

The Uneven Impact Of The Russian Invasion On Ukraine's Neighbouring Countries' Inbound Tourism In 2022

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Abstract:

This paper delves into the interplay between war, particularly the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and tourism in the latter's neighbouring countries. With the onset of the Russian invasion in 2022, the ripple effects extended into the tourism industry of Ukraine's neighbouring countries, compounded by economic challenges and travel restrictions stemming from the conflict. The aim of this paper is to record the impact of the conflict on inbound tourism for Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Moldova, and Belarus for the year 2022, highlighting shifts in tourist flows due to geopolitical dynamics. In Chapter II, the issue of War and Tourism will be theoretically approached, while in the Chapter III, a brief reference will be made to the geopolitical context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Then (Chapter IV) special issues, of a touristic nature, of the crisis will be addressed. Finally, in Chapter V, the inbound tourist flows in Ukraine's neighbouring countries will be presented, and critically approached. It seems that long-standing cultural, but also more broadly political transnational relations, as well as the varying sense of security from country to country, influence travel behaviour in areas adjacent to war zones.

Background: *In most of the studies, the effects of wars on tourism flows are examined with a focus on war-torn regions. This paper is based on the idea to measure and analyze tourism flows in the bordering countries in a war situation. The case of Ukraine proved to be an ideal example, as it borders with many countries that are different from each other, economically, politically, and culturally.*

Materials and Methods: *The study was based on the comparative method. Statistical data on inbound tourism were collected and compared, mainly from national statistical authorities and secondarily from OECD.*

Conclusion: *The war between Russia and Ukraine has changed the landscape of international travel in the wider region, however, this effect has not manifested itself uniformly across countries. From a first approach, it appears that the travel behaviour of Ukraine's neighbouring countries is influenced by various parameters, such as the long-standing cultural, and more broadly political, transnational relations, or the sense of security, which depends on differentiating cultural parameters.*

Key Word: *Geopolitics of tourism; War impact on tourism; Ukraine – Russia conflict; Traveling behaviour in areas adjacent to war zones*

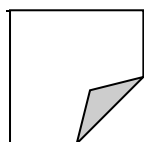
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I. Introduction

The connection between war and tourism remained relatively underexplored until the late twentieth century.¹ John Walton (1996) expressed surprise at the limited attention dedicated to investigating the impact of the First World War on touristic towns². Over the subsequent years, however, increased academic interest has been directed towards the numerous linkages between war and tourism throughout history, as evidenced by the works of Butler & Suntikul (2013) and Elliott & Milne (2019).³ Nowadays, in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, on February 24, 2022, the ripple effects extend far beyond borders, reaching into the heart of the tourism industry in neighbouring countries.

Moreover, there is a growing concern over the significant challenges posed by high inflation, escalating energy and food prices, supply chain disruptions, and the overall insecurity stemming from the military conflict, which place considerable strains on the provision and affordability of travel and hospitality services, accompanied with travel restrictions on passenger transport operations and prices, encompassing flights, cruises, and other modes of travel⁴. As the geopolitical canvas undergoes a profound transformation, so does the landscape of international travel. Subsequently, beyond the immediate ramifications on regional stability, this invasion casts a



far-reaching shadow, notably affecting the inbound tourism of Ukraine's neighbouring countries. The symbiotic relationship between geopolitics and tourism is brought sharply into focus as nations grapple with the repercussions of conflict⁵. As many institutions and organizations rushed to predict the consequences of the war crisis in tourism and particularly in the countries neighbouring the warring countries, this study navigates the intricate interplay between conflict and tourism, dissecting, through objective measurements, how the upheaval in Ukraine has influenced the inbound tourism for its neighbouring nations.

II. War and Tourism

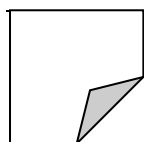
War poses a significant contemporary security concern, differing from crime and terrorism due to its pervasive societal impact and enduring consequences⁶. Serving as a crucial cultural marker, societies often divide their history into distinct phases: 'before the war', 'during the war', and 'after the war'⁷. Despite limited exploration, existing literature suggests that war tends to have a detrimental effect on tourism⁸. Specifically, the repercussions of conflict are profound, encompassing a myriad of adverse outcomes. These include not only human casualties, with civilians bearing the brunt, but also the devastation of critical infrastructure, businesses, and the personal assets of citizens⁹. Furthermore, the aftermath of war often triggers political instability, giving rise to heightened security concerns, especially in locations frequented by tourists¹⁰.

