

Structural Analysis of State Fragility in Turkey: A MICMAC Approach, 2006–2024

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Research Article

Received:
11 May 2026Revised:
6 August
2026Accepted:
7 August
2026Published:
6 September
2026

PP. 73-108

Abstract

This study examines the evolution of state fragility in Turkey between 2006 and 2024 by drawing on the theoretical framework of fragile states and employing structural analysis. It addresses the following central question: How can Turkey's current and prospective condition be explained through the indicators of state fragility? The data were obtained from the Fragile States Index (FSI) compiled and published by the Fund for Peace. To examine the structural relationships among the relevant variables, the study employs the MICMAC method and specialized MICMAC software, version 6.1.2. The structural impact matrices were evaluated on the basis of the judgments and consensus of an expert panel comprising specialists in Turkish studies and related fields, thereby incorporating expert assessment into the analysis. The findings indicate that three key variables such as factionalized elites, external intervention, and human rights, constitute the principal driving forces within Turkey's fragility system. Through their effects on five linkage variables, state legitimacy, security apparatus, public services, uneven development, and economic decline, they generate a complex set of causal relationships. These interactions produce reinforcing feedback loops that erode governance capacity and intensify Turkey's structural vulnerabilities. The resulting dynamics are associated with outcomes including brain drain, persistent inflationary pressures, declining social capital, and a weakening of Turkey's international position. Overall, the findings suggest that Turkey has been moving toward a condition of increasing state fragility, characterized not by the immediate collapse of state institutions but by the cumulative erosion of their resilience and governing capacity.

Key words: Turkey, State fragility, Fragile states index, Structural analysis, MICMAC.

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Cite this article: Saffari, S., Farahmand, S., Samiei Esfahani, H., Samiei Esfahani, A., (2025). Structural Analysis of the Turkish State Fragility Using the MICMAC Approach (2006–2024), *Quarterly Journal of West Asia Political Research*, 2(3), 73- 107

Introduction

Over the past two decades, the concept of the “fragile state” has become a central analytical category in the study of international politics and global security. Western organizations and institutions, ranging from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to the Fund for Peace, have employed the concept to describe and rank states that, despite possessing formal sovereignty, lack the capacity or legitimacy necessary to perform core governmental functions, provide basic public services, and maintain national cohesion. States exposed to persistent cycles of instability are consequently regarded not only as obstacles to sustainable development but also as potential threats to regional and international security.

The Republic of Turkey, which at the beginning of the twenty-first century was widely regarded as a successful model combining democracy, economic development, and political Islam in the Middle East, has increasingly become the subject of theoretical debate. Since 2006, alongside the consolidation of the Justice and Development Party’s (AKP) political dominance under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey has followed a complex and seemingly paradoxical trajectory. On the one hand, the period has witnessed the apparent consolidation of a strong and highly centralized state; on the other, it has been accompanied by the gradual and systematic erosion of democratic institutions, the rule of law, and economic resilience. This transformation raises a fundamental question for scholars and policymakers: Is Turkey moving away from the category of moderately stable states toward a distinctive form of state fragility, not because of extreme state weakness, but as a consequence of institutional tensions among entrenched authoritarianism, a rentier-oriented political economy, and unprecedented levels of social polarization that have progressively weakened the foundations of the state?

The consequences of this transformation can be traced across multiple levels: institutionally, through developments such as the erosion of judicial independence; socially, through phenomena such as brain drain; and internationally, through growing tensions with external partners and allies. Against this backdrop, the present study draws on the theoretical framework of fragile states, the Fragile States Index developed by the Fund for Peace, and the MICMAC method to address the following central research question:

How can the current and prospective condition of the Turkish state be explained through the structural configuration of state-fragility indicators?

Despite the substantial body of scholarship on Turkey’s political and institutional transformation, three major gaps can be identified in the existing literature. First, much of the previous research has adopted a predominantly one-dimensional analytical perspective and has paid insufficient attention to the dynamic and systematic interactions among the various dimensions of state fragility. Second, the dominant approach has been largely descriptive and historical, with comparatively limited use of prospective analytical tools capable of modelling interactions among factors and identifying the system’s key driving forces. Third, existing analyses have rarely employed an integrated framework of state fragility and its composite indicators in a systematic manner to explain the Turkish case.

The present study seeks to address these gaps by combining a structural-systems approach based on MICMAC with the theoretical framework of state fragility. By adopting an integrated and forward-looking perspective, the study seeks to extend previous research through a network analysis of reinforcing and potentially destabilizing feedback loops that help explain the self-reinforcing dynamics of fragility in Turkey. In doing so, it also aims to provide an analytical starting point for identifying possible strategies for escaping the “fragility trap.”

Theoretical Frameworks

A fragile state refers to a condition of governance in which central institutions and the structures of state power have lost the capacity or willingness to exercise lawful authority, maintain public order, and provide essential services to citizens. In such a situation, a deep gap emerges between “formal law” and “reality on the ground,” such that the state can no longer maintain its monopoly over the legitimate use of force, while geographical territories or social sectors fall outside central control and come under the influence of non-state actors, such as militias, organized criminal cartels, or insurgent groups. In fact, a fragile state is a condition in which the “social contract” has been disrupted and the state, despite preserving its formal appearance, including a flag, national symbols, or formal institutions, fails to carry out its fundamental functions, such as ensuring security, administering justice, and managing economic resources.

It should also be noted that the concept of the “fragile state” emerged later than related concepts such as the “weak state,” “failed state,” and “collapsed state.” The term “failed state” was first introduced by foreign policy analysts in the early 1990s, following the alarming spread of internal conflicts after the Cold War. In several countries, these conflicts led to the disintegration of state institutions, economic stagnation, and deteriorating security (Nay, 2013, p. 327). The wars in Bosnia and Croatia, factional conflicts in Somalia, sectarian crises in Yemen, poverty in Haiti, the failure of the Cambodian state to end the guerrilla activities of the Khmer Rouge, and, more broadly, the emergence of “new wars” beyond the model of conventional warfare prompted many analysts to develop categories such as the “quasi-state” (Jackson, 1990), the “failed state” (Helman & Ratner, 1992), and the “collapsed state” (Zartman, 1995).

Initially, failed states were regarded primarily as a threat to the populations living within them. However, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, transformed this perspective and turned failed states from a development issue into a major security threat for the United States and its Western allies. Consequently, a connection was established between state failure and transnational security threats, including terrorism, thereby making interventions in areas previously defined within the framework of national sovereignty more justifiable (Call, 2011, p. 303).

During the 2000s, the concept of the “fragile state” gradually replaced that of the “failed state.” This shift represented a small but important change in meaning. Fragile states were described as dysfunctional, but not completely failed, political entities. They are characterized by the existence of a central government and bureaucratic institutions that are unable to provide public services (Clausen & Albrecht, 2022, p. 3). From this perspective, fragile states experience many of the same problems as failed states, although

on a smaller scale, and their fragility serves as a warning of the potential trajectory awaiting them if administrative practices are not improved (François & Sud, 2006). Nevertheless, one of the most significant limitations in the literature on this subject is the absence of agreement on fixed criteria for defining state fragility. The term “fragile state” simultaneously refers to more than one meaning, and there is no single, universally accepted definition of it (Grimm et al., 2014, p. 205). Despite this lack of consensus, several definitions have been proposed. McKay and Thorbecke define a fragile state as “a low-income country with weak state capacity or legitimacy,” a condition that makes citizens vulnerable to shocks (McKay & Thorbecke, 2016, pp. 3–4). Rotberg (2004), in his analytical framework, defines fragility on the basis of the state’s performance in providing public goods and argues that the wider the gap between citizens’ expectations and the actual capacity of the state, the closer the state moves toward collapse.

Similarly, Call (2011), while criticizing the concept of the “failed state,” regards fragility not as a static condition but as a dynamic gap between the institutional capacity of the state and social expectations. According to this perspective, fragility is affected by two dimensions: capacity, including executive capability and resources, and legitimacy, including political acceptance and public trust. Accordingly, a fragile state is unable to maintain an effective monopoly over violence, extend the rule of law throughout its territory, or respond equally to the demands of different social groups.

The persistence of state fragility can often be traced to the quality and historical development of political institutions. Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) similarly demonstrate that extractive institutions, which concentrate power and resources in favor of a limited elite, create the conditions for chronic fragility by weakening incentives for investment, innovation, and public participation. Risse (2011), through the concept of “areas of limited statehood,” emphasizes that in many fragile states, central authority extends only over part of the national territory, while large segments of society remain beyond the effective control of the state. Under such circumstances, non-state actors fill governance gaps and deepen the cycle of fragility. Thus, the combination of extractive institutions and incomplete territorial authority severely limits the capacity of the state to overcome conditions of fragility.

Vallings and Moreno-Torres emphasize “weak capacity and/or lack of political will to provide services and maintain a development partnership with the international community” (Vallings & Moreno-Torres, 2005, p. 4). Stewart and Brown define a fragile state as one that fails to maintain a monopoly over violence, protect its citizens, provide public services, and possess full legitimacy (Stewart & Brown, 2009, p. 3). Rotberg describes failed states as “tense, deeply conflicted, dangerous, and contested,” characterized by the absence of effective territorial control, attacks on citizens, limited public services, high levels of criminality, economic decline, deteriorating institutions, and a loss of legitimacy (Rotberg, 2003, p. 5).

State collapse represents the final stage in the trajectory of a fragile state. Unlike fragility and failure, collapse is a condition in which the structure, authority, law, and political order of the state disintegrate and must subsequently be reconstructed (Zartman, 1995, p. 1). This condition goes beyond simple weakness because, under conditions of fragility and failure, the state still exists (Gros, 1996). In a situation of collapse, however, the state is completely overthrown as a legitimate authority, resulting in a vacuum of

authority (Zartman, 1995; Rotberg, 2003). Under such circumstances, citizens are effectively left to fend for themselves.

Rotberg considers state fragility to exist along a spectrum encompassing weak, failed, and collapsed states (Rotberg, 2003, p. 5). Since the mid-2000s, the concept has been widely employed by the OECD (2007) and the World Bank to describe the poorest and most unstable countries that are unable to meet the minimum standards expected by development aid donors.

