

**ACTION BRIEF**

# DESTINATION REPUTATION:

**GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICTS**


# INTRODUCTION

---

## Geopolitical Conflicts

Geopolitical conflicts, even those occurring far away, can create misperceptions that impact traveler confidence. News coverage and global uncertainties often influence event planners' decisions. As a destination leader, it's crucial to proactively control the narrative to instill confidence among visitors and stakeholders.

This brief provides a structured approach for destination organizations and tourism authorities to effectively address geopolitical concerns. It includes tailored messaging, stakeholder-specific strategies, proactive crisis communication and key questions to help your destination stay ahead of uncertainty.



This research was made possible through the support of the Destinations International Foundation, whose mission is to drive innovation and provide critical resources that strengthen the future of destination organizations. The foundation champions forward-thinking initiatives that enable destination leaders to navigate change with insight, strategy and resilience. We acknowledge their commitment to industry research and extend sincere thanks to all foundation supporters who make initiatives like this possible.



# SCENARIOS

---

The following scenarios illustrate real-world situations that destination organizations may encounter when addressing this issue. They are intended to provide context and practical insight into the key findings outlined in this brief.

## 1 SCENARIO

### **International Conflict and Travel Restrictions Disrupt Participation**

A major geopolitical conflict or international dispute—whether regional or global—leads to travel advisories, economic sanctions or widespread safety concerns. Even if the destination is geographically distant, travelers and event participants from affected regions begin canceling trips due to uncertainty or perceived political instability. Attendance and booking numbers decline, particularly for international events or delegate-heavy conferences.

## 2 SCENARIO

### **Domestic Political Climate Viewed as Unwelcoming**

A controversial national political decision related to immigration, human rights or international relations sparks widespread protests and makes global headlines. International and domestic event planners start questioning whether the destination reflects the inclusive and welcoming environment they seek for attendees.

## 3 SCENARIO

### **Major Event Draws Political Demonstrations**

An international summit, conference or sporting event being hosted at the destination attracts large-scale political protests related to a foreign conflict. Even if peaceful, the visual imagery of protests can raise concerns about disruption, attendee safety or political neutrality.



# 1. HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: HOTELS, RESTAURANTS, ATTRACTIONS AND AIRPORTS

## Safety and Stability

- ◆ Emphasize the destination's commitment to maintaining normal operations while prioritizing visitor safety. Hotels, attractions and airports should highlight security measures that do not disrupt guest experiences.
- ◆ Communicate partnerships with law enforcement and security agencies to reinforce preparedness and reassure travelers.



### Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *Are frontline staff trained to address safety concerns confidently and accurately?*
- ◆ *How are we proactively addressing guest concerns about geopolitical uncertainties?*
- ◆ *Do we have a crisis communication plan that aligns with destination-wide efforts?*

## Transparency and Proactive Communication

- ◆ Ensure visitors receive timely and accurate updates through official channels, pre-arrival communications, and concierge services.
- ◆ Develop FAQs and digital content that provide clear, factual information about safety measures and operational status.



### Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *Are we equipping customer service teams with the latest travel and security updates?*
- ◆ *How can we use digital and social platforms to reinforce confidence in normal operations?*
- ◆ *Are we leveraging guest testimonials to highlight positive experiences during uncertain times?*

## Operational Normalcy and Guest Experience

- ◆ Reinforce that all hospitality services remain fully operational, offering seamless guest experiences despite global uncertainties.
- ◆ Offer flexible booking policies to instill traveler confidence and mitigate concerns about potential disruptions.



### Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *How are we demonstrating operational stability to reassure guests and event planners?*
- ◆ *Are we providing clear guidance to travelers about what to expect upon arrival?*
- ◆ *How do we balance security measures with a welcoming atmosphere to enhance visitor comfort?*

## 2. ELECTED OFFICIALS AND GOVERNMENT LEADERS

### Public Safety and Policy Measures

- ◆ Highlight proactive security efforts without creating unnecessary concern. Communicate a well-prepared, strategic approach to maintaining public safety.
- ◆ Establish clear coordination between tourism officials, law enforcement, and emergency response agencies to ensure cohesive messaging.



#### Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *Are we ensuring consistent messaging across tourism and government agencies?*
- ◆ *How are we proactively communicating safety policies to prevent misperceptions?*
- ◆ *What partnerships with international security organizations can we leverage to reinforce credibility?*

### Economic Resilience and Tourism Sustainability

- ◆ Emphasize the critical role tourism plays in the local economy and outline measures taken to ensure continued industry growth and economic impact.
- ◆ Offer reassurance that infrastructure investments and strategic planning efforts will protect the tourism sector from potential disruptions.



#### Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *Are we offering financial or policy incentives to support local businesses affected by uncertainty?*
- ◆ *How are we aligning with industry leaders to reinforce confidence in economic stability?*
- ◆ *What long-term strategies are in place to safeguard the tourism industry from future geopolitical risks?*

### Media Relations and Crisis Communication

- ◆ Take a proactive approach to media engagement by providing accurate updates that prevent speculation and misinformation.
- ◆ Designate official spokespeople to ensure clarity and consistency in public statements and interviews.



#### Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *Are we engaging with media proactively to control the narrative instead of reacting to speculation?*
- ◆ *Do we have a crisis response team trained to handle geopolitical concerns effectively?*
- ◆ *How can we leverage diplomatic relationships to reinforce international confidence in our destination?*

### 3. LOCAL BUSINESS LEADERS, LAW ENFORCEMENT AND RESIDENTS

#### Community Engagement and Public Perception

- ◆ Encourage local businesses and residents to play a role in maintaining a welcoming environment for visitors by sharing positive narratives.
- ◆ Strengthen partnerships between community organizations, business leaders, and tourism stakeholders to ensure unified messaging.



#### Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *How can we empower local businesses and residents to act as tourism ambassadors?*
- ◆ *Are we actively addressing and correcting misinformation that may affect visitor perception?*
- ◆ *What strategies can we use to align public sentiment with the destination's stability messaging?*

#### Security Collaboration and Law Enforcement Readiness

- ◆ Facilitate collaboration between law enforcement and tourism stakeholders to ensure seamless coordination of safety measures.
- ◆ Regularly update businesses and residents about security protocols to reinforce confidence without creating alarm.



#### Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *How do we ensure that law enforcement and the tourism industry are working together effectively?*
- ◆ *Are we conducting regular security briefings to keep businesses informed?*
- ◆ *What best practices can we learn from other destinations that have successfully managed geopolitical concerns?*

#### Crisis Response and Community Resilience

- ◆ Foster a culture of preparedness by maintaining clear communication channels between law enforcement, local businesses and residents.
- ◆ Ensure that public safety measures are framed as proactive strategies that support tourism growth.



#### Key Questions for Destination Organizations

- ◆ *How do we ensure that clear, factual information reaches the community and avoids unnecessary alarm?*
- ◆ *Are we actively engaging local businesses and residents in tourism advocacy efforts?*
- ◆ *What initiatives can we develop to showcase and celebrate the destination's resilience?*

# NEXT STEPS AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

---

## Next Steps

- ◆ Develop and implement a proactive crisis communication plan that aligns with key stakeholders.
- ◆ Train hospitality and tourism partners on messaging strategies and visitor reassurance tactics.
- ◆ Establish monitoring systems for geopolitical developments and their potential impact on tourism.
- ◆ Strengthen partnerships with law enforcement and government agencies to ensure cohesive communication strategies.
- ◆ Implement digital campaigns and community engagement initiatives to reinforce confidence in the destination.

## Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- ◆ Increase in visitor sentiment scores related to safety and confidence in destination stability.
- ◆ Growth in hotel occupancy and event bookings despite geopolitical uncertainties.
- ◆ Reduction in misinformation spread through active media engagement and community outreach.
- ◆ Higher engagement rates on digital and social media platforms regarding destination safety messaging.
- ◆ Number of businesses and stakeholders trained in crisis communication and safety preparedness.
- ◆ Successful coordination of multi-stakeholder crisis response simulations or training sessions.

Destinations that successfully navigate geopolitical uncertainty do so by leading the conversation, not reacting to it. A well-prepared destination ensures that its messaging is clear, confident and aligned across all stakeholders.

Your ability to reassure travelers, engage your community and counter misinformation in real time will define how resilient your brand remains. Keep messaging proactive, ensure that crisis plans are in place, and maintain transparency in all communications. When destinations lead with clarity and confidence, they maintain traveler trust and industry stability.

To understand more about this issue affecting your destination's reputation, learn more at:

<https://destinationsinternational.org/destination-reputation>



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

**This study was initiated and launched by Destinations International in collaboration with Future Partners. We are especially grateful to the Destinations International Foundation, whose support made this research possible.**



## About Destinations International

Destinations International is the world's largest and most respected resource for destination organizations, convention and visitors bureaus (CVBs) and tourism boards. With more than 8,000 members and partners from over 750 destinations, the association represents a powerful forward-thinking and collaborative community around the world. For more information, visit [destinationsinternational.org](https://destinationsinternational.org).

## Future Partners

### About Future Partners

Future Partners was founded by Dave Bratton and Erin Francis-Cummings in San Francisco, California, in 2003. It is a team of market researchers that work with over 250 organizations and travel brands around the U.S. and the world to provide insights and strategies that capture hearts, minds and market share. Future Partners connects human behavior and understanding to bring the future of travel within reach. For more information, visit [futurepartners.com](https://futurepartners.com).



### About the Destinations International Foundation

The Destinations International Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering destination organizations globally by providing education, research, advocacy and leadership development. The Foundation is classified as a charitable organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code and all donations are tax-deductible. For more information, visit [destinationsinternational.org/about-foundation](https://destinationsinternational.org/about-foundation).





**DESTINATIONS**  
INTERNATIONAL