Tourism primarily rooted in positive experiences, fundamentally clashes with conflict, war, violence, and terrorism¹¹. Despite statistical indications that the 21st century has been relatively peaceful, the prevalence of violent conflicts, coupled with extensive media coverage, has brought distressing events directly into the lives of many citizens¹². When considering wars and various forms of conflict, this number significantly escalates¹³. While these tragic occurrences are crucial concerns in their own right, it raises the question of how they impact tourism¹⁴. Recent crises in well-known tourist destinations, such as attacks in Tunisia, Turkey, France, and Spain, led to a shift in tourist preferences toward locations perceived as safer¹⁵.

Weaver (2000) extends Butler's (1980) model¹⁶ by introducing the theoretical concept of a war-distorted life cycle within the field of tourism¹⁷. This concept suggests that war disrupts the normal trajectory of tourism growth, resulting in a disparity between the anticipated level of tourism in the absence of conflict and the actual level experienced due to the impact of war¹⁸. The difference between these two levels signifies the loss in tourism caused by the conflict. Furthermore, Weaver breaks down the period of decline into two distinct stages. The first stage is characterized by instability before the outbreak of hostilities, during which potential tourists become aware of significant risks associated with traveling to the destination¹⁹. The second stage, the collapse stage, coincides with the occurrence of hostilities and witnesses the most drastic decline in tourism²⁰. Following these stages, there are phases of exploration and recovery as tourists gradually return to the affected area²¹. In accordance with the above, the pervasive societal impact, enduring consequences, and intricate dynamics between war and tourism highlight the considerable challenges faced by the global travel industry during and after conflicts²².

On the other side, it would be interesting to mention at this point the term 'war tourism'. War tourism, also known as battlefield tourism or dark tourism, involves visiting sites associated with death, historical conflicts, wars, and tragedies²³. This form of tourism encompasses a wide range of destinations, including former battlefields, war memorials, concentration camps, and sites of terrorist attacks or natural disasters²⁴. While it may seem morbid or insensitive to some, war tourism can serve several purposes and attract various types of visitors²⁵. One of the primary motivations for war tourism is educational²⁶. Many people are drawn to these sites to learn about history, gain insight into the causes and consequences of conflicts, and pay tribute to those who lost their lives²⁷. War museums, memorials, and preserved battlefields offer opportunities for reflection, remembrance, and understanding of past events. Additionally, war tourism can facilitate reconciliation and healing^{28,29}. Visiting sites of past conflicts can help individuals and communities come to terms with historical trauma, promote dialogue, and foster reconciliation efforts³⁰. Moreover, war tourism can contribute to economic development in regions affected by past conflicts³¹. Many destinations rely on tourism as a source of revenue and employment, and war-related attractions can draw visitors, generate income for local businesses, and support heritage preservation efforts.

Going one step further, there is also the term "Hot war tourism", which typically refers to the act of visiting destinations or areas that are currently experiencing armed conflict or war³². Unlike traditional war tourism, hot war tourism involves traveling to regions where conflicts are ongoing or recent³³. Participating in hot war tourism can be highly dangerous and is generally discouraged by governments, international organizations, and travel advisories due to the risks involved³⁴. However, "war tourism" and "hot war tourism" raise ethical and moral considerations. The issue lies in their disproportionate emphasis on their forms of tourism within a leisure context, thereby perpetuating the perception of them as fringe activities³⁵. This viewpoint is subtly reinforced by Lennon and Foley (2000), who refer to those venturing to the 'most dangerous places on earth' as the 'vanguard of dark tourism'³⁶. They suggest that these pioneering tourists are few and hold limited economic, political, and social significance³⁷. However, according to Piekarczyk (2007), while these vanguard tourists may indeed be numerically small, their impact shouldn't be underestimated³⁸. Pryer (1997) noted that their significance lies not



in their numbers but in their role as trailblazers, opening up destinations for others to follow³⁹. War, paradoxically, can shield tourist destinations from overwhelming crowds, offering a more intimate and intense travel experience for certain types of travelers⁴⁰. Finally, it's unsurprising that many former war zones have the potential to emerge as tomorrow's tourist hotspots, often in a remarkably short span of time⁴¹.