The Fragile States Index (FSI) is an annual ranking published by the U.S.-based Fund for Peace. It measures the vulnerability of 179 countries to political, economic, and social pressures that may lead to collapse or conflict. The methodology of the index is based on the Fund for Peace's Conflict Assessment System Tool. Under this approach, three main streams of data, quantitative information, qualitative information, and expert validation, are integrated and analyzed. For each country, a final score is calculated on the basis of 12 key indicators, which are grouped into four general categories: Cohesion, including Security Apparatus, Factionalized Elites, and Group Grievance; Economic, including Economic Decline, Uneven Development, and Human Flight and Brain Drain; Political, including State Legitimacy, Public Services, and Human Rights; and Social, including Demographic Pressures, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, and External Intervention. The definitions of these variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. FSI Index

No.	Abbreviation	Full Name	Description
1	DP	Demographic Pressures	Pressure resulting from population growth beyond the capacity of basic resources, such as water, food, and housing, leading to competition over resources, forced migration, and social tensions.
2	REF	Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons	The forced displacement of people as a result of violence, conflict, or natural disasters, placing substantial pressure on infrastructure, resources, and the social stability of the host country.
3	GG	Group Grievance	Deep-rooted and historical grievances among ethnic, religious, or tribal groups that contribute to discrimination, violence, and the erosion of national cohesion.
4	HF	Human Flight and Brain Drain	The large-scale migration of skilled and educated individuals abroad, resulting in the loss of human capital, the weakening of institutions, and disruptions in the provision of public services.

5	UD	Uneven Development	Significant inequalities in economic development and infrastructure among different regions of a country, intensifying feelings of deprivation and regional injustice.
6	ED	Poverty and Economic Decline	Severe and sustained decline in gross domestic product, per capita income, and employment, undermining the state's capacity to collect taxes and provide services.
7	LS	State Legitimacy	The weakening of public belief in the state's right to govern and legislate as a result of corruption, inefficiency, or the monopolization of power, leading to distrust and rebellion.
8	PS	Public Services	The inability or unwillingness of the state to provide essential services such as healthcare, education, water, and electricity, representing one of the most direct pathways to public dissatisfaction and instability.
9	HR	Human Rights	The systematic violation of citizens' fundamental rights, including freedom of expression, justice, and equality before the law, together with the absence of independent judicial institutions, thereby undermining public trust.
10	SP	Security Apparatus	The presence of military, police, or paramilitary forces that either operate outside state control or become instruments of repression and the preservation of personal power.
11	FE	Factionalized Elites	Division and destructive competition among ruling groups, including military actors, political parties, or tribes, leading to decision-making paralysis, instability, and the possibility of coups.
12	EI	External Intervention	The influence or direct intervention of states, international organizations, or transnational actors in a country's domestic affairs, weakening national sovereignty and intensifying instability.

Source: <https://fragilestatesindex.org/indicators>

Each of the 12 indicators is assigned a score ranging from 0 to 10, where 0 represents the lowest level of intensity and the most stable condition, while 10 represents the highest level of intensity and the most unstable condition. The sum of these scores produces a total ranging from 0 to 120 for each country. The higher the final score, the

greater the weakness, vulnerability, and fragility of the state. Although the index provides country rankings, its principal emphasis is on analyzing changes in each country's score over time, since comparing a country with itself across different periods provides a more accurate picture of progress or deterioration (FragileStatesIndex.org, 2024). Based on the above definitions and indicators, the present study examines the variables affecting the fragility of the Turkish state between 2006 and 2024.

Research Method

The research method employed in this study is based on MICMAC, a well-established branch of structural analysis and a form of cross-impact analysis introduced by Duperrin and Godet. It is used to identify the most important variables within a set of variables. In this method, the variables are first identified by an expert committee, and the importance of each variable is then assessed through a matrix in order to clarify its role and position within the system (Godet, 2000, pp. 5–6).

The implementation of MICMAC generally consists of three stages: (1) compiling a list of variables, (2) describing the relationships among them, and (3) identifying the key variables. At the stage of describing the relationships, the expert panel completes a numerical matrix known as the Direct Influence Matrix (MDI), with dimensions of $(n) \times (n)$. Each cell, MDI_{ij} , represents the direct influence of variable (i) on variable (j), and the intensity of this influence is generally coded on a scale from 0 to 3 (0: no relationship, 1: weak, 2: moderate, 3: strong) (Arcade, Godet, & Roubelat, 1993).

Accordingly, there are two approaches to conducting this analysis: direct and indirect. Given the nature of the data, the analysis in this study was conducted using the direct approach. The direct approach ranks the variables according to their direct influence on, and dependence on, one another. In this regard, the elements of the MDI matrix are summed by MICMAC across the kth row and the kth column to obtain the overall direct influence. As stated above, the MDI matrix is calculated according to the following formula:

$$I = \sum_{(j=1)}^n MDI(K, j)$$

and dependence, as follows:

$$I = \sum_{(i=1)}^n MDI(i, K)$$

The results of MICMAC analysis generally classify the variables into five distinct categories:

Input/Driving Variables: These variables are located in the northwestern section of the diagram. They play a determining role, and their influence on other variables is considerably greater than their dependence. They are therefore recognized as the main drivers of the system.

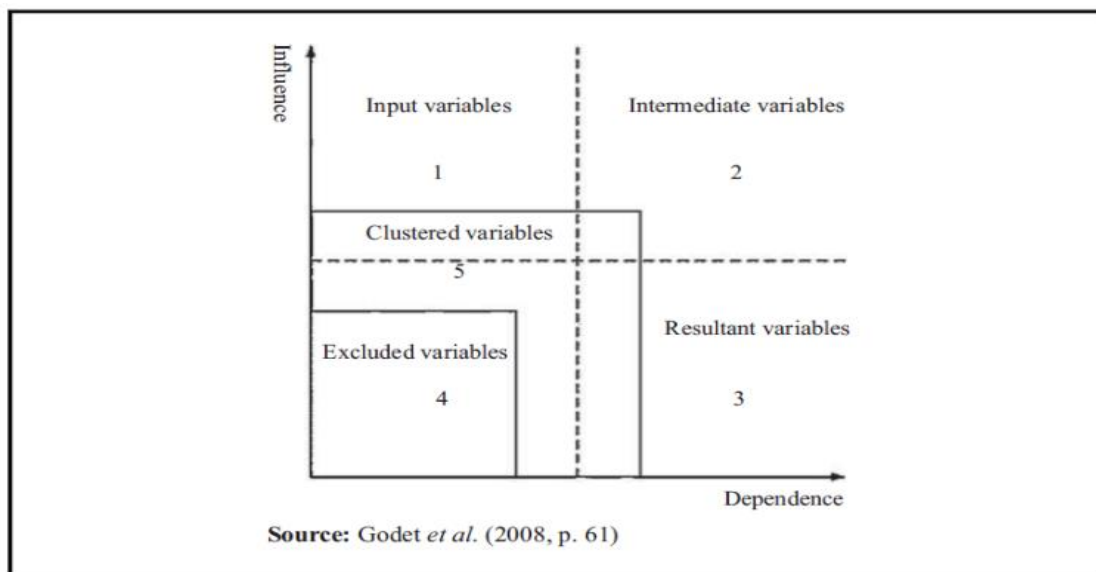
Intermediate Variables: These variables are located in the northeastern section of the diagram. They can simultaneously exert influence and be dependent on other variables. Because of their unstable nature, they sometimes influence other variables and at other times are influenced by them.

Output/Dependent Variables: These variables are located in the southeastern section of the diagram. They have a low level of influence and a high level of dependence and are regarded as the outcomes or outputs of the system.

Excluded Variables: These variables are located in the southwestern section of the diagram. Both their influence and dependence are low, and they therefore have no significant practical role in the functioning of the system.

Cluster Variables: These are variables located in boundary areas, whose precise position is uncertain. Such variables may gradually move into one of the four main categories (Villacorta et al., 2014, pp. 5–8).

This classification enables analysts to identify driving variables, determine bottlenecks, and systematically define intervention priorities in the design of scenarios and policies (Figure 1).

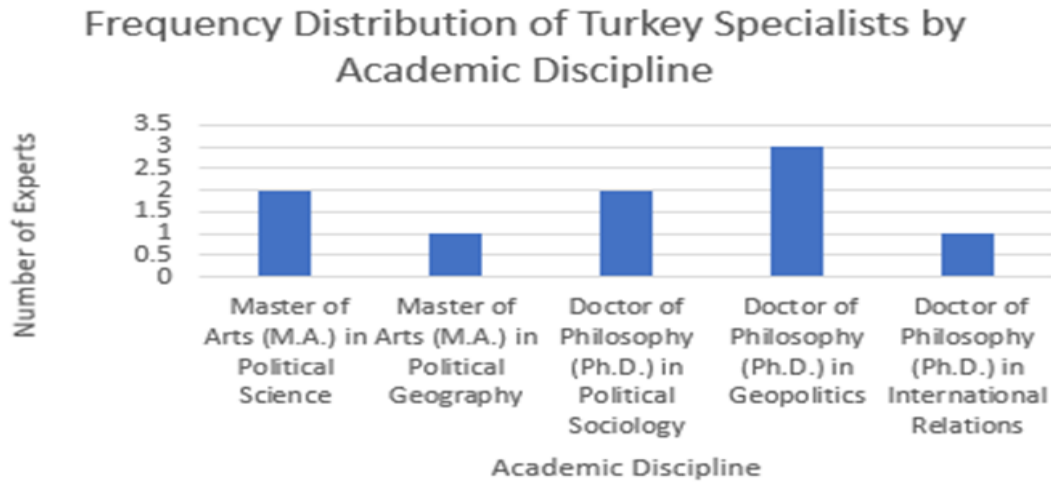


Legend of the MICMAC output influence map

Data Collection

In this study, the primary data were collected from the database of the Fund for Peace and the Fragile States Index (FSI) for the period 2006–2024. To analyze the structural relationships among the variables, the MICMAC structural analysis method was employed. To assess the relationships among the variables, a panel of five experts specializing in Turkish studies was selected using purposive sampling. The panel consisted of a political science specialist with a master's degree, a political geography

specialist with a master's degree, a PhD in political sociology, a PhD in geopolitics, and a PhD in international relations (Figure 2).



