



The Impact of International Conflicts on the Development of the Maritime Tourism Sector in Southeast Asia

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Abstract. *International conflicts significantly impact maritime tourism development in Southeast Asia, a region rich in natural marine beauty and essential to the regional economy. Destructive international disputes, including geopolitical tensions and naval security threats, can significantly disrupt the regional stability on which tourism is built. Although maritime tourism in Southeast Asia continues to show post-pandemic growth, conflict risk remains a significant challenge that could affect traveler confidence and hinder the sector's contribution to regional GDP. The impact of international conflicts on the development of maritime tourism in Southeast Asia is analyzed in this research using a qualitative approach and literature study method. Journals, articles, and reports were reviewed to understand how geopolitical tensions and maritime security threats affect the tourism sector. The study utilizes conflict theory to explain the dynamics of conflict escalation and the application of resolution efforts in this context. Therefore, the potential disruption of maritime tourism development by ongoing conflicts in the Southeast Asian region is highlighted. The sustainability of the industry relies on security stability, and regional cooperation is crucial in mitigating the negative impact of conflict on the economic sector.*

Keywords *Conflict International, Security Maritime, Tourism Maritime*

1. INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of international conflicts are intricate and multifaceted, particularly within the framework of interstate politics or involving states and other international bodies. Often, these conflicts escalate into extensive and damaging confrontations that not only impact interstate relations but also disrupt regional and global stability. Thus, an escalating conflict in Southeast Asia can destabilize the region, which relies heavily on security to promote the development of the maritime tourism sector (Kartunova et al., 2024, p. 8). In the literature, conflict is often described as distance and can be distinguished into negative and positive dimensions. If the negative dimension of conflict is easily recognizable through its common linkages and stable 'attempts to destroy, exploit, or impose solutions on one party or the other.'

On the other hand, the positive dimension of conflict generally refers to 'the urge to work or establish contact, problem-solving, and positive exchanges between the parties involved' (Al-Rawashdeh, 2017, p. 3488). Widespread and destructive international conflicts damage interstate relations and threaten regional and global stability. In Southeast Asia, conflict escalation can destabilize the region and negatively impact the development of the security-dependent maritime tourism sector.

Southeast Asia is a highly potential maritime travel and tourism region due to its natural marine beauty, exotic beaches, and cultural heritage. Maritime tourism counts in the region's economic sector. The contribution of the industry to the national income of

Southeast Asian countries is significant; since the COVID-19 pandemic, ASEAN countries received about 43 million visitors in 2022, compared to about 2.95 million in 2021. Tourist arrivals to the ASEAN region grew over the last ten years before the pandemic. The region of Asia-Pacific will have the largest inbound tourism growth in the world by 2024. Southeast Asia is the region that accounted for the number of international tourist arrivals after the COVID-19 pandemic. As interest in the region increases as a tourist destination, traveler spending drives good economic growth in the tourism sector. Since the pandemic, the contribution of travel and tourism to Southeast Asia's GDP has significantly increased. This GDP value is expected to double by 2033 from before COVID-19. (Statista Research Department, 2024). The high interest in Southeast Asian tourism indicates the great potential for maritime tourism. The rapid growth in the number of international travelers in 2022 significantly impacts the economy. In addition, Southeast Asia could experience growth in marine tourism.

Southeast Asia's maritime region poses complex risks. There are multiple security challenges facing the region. The region sits at the strategic crossroads of the Indo-Pacific, encompassing important straits and significant sea trade routes. Southeast Asia is the region most dependent on its seas for economic development, income, inter-state transport, cultural assets, and heritage. Threats include piracy, armed robbery, maritime terrorism, and geopolitics, particularly in the South China Sea, where tensions with countries with overlapping territorial claims in the region have fuelled disputes between ASEAN countries and where there is a risk of international confrontation between major powers vying for influence (Bradford & Edward, 2023, p. 5). The Southeast Asian maritime region faces various security challenges, such as piracy, maritime terrorism, and geopolitical tensions in the South China Sea, caused by overlapping territorial claims and competition between major powers for influence, increasing the risk of interstate conflict.