III. Geopolitical Background Of Russian – Ukrainian Conflict

Russia and Ukraine share a profound and interconnected relationship, both geographically and historically⁴². The proximity of the two countries, coupled with strong ties in terms of economy, culture, and politics, underscores their inextricable link⁴³. Ukraine holds a very important position within Russia's immediate foreign sphere, particularly in the broader post-Soviet region, where Russia has vital interests. Notably, Ukraine's significance is accentuated by its strategic location at the crossroads between Eastern Europe and Russia⁴⁴. Following the Soviet Union's dissolution, Russia lost control over the Baltic States, as they aligned with the EU and NATO⁴⁵. Additionally, Moscow's influence in the Balkans, where it once held a leading position, has diminished⁴⁶. Consequently, Russia is hesitant to relinquish Ukraine to Western powers⁴⁷.

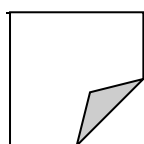
The country actively opposes Ukraine's NATO membership; as such an accession would automatically establish Ukraine as a strategic outpost for the alliance. In this context, losing Ukraine would compel Russia to shift its focus further eastward. According to Kissinger, Ukraine plays a crucial role in helping Russia maintain its Eurasian "Empire"⁴⁸. Without Ukraine, Russia would still strive for imperial status, but its orientation would likely become more Asian. This shift could lead to conflicts with other recently independent Asian nations, possibly receiving support from Islamic states in the south⁴⁹. With Russia experiencing a declining birth rate and Central Asian countries seeing an increase, an Eurasian Empire without Ukraine would inevitably take on a more Asian character and diminish its European influence⁵⁰.

Beyond that, from a geopolitical point of view, the loss of Ukraine was of critical importance for Russia, because, according to Brzezinski, it would deprive Russia of its dominant position in the Black Sea, where Odessa served as Russia's vital gateway to trade with the Mediterranean and other southern seas. Moreover, without the Ukraine of its 42 million or so Slavic brothers and sisters, Russia could not have sought to dominate the non-Slavs in the south and southeast of the former Soviet Union. Indeed, the example of Ukraine's political self-determination was followed by the other former Soviet republics. Moscow, after losing its dominant position in the Baltic Sea, lost its corresponding position in the Black Sea, where the projection of its naval power in the Mediterranean had started. This was not only because of Ukrainian independence, but because the newly independent states of the Caucasus: Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, reinforced the restoration of Turkey's former geopolitical influence in this region⁵¹. Moreover, Ukraine has openly cooperated with Turkey in order to weaken Russian influence in the Black Sea and supported its efforts to direct oil flows from Central Asia to Turkish terminals⁵². In other words, Russia, the once leading ideological and territorial empire that reached into the heart of Europe and the South China Sea, became a vulnerable and therefore insecure state without easy and unimpeded geographical access to the outside world. Only the uninhabited northern territories, almost permanently frozen (apparently not for much longer), still seem safe from a geopolitical point of view⁵³.

It is true, of course, that in 1990, the leader of Soviet Russia, Mikhail Gorbachev, consented not only to the reunification of Germany, but also to its accession, as a unified Germany, to NATO. Already facing fierce opposition at home, Gorbachev was further weakened by this decision, which probably contributed to the attempted coup against him in August 1991. Gorbachev made this decision based on assurances from his then Western "partners" that in return NATO would not expand "not an inch eastward" into Russia⁵⁴. At the time, it was known that George Bush Jr. in particular had convinced Gorbachev with Secretary of State James Baker's not an "inch" and other equally emphatic guarantees. Today, having almost doubled its member states, the world's most powerful military alliance is hugging Russia's western border tightly. As prominent Russian analysts of US foreign policy have argued, the US sought "to reorganize interstate relations throughout Europe....so that there would be no leading power on the continent, but many moderately large, relatively stable and moderately powerful states... but necessarily inferior to the United States in terms of their individual or even collective capabilities"⁵⁵.

In this respect, according to Brzezinski, Ukraine was of crucial importance. Indeed, Washington's growing tendency, especially in 1994, to give high priority to US-Ukrainian relations and to support Ukraine in its new national struggle for independence was seen by many Russians, including the 'westernizers', as a policy that went against Russia's vital interest and the future restoration of Ukraine to the Russian sphere of influence⁵⁶. Ukraine, therefore, was set by Russia as the red inviolable point, which NATO/US did not respect. Ukraine is for Russia the outer yard of its home. In other words, and in line with Vladimir Putin's doctrine, it is its 'near outside' that provides it with the necessary strategic depth and therefore a sense of national security.