Source: Research Findings, 2026

Subsequently, a Direct Influence Matrix (MDI) with dimensions of 12×12 was constructed (Table 2). In the final stage, each expert was asked to evaluate the degree of influence of the row variable on the column variable using an ordinal rating scale.

Table 2. MDI Matrix

	DP	REF	GG	HF	UD	ED	LS	PS	HR	SP	FE	EI
DP		2	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1
REF	3		2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
GG	1	2		2	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	1
HF	2	2	2		2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
UD	3	2	2	2		3	2	3	2	2	2	1
ED	3	2	2	2	3		3	3	2	2	2	2
LS	3	2	3	2	3	3		3	2	3	3	3
PS	3	2	3	2	3	3	3		2	2	2	2
HR	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	2		2	3	2
SP	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	3		3	2
FE	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3		2
EI	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	

Source: Research Findings, 2026

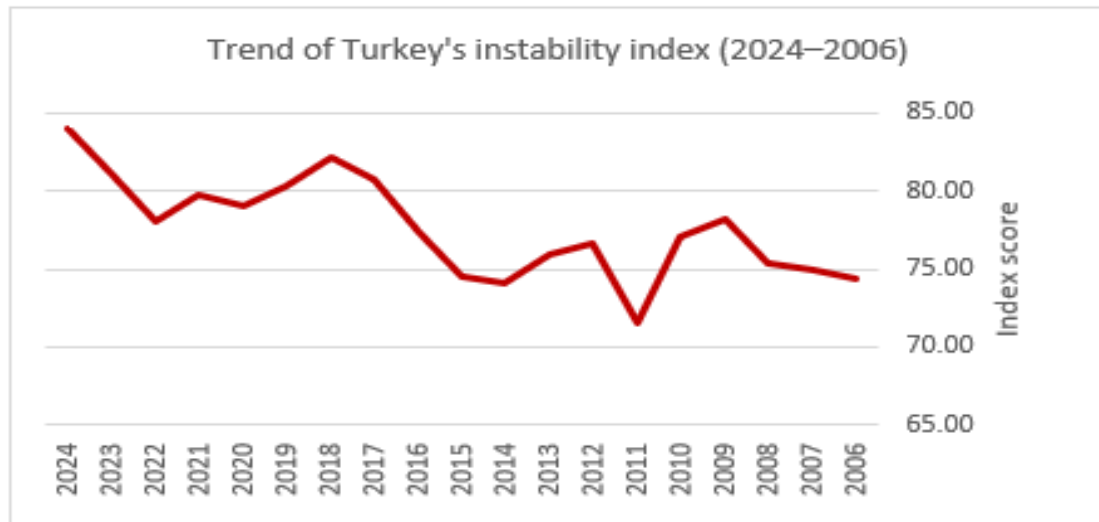
3. Findings

3.1. Turkey's State Fragility Index Score Based on the FSI

Data and reliable international reports, including reports by the World Bank, Freedom House, the International Crisis Group, and the Fragile States Index, indicate that Turkey's instability score on the index (on a scale of 0 to 120) increased from 74.4 in 2006 to 84.0 in 2024. This overall upward trend indicates a deepening of fragility and instability in the country. However, this trajectory has not been linear or uniform; rather, it has been accompanied by fluctuations and several significant turning points (World Bank, 2024; Freedom House, 2024).

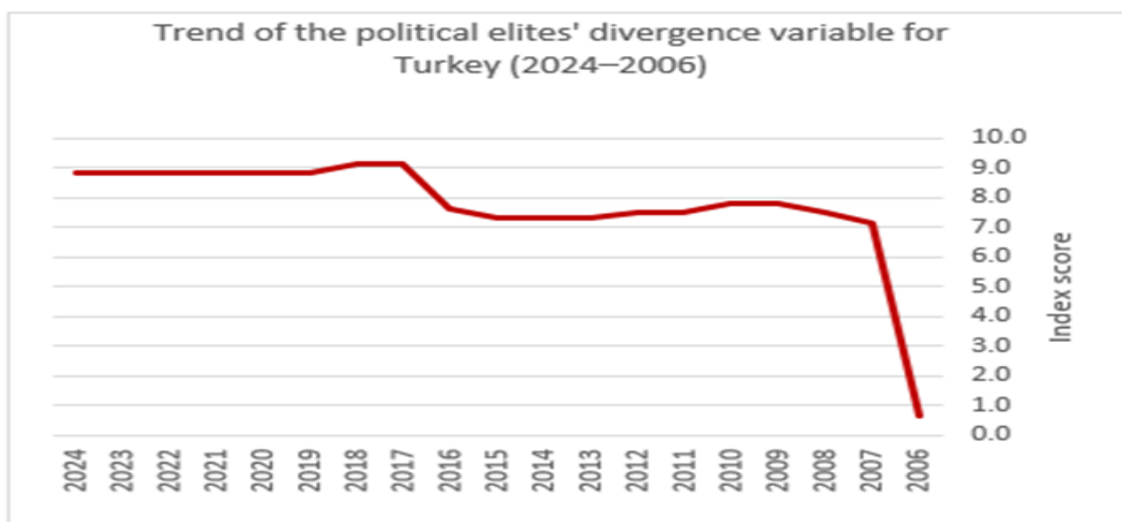
According to the index data, between 2006 and 2010, Turkey experienced a moderate to relatively high upward trend in terms of fragility. The relative peak in state instability and fragility can be identified in the years leading up to 2009, when the score reached 78.2. The data show that in 2011, Turkey's instability index declined significantly, with the index score falling to 71.5. However, from 2012 to 2018, this stability became increasingly unstable, resulting in a renewed upward trend and a gradual increase in the fragility score from 78.2 in 2009 to 82.2 in 2018.

Following a slight decline and fluctuations during 2019–2022, the upward trend resumed with greater intensity in 2023 (81.2) and, particularly, in 2024 (84.0), bringing the country to the threshold of the “High Warning” category and close to the “Emergency” level of the index (Figure 3).



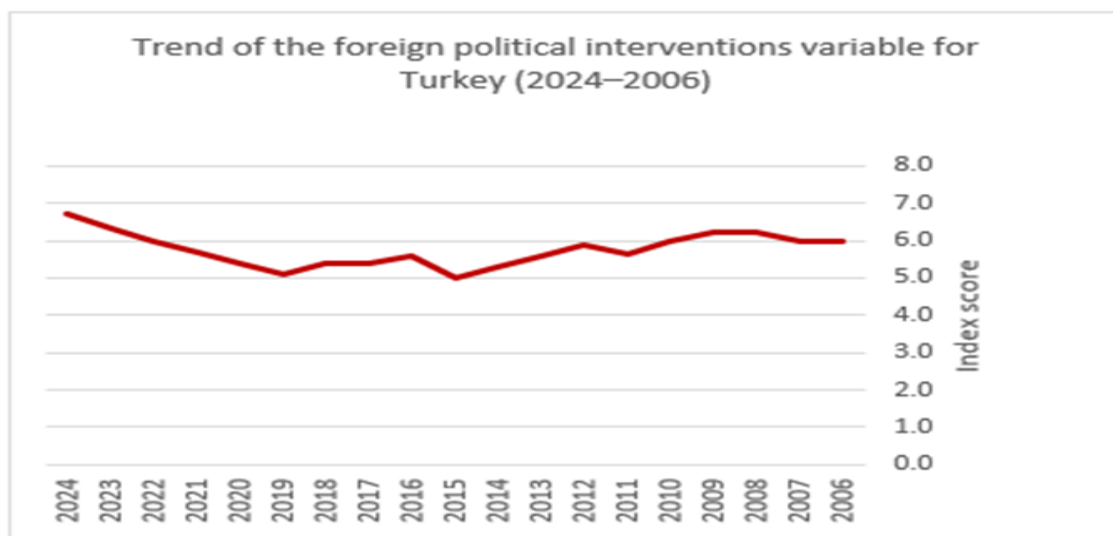
Source: FSI, 2006 – 2024

The quantitative data and indicators of the Fund for Peace reveal significant fluctuations in the Factionalized Elites indicator between 2006 and 2024. This indicator, which stood at 74.40 in 2006, followed an upward trend over the subsequent two years, reaching 75.40. In 2009, a significant surge was observed in the indicator, with the score reaching 78.20 and setting a new record at the time. However, the trend reversed in 2011, when the indicator declined to a low of 71.50. By contrast, the period from 2016 to 2017 marked an important turning point, as the indicator rose sharply again, reaching 80.80 and, for the first time, exceeding the threshold of 80. Although the indicator has followed a gradual downward trend since 2019, it experienced a remarkable surge in 2024, reaching a score of 84.00 (Figure 4).



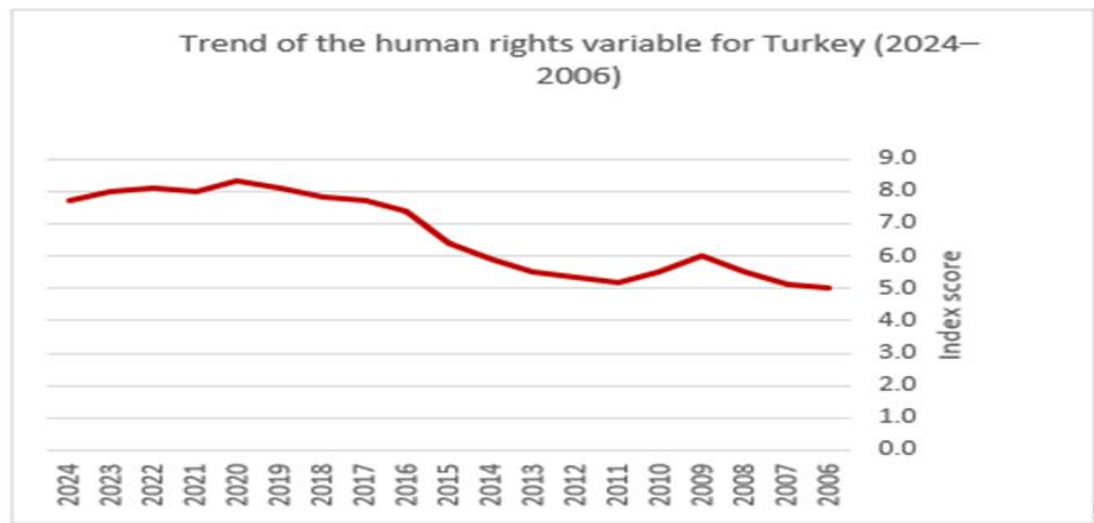
Source: FSI, 2006 – 2024

Based on the Fragile States Index of the Fund for Peace, the trend of “External Intervention” in Turkey fluctuated between 2006 and 2010. Overall, the indicator moved from a moderate level at the beginning of the period to its lowest level in the middle of the period and then increased again. Specifically, the indicator recorded a value of 6.0 in 2006, which remained unchanged in 2007. In 2008 and 2009, it increased to 6.2 in both years, representing the highest level during the initial years. However, in 2015, the score of this indicator declined to 5.0, the lowest value recorded over the entire period. Nevertheless, from 2016 to 2024, this variable followed an upward trend, with its score reaching 6.7, which represents the highest value over the entire period (Figure 5).