War, terrorism, and political conflict have hurt the travel and tourism industry at every level, from destination marketing organizations to tour operators and other suppliers. Although some effects of war, terrorism, and political conflicts can be logically assessed, research establishing these channel opportunities is sparse (Variakojienė & Achonen, 2022, p. 122). For example, when there is war or political instability for months or years, many tourists decide that going to the area may not be safe. So, the tourism industry also has the potential to suffer losses in revenue. At the same time, it is impossible to determine where the economy of such expenditure comes from (Variakojienė & Achonen, 2022, p. 123). The impact of war and terrorism considerable

on the travel and tourism industry by causing a decline in tourist interest and the sector's revenue. The resulting insecurity leads many travelers to avoid affected areas, decreasing the number of visits and bookings.

This research aims to provide an in-depth analysis of international conflict dynamics, focusing on the factors influencing conflict escalation and resolution. This study is essential to understand how states respond to increasingly complex security challenges and how different theoretical approaches can be applied to reduce tensions and create more sustainable global stability. The novelty in this study is due to the need for more literature that discusses the impact of international conflict on the development of maritime tourism in Southeast Asia.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

International Conflict

Tensions or disputes between states resulting from divergent interests, values, or objectives are referred to as international conflicts. These variations in international relations are frequently caused by the roles that states play both locally and globally, as well as by the ways in which they respond to various international norms. A state might experience "role conflict," for instance, if it has to balance the divergent expectations of its domestic and foreign audiences. Decisions about foreign policy may become ambiguous as a result of this circumstance (Karim, 2022, p. 2). Furthermore, the idea of a "security dilemma" is frequently very important when researching international conflict. This notion delineates a scenario in which an attempt by a state to augment its security may inadvertently heighten strains and augment worldwide insecurity (Okpevra, 2024, p. 2). Divergences in worldwide interests and responsibilities frequently result in ambiguity in foreign policy, mirroring the challenge faced by states in reconciling internal and external demands. In addition, the 'security dilemma' concept highlights the paradox that efforts to enhance national security can instead exacerbate global insecurity.

According to the Macmillan Dictionary, conflict is a disagreement between individuals or groups, often stemming from differences in opinions and interests. Conflict is not limited to interpersonal or intrapersonal disputes; in today's world, international conflict plays a significant role in shaping international relations, policy-making, and policy research. The term 'international conflict' refers to clashes between people from different sovereign states, regardless of proximity, socio-economic-political status, or national ambitions. The leading causes of international conflict include inequality in society, unequal distribution of resources, differences in public policy, divergent views

in international politics, preferential treatment in trade and commerce, economic domination, racism, and more. These factors contribute to three main types of conflict: territorial disputes, such as dominance conflicts, political disputes, and financial conflicts. Global conflicts create a gloomy atmosphere among the countries involved and cause various social and economic losses (Ghosh & Ghosh, 2019, p. 18). Conflicts arise from differences in interests and inequalities, which can occur at the individual and international levels. In interstate relations, international conflicts are fuelled by factors such as divergent public policies and the distribution of resources.

International conflict is different from other international relations phenomena because it is highly dynamic and complex. This complexity stems from its multiple dimensions, interrelated causes, sources, and interconnected direct and indirect impacts. In addition, international conflicts vary widely in scope, intensity, and violence. The tactics parties use in an ongoing conflict, whether they have to do with goals, means, or resources, present additional difficulties on top of these basic differences like conflicts. The development of a thorough and rational general theory of international conflicts, their causes, and workable strategies for resolving them within an integrated framework has long been hampered by this complexity (Al-Rawashdeh, 2017, p. 3488). Global conflict has both direct and indirect causes and effects, and it is a dynamic phenomenon with many interconnected dimensions. It is challenging to develop a general theory that addresses every facet of conflict's causes and logically and fully resolves it due to the variety of conflict management techniques.

