

INFLUENCE OF REGIONAL CONFLICTS ON TOURISM: A CASE STUDY ON SILK ROAD COUNTRIES

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Abstract

Due to the development of technology and transportation facilities worldwide, the 21st century allowed people to relocate for a short and /or long-term purpose and this created a notable increase in tourism revenues for a wide range of countries and influence on their overall revenues. Therefore, all countries by focusing on different aspects of tourism such as educational, cultural and environmental has developed a wide range of programs attracting people to their own countries. However, instability in global political and economic situation and international political relations has created some fluctuations in tourism revenue. Regional ethnic and nations' borders conflicts, terrorism and political obstacles caused a dramatic decrease in tourism revenues. Especially the countries on the historical Silk Road route have been greatly affected. This study is prepared to demonstrate how important tourism is by evaluating the economical extent to which countries along the China-Afghanistan-Iran line are affected negatively by this issue through statistical data.

Keywords: Tourism, China, Afghanistan, Terrorism

Özet

Dünyada teknoloji ve ulaşım araçlarının artması sebebiyle 21. yüzyıl insanlar kısa ve/veya uzun süreliğine yerini değiştirmesine daha

fazla imkân tanımaktadır. Bu durum birçok ülkenin millî gelirini etkileyecek derecede turizm gelirlerinin artmasını sağlamıştır. Dolayısıyla ülkeler, turizmin eğitim, kültür ve çevre gibi boyutlarına odaklanarak kendilerine turist çekebilmek için çeşitli programlar geliştirmiştir. Ancak küresel ekonomi ve siyasetteki istikrarsızlıklar turizm gelirlerinde dalgalanmalara yol açmıştır. Etnik çatışmalar, sınır çatışmaları, terörizm ve siyasî engeller turizm gelirlerinde ciddi bir düşüşe sebep olmuştur. Bilhassa tarihî İpek Yolu ülkeleri bundan büyük ölçüde etkilenmiştir. Bu çalışma, Çin-Afganistan-İran hattındaki ülkelerin bu süreçte nasıl olumsuz yönde etkilendiğini istatistiksel veri ile göstermek amacıyla hazırlanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Turizm, Çin, Afganistan, Terörizm

Introduction

The Eurasian Continent has historically been the cradle of civilizations and is a geography with all kinds of wealth in it. Of course, the richness we mentioned here is not only materially. Material wealth is valuable for a given period of time and is also limited. Therefore, it's doomed to end depending on the rate of consumption. But then there's spiritual wealth. It preserves its value throughout history and becomes more valuable. The spiritual wealth mentioned here are particularly cultural elements. Culture is everywhere, in the heart of people, and therefore never disappears. The most important basis of the claim that people; who are the main basis of the theory of idealism; will always strive to live together and they have equipped to achieve this is that cultural wealth never disappears. Immanuel Kant, one of the founders of the theory of idealism, emphasizes cultural heritage by saying that "there is a cosmopolitan human society in the world, but for the formation of this community, inter-border dialogue must be established".¹

¹ Ramazan Gözen, "İdealizm", *Uluslararası İlişkiler Terorileri*, İletişim Yayınları, 2006, Ankara, s. 97.

Throughout history, the Eurasian continent has enormous cultural heritage. Thanks to the ancient societies, cultural structures have grown, civilizations have been established and have not remained stable in the largest and most populous continent of the world and have been in a constant motion. In order for civilizations to maintain their existence throughout history, there is a need for movement first. This has been achieved through thousands of years of Silk Road culture and trade transfer. The Ancient Silk Road is a road stretching from China to the Adriatic along a line of thousands of kilometres for thousands of years, people, cultures, commercial materials have moved constantly through this path, allowing cultures to spread and survive forever.

Historically, the Eurasian Continent has witnessed great destruction in both natural phenomena and ambitious leaders dominating the entire continent, but the cultural elements as foundations of these civilizations have not disappeared and have attracted people to the present day and the artefacts from the civilizations on this road and the cultures that still remain alive in humans have been the elements that should be seen for everyone.²

However, the societies on the silk road have seen the greatest damage in the recent past. For example, Afghanistan, as a criteria on the Silk Road, is the country that suffers the most from this damage. Halit Husayni, the author of the book "The Kite Hunter", which shook the whole world, touches upon this issue when he talks about the Soviet invasion in the late periods of the Cold War, and then a civilization that was destroyed in the radical religious oppression of the Taliban.