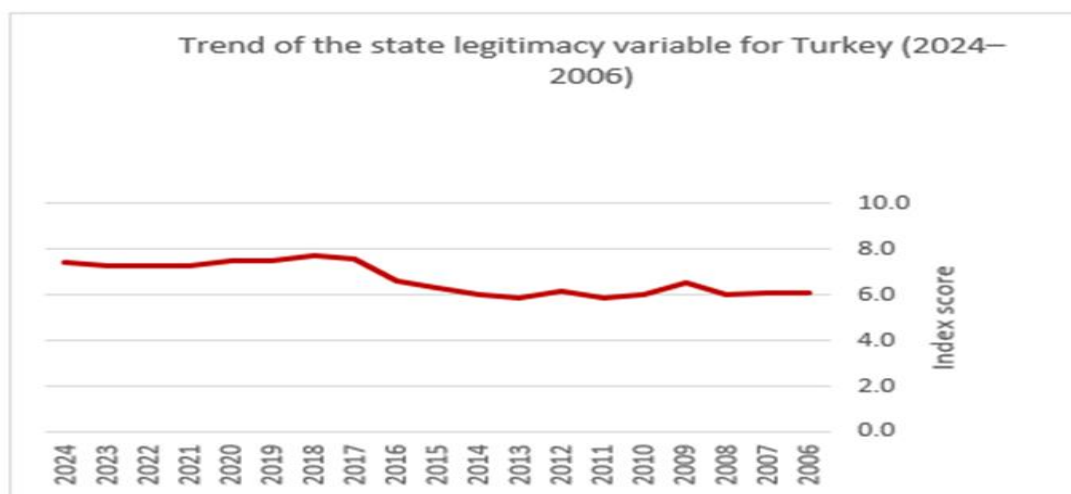
Source: FSI, 2006 – 2024

The quantitative “Human Rights” fragility indicator in Turkey shows an upward trend. During the period from 2006 to 2010, the score of this indicator increased from 5.0 to 6.0. Between 2012 and 2016, the indicator experienced a significant surge, reaching 7.4. However, the peak of this increase occurred during 2017–2020, when the score of the indicator reached its highest possible level of 8.3. In contrast, from 2021 to 2024, the score of this indicator followed a gradual downward trend. Although the score has declined slightly, the indicator remains at the warning level. This does not signify structural improvement; rather, it indicates the “normalization” of emergency conditions within Turkey’s political system (Figure 6).



Source: FSI, 2006 – 2024

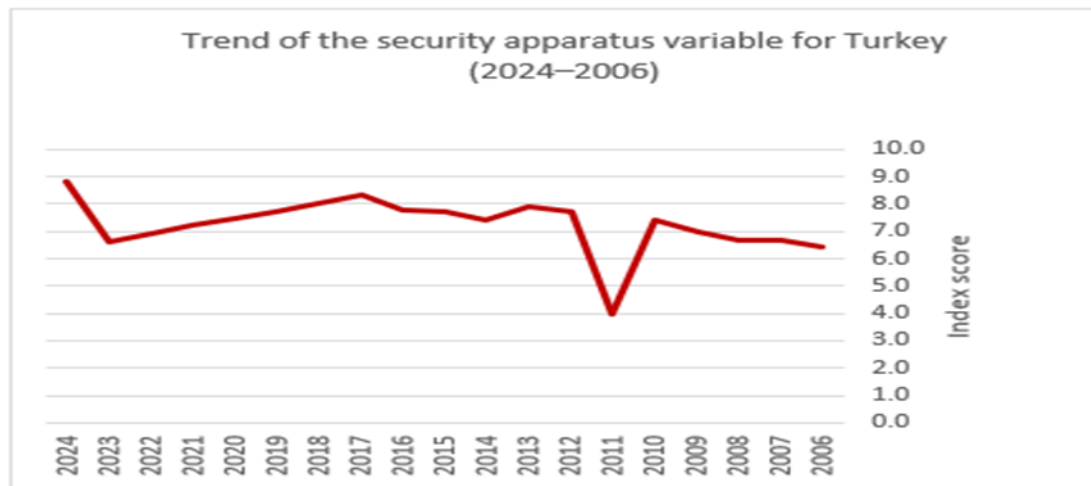
An analysis of Figure 7 shows that the indicator experienced limited fluctuations between 2006 and 2016, increasing from a score of 5.6 to 6.6. Subsequently, this variable rose sharply in 2016, reaching 7.6, and recorded a score of 7.7 in 2018. From 2019 onward, a gradual downward trend began, with the scores declining to 7.5 in 2019 and 2020, and then to 7.3 during 2021–2023. Finally, following a slight change in 2024, the score reached 7.4 (Figure 7).



Source: FSI, 2006 – 2024

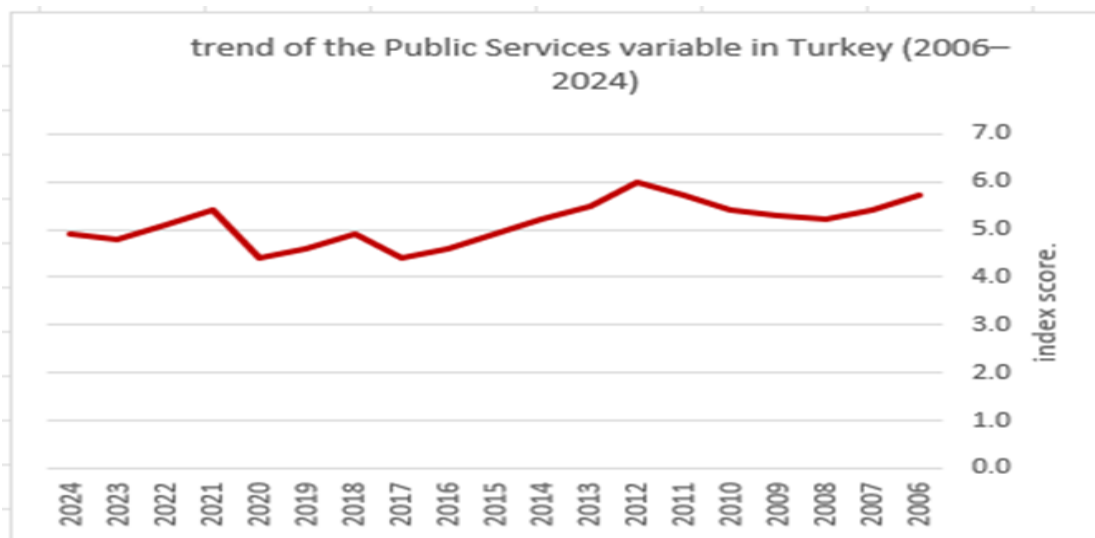
As illustrated in Figure 8, the security index increased gradually from 6.4 to 7.4 between 2006 and 2010. However, 2011 marked the sharpest decline over the period, with the index falling abruptly from 7.0 to 4.0. Thereafter, the index recovered steadily, reaching a peak of 8.3 in 2017. Between 2018 and 2023, in contrast to the pronounced fluctuations observed in the preceding years, the index followed a relatively stable

downward trajectory, declining from 8.0 to 6.6. This pattern may indicate a return to more normalized conditions and a gradual departure from a state of emergency. This downward trend was abruptly reversed in 2024, when the index experienced an unprecedented surge, reaching 8.8, the highest level recorded throughout the entire period (Figure 8).



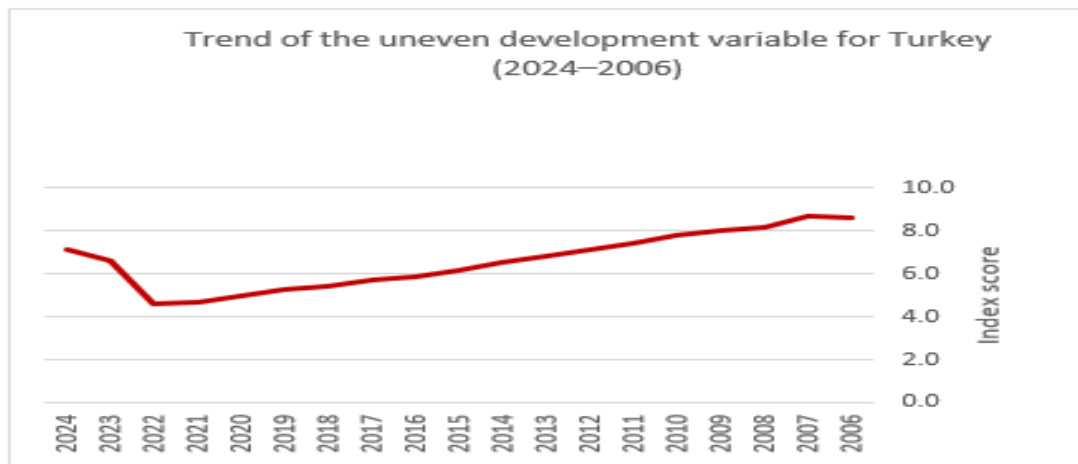
Source: FSI, 2006 – 2024

An examination of Turkey's Government Public Services Index between 2006 and 2024 indicates a gradual improvement in public service provision, as reflected in the index's declining trajectory from 2006 to 2012. After 2012, this trend was accompanied by a degree of fluctuation. Nevertheless, between 2014 and 2017, the index declined sharply to 4.4, suggesting a relative and sustained improvement in the quality of public services. This pattern, however, was reversed from 2022 onward, with the index rising to 4.9 in 2024. The renewed upward trajectory points to a deterioration in public service provision and an increase in indicators associated with state fragility in Turkey (Figure 9).