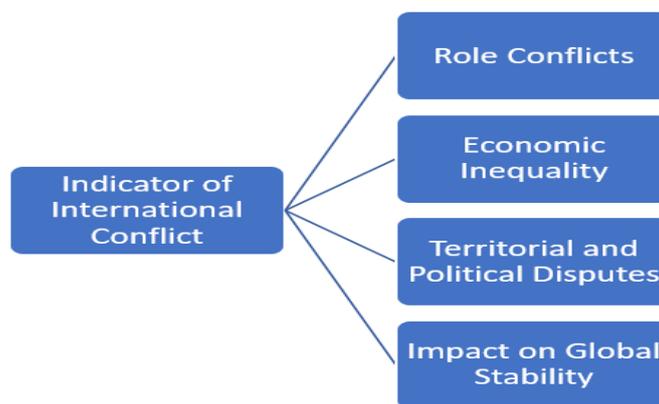


Figure 1. Indicators of *International Conflict*

Maritime Tourism

Tisdell & Wilson define marine tourism as any activity that is either directly or indirectly associated with the sea (Raikwar & Easow, 2023, p. 725). On the other hand, Richards describes marine tourism as 'any activities, events, and experiences that occur

in, over, on, by, or in connection with the sea, including those that occur in coastal areas' (Raikwar & Easow, 2023, p. 725). Garcia, López & López define marine tourism as a range of activities related to travel to the marine environment, its natural and artificial resources, and related recreational activities (Raikwar & Easow, 2023, p. 725). Therefore, marine tourism can be considered a type of tourism that includes activities directly or indirectly related to the ocean and coastal areas. Maritime tourism includes experiences and activities that take place or are related to the sea and coastal areas, as well as recreational activities that focus on the marine environment and its natural resources.

Maritime tourism, which includes marine and coastal activities, is an integral part of the tourism sector in Southeast Asia, a region highly dependent on its aquatic ecosystem. However, the region's marine tourism potential faces significant maritime challenges, including the following:

1. Piracy and armed robbery: these threats have become more frequent and violent, especially in areas heavily affected by human trafficking, such as the Straits of Malacca and the Sulu/Sulawesi Seas. These threats have become more frequent and violent, especially in areas heavily affected by human trafficking, such as the Straits of Malacca and the Sulu/Sulawesi Seas. Malacca Strait and Sulu/Sulawesi Seas. The frequency of attacks fluctuated over the years but increased after events such as the 1997 Asian financial crisis (Bradford & Edward, 2023, p.2). Piracy and armed robbery have become more prevalent and violent, with a spike in attacks, especially after the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis.
2. Maritime terrorism: Attacks on ships in the region have highlighted weaknesses in marine security. This has increased international and regional cooperation in combating this threat (Bradford & Edward, 2023, p. 6). Maritime terrorism in the region demonstrates the vulnerability of marine security, prompting increased international and regional cooperation to address the threat.
3. Geopolitical tensions: The South China Sea is a critical region where overlapping territorial claims cause tensions within ASEAN and the risk of interstate conflict as major powers jockey for influence (Bradford & Edward, 2023, p. 5). In the South China Sea, overlapping territorial claims exacerbate geopolitical tensions. Geopolitical tensions arise from overlapping territorial claims in the South China Sea.
4. Irregular migration: the movement of people across oceans in Southeast Asia, including refugees fleeing conflict, creates additional security challenges. (Bradford & Edward, 2023, p. 6). Irregular migration in Southeast Asia adds challenges to regional maritime security.

5. Complex threat environment: The maritime domain in Southeast Asia is characterized by various new and continuing threats, which complicate the security landscape for maritime stakeholders (Bradford & Edward, 2023, p. 3). Southeast Asia's maritime security landscape is affected by multiple complex environmental threats.