After all, Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, as well as its military actions against Georgia in 2008, should have demonstrated to the West/NATO/USA Russia's belligerent readiness to defend its national interests in the areas it considers its 'near abroad' or otherwise Russia's 'outer yard'. It should even have been recognized



by the peoples of these regions that Washington is too far away, while Moscow is just a stone's throw away⁵⁷. As demonstrated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

IV. Tourism & The Conflict Between Russia And Ukraine

With the beginning of the invasion, many institutions and organizations rushed to prepare for the consequences of the war crisis in tourism and especially in the countries neighbouring the warring countries. Declaring that Tourism is a pillar of peace and international friendship, and Members of *World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)* must uphold these values or face consequences, 99 countries suspended the Russian Federation from the UNWTO, appealing to Article 3 of the Statutes, according to which all Members commit to developing tourism with a view *to contributing to economic development, international understanding, peace, prosperity, and universal prospect for, and observance of human rights*. The Russian delegation declined to step up and defend its position, and instead announced its withdrawal from UNWTO before the debate took place⁵⁸.

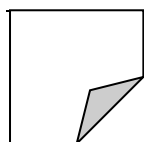
The *World Committee on Tourism Ethics (WCTE)* welcomed the statement of UN Secretary-General that "Continuing the war in Ukraine is morally unacceptable, politically indefensible and militarily nonsensical", in firm belief that tourism is a vital force for peace and a factor for friendship and mutual understanding among the peoples of the world, and urged the Russian Federation to end its invasion against Ukraine which is putting millions of lives at risk, threatening their peace and security. Guided by Article 1 of the *UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism*, the Committee called on all efforts to be extended towards peace negotiations in accordance with the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter⁵⁹.

In the same direction, Julia Simpson, *World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC)* President & CEO, stated that WTTC stands for peace and respecting the sovereignty of nations; *The invasion of Ukraine has shocked the world, and our hearts go out to all those who are suffering. We support those Ukrainians and Russians alike, who seek peace and bringing an end to this conflict. The Travel & Tourism sector is united in providing help to those affected by this crisis*⁶⁰.

Referring to the issue in the *European Agenda for Tourism 2030*, the *European Union Council* strongly condemns Russia's unprovoked and unjust military aggression against Ukraine, by recognising at the same time its wide-ranging economic, political, and humanitarian consequences, including its adverse impact on tourism and other sectors, particularly in countries neighbouring Ukraine. It recognises that despite the continuing insecurity, the tourism ecosystem has shown solidarity towards refugees from Ukraine, for example by providing temporary accommodation for relocated citizens, supporting their integration and where possible, by providing employment opportunities. Furthermore, it expresses concern that high inflation, rising prices on energy and food products, disruptions of supply chains, and insecurity related to the military aggression of Ukraine impose heavy burdens on the provision and affordability of travel and hospitality services. Finally, it points out that limitations on travel have serious effects on the operations and prices of passenger transport across all Member States, including, but not limited to, flights and cruises⁶¹.

The *Warsaw Institute Review* indicated that the conflict in Ukraine will have repercussions on tourism both into the European Union and within its member countries⁶². The nations most likely to bear the brunt of these effects are those sharing a common border with Ukraine. According to World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Russia and Ukraine, as significant source markets, collectively contribute approximately 3% to global spending on international tourism as of 2020⁶³. It was also mentioned that if the conflict persists, it could result in a substantial loss of \$14 billion in tourism receipts worldwide in 2022⁶⁴. Just as the tourism industry was beginning to recover from the Covid -19 pandemic, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has dealt a significant blow to its prospects for revival. This unexpected turn of events has introduced new uncertainties and challenges to the tourism sector's path to recovery. With the lasting effects of the pandemic still present, the war has further hindered economic growth and exacerbated inflationary pressures, particularly due to tightening labor markets⁶⁵. Fragile tourism businesses now face the added strain of rising costs for energy, food, and other inputs, while the overall cost-of-living crisis has put a squeeze on consumer spending power. Non-essential items like tourism are among the first to face potential cuts in consumer budgets.

The substantial rebound observed in tourism across many countries in 2022 was driven by pent-up demand but is now showing signs of faltering in the face of the complex economic and geopolitical landscape. As the tourism industry grapples with these challenges, both existing and emerging structural weaknesses are being exacerbated, while broader global trends continue to influence the sector across social, economic, political, environmental, and technological dimensions. It is a fact that the conflict in Ukraine has disrupted the economic recovery, compounding the lingering effects of the pandemic and posing significant consequences for the tourism sector. The war has also triggered a global cost-of-living crisis, impacting populations worldwide. Inflationary pressures, previously focused on food and energy, have now expanded to include higher costs for energy, transportation, and labour, which businesses are passing on to consumers. Finally, this has dampened growth, reduced real incomes, and constrained spending, further impeding the tourism sector's fragile recovery from the pandemic⁶⁶.