Source: FSI, 2006 – 2024

Regarding the Uneven Economic Development indicator, FSI reports reveal a pattern of gradual and sustained improvement between 2006 and 2021, followed by a sharp upward reversal. Specifically, the indicator declined from 8.3 in 2006 to 4.5 in 2022. This trend was abruptly reversed during the 2023–2024 period, when the indicator increased substantially, rising from 4.5 in 2022 to 6.6 in 2023 and 7.2 in 2024 (Figure 10).



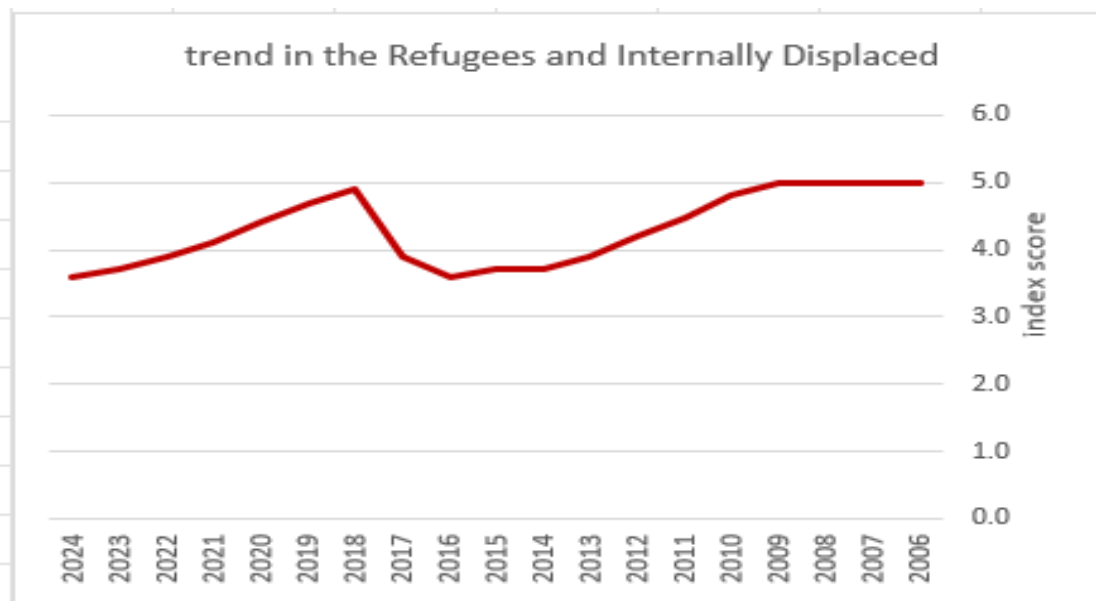
Source: FSI, 2006 – 2024

Turkey's Poverty and Economic Decline indicator exhibits a fluctuating downward–upward trajectory over the 2006–2024 period. The indicator declined from 4.1 in 2006 to 2.5 in 2009. Thereafter, it experienced moderate fluctuations and eventually reached 5.4 in 2018. Although this level remained below some of the peaks observed earlier in the period, it was nevertheless higher than the 4.1 recorded in 2006. Between 2021 and 2024, the trajectory underwent a further reversal, with the indicator declining from 5.3 in 2021 to 4.9 in 2022. From 2023 onward, however, the Poverty and Economic Decline indicator resumed an upward trajectory, reaching 6.9, before falling to 5.7 in 2024 (Figure 11).



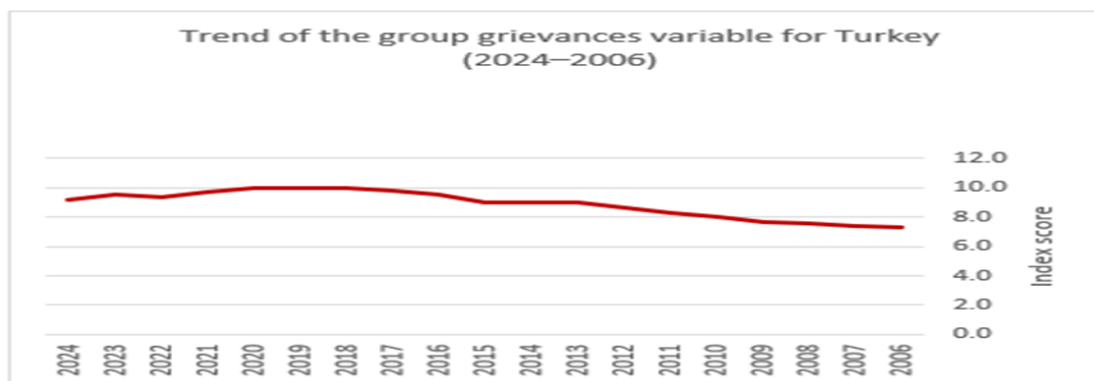
Source: FSI, 2006 – 2024

An analysis of the trend in the Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons indicator clearly shows that the index remained relatively stable between 2007 and 2011, fluctuating within a range of 0.6 to 6.6. Subsequently, between 2013 and 2018, the indicator followed an upward trajectory, reaching 3.9. Following a period of decline between 2019 and 2022, during which the indicator reached 8.1, its score increased sharply in 2023–2024, rising to 8.7 (Figure 12).



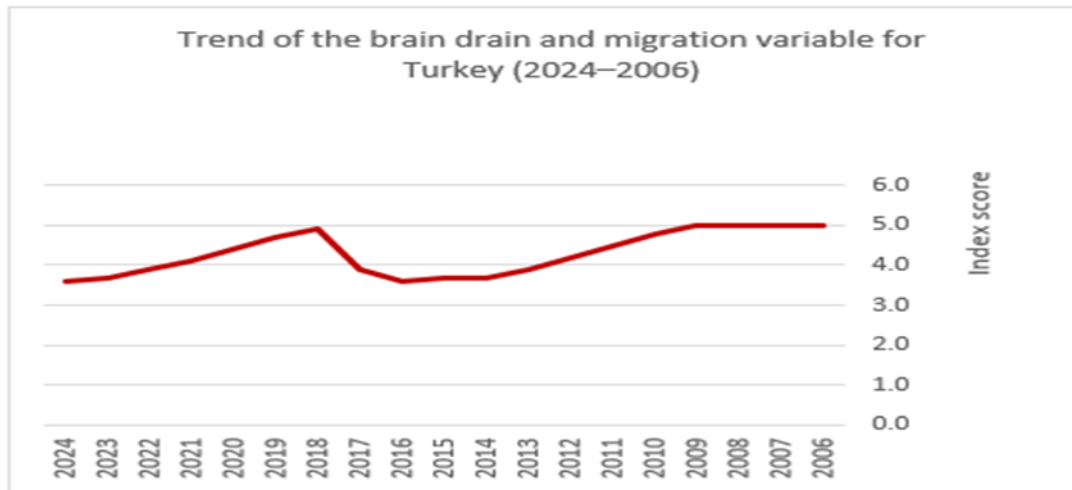
Source: FSI, 2006 – 2024

Quantitative data and indicators from the Fragile States Index also clearly demonstrate that Group Grievance in Turkey followed a gradually increasing trajectory between 2006 and 2012, with the indicator score rising from 7.3 to 8.6. However, during the 2013–2018 period, the indicator continued to increase, culminating in a sharp escalation and reaching 0.9. The peak of this crisis can be identified in 2018, when the indicator reached its highest recorded level of 10.0. Finally, between 2021 and 2024, the Group Grievance indicator exhibited a fluctuating downward trend, with its score declining from 9.7 in 2021 to 9.2 in 2024 (Figure 13).



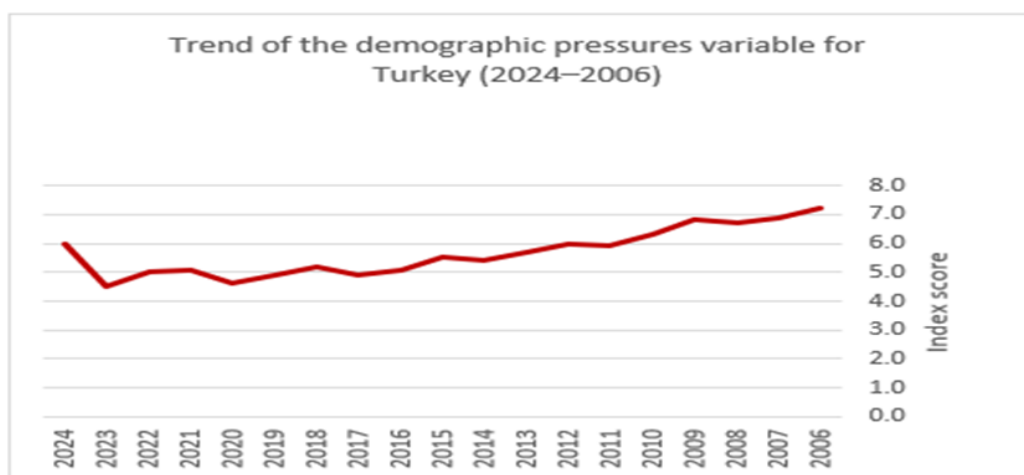
Source: FSI, 2006 – 2024

The figure indicates that Turkey's Human Flight and Brain Drain indicator followed a downward trajectory between 2006 and 2016, reaching its lowest level over the entire period at 6.3 in 2016. The indicator subsequently recorded a notable increase in 2018, reaching 4.9, which appears to represent its highest level since 2009. From 2019 to 2024, however, the indicator once again followed a downward trajectory, falling to 3.6 in 2024. This decline can be interpreted as a positive development insofar as it suggests a reduction in the risk of brain drain and human capital outflow (Figure 14).