Maritime refers to activities, environments, and sea and ocean issues. In the context of Southeast Asia, this includes the region's dependence on maritime areas for revenue, intra-regional transport, cultural heritage, and the various security challenges that arise in these waters, such as piracy, armed robbery, and geopolitical tensions. (Bradford & Edward, 2023). Maritime refers to activities, environments, and sea and ocean issues. In the context of Southeast Asia, this includes the region's reliance on maritime areas for revenue, intra-regional transport, cultural heritage, and the various security challenges that arise in these waters, such as piracy, armed robbery, and geopolitical tensions. (Bradford & Edward, 2023). The Southeast Asian region is strongly maritime-related.

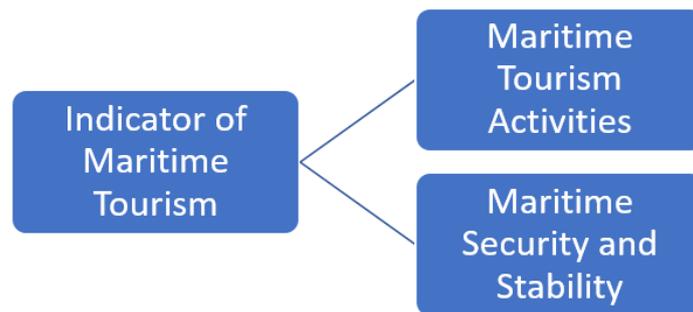


Figure 2. Indicators of *Maritime Tourism*

3. METHODS

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach to examine or analyze the impact of international conflicts on the development of maritime tourism in Southeast Asia. Researchers used data sources in the form of a literature review (articles, journals, news, websites). During the research, researchers conducted an analysis process regarding the impact of international conflicts on the development of maritime tourism in Southeast Asia using these data sources.

4. RESULTS



Figure 3. Map of Subnational Conflict Areas in South and South East Asia

Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-subnational-conflict-areas-in-South-and-Southeast-Asia_fig1_358978841

The map shows areas of subnational conflict in South and Southeast Asia. Areas marked with the term 'red circles' refer to the location of subnational conflicts, i.e., conflicts that occur within a state and involve non-state actors, such as separatist groups, insurgencies, or ethnic conflicts. Some of the central conflict areas in Southeast Asia, as evident on this map, are Mindanao in the Philippines, Southeast Thailand, Aceh, and Papua in Indonesia. In Mindanao, the conflict is between Muslim separatist groups fighting for autonomy or independence from the Philippine government, while in Southeast Thailand, the conflict is between the Thai government and Muslim separatist groups in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat provinces. Although Aceh in Indonesia has long been associated with a peaceful society, it remains recognized as a region with a history of separatist conflict. At the same time, Papua has also seen a continuous separatist movement leading to the country's independence (Parks et al., 2013). These regions illustrate the challenges Southeast Asian countries face in dealing with internal conflicts often linked to ethnicity, religion, and demands for autonomy. This condition indicates international conflict related to territorial and political disputes. Political and territorial disputes are highly relevant to the subject matter because of the conflicts in many regions of the world, characterized by claims to territory and resources made by various groups of people. In Mindanao, Aceh, Southern Thailand, and Papua, separatist groups are fighting to achieve autonomy or independence, a vital issue in territorial disputes. In addition, these conflicts often result in a lack of trust in the national government and create political tensions over representation and the use of public funds. In other words,

these conflicts illustrate how political and territorial issues typically arise, causing tensions within countries and increasing the challenge of maintaining stability across Southeast Asia.

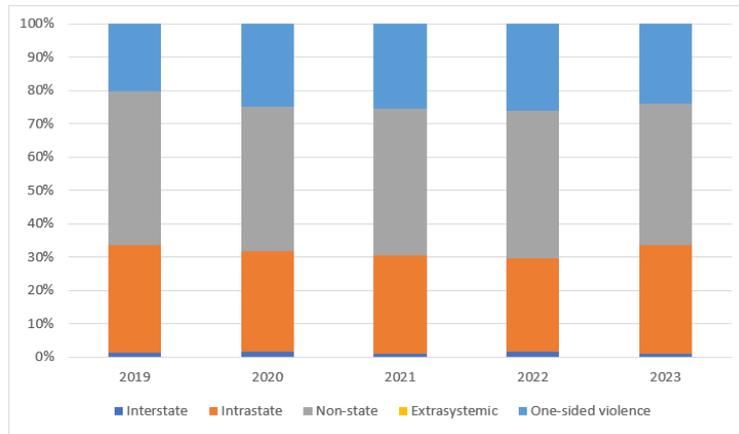


Figure 4. Number of Armed Conflicts in the World, 2019-2023

Source: <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/new-armed-conflicts-by-type>