V. The Impact On The Inbound Tourism Of Ukraine's Neighbouring Countries

Poland⁶⁷

Table no 1: Inbound tourism in Poland - Overnight visitors (tourists, in 000)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 ⁶⁸	2022 vs 2021 (%)	2022 vs 2019 (%)
Top markets - Total	18.258	19.623	21.158	8.418	9.722	15.900	63,55	-24,85
Germany	6.504	6.704	7.067	3.426	3.630	5.219	43,77	-26,15
Ukraine	1.360	2.038	2.596	1.021	1.496	3.462	131,42	33,36
Russia	875	919	955	238	-	R ⁶⁹	-	-
United Kingdom	851	919	1.002	360	389	699	79,64	-30,26
Belarus	763	793	807	391	490	735	49,98	-8,93

In 2022, Poland registers a significant decrease in tourist flows compared to 2019, except for visitors from Ukraine, whose status is questionable whether it is appropriate to be counted as tourists. As a recovery trend is observed in comparison with incoming tourists in 2021, it becomes evident that the Russian invasion slowed down, but did not stop a looming trend of recovery of tourist flows.

Slovakia⁷⁰

Table no 2: Organized tourism (Active and Passive) in the Slovak Republic

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2022 vs 2021 (%)	2022 vs 2019 (%)
Top markets - Total	387.061	387.834	331.193	25.384	32.040	120.802	277,03	-63,53
USA	67.268	36.273	54.391	198	6.094	28.055	360,37	-48,42
Austria	67.936	51.735	81.690	6.199	12.959	38.483	196,96	-52,89
France	14.096	15.024	14.310	30	180	9.168	4993,33	-35,93
Germany	95.237	62.982	54.305	4.207	3.373	7.829	132,11	-85,58
Czech Republik	10.535	15.375	15.084	4.650	3.852	5.975	55,11	-60,39

While Slovakia has experienced a notable increase in inbound organized tourists compared to 2021, the gap remains significantly negative when compared to 2019. Particularly noteworthy is the rapid decline in visitors from Germany, especially when contrasted with other top destinations.

Hungary^{71,72}

Table no 3: International tourist arrivals in Hungary (in 000)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2022 vs 2021 (%)	2022 vs 2019 (%)
Top markets - Total	15.785	17.510	16.937	7.417	7.929	12.649	59,53	-25,32
Romania	2.477	2.370	1.570	745	732	998	36,34	-36,43
Slovak Republic	1.802	1.710	1.358	728	585	904	54,53	-33,43
Austria	1.323	1.440	1.197	889	929	1.553	67,17	29,74
Germany	929	2.375	2.619	1.369	1.450	1.940	33,79	-25,93
Serbia, Montenegro	882	864	700	425	413	424	2,66	-39,43

Except for Austria, which shows a significant increase even compared to arrivals in 2019, Hungary has lost approximately a quarter of its tourist flows compared to 2019, with almost all of the top 5 markets recording a significant decrease, exceeding 30%. The significant increase in Austrian visitors can potentially be interpreted by the historical ties between the two countries.

Romania^{73,74,75}

Table no 4: Table 4. Inbound tourism in Romania - Arrivals of foreign visitors to Romania (in 000)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2022 vs 2021 (%)	2022 vs 2019 (%)
Top markets - Total	160.233	174.021	28.732	68.852	162.086	135,41	-6,86	160,233
Ukraine	18.693	21.582	3.893	8.194	75.800	825,07	251,22	18.693
Rep. of Moldova	12.939	14.786	2.777	8.493	5.438	-35,97	-63,22	12.939
Bulgaria	44.903	47.031	9.010	18.993	26.604	40,07	-43,43	44.903
Hungary	9.637	9.808	1.078	4.938	8.043	62,88	-18,00	9.637
Turkey	5.511	6.847	1.566	3.057	5.358	75,27	-21,75	5.511

Despite the decrease in Romania's inbound tourism from the more western-oriented countries, Bulgaria and Hungary, the overall inbound tourism trend is still positive compared to 2019, thanks to the large increase in

inflows from Turkey and Ukraine, the latter apparently due to the Russian invasion. Interestingly, there is also a slight increase in the flow from Moldova, which may reflect an escape corridor for Ukrainians heading westwards.

