

# Tourism and Political Change

19

Edited by Richard Butler and Wantanee Suntikul

## Conclusions

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# **Part VI**

# **Conclusions**

# 19 Conclusions

Richard Butler and Wantanee Suntikul

The preceding chapters in this volume have revealed the many ways in which tourism and political change have become increasingly interrelated. The rapid and extensive political changes in the world over the last quarter century have been unparalleled in terms of the fundamental changes that have taken place in the political geography and economics of the world without involving armed conflict. It is true that some of the changes discussed in this volume have come about following earlier conflicts – the Reunification of Berlin (and Germany as a whole) and the improvements in relations between the two communities in Cyprus, for example – while other changes have arisen from rebellions and coups, fortunately in most cases involving very little loss of life, even if considerable loss of liberty, such as in Libya and Fiji. In many other cases, however, massive change has come about in the most unexpected circumstances, often suddenly and apparently successfully, as seen in the emergence from the Communist yoke of Eastern European states following the dramatic fall of the Berlin Wall and from the horrors of apartheid in South Africa. One might also think of examples not covered here, such as Northern Ireland, where tourism is increasing, as it is in the republic to its south, after decades of ‘Troubles’, following a cessation of violence and a political settlement; and the tourist success stories of Croatia and Slovenia following the civil wars in the Balkans after the fragmentation of the former Yugoslavia.

It would be comforting to think that politicians and others have reached the stage of political development that they feel confident that non-violent means can be used to achieve political goals, as shown with the creation of new levels of government in Canada and Scotland for example, but one has to be aware that the risk of violence is still present in parts of the world and that tourism still has ‘no go’ areas, either because of insecurity and danger as, for example, in Afghanistan, or because of restrictions backed by the threat of force imposed by totalitarian regimes, such as North Korea. In such locations, tourism has not proved to be ‘a force for peace’, despite, for example, many years of efforts in the still divided peninsula of Korea. Even in locations that are popular international tourism destinations, political factors can restrict tourism, as the US embargo on travel to Cuba by its citizens demonstrates, a situation stemming from political events a half a century ago that are still not resolved.

In most parts of the world, however, tourism has been welcomed, even if it is recognised as being a sometimes controversial force of change in many areas, economic, social, cultural, environmental and political. Restrictions on tourist travel have diminished with fewer countries now requiring visas for tourists than in previous years, although some nations now appear to see visas not only as a means of exerting control over who visits them, but also as a source of revenue. Security measures enacted following the ‘Twin Towers’ terrorist acts in the USA have resulted in the ‘home of the free’ appearing increasingly unwelcoming to casual visitors from overseas, with increasing amounts of

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