Figure 4 displays the number of armed conflicts in the world from 2019 to 2023, classified into several categories: interstate conflict, intrastate conflict, non-state conflict, extrasystemic conflict, and one-sided violence. This data is drawn from the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme (UCDP), which measures the various forms of armed conflict that cause at least 25 combat deaths yearly (Our World in Data, 2024). Global armed conflict from 2019 to 2023, categorized into worldwide conflict, domestic conflict, non-state conflict, extra systemic conflict, and one-sided violence, based on Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) data.

In the graph, intrastate conflict is the most dominant and increasing type. This shows that while interstate wars are becoming less frequent, internal conflicts involving governments and non-state armed groups are rising, especially in developing countries (Our World in Data, 2024). Although interstate wars are becoming less frequent, the world still faces a surge in domestic violence and violence against civilians. This graph indicates that modern conflicts are more common within states than between states, revealing new dynamics of global conflict, such as secessionist movements, insurgencies, and violence by non-state actors. This condition indicates international conflict related to territorial and political disputes. The link between territorial and political disputes and armed conflict data from 2019 to 2023 shows that domestic conflict, the most dominant type, is often triggered by the demands of certain groups for autonomy or recognition of their territory. Although interstate wars are increasingly rare, the rise in internal conflicts reflects tensions stemming from differences in political interests and territorial claims, as

seen in separatism movements and insurgencies in developing countries. Data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme (UCDP) underscores that domestic violence is on the rise.

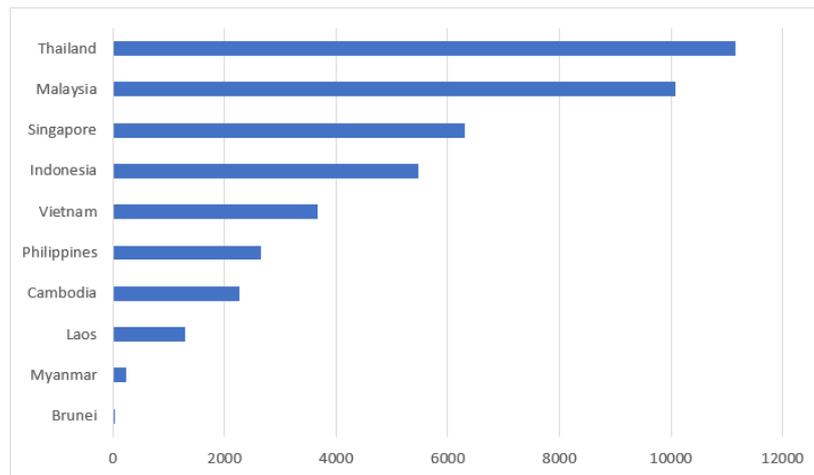


Figure 5. Tourist Arrivals in South East Asia in 2022 by Country

Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/645730/tourist-arrivals-in-asean-region-by-country-of-arrival/>

Figure 5 compares tourism sector revenue in ASEAN countries, measured in millions of US dollars. The countries shown include Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Brunei (Statista, 2024). This data illustrates how much the tourism sector contributes to each country's economy in the region.

In the graph, Thailand has the highest income from the tourism sector, reaching 11,153 million USD, followed by Malaysia with an income of 10,071 million USD. Singapore took third place with a revenue of 6,305.7 million USD, followed by Indonesia with 5,471.3 million USD (Statista, 2024). Thailand and Malaysia show strong dominance in the tourism industry in ASEAN. These countries show great appeal to international travelers.

