

## **Impact of Modern Armed Conflicts on Tourism Industry**

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### ***Abstract***

*War has been changed everything in the history of humanity. Modern aspects of war doesn't limit to the civilians and combatants, rather it has a widespread impact on the routine lives of individuals. The direct impact of armed conflicts is on the battlefield however the most serious impacts are indirect. Tourism industry is one the fields that armed conflicts have indirect impact on it. Because of the disaster of war thousands of people lost their jobs and unemployment comes as a serious challenge of states. Psychological impacts of armed conflicts have direct impacts on the mind of tourists and because of that the countries which involved in an armed conflict many years after the end of war see its destructive impacts on their industries especially tourism industry. Terrorism is another effective factor on tourism industry. The impact of terrorists on tourism industry is greater than classical armed conflicts. As we observe the situation of Iraq and Syria as the countries which directly involved in the challenge of fighting against Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).*

***Keywords: Tourism, armed conflicts, terrorism, employment***

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### **Introduction**

War brings destruction and naught with itself and destroys whatever human built in just a second. To tell the truth, war is the most terrible human's nightmare. It brings insecurity and instability. Unfortunately, from the beginning of humanity, human, instead of choosing peaceful methods of dispute settlement has already used war and armed conflict as a best solution of problems. One of the direct consequences of war is its effect on country's sustainable development and stability and automatically lack of those factors have direct impact on Tourism Industry. Tourists are the first group who leave war zones before any other people because when there isn't any safe place to live how we can expect them to stay in a dangerous and insecure place. When a country because of armed conflict doesn't have any tourist many local businesses will be gone. So, armed conflicts always have direct and indirect destructive effects on socio-economic situation of countries involved in it.

But nowadays, experts faced with the new challenges of modern armed conflict. They faced with a situation of a country that is not involved in any conflict but neighbor countries which are involved in an armed conflict effect on that country too and economical and cultural relations stop just because of war. In the modern world we see many countries that their yearly income is depending on tourists and domestic industries of these countries work under the benefits that made by tourists. In such countries there are many service jobs and touristic institutes with a lot of employees and servants that are living and making money through this industry. Imagine war occurs in such countries or their neighbor countries, the first impacts of war would be on tourism industry and its relevant industries. Nature and structure of war is unpleasant and bad that brings horror, brutality and destruction for anybody who is standing in front of it.

According to the experts believe war is the most horrible poison for Tourism Industry. This industry brings sustainable development and stability with itself. One of the key effective elements in modern armed conflicts is the significant time and resources to make modern military weapons for having control over the battlefields. Tourists, never come to a place where covered by landmines totally. Also, they never go to such places that have danger of air bombing by

belligerents. In this article we examine the effects conflict and post-conflict on Tourism Industry and its relevant industries. We try to find a connection between Sustainable Development, War and Tourism Industry and the role that tourism can be played in post-conflict reconstruction.

### **Methodology**

This research is a qualitative and applicative research. The method has been used in this paper is descriptive-analytical. Required information has been collected through library resources including books, articles, statistical reports and documents.

### **Armed Conflict and Tourism**

Tourism Industry has been playing more important and effective role to decrease poverty, especially in developing countries. Tourism is an industry that governments and international organizations for development emphasize on it as a solution to decrease poverty and a main factor to increase national incomes of citizens (Spenceley: 2008, 4). the impact that tourism can have on economic development and improve family livelihood is enormous and comprehensive. This situation has a high potential to create an acceptable sustainable development in developing countries and helps governments to make more jobs from this industry and reduce the rate of unemployment in their countries. The UN Commission on Environment and Development has published a report known as Brundland Report or Our Common Future (WCED, 1987), this report said that equality never establish among generations unless environmental effects of economic activities take into consideration and in this report also discussed about sustainable development (WCED: 1987, 43).