Source: FSI, 2006 – 2024

According to the Fragile States Index, Turkey's Demographic Pressures indicator declined gradually from 9.6 to 9.4 between 2007 and 2017. However, the indicator experienced considerable fluctuations between 2018 and 2023. Following an increase to 5.2 in 2018, it subsequently declined to 4.9 in 2019 and 4.6 in 2020, before experiencing a further shift in 2024. From 2024 onward, the indicator entered an upward trajectory, reaching 0.6 (Figure 15).



Source: FSI, 2006 – 2024

4. Discussion and Analysis

4.1. Analysis of the Direct Influence Matrix

The results of the direct influence matrix analysis indicate that, among the 12 factors examined across two iterations, 12 relationships were identified as having no influence (zero), 75 as having moderate influence, and 45 as having strong influence. With a filling rate of 91.67%, the matrix indicates a high degree of interconnectivity and systemic complexity, suggesting that the vast majority of relationships among the factors are characterized by meaningful levels of influence. These findings point to the existence of a dense network of strong interrelationships and a highly dynamic structure within the system under investigation (Table 3).

Table No. 3) Specifications of the Matrix Filled by Elites

Indicator	Count
Matrix dimension	12
Number of iterations	2
Number of Zeros	12
Number of ones	12
Number of twos	75
Number of threes	45
Number of P	0
Total	132
Fill percentage	91.66%

Source: Research Findings, 2026

4.2. Influence–Dependence Analysis across Iterations

According to the influence–dependence matrix analysis, during the first iteration, the overall level of influence exerted by the indicators was 93%, while their level of dependence was calculated at 83%. These figures indicate strong interactions and substantial reciprocal relationships among the indicators. In the second iteration, these values increased to 98% for influence and 95% for dependence, respectively. This pattern suggests that the system has become increasingly interconnected, thereby heightening its sensitivity to internal dynamics and increasing the risks associated with endogenous feedback mechanisms (Table 4).

Repetition	Effectiveness	Receptivness
1	93%	83%
2	98%	95%

Source: Research Findings, 2026

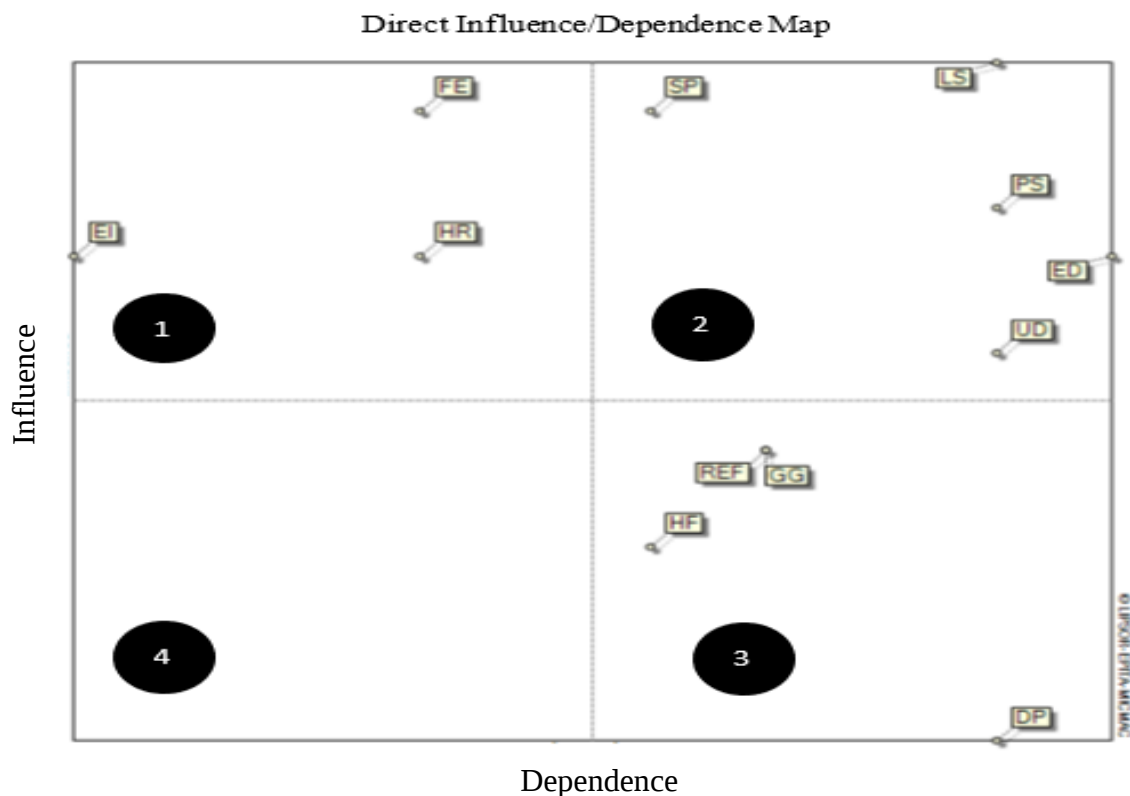
Accordingly, the variables examined in this study can be classified into four principal zones based on their influence–dependence profiles:

Zone 1 – Influential Variables: Elite Divergence, External Intervention, and Human Rights.

Zone 2 – Linkage Variables: State Legitimacy, Security Apparatus, Public Services, Uneven Economic Development, and Poverty and Economic Decline.

Zone 3 – Dependent Variables: Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, Group Grievance, Human Flight and Brain Drain, and Demographic Pressures.

Zone 4 – Autonomous Variables: These variables, commonly referred to as “low-impact independent variables,” neither exert a significant influence on other factors nor are substantially influenced by them. Within the framework of the present analysis, no autonomous or self-reinforcing mechanisms were identified in the case of Turkey. (Figure 16).



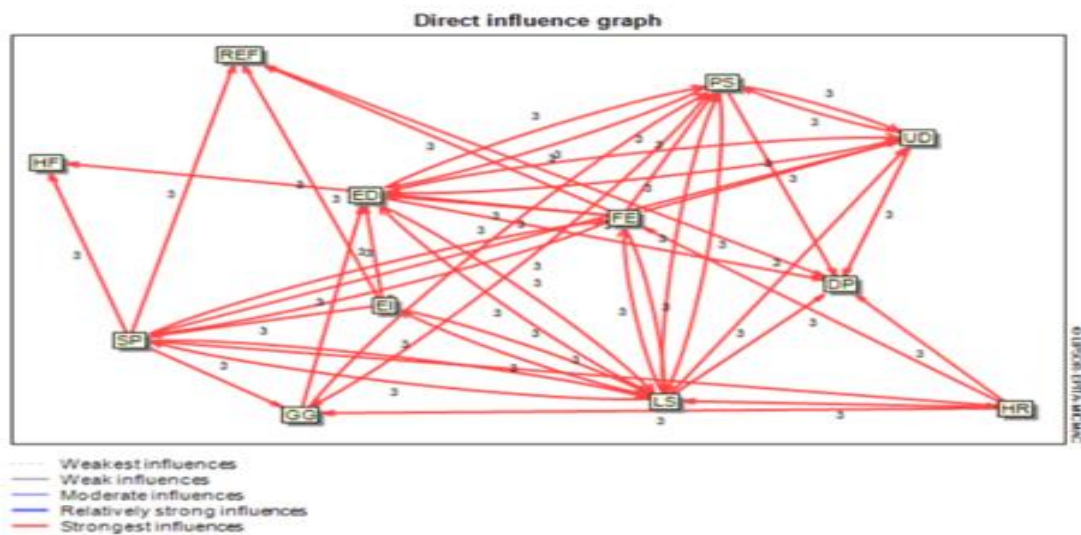
Source: Research Findings, 2026

4.3. Analysis of the Role of Variables in Turkey's State Fragility

To address the central research question, this section employs the direct influence map generated through the MICMAC method. The results are presented below.

As shown in Figure 7, the 34% coverage of the strongest direct relationships highlights the concentration of high-intensity interactions among the variables underlying state fragility in Turkey. Of the 132 relationships among the 12 variables, 45 are classified as being at the highest level of influence intensity. As indicated by the graph, the greater the

Figure 17. The role-playing network of the variables affecting the fragility of the Turkish government (34% coverage).



Source: Research Findings, 2026

number of outgoing arrows from a variable, the greater its influence, whereas a higher number of incoming arrows indicates greater dependence on other variables.

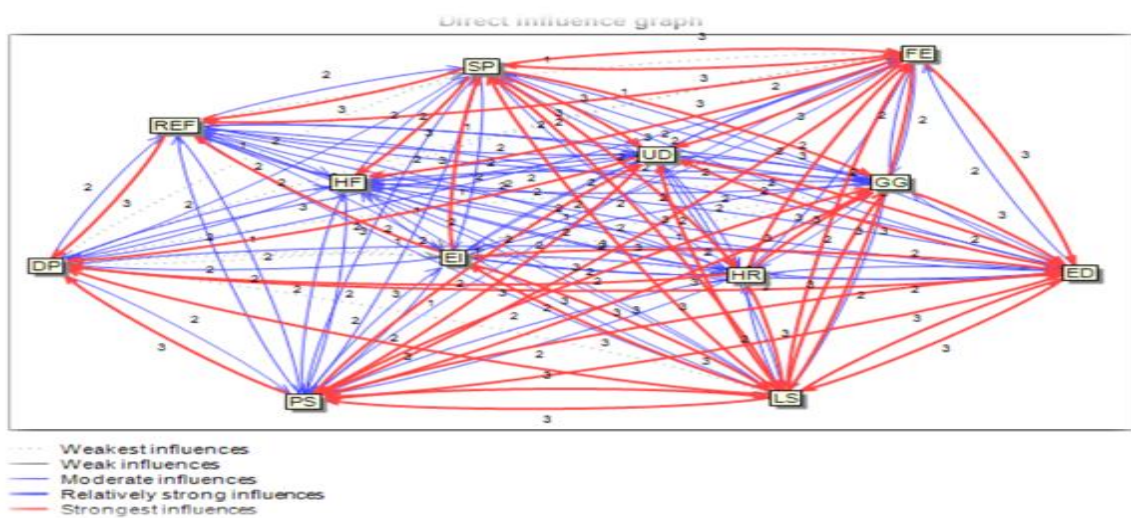
Accordingly, State Legitimacy (LS), with eight strong outgoing relationships, exhibits the highest level of influence. Political Elite Divergence (FE) and the Security Apparatus (SP) rank second, each with seven strong outgoing relationships. In terms of dependence, Poverty and Economic Decline (ED) and Demographic Pressures (DP) exhibit the highest levels of dependence, with six strong incoming relationships each. Uneven Economic Development (UD) and Public Services (PS) follow, with five strong incoming relationships each.