"Once upon a time, Kabul was a great city. A beautiful river would pass through it. There were restaurants, tea gardens and parks on the coast. The rugs laid along the way were washed with rose water every morning, and the people would think of themselves in the rose gardens while walking, sitting and chatting here. All languages

² Fahri Atasoy, "Küreselleşme Çağında Yeniden İpek Yolu", *Bir Kültür Koridoru Olarak İpek Yolu Sempozyumu*, 2010, Antalya, s. 2.

were spoken around here and people from all over the world were seen. Everyone was so happy. But then Soviets came and the destruction began. We thought we would be released after they left but we didn't know it was the beginning. After them, Taliban came and our country, our people, our culture, everything was destroyed in such a way that it would never come back".³

The point to be emphasized here is essentially the following. Civilizations are in transmission, and people are curious. They want to see, to say with hands, to live and feel even if there is a short period of time. In the past, while this was a traveller's philosophy, over time has changed its name to tourism by returning to trips in groups. Today, it has become an essential source of economic income for a country and has become a state policy.

The main problem of this study is the question of "what is the mean of mentioned sorrowful sentences above?" and its hypothesis is that wars are damaging society and culture and heritage of that society and also wars also prevent people to travel to communities having unique characteristics lead to lose a lot of revenue. The study will examine the tourism revenues of the countries along the Silk Road route before and after the war, and will present assessments of whether major projects such as "One Belt, One Raod" will be effective.

A Research of the Silk Road

There are different commentaries about the name of the Silk Road. As stated to be the result of the transport of silk fabrics produced in China by caravans⁵, Gustave Le Bon, in his book "La Civilisation Des Arabes", stated that this line passing through the deserts has been used in centuries to produce piles of bones that have been whitened by extreme temperatures. It is caused by its glare like a mirror in the sun, and at night it stretches out like a bright rip in the moonlight.⁴

³ Khaled Hosseimi, *Uçurtma Avcısı*, Everest Yayınları, 2016, İstanbul, s. 100.

⁴ Gustave Le Bon, *La Civilisation Des Arabes*, Arapların Medeniyeti, Çev. Haktan Birsal, IQ Yayınları, 2014, İstanbul, s. 120.

The route of the Silk Road is very important due to our subject. According to the detailed investigations, starting from the coast of China's Wei River reaching the point known as the Jade Gate, where it was divided into three branches and covered Central Asia. These three branches were named as the Northern, Central and Southern Silk Roads. From the north It reached Mongolia and Red Sand Desert through Kazakistan and From there it went to Caucasus and reached to the Black Sea. The central line passing Karakum desert reached to the ancient city of Merv of Turkmenistan, from there by passing through Pers (now-iranian territories) reached to Anatolia. The southern line passed through the Maveraünnehir into India, Afghanistan and continued to Anatolia, Syria and the Persian Gulf. The commercial wealth from silk roads of the Mediterranean and Black Sea was transported to the west.⁵

The Silk Road began in the 15th century BC. It was the world's primary economic route until the 19th century. Not only economic materials we. As a result, thousands of years of ancient civilizations evolved by taking a lot from each other, and over time it aroused great curiosity, especially among Westerners. In modern times, these people began to satisfy their curiosity with tourism.

However, as a time frame for the collapse of the Silk Road, 15th century went down in history. Because the geographical discoveries started in the West, India was reached by traveling around the African Continent and a new road emerged. The name was called the Spice Road, and with the proliferation of Western colonies, Silk Road and a great wealth and civilization collapsed.⁶ Then, in the geographies on the Silk Road, chaos and anarchy were not disappeared. In the modern times, Soviet oppression, then radical religious groups, was influential and decline continued. However, people's curiosity about cultural riches in this land has

⁵ Uysal Yenipınar, West Silk Road Tourism Project And Turkey, The Journal of International Civilisation Studies, Vol. 4, Issue. 1, s. 120.

⁶ Jules Verne, Les Grandes Explorateur ve Exploration, Büyük Keşifler, Büyük Kaşifler, Çev. Haktan Birsal, IQ Yayınları, İstanbul, 2018, s. 234.

never diminished. Whether or not it changes continuously depending on regional stability, in parallel with the realising cultural tourism as a part of sociology of tourism in today's world, the Silk Road peoples got also very much involved in cultural tourism which means a new wealth.