Moldova⁷⁶

Table no 5: Inbound tourism in Moldova - Number of tourists placed in establishments of collective touristic reception with functions of accommodation / of which, foreigners.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2022 vs 2021 (%)	2022 vs 2019 (%)
Top markets - Total	10.986	11.720	12.815	5.023	6.789	12.967	91,00	1,19
Ukraine	1.208	1.466	1.755	663	1.105	3.293	198	88
Rep. of Moldova	2.052	2.330	2.523	827	1.247	2.607	109	3
Bulgaria	1.603	1.600	1.857	1.267	1.254	1.539	23	-17
Hungary	1.454	1.491	1.529	481	603	865	43	-43
Turkey	357	397	430	353	509	728	43	69

While the overall statistical records indicate a balance in tourist arrivals for 2022 compared to 2019, with a significant increase compared to 2021, a closer examination of the top 5 source countries reveals that this situation is primarily driven by heightened arrivals from Ukraine, likely attributable to the Russian invasion. Additionally, the upward trend in arrivals from the US and Turkey is surprising when contrasted with the declining trend from Russia. Furthermore, it's important to note that Moldova's tourism figures are relatively small overall, resulting in volatile percentage changes.

Belarus⁷⁷

Table no 6: Inbound tourism in Belarus (except CIS Countries) - Total international arrivals (in 000)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2022 vs 2021 (%)	2022 vs 2019 (%)
Top markets - Total	10.986	11.720	12.815	5.023	6.789	12.967	91,00	1,19
Poland	83.920	152.103	182.317	27.290	17.433	6.187	-64,51	-96,61
Lithuania	22.686	46.305	61.349	13.562	231	737	219,05	-98,80
Latvia	26.182	59.564	76.060	6.719	246	751	205,28	-99,01
Germany	6.533	11.026	10.478	1.116	101	2.164	2042,57	-79,35
China	3.102	3.566	4.538	818	229	504	120,09	-88,89

Belarus finds itself significantly isolated from Western countries, as well as from China. Excluding the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (Kazakhstan, Belarus, Moldova, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan), the share of international arrivals to Belarus exceeds 96% compared to 2019. It is the only country among those examined that shows a decrease in international arrivals compared to 2021.

While Belarus was not directly involved in the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict, factors such as the deployment of military forces on the border with Ukraine, proximity to Kiev (the occupation of which was a declared objective at the beginning of the invasion), and the country's close allied relationship with Russia likely deterred visits. A notable increase in visitors from Latvia between 2021 and 2022 can be attributed to Latvia's significant Russian minority, which accounts for 25.6% of the total population. Primarily residing in urban areas, Russians have a notable demographic presence in the capital city of Riga, where they comprise almost half of the population⁷⁸.

VI. Conclusion And Further Discussion

As the bulk of the literature refers to the impact of wars on war zones or countries, this paper focuses on the impact of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict on the countries bordering the latter. As the bulk of the literature refers to the impact of wars on war zones or countries, this paper focuses on the impact of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict on the countries bordering the latter. Clearly, the transformation of the geopolitical canvas is altering - in addition to regional stability - the landscape of international travel, however, it seems this effect has not manifested itself uniformly across countries.

Alongside the anticipated overarching decline in tourist influx, nuanced traveling behaviour have surfaced. For example, Germans exhibit a perceptible reluctance towards venturing into Eastern territories, while Austria demonstrates a conspicuous surge in travel towards Hungary. The intriguing dynamics observed in Moldova, a region mired in political contention, further add complexity to the narrative, as flows between Western and Russian spheres display a discernible reversal. Concurrently, Belarus remains ensconced in isolation from Western nations, amplifying its geopolitical detachment. Central point to this discourse is also the notable upsurge

in arrivals from Ukraine; however, this phenomenon warrants scrutiny regarding the delineation between tourists, displaced and voluntarily migrated Ukrainians.

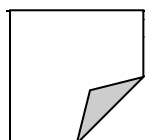
On the one hand, to the long-standing cultural, and more broadly political, transnational relations, and on the other hand, to the sense of security, which is not uniform in all societies, as it depends on differentiating cultural parameters.

Moreover, it is notable that Weaver's first stage, characterized by instability before the outbreak of hostilities, cannot be evaluated since the years 2020 - 2021 were influenced by the COVID- 19 pandemic.

Finally, the unveiling of subsequent years' statistical datasets promises to furnish avenues for further in-depth analysis, facilitating the derivation of more comprehensive and nuanced insights into the intricacies of traveling behaviour in areas neighbouring war zones.

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