Based on these structural relationships, three major crisis chains can be identified. The first runs from State Legitimacy (LS) to Public Services (PS), Poverty and Economic Decline (ED), Demographic Pressures (DP), and Uneven Economic Development (UD).

The second extends from Political Elite Divergence (FE) and the Security Apparatus (SP) to Human Rights (HR), Group Grievance (GG), and Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (REF). The third connects External Intervention (EI) to State Legitimacy (LS) and Political Elite Divergence (FE).

Given that 34% of all relationships are classified as strong, the findings suggest that one-dimensional interventions are unlikely to generate sustained improvements in state resilience. Moving beyond political fragility therefore requires simultaneous and targeted interventions in three strategically important variables, State Legitimacy (LS), Political Elite Divergence (FE), and the Security Apparatus (SP).

Figure 18. Direct-effect network demonstrating 100% node coverage



Source: Research Findings, 2026

Figure 8 presents the complete network of reciprocal influences among the 12 variables affecting state fragility in Turkey. The matrix filling rate of 91.66% indicates a very high density of causal relationships within the system. As noted above, a greater number of outgoing arrows from a variable indicates a higher degree of influence, whereas a greater number of incoming arrows indicates a higher degree of dependence.

Accordingly, State Legitimacy (LS), which exhibits the highest level of direct influence, ranks first in terms of influence. Political Elite Divergence (FE) and the Security Apparatus (SP) rank second. In terms of direct dependence, Poverty and Economic Decline (ED) exhibits the highest level of dependence, followed by Demographic Pressures (DP), Uneven Economic Development (UD), State Legitimacy (LS), and Public Services (PS), which occupy the next level of dependence.

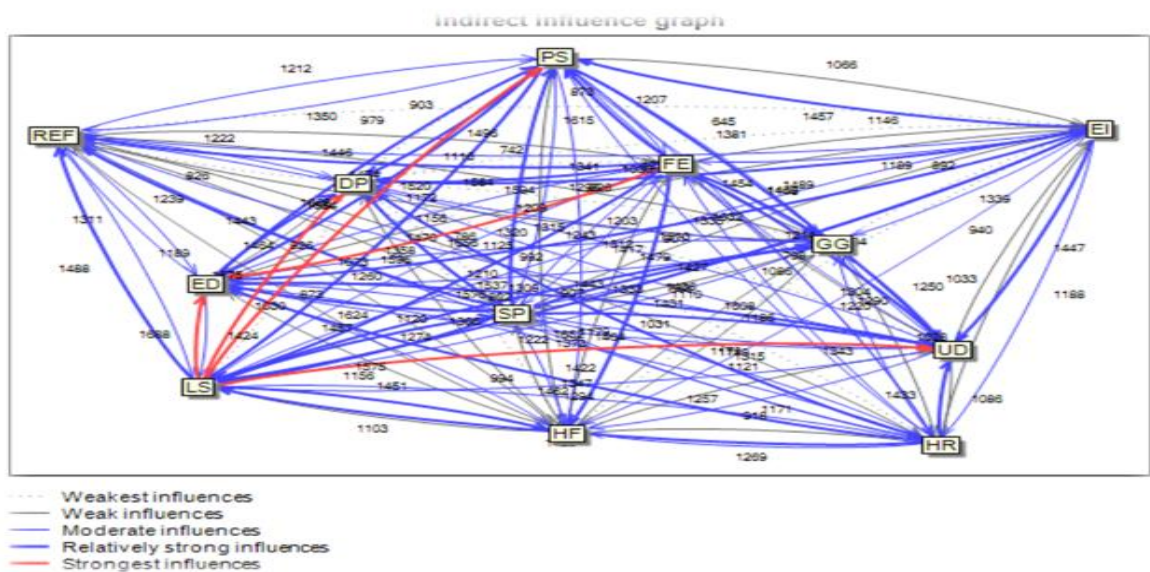
The graph also reveals three strong bidirectional feedback loops, respectively connecting LS and FE, LS and SP, and ED and PS. These reciprocal relationships indicate the

presence of self-reinforcing dynamics within the system, whereby changes in one variable can generate feedback effects that subsequently reinforce or amplify changes in the other.

In addition, three major crisis chains can be derived from these structural relationships. The first extends from LS to PS, ED, DP, and UD; the second runs from FE and SP to HR, GG, and REF; and the third links EI to LS and FE.

The high proportion of direct relationships, reflected in the 91.66% matrix filling rate, indicates that Turkey's state fragility system is highly interconnected and lacks clearly autonomous or isolated variables. Consequently, interventions targeting a single dimension are unlikely to produce sustainable effects, as changes in one component can rapidly activate interconnected dynamics elsewhere in the system. Addressing this systemic fragility therefore requires simultaneous and strategically coordinated interventions in the three key variables of State Legitimacy (LS), Political Elite Divergence (FE), and the Security Apparatus (SP).

Figure 19. Network of indirect influence, illustrating complete (100%) coverage of actors



Source: Research Findings, 2026

4.4. Indirect Influence Network

The analysis of the indirect influence matrix indicates that, across the full range of indirect relationships, the strongest effects are exerted by Political Elite Divergence (FE) on Poverty and Economic Decline (ED), and by State Legitimacy (LS) on Poverty and

Economic Decline (ED), Demographic Pressures (DP), Public Services (PS), and Uneven Economic Development (UD).

5. Discussion and Analysis of the Variables

5.1. Influential Variables

(High influence, low dependence)

In the analysis of Turkey's state fragility based on the Fragile States Index (FSI), Political Elite Divergence exhibits an overall upward trajectory between 2006 and 2024. This trend began to accelerate around 2009 and culminated in a particularly pronounced increase during the critical period of 2016–2017. This surge closely coincided with the failed coup attempt of 15 July 2016 and the constitutional referendum held in April 2017.

Turkey's experience suggests that, rather than contributing to the restoration of political consensus, the political consequences of these events intensified polarization between governing elites and opposition forces. Extensive purges within the administrative, judicial, and educational sectors may have enhanced the state's capacity for political control in the short term; however, over the longer term, they contributed to a reduction in institutional pluralism, weakened organizational autonomy, and increased the dependence of state institutions on networks of political loyalty (Tank, 2016).

From the perspective of state fragility indicators, this process reflects the displacement of political competition by systematic exclusion and the erosion of elite consensus, which directly explains the sharp increase in Turkey's Political Elite Divergence indicator. In effect, Turkey's transition from a "multipolar competitive authoritarianism" toward a "hegemonic authoritarian system" has constituted a key driver of the substantial increase in this variable within the analytical model. Ultimately, the MICMAC analysis and the direct influence matrix demonstrate that Political Elite Divergence exerts the strongest level of influence on seven other variables, namely Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, Human Flight and Brain Drain, Uneven Economic Development, Poverty and Economic Decline, Public Services, the Security Apparatus, and State Legitimacy.

In the area of refugee governance, elite divergence over the "open-door policy" toward approximately 3.6 million Syrian refugees has directly transformed the issue into a field of political contestation. Nationalist opposition parties, as well as segments of the governing party's support base, have portrayed refugees as a demographic and economic threat and called for their forced return. This fragmentation of elite positions has not only impeded the development of a coherent integration policy but has also contributed to heightened social tensions and the instrumentalization of refugees within regional geopolitical competition.

With regard to human flight and brain drain, post-coup political purges directly generated a wave of both forced and voluntary migration among highly educated elites. Independent reports indicate that more than 10,000 academics were suspended or dismissed from their positions during 2016 and 2017 alone. At the same time, applications for educational and employment visas by highly skilled individuals to European countries reportedly increased by approximately 50%.

In relation to uneven development, elite divergence has contributed to the politicization of resource allocation, making access to public resources increasingly contingent upon political loyalty. Large-scale infrastructure projects, including Istanbul's new airport and the proposed Istanbul Canal project, have been awarded to companies closely connected to the political establishment. By contrast, southeastern provinces and areas governed by opposition parties have experienced substantial reductions in public investment and persistent economic deprivation. This pattern has contributed to widening regional economic disparities, which are closely associated with the deterioration reflected in the Poverty and Economic Decline indicator.

Indeed, the instability generated by elite competition over political power has also affected economic governance. Politically motivated dismissals of central bank governors and the adoption of unconventional monetary policies contributed to currency instability and severe inflationary pressures. According to official data, the poverty rate increased from 21.9% in 2016 to approximately 25% or higher in subsequent years.

Public services have likewise been significantly affected by elite polarization. The dismissal of tens of thousands of teachers, physicians, and civil servants and their replacement with politically appointed personnel have adversely affected the quality of education and healthcare provision. These effects have been particularly pronounced in predominantly Kurdish provinces, where critical educators and elected mayors have, in numerous cases, been replaced by state-appointed officials. The security apparatus has not been insulated from these dynamics either. Extensive purges within the military and police forces, together with declining public confidence in the armed forces, temporarily disrupted operational cohesion and undermined counterterrorism capacity in southeastern Turkey and northern Syria.

Finally, the erosion of political legitimacy has been closely associated with the controversial constitutional referendum, the two-year state of emergency, and the detention of leaders of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and civil society activists. These developments contributed to a substantial decline in public trust and confidence in political institutions (Quinn, 2017, para. 4; Aydın-Düzgit & Balta, 2017, p. 2).

From a structural perspective, the MICMAC analysis identifies Political Elite Divergence as one of the most consequential variables, and, more specifically, as a principal driver of the erosion of state cohesion within Turkey's fragility system. This finding suggests that reforms in other policy domains are likely to have only limited effects unless accompanied by a reduction in elite polarization. As an upstream variable,

elite divergence exerts cascading effects across multiple state subsystems. It affects State Legitimacy directly while also expanding the scope of fragility through its effects on the security apparatus, public services, uneven development, economic deprivation, human capital outflows, and group grievances.