The Importance of Silk Road Tourism

Along this road a wide range of historical dimensions such as legends, stories, and famous leaders and researchers and it is of great importance because of the growing interest of today's people in cultural tourism. Over the centuries Silk Road has brought abundance to every route it has passed and has left traces that could survive in time. When we take the Chinese territory as a starting point from Xinjiang and Kazakhstan in the north, Uzbekistan in centre and the Pamir mountains in the border of Hindistan and Afghanistan in the south and also Iran, the Middle East line, the Caucasus Black Sea and the Anatolia Mediterranean line are the main source of this abundance.

However, this land has been periodically fertile by this wealth. Because during centuries, major power centers and ambitious leaders wanted to control this wealth it led to the suffering processes for the silk road peoples. Initially caravan trades were the source of this wealth but then a new line as Spice route emerged, resulting in the destruction of Silk Road's importance and thus its wealth. In the process following the World Wars, this geography, which remained closed to the world with Soviet rule, could only show itself after completion the Soviets era.

In the new period after 1990, when the ancient states of Central Asia gained their independence were included in the states on the Silk Road. The power struggle which, called "The Great Game" by Lord Curzon, has started again in the century. But in this time the The struggle that started in this land, which have large energy resources, has developed in multidimensional

dimensions and especially emersion of Taliban and its terror force, al-Qaeda, all the Silk Road countries as well as Afghanistan have been negatively affected. Due to the rise of regional conflicts and the intervention of foreign powers, the lands with ancient cultural treasures have been deprived of cultural tourism and revenues of tourism that seems to be a factory without chimneys, has not flowed to the peoples of this geography. Because organizations need for tourism planning, which are necessary for, the smooth running of tourism activities could not be created due to conflicts between the regions.⁷

When tourism potential of countries on silk road are investigated as a case study, the situation will be clear. Especially when Afghanistan is considered as a central point it is obvious that in a geography whit high level of tourism potential insecurity lead to decreasing tourism revenue.⁸ Therefore, changing to safe environments affect tourism potential very much. When the Shanghai Five was established in 1996, an increase in environmental safety was observed. In 2001, the events of September 11 followed by the invasion of by the USA and the fight against terrorism reduced the tourism movement to zero and even negative values. Starting the Arab Spring in 2010, the entire area from North Africa to Afghanistan has been deprived of tourism potential.

In this study, "World Tourism Barometer" publications were taken as basis.⁹ By looking at the statistics about the tourism worldwide, it is possible to reach the following conclusion clearly. Especially regions where conflicts and terrorism are rare can attract the most tourists.

⁷ Ergin Ayan, Yeni İpek Yolu Stratejileri ve Trans-Avrasya Güvenlik Sistemleri, *Journal of History and Future*, December 2016, Volume. 2, Issue. 3, s. 17.

⁸ Golita Hosseinpour Esfahani, Negin Memarzadeh, Sadat Hasheminasab, "Analysis of Silk Road Tourism Development (Emphasizing On South Korea)", *Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi Fen Bilimleri Dergisi*, Cilt. 36, No.3, 3870.

⁹ UN World Tourism Organisation, World Turism Barometer-2019, (Volume 17, Issue 1, January 2019).

In this context, the Russian Federation, France, Australia, USA, Canada, South Korea and China have been the leading countries. Apart from these countries, Middle Eastern countries also have significant tourism potential. However, it is necessary not to ignore the important issue here. That is because Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman have invested heavily in tourism. Also, Muslim and Christian pilgrims come to this region within the scope of religious tourism in the summer, and their tourism potential is very high.

When Barometer data is revised, Central Asian countries, Afghanistan and Pakistan are not listed in terms of tourism potential. This indicates a strong relationship between tourism and regional security which, is the main claim of the study. An increase is observed every year within the scope of international tourism. About 4%, which it means every year 74 million tourists were increased comparing with the last year.

When the statistics are analysed within the Asian continent, the Russian Federation, China, Singapore and Korea have a substantial potential worldwide. One of the biggest reasons for statistical data to change over the years is important sports organizations such as world trophies and Olympics. One of the biggest reasons to change of statistical data over the years is the important sports organizations such as world cups and Olympics.