In fifth place, Vietnam recorded revenue of 3,661.2 million USD, while the Philippines generated 2,653.9 million USD from tourism. Cambodia also contributed a revenue of 2,276.6 million USD, although it was smaller than the other major countries in the region. Laos and Myanmar were in a lower position, with revenues of 1,291.6 million USD and 233.5 million USD, respectively. Brunei recorded the most minor revenue, at 35.7 million USD (Statista, 2024). This graph shows that Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore are leading the way in tourism revenue. At the same time, other countries such as Indonesia and Vietnam also have the potential to continue developing their tourism industry. This condition is the indicator of maritime tourism related to Maritime

Tourism Activities. The graph comparing the tourism sector revenue in ASEAN countries highlights the region's substantial contribution to maritime tourism activities, making the Maritime Tourism Activities indicator highly relevant to the content. Thailand and Malaysia, two nations well-known for their stunning beaches and marine tourism spots, have high tourism revenues, a sign of their appeal to foreign visitors looking for a beach experience. Furthermore, nations with a lot of maritime destinations, like the Philippines and Indonesia, have a lot of potential for growing their tourism sectors. As a result, the Maritime Tourism Activities indicator shows how vital the maritime tourism industry is to drawing tourists and boosting national income by illustrating its vitality and contribution to the economies of ASEAN member nations.



Figure 6. Maritime Security Challenges in South East Asia

Source: https://www.stratfor.com/sites/default/files/styles/wv_small/public/southeast-asia-shipping-insurgency.png?itok=vEG-eM1o

Figure 6 shows the maritime security challenges in Southeast Asia, particularly in the "Tri-Border Area," which encompasses the maritime borders between Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. This region is a vulnerable area characterized by militant and criminal activities (highlighted in yellow), such as piracy, smuggling, human trafficking, and acts of terrorism, which frequently occur around the Sulu Sea and the Sulawesi Sea. Additionally, several major shipping routes connecting the Strait of Malacca, the Java Sea, the Sulu Sea, and the Sulawesi Sea pass through this area, making it one of the busiest maritime trade hubs in the world. The security risks along these routes are very high due to their proximity to crime-prone areas. Important ports (marked with gray boxes) scattered along the shipping routes further reinforce the region's role in the global economy (Stratfor, 2016). The main challenge faced is maintaining maritime security amidst the threats of militant activities, piracy attacks, and smuggling, which can disrupt regional and international trade stability. Security participation between nations

within the locale plays a part in decreasing the chance of cross-border violations that regularly happen in these waters. This condition aligns with the indicators of maritime tourism related to Maritime Security and Stability, as Figure 5 illustrates the maritime security challenges in the "Tri-Border Area" between Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, which includes various threats such as piracy, smuggling, and terrorism. These challenges could disrupt maritime trade and tourism stability in a region with significant shipping routes and essential ports. Maintaining maritime stability is essential to ensuring the seamless operation of trade and tourism activities, given the high security risks present in these waters. Furthermore, the maritime industry and the regional economy depend on security cooperation amongst member nations to reduce the risks of cross-border crime. All things considered, these four photos demonstrate how non-state actors' insecurity and subnational conflicts both on land and at sea impact Southeast Asia's stability, economy, and security. In order to preserve security and the region's economic prosperity, these conflicts have a substantial influence on important industries like trade and tourism and necessitate international cooperation.

5. DISCUSSION

The marine biodiversity in Southeast Asia makes it a prime location for marine tourism, coupled with its vast coastlines and countless islands. Southeast Asia is a global center for marine biodiversity and is home to 31% of the world's mangrove forests, 33% of seagrass beds, and one-third of the world's coral reefs. . The region accounts for 80% of global aquaculture and 60% of the world's wild fisheries and serves as a route for 90% of global trade through shipping. In several Southeast Asian countries, the marine economy constitutes 20% of GDP, and it is estimated that 625 million people in the region depend on the sea for their livelihoods, significantly higher than most other regions worldwide. Marine health is essential in this area (Sancho & Bertomeu, 2022). The region has great potential for marine tourism due to its rich marine biodiversity and the critical role of the marine economy for regional economies.