A decade after Brundland Report, the United Nations emphasized that to achieve to a sustainable economic, social and environmental development and the UN said that these three factors work independently but significantly related to each other. These three items together made sustainable development. Particularly, tourism industry has a direct connection with economic and environment development and there is it has an indirect communication with social development. This industry has a direct relation with economy and environment because it brings economic boom with itself and makes more employment and benefit for hundreds and thousands of

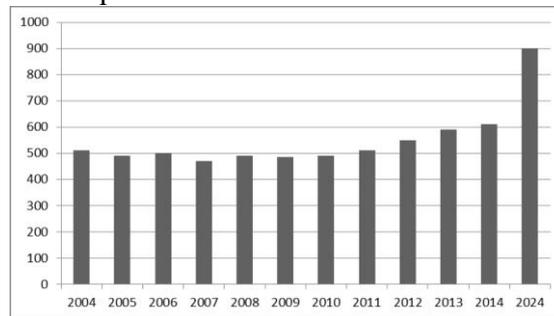
individuals directly or indirectly. With regarding to this remarkable effect, tourism industry is a significant factor for achieving to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the UN (Spenceley: 2008, 30). Meanwhile, it has an indirect effect on social development of individuals because whatever livelihood situation and economic condition of a person increase, his/her social position will be increased and people have more tendency to achieve equality, transparency and justice in their societies.

If we pay attention to the different samples, can see how tourism industry has developed the economy of countries. Thailand is one of the important touristic countries in Asia that is the destination of many tourists from every corner of this world. Tourists spend a huge amount of money every year in this country because of its beauties, in last decades it could attract more and more tourists and the number of tourists coming to this country is increasing each year (Cerina, Markandya and McAleer: 2011, 22). The majority of tourists are entering to Thailand are Japanese, American and Malaysian. Recently, Thailand Tourism Office in reported that the average growth rate from 1971 to 2014 was around 4 percent. This growth is impressive for a country that has no access to oil or its relevant industries (World Travel and Tourism Council “Thailand”: 2015, 6).

Turkey is another good example, this country had long-term development program on its tourism industry to achieve a high economic development. Turkey Government in last two decades spent a massive amount of money for improving touristic infrastructure of their country. The World Travel & Tourism Council reported that tourism industry could allocate 11.9 percent Gross Domestic Production (GDP) to itself. In regard to the report of the council Turkey in 2013 could create 587,000 direct jobs by tourism industry and it predicted in 2024 this number of jobs will increase to 900,000 new jobs (World Travel and Tourism Council “Turkey”: 2015, 5).

With a little more attention on two sample countries (Thailand and Turkey) we can observe “Stability” as a key element which helped both those countries to improve their economic and social situation. Automatically, stability brings peace with itself for any country. Both these countries in last decades didn’t engage in any serious armed conflict and it helped them to have a clear and sustainable program for

development especially in tourism industry. As I said in the introduction, war is the most horrible poison for Tourism Industry. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council report, a country like Turkey only in 2013 could make 587,000 jobs from tourism industry and every year more and more people enter into this profession (Ibid). If this country was engaged in any armed conflict couldn't create this number of jobs and more and more people lost their jobs as a consequence of war.



**Chart 1: Turkey Direct Contribution of Travel and Tourism Employment**

Unfortunately, our world has seen armed conflicts in the touristic countries recently. The best example to observe the impact of armed conflicts on touristic countries is Iraq and Syria. These two countries especially Syria, before social movements in Arab Spring events in 2011 had a suitable and acceptable situation about having tourists in their countries and because of numerous historical places they could attract a lot of tourists to their countries. Both Iraq and Syria because of their deep historical background have a good potential to attract many tourists and as the result they could have made more and more jobs and increase their GDP. But since Arab Spring and the conflicts that happened in both these countries, after that rise of the ISIS<sup>4</sup> everything has been changed. From the time that the ISIS has over controlled on historical places in Iraq and Syria such as Palmira (located in Syria), they started to destroy all human common heritages in the remain ancient cities of Iraq and Syria (Roach: 2015, 632). Another effective factor on decreasing the number of visitors of Syria and Iraq is looting museums by ISIS especially after their attack to

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<sup>4</sup> Islamic State in Iraq and Syria

Mosul and occupation of the main museum of this city and terrible destruction of ancient things by them (Ibid). By happening of all these events the tourism industry has been destroyed in these two countries and they lost a massive amount. Also, the rate of unemployment has been raised during this period.

With scrutiny in the report of World Travel & Tourism Council in 2014 we can observe the disaster clearly. Syria, before civil war in 2010 and 2011 could make around 400,000 new jobs directly by using tourism industry (World Travel and Tourism Council “Syria”: 2015, 5). This amount of new jobs with regarding to the total population of Syria was a remarkable success. However, after starting civil war the number of jobs which made by tourism industry dramatically increased to 170,000 in 2014 (Ibid). This is a tragic rate for Syria sustainable development programs. In 2010, 8 percent of total number of employed people in Syria were working in the jobs relevant to the tourism industry but this percent reduced to only 2.8 percent in 2014 (Ibid, 8).