However, security can be considered here as well. The two most important routes of the Silk Road line, which including the entire cultural heritage of history, i.e. central and southern routes, do not get almost any share of the world's tourism potential. The most important reason is regional insecurity. Especially a line from China to the west, Maverolnahir-Samarkand-Bukhara-Isfahan and Syria and a line starting from China to Afghanistan-Pakistan-Tehran and Anatolia, have the world's cultural memories. People living in every geography around the world feeling relation in some way but although people's curiosity about cultural differences makes these geographies remarkable, they can't take steps because of insecurity. Especially a

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According to limited data, the following chart describes how terrible situation is in Afghanistan as the center of terrorism, regarding to the number of tourists and tourism income over the years. When Afghanistan is analyzed, it is seen that Afghanistan is not the only country who suffers from the consequences of being in the swamp of terror. That's because terrorism and fight against terrorism in Afghanistan also includes Pakistan and its borders, but it doesn't affect India. When we do not make sense of tourism as just sightseeing, considering that the foreigners who come here can find different job, education and life opportunities the losses will be considerable. Therefore, while the southern route of the Silk Road becomes insecure to terrorism, it also turns into chaos geography and affects the Central Asian states in the north negatively. For this reason, regional security enhancing notices are not based on o a particular country, There is need to handle it with large participation organizations.

Afghanistan's Tourism Performance¹⁰

Human/year	Before 1990	2010	2015
Visitor	90.000 ¹⁰	1800 Domestic, 947 International	6.000
Revenue	-		
Tourism Investments	-	290.000 dollar	35 milyon dollar (UNESCO) ¹¹

¹⁰ Firuz Fevzi, "Afganistan Dünya Turizmine Hazırlanıyor", Uluslararası Turizm Kongresi Bildiri Kitabı, Antalya, 2012, s. 554.

¹¹ "Afganistan'da Turizm" Afganistan Ankara Büyükelçiliği, <https://afghanembassy.org.tr/tr/contact/2>

Evaluation of the measures taken to strengthen the Silk Road cultural tourism

In general terms, the process that started with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1990 caused both an increase in radical terrorism in these states and an economic impact on China in the east and Iran blocks in the west. In general terms, the process started with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1990 caused both an increase in radical terrorism in these states and an economic impact on China in the east and Iran in the west. In the following periods, the process got worsened. After the September 11 attacks, US-based military action against the Afghanistan caused other countries to remain insecure, while tourism revenues dropped to almost zero. China, however, has put important plans for the elimination of chaos.

“One Belt One Road” project is a successful project to find solutions for problems and chaotic environment. In the general context, the project history is capable of reviving the silk path. While China takes the responsibility to cover all of the financial support, in 2016, it met the authorities of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and India to propose a plan covering all five countries. According to the plan, the four countries will cooperate in military, political, economical and intelligence issues for their common interests and stop the primary threat, "terrorism". It was also emphasized that this cooperation should be ensured in order to cut off the conflict and financial support of terrorism. Believing that this opportunity can eliminate the chaos environment, other countries have declared that they will fully support China's project and started to implement practices on the basis of cooperation.

“One Belt One Road” project is essentially an economic project. Iran is planned to pass natural gas through pipelines from all countries to China. It has also been decided to build one of the longest railways in the world. Although the project started in this way, it faced a variety of problems, but it has reached the last stage.

Although the project started in this way, it faced a variety of problems, but it has reached the last stage. Other countries are doing their best to create safe areas. In this way, three big geographical countries between China and Iran will destroy terrorism in their territory and economically, they will be enriched to meet their needs. A peaceful environment will bring economic wealth, and then the greatest cultural wealth in history will be opened to tourists from all over the world. The increase in the number of tourists coming as a result of ensuring a safe life in the countries will cause to find another strong economic resource.

Conclusion

As can be seen, today, tourism has become an attractive economic resource for all countries. Every year, millions of people around the world come to different geographies for many reasons and spend money there. There is only one requirement for that. It is to ensure that people who come as guests feel safe and confident everywhere. Consequently, security and tourism are a mechanism that develops together. All countries are aware of this situation and this leads to the emergence of a great competition, and new projects are put into the field of implementation in terms of tourism every year.

However, ensuring security in any case will be the most important issue. Because countries constantly warn their citizens about this issue and act in a way that guarantees their lives. The bomb explosion in a country's tourist region causes the number of tourists to decrease over the years.

Security and tourism have special importance for the Silk Road countries. Europeans, who found the Spice Road in the 17th century, destroyed the trade volume on the Silk Road. This not only caused an economic impact on the eastern world, but also led to the cultural heritage to be buried under the ground. Therefore, all countries on the Silk Road must make their geography reliable with security measures. It can only be achieved by the Silk Road Cultural

Organizations. One of the most important of these is the One Belt One Road project created by China.

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