presence of tourists and researchers can increase global awareness of the conditions of war-affected societies and help attract humanitarian support.

Ultimately, war and tourism are two complex and interconnected phenomena that share a reciprocal relationship. Although war can push the tourism industry into severe crisis, tourism in post-crisis conditions can also become a tool for reconstruction, peacebuilding, and strengthening human connections. Therefore, paying attention to crisis management, destination image reconstruction, and the cultural and social capacities of tourism is an undeniable necessity for countries that have experienced war and tension.

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