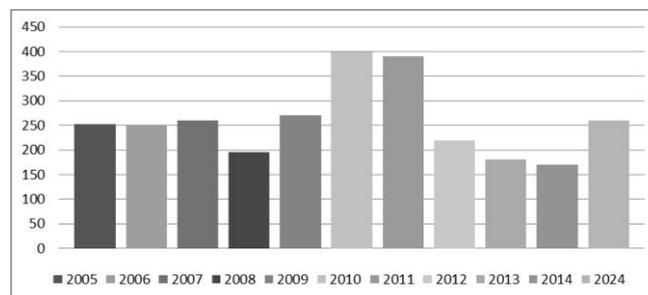
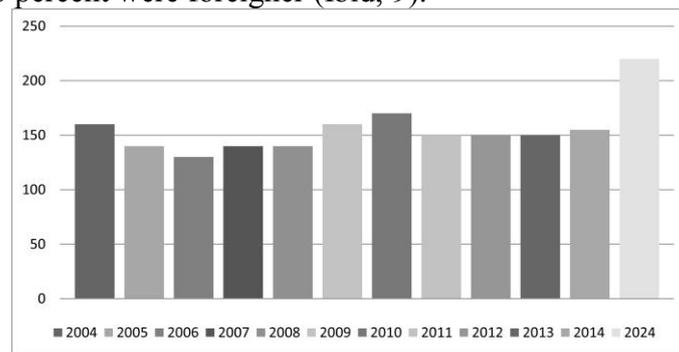


Chart 2: Syria Direct Contribution of Travel and Tourism Employment

When there is war in an area automatically we see fewer tourists because of lack of safety. Safety is the key elements of sustainable development programs; the best example to support this idea is the latest terrorist attack to Mexican tourists in Egypt, in this attack Egyptian soldiers had a bad mistake and they attack to the tourists because they have thought that these people are terrorists but it was horrific mistake and many Mexican citizens killed by them in this attack (Ibid). By regarding to the background of this tragedy we could analyze that this event happened because of lack of safety and because at the region that this event happened there to many terrorist attacked has been happened before and it was the main reason behind of this

tragedy. In this context safety is equal with peace, because if we ask foreign tourists that “do you like to visit a country which engaged in a war?” they definitely answer “No”. As we mentioned before safety is the key element that tourist will be regarded for travelling to abroad.

Another good example to observe the impact of war on tourism industry is Iraq. According to the reports and statistics released by World Travel & Tourism Council in 2014 we can see the effect of long war on the face of this country. Iraq has a high potential to gain more and more tourists every year because it is an ancient country and has too many historical places and things from thousand years before, but almost 20 years war and civil war in this country prevented realization of this aim. With a comprehensive view to the available statistics we can understand from the second Gulf War and continuing that to the present time especially from 2004 to 2014 in a ten year period Iraqi government couldn't increase the number of people who employed in the field of tourism to more than 170,000 jobs in a year (Travel & Tourism "Iraq": 2015, 8). With regarding to the reports of World Travel & Tourism Council in the last decade Iraq always reached to make the average 120,000 to 170,000 jobs (170,000 jobs in the most optimistic situation) in tourism industry, which is 5.4 percent of total number of employed people in this country (Ibid, p.8). Domestic tourists are the biggest group of visitors that visited Iraq, as the reports showed just in 2013, 71.4 percent of visitors were Iraqi and just 28.6 percent were foreigner (Ibid, 9).



**Chart 3: Iraq Direct Contribution of Travel and Tourism Employment**

By regarding to the situation of all these mentioned countries something is clear to understand that safety and stability (in any kind)

has great impact on tourism industry. When a country has a safe and stable situation that country can gain millions of tourists every year but in the conflict situation states shouldn't expect to attract tourists to their countries. We compared different countries with different situations, Turkey and Thailand in one side, both these countries by having a careful planning in last two decades could attract millions of visitors to their countries and they were success to make thousands of new jobs for their youth by tourism industry. In another side we had Iraq and Syria which involved in an armed conflict, both these countries had a shining background in tourism industry before but in the present time because of the matter of armed conflict in both of these countries they lost their place among tourists. As the result, armed conflicts have a direct deep impact on underdevelopment of Iraq and Syria and many other countries with the same situation as them. I believe, one of the main character of sustainable development that United Nations mentioned that in many of its documents is regarded to tourism industry and it will never happen unless in peace and stability.