International conflicts significantly impact tourism and regional stability in various ways. Tourism is heavily affected when tourist destinations face challenges such as terrorist attacks or warfare. Webster and Ivanov studied a series of geopolitical events that can influence tourism and drastically change the flow of tourists at the international level (Ghosh, 2022, p. 5). Morakabati analyzes the importance of tourist perceptions regarding geopolitical risks and how they alter the flow of tourists worldwide. Geopolitical risks change the space of individual freedoms, thus affecting tourism as it is

based on the power struggle game. Tourism boosts economic growth, but the recent increase in geopolitical risks has adversely affected the tourism industry (Ghosh, 2022, p. 5). Geopolitical risks, such as terrorist attacks and warfare, significantly affect tourist perceptions and global travel flows, negatively impacting the tourism industry and economic growth. The great potential of marine tourism in Southeast Asia, which relies on its marine biodiversity, can be threatened by international conflicts, which significantly affect regional stability and the tourism industry through geopolitical risks such as terrorist attacks and warfare.

International tourists become easy targets during terrorism and internal conflicts that negatively impact tourism. Visitors and travelers will always choose peaceful and safe destinations (Ghosh, 2022, p. 18). Wall assesses that instability and violence affect not only the conflict-affected locations but also a broader area extending across regions, countries, and neighboring nations (Tkalec & Žilić, 2021, p. 3). Terrorism and internal conflicts threaten the safety of international tourists, who tend to prefer safe destinations, while the impact of instability spreads to broader areas, including neighboring countries.

According to the *World Tourism Organization* report, tourism is the third largest industry in terms of global export revenue. However, the tourism industry faces high uncertainty due to global tensions, terrorist attacks, geopolitical risks, and economic uncertainty. Tourism negatively responds to geopolitical risks, economic uncertainty, and political unrest (Tkalec & Žilić, 2021, p. 3). As the third largest export industry, tourism is vulnerable to global tensions, terrorist attacks, geopolitical risks, and economic uncertainty, negatively impacting its growth.

This decline affects hotels, restaurants, and local tourist attractions and impacts jobs and government revenue from taxes and tourism-related fees. If the conflict continues, the potential long-term impact on the regional economy could be severe. Prolonged instability tends to erode the tourism sector's ability to recover, leading to job losses and business closures in the long term. Furthermore, progressing strife can occupy speculations and assets from tourism advancement to more pressing conflict-related needs, ruining travel and tourism division development. As tourism decays, there's likely to be a diminish in remote trade profit, which are vital for keeping up the adjust of installments (Töre, 2024). Delayed strife antagonistically influences the tourism division, causing employments, government income, and venture decays, as well as dangers ruining territorial financial recuperation and diminishing remote trade profit.

6. CONCLUSION

The marine tourism sector in Southeast Asia experiences significant and varied impacts from international conflicts. The stability and growth of this crucial part of the region's economy are at risk due to international conflicts. The potential of marine tourism in this region, known for its diverse marine life and extensive coastlines, faces threats from security issues and geopolitical tensions. International conflicts create a feeling of insecurity among international travelers, causing them to favor peaceful and secure destinations. This not only affects areas directly affected by conflicts but also has wider implications for the entire region and neighboring countries. As the third-largest export industry globally, the tourism sector is highly susceptible to global tensions, terrorist activities, geopolitical risks, and economic instability. The tourism sector is negatively affected by prolonged conflicts, resulting in job cuts, reduced government revenue from taxes and tourism-related fees, and potential long-term adverse impacts on the regional economy. The decrease in tourism not only impacts local businesses like hotels, restaurants, and tourist attractions, but also has lasting effects on job opportunities and government revenue, potentially leading to a decline in foreign exchange earnings crucial for maintaining the balance of payments. Consequently, it is crucial to tackle global issues.

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