Generally scientists believe that peace is the main factor to achieve to a high standard tourism industry. In last two decades tourism introduced as an essential part of any development and the best way for better understanding of different nations from each other (Sonmez: 1998, 417). Analyzing different aspect of armed conflict and its impact on tourism industry in the different levels in most political and geographical regions haven't been regarded by experts. Truth to say that few researches in this field have been taken in last 50 years because it is a quite new topic but we have had some researchers who have done research in this field.<sup>5</sup> Also one special volume of International Journal of Tourism Research dedicated to this subject and few authors have been written book in this area. Armed conflicts and tourism industry have a dynamic and complicate relation including political, psychological, economical, ideological and ethical factors and it shows how not only geographical location but also political strategies, historical events, communications ways and economic measures play a remarkable role on developing of tourism

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<sup>5</sup> For more information see: Smith 1998; Seaton 1999; Hendsen 2000; and Lee 2006, 2009 and 2011

in locations affected before, during and post of armed conflicts (Ibid, 425).

Violence was destructive factor in former Yugoslavia civil war (1991-1995). This war had created a deep line of ethnicity among Croatians, Serbs and Muslims. Genocide in Rwanda (1994) that happened by Hutus against Tutsis was following of the deep ethnicity mentioned line in former Yugoslavia civil war. Many experts believe that Rwanda genocide based on ethnicity (Farrel and Schmitt: 2012, 6). After the Cold War the world has been observed more ethnical, religious and racial conflicts compared with the time of Cold War that most of armed conflicts based on ideological conflicts between two superpowers of that age but after 1991 and destruction of the Soviet Union everything has changed totally and conflicts shifted to the situation that we have now (Sussex: 2012, 24). But the most important impact war imposed on civilians who aren't associated with any of the belligerent parties and therefore most of injures impose to them, civilians take effect by armed conflicts either by armed conflicts or the impacts which have created by that (Farrel and Schmitt, Op.cit.: 2012, 10). In some cases impacts of armed conflicts still remain for a long time on the different generations of a country. Consequently, these remained impacts of armed conflict have a direct impact on Tourism Industry too. Aside from the direct effects of war, its psychological effects remain for many decades. For many years after applying ceasefire between Iran and Iraq in 1988, both belligerent countries couldn't attract tourists and that was only because of psychological effects of war and the picture that the other nations had seen from this war. After Balkan war and all sad events of that civil war Serbs can't visit Muslims or Croats regions because the former Yugoslavia civil war was ethnical and religious war, even the Muslims and Croats don't protest to the Serbs Visitors but the picture of all crimes that Serbs have done during the civil war are still alive in their minds and memories. Psychological impact of armed conflict creates an obstacle for the ultimate aim Tourism Industry which is positive cultural encounter between different nations from every corner of this universe.

The direct and indirect impacts of armed conflicts on the minds of nations are the main effective factor on destruction and

underdevelopment of Tourism Industry. Not superfluous to say that Iraq for rebuilding of its Tourism Industry and getting some minimums, in addition to the serious investment on its tourist foundations needs two or three decades to remove negative effects of war from the mind of Iraqis and encourage them to accept new Iraq and visit different parts of this country. However, this is an ideal plan for Iraq because war (fight) against terrorism hasn't finished yet and after a long period of conflicts between Iraq and the other countries, this country has faced with ISIS and definitely, solving this new challenge takes a long time.

War brings ruin with itself; African governments could make billion dollars by investing on tourism and hospitality for their countries every year. However, long conflicts have abandoned virgin and beautiful nature of Africa and psychological impacts of these conflicts effected on foreign visitors to not to come to Africa and armed conflicts has presented a violence and unsafe face from Africa to foreigners. Actually, long war in Africa is only reason that Africans couldn't reach to their real place in international community (Oxfam: 2007, 5).

**Relation between tourism and terrorism and their effects on each other**

The symbiotic relationship between terrorism and tourism needs to be understood and acted on, not just in terms of security and marketing, but in terms of such factors as planning, site development, employment policies, political risk analysis and emergency management. This section looks at the relationship between tourism and terrorism from several perspectives. The political and economic impact of terrorism on tourism is assessed, including the sensitivity of the tourism industry to general political strife and the vulnerability of travellers and tourist facilities to terroristic activity (Richter and Waugh: 1986, 233). The nature of terroristic violence and the objectives of terrorist groups are evaluated to determine why and how attacks on tourists and facilities may fit the organizational and political objectives of terrorist groups.

Belligerent forces find variety of ways and reasons for attacking to the civilians and the result will be deep and widespread on civilians who involved in an armed conflict, violence in an armed conflict can appear in different ways (Ibid, 11). In this situation, nobody can

expect rising and strength of Tourism Industry after the end of wars. From the end of the Cold War, activities of militias and terrorist groups destroyed all impacts that tourism industry can create in different countries and since these groups are using different methods of fight compared with the classical methods (in the classic method of war two states involved in an armed conflict and the conflict between belligerent states had a start and an end point) but the modern armed conflicts occurred between states and the mentioned groups and can't expect that conflict will end soon (Finlay: 2015, 157). As the United States of America has started Fight against Terrorism (in the National Strategy which released by Bush Administration in 2003 this strategy has named War against Terrorism) but after 15 years, terrorism still alive and every year our world see a new terrorist attack or a new terrorist group, the last one was ISIS. I believe out of all dangers that this terrorist group has made, the main crisis was their impact on tourism industry. ISIS has assaulted tourists in the different part of the world especially in the Middle-East and North Africa from 2013 until now. This terrorist group is a poison for every country that likes to have an active tourism industry and increase its yearly Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and I would name ISIS the enemy of the nations.

Terrorist attacks after 9/11 in particular the formation of Islamic State (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria had direct consequences on developing of Tourism Industry. This stream back to destruction of Bamyán's Buda statues by Taliban and it continued by Salafi extremist in Iraq and Syria, as we were witness what happened for historical places, things and monuments of Mosul by ISIS members and now they have occupied Palmira city and ISIS members have installed land mines around Palmira ancient region. By having this situation tourist never attract to the mentioned places. So, civil war is another key factor that effecting increase or decrease of tourists. Most of researches have been showed that there is a meaningful connection between Tourism Industry and terrorism, as Richter believed that always tourists are attractive targets for terrorists because tourists are always playing the role of ambassador for their countries and always are easy targets to attack for terrorists. Also, terrorists usually attack to tourists for sending indirect political message to the others. This isn't only a

hypothesis but also it happened in practice. In the attack of the Palestine Liberation Organization members to Achille Lauro ship in 1985, terrorists only selected American-Jewish tourists and they killed one of them. In fact we can analyze that terrorist attacks to tourists and civilians is kind of political protest to the present situation of a special country.

### **Conclusion**

Humanity has been faced with too many challenges in the recent years especially after 9/11. In one side armed conflicts create new difficulties and in another side rising and development of terrorist groups like al-Qaeda or Islamic State (ISIS). Armed conflicts bring destruction and widespread unemployment for nations. One of the modern problems that creates by armed conflicts is regional impact, regional impact is when a country involved in an armed conflict either two states with each other (international armed conflicts rarely happen in the modern time) or non-states actors and rebellions against a state, in the regional impact of armed conflicts the country that has this challenge effects on the other countries at that region. From the time that members of ISIS has occupied Mosul in Iraq the impact of this occupation has affected on the other countries of Middle-East. This regional impact had some direct and indirect impacts on the industries of this region. One the most serious impacts were on tourism industry and it created some challenges like unemployment, instability and insecurity for states of this region. Also, by having armed conflict in a region, visitor that may want to visit that region change their mind.

To achieve sustainable development every country needs before everything to safety and political, economical and social stability without these key mentioned elements any country can't reach to sustainable development. by comparing countries which are safe with the countries that aren't safe enough something is clear that safe countries always can attract more tourists because of their stable situation and because of this reason this countries like Thailand and Turkey could design a strong tourism plan for their countries and attract millions of tourists every year just because safety and the chance that safety prepared for them to think and design a sustainable plan to develop their tourism industry.

By having a stable plan for attracting foreign visitors states can make more jobs and unemployment decrease gradually. Turkey is a good example to show how a stable plan on routine industry can improve GDP of a country. Long-term development programs can help countries to increase their international social, economical and cultural position in the international community. As the result armed conflicts can have destructive result on the development of countries especially tourism industry. Future of tourism industry is not clear in Middle-east because of very long wars in this area and I do think the present situation will effect for decades on the countries of this region, I would remember that war is not as hard as rebuilding of post conflicts.

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