External Intervention represents another highly sensitive variable and plays a consequential role in intensifying instability. An examination of this component over the 2006–2024 period indicates that Turkey’s overall FSI score increased from 74.1 in 2014 to 84.0 in 2024. Within this broader trajectory, the External Intervention indicator experienced notable increases during three critical periods. The first occurred in 2008–2009, coinciding with the global financial crisis and the restructuring of economic institutions under the supervision of the International Monetary Fund. Extensive incentives designed to attract foreign direct investment further increased Turkey’s financial exposure to external capital flows and contributed to a form of “structural dependence on external financial flows,” subsequently interpreted by scholars such as Apaydın and Çoban (2023) as a factor contributing to the country’s authoritarian turn (Kaya, 2023).

The most pronounced increase occurred in 2016–2017. A May 2017 report by the Fund for Peace, entitled “From Failed Coup to Self-Declared Authoritarianism,” reported that Turkey’s FSI score deteriorated by 3.5 points within a single year. This deterioration placed Turkey among the countries experiencing the highest levels of fragility globally. The failed coup attempt of 15 July 2016, while constituting a domestic military intervention, also intensified international reactions and external pressure on Ankara. The resulting political and security instability was reflected in the deterioration of the Security Apparatus indicator, whose score increased from 7.8 to 8.3. This upward trajectory in fragility continued from 2016 to 2020, a period shaped by three major developments: the failed coup and its aftermath, Turkey’s acquisition of the Russian S-400 air-defense system, and the imposition of U.S. sanctions under the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) in December 2020. The sanctions marked Turkey as the first NATO member state to be subjected to measures under CAATSA, introducing an additional dimension to the country’s international tensions.

External Intervention has also acquired an institutionalized dimension through the management of the refugee issue and the 2016 agreement between Turkey and the European Union. By assuming the role of a “buffer state” along the EU’s external borders and hosting more than 3.1 million refugees, equivalent to approximately 3.8% of its population, Turkey has faced unprecedented external pressures related to border control and migration management. Beyond imposing substantial financial burdens on the economy and perpetuating the social vulnerability of refugees, this situation has placed additional pressure on the security apparatus (D’Alema, 2017, p. 2; Askerov, 2017, pp. 149–167).

Within the present model, External Intervention therefore emerges as the second key variable through which state fragility is intensified. Its effects operate through three principal pathways: heightened security pressures, increased economic dependence, and the growing complexity of managing regional crises. External intervention should therefore not be understood as an independent source of fragility in itself; rather, it becomes a crisis-generating force when it interacts with domestic political divisions, weakened legitimacy, and economic vulnerabilities. In this sense, the external environment functions primarily as a “multiplier” of Turkey’s internal vulnerabilities.

The Human Rights indicator constitutes a key measure of the extent to which civil liberties, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and the functioning of human rights institutions are respected within a country. An examination of this indicator in Turkey between 2006 and 2024 reveals a concerning trajectory of deterioration. During the early years of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, Turkey appeared to be moving toward the consolidation of liberal-democratic values, improvements in human rights, a reduction in the military’s political influence, and further progress toward European Union accession. Over the past 18 years, however, Turkey has experienced a marked deterioration in its Fragile States Index (FSI) profile. Between 2017 and 2020, the country’s fragility score reached a critical level within the “Warning” category and remained at approximately that level thereafter (Ağartan, 2024, pp. 41–77; Örs, 2014, pp. 489–498).

A May 2017 report by the Fund for Peace, entitled “*Polarization and Group Grievances Are Drivers of Instability*,” emphasized that FSI data indicated a significant deterioration across a broad range of indicators in Turkey since 2011, with the country’s overall score deteriorating by approximately 10 points over this period. Much of this deterioration was reflected in the social and political dimensions of fragility, particularly in the areas of Group Grievance, Human Rights, State Legitimacy, Political Elite Divergence, and the Security Apparatus. In 2017, Turkey was identified as the third country experiencing the most pronounced deterioration since 2016, a development widely associated with the consequences of the failed coup attempt of July 2016. The event, followed by extensive repression of political opponents and journalists, as well as intensified terrorist attacks and renewed military tensions with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), placed unprecedented pressure on Turkey’s political and social structures (Fund for Peace, 2017).

Importantly, the controversial constitutional referendum held in April 2017, together with the highly polarized political environment preceding it, was not fully captured in the 2017 FSI assessment. This temporal limitation contributed to a particularly unfavorable assessment of Turkey’s outlook for 2018. Subsequently, the deterioration continued as restrictions on civil liberties, media activity, and civil society organizations intensified in the following years. Turkey’s already troubling human rights record thus remained a structural challenge through 2022, with the corresponding FSI score reported at above 8.0 out of 10 in the 2023 assessment. Freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly had already experienced substantial erosion during the AKP’s tenure.

These concerns intensified in October 2022, on the eve of the 2023 general elections, following the adoption of legislation criminalizing the dissemination of “misleading information,” which generated further international concern regarding the deterioration of the human rights environment in Turkey.

The Direct Influence Matrix (MDI) analysis indicates that the Human Rights indicator, with a high influence score of 3, occupies a particularly important position within the system. This finding suggests that human rights conditions play a substantial role in reproducing and intensifying other dimensions of fragility. Changes in the human rights environment exert direct effects on Demographic Pressures, Group Grievance, State Legitimacy, and Political Elite Divergence, thereby contributing to the broader reproduction of systemic fragility (Çalı & Demir-Gürsel, 2023).

5.2. Linkage Variables

(High influence, high dependence)

The Security Apparatus constitutes another important linkage variable within the structure of Turkey’s state fragility. On the one hand, an effective security apparatus is essential for maintaining political order and responding to crises. On the other hand, excessive securitization of politics may undermine state legitimacy and widen the distance between the state and society. From the perspective of state fragility theory, governments that rely excessively on coercive and security-oriented instruments to manage crises may become trapped in a vicious cycle. Greater reliance on security-based control can reduce public trust and increase social discontent, which, in turn, may encourage the political system to intensify its reliance on coercive mechanisms.

In Turkey, the trajectory of the Security Apparatus indicator between 2006 and 2024 reveals a pronounced and increasingly concerning pattern, including two particularly notable increases in 2016–2017 and 2024. The most consequential changes occurred in 2016 and 2017, following the attempted military coup of 15 July 2016, during which key state institutions, including the parliament and the presidential complex, were targeted. The aftermath of the coup attempt resulted in extensive institutional restructuring. The declaration of a state of emergency by President Erdoğan and the subsequent large-scale purges within the security and judicial institutions resulted in the dismissal or removal of more than 100,000 public officials and military personnel (Sentek, 2020).

This structural disruption was clearly reflected in Turkey’s FSI profile. The Security Apparatus score increased from 7.8 in 2016 to 8.3 in 2017. At the same time, Turkey’s overall FSI score deteriorated by 3.5 points, representing one of the country’s most substantial annual deteriorations since 2012 and placing Turkey among the three countries with the sharpest year-on-year deterioration in the FSI.

In 2024, Turkey’s Security Apparatus indicator experienced another unprecedented increase. A major turning point was the terrorist attack of 23 October 2024 against the Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI) complex in Kahramankazan, Ankara. In response

to the attack, the Turkish Air Force conducted retaliatory operations against militant positions in Iraq and Syria. These tensions intensified in an environment characterized by challenges including the security vacuum in Syria and the continued activities of militant and terrorist organizations along Turkey's southern borders.

In parallel with extensive security operations by the Ministry of Interior against alleged espionage networks, the budget allocated to Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (MİT) reportedly increased by 125.7%, rising from TRY 7.7 billion to TRY 17.4 billion. This substantial increase can be interpreted as evidence of a pronounced shift toward security-centered governance and the expansion of state security capacities.

However, this intensified security-oriented approach has also generated significant pressures in other dimensions of state fragility, particularly Group Grievance, which constitutes a key component of the FSI. The latter is closely connected to the functioning of the security apparatus. Ethnic tensions involving Turkey's Kurdish population, the continuation of violence following the collapse of the ceasefire with the PKK in 2015, and the repression of political opponents can all be examined in relation to the policies and practices of state security institutions. In this respect, the Fund for Peace's 2017 report emphasized that political polarization and rising group grievances can intensify instability. This dynamic is particularly relevant to Turkey, where deterioration across multiple indicators, including the performance of the security apparatus, has contributed to the broader pattern of state fragility (Unal, 2012; Yılmaz, 2013, pp. 119–128).

According to state fragility theory, legitimacy constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of state capacity, since a state cannot achieve sustainable stability through coercive instruments alone. Restrictions on civil liberties, the erosion of judicial independence, and the contraction of political participation transform the state–society relationship from a consent-based model toward one increasingly centered on control.

In the case of Turkey, the State Legitimacy indicator over the 2006–2024 period exhibits a relatively stable trajectory with limited fluctuations, followed by an upward trend beginning in 2018. By 2024, the indicator had reached 7.4 out of 10, representing a substantial increase relative to its historical average of 6.73 over 2007–2024. The indicator reached its highest level in 2018, when it stood at 7.7. At the international level, Turkey's score of 7.4 also represents a highly unfavorable position relative to the global average of 5.67. Among European countries, Turkey ranked third in terms of the severity of this indicator, after Russia (9.3) and Belarus (9.1). Consistent with this trajectory, Turkey's overall FSI score increased from 74.1 in 2014 to 84.0 in 2024, placing the country 41st among 179 countries (Fund for Peace, 2024).

An examination of these fluctuations suggests that, during the early years of the period under study, the Turkish political system benefited from a relative degree of stability, partly as a result of the emphasis placed on democratic reforms and the European Union accession process. The year 2016, however, represented a critical

turning point. The failed coup attempt of 15 July fundamentally altered the trajectory of political stability and created the conditions for major structural changes in Turkey's political and institutional indicators.

The coup attempt provided Erdoğan with an opportunity to invoke the need to confront security threats as a basis for initiating extensive purges within the military and the civilian bureaucracy. Under the state of emergency, which remained in force until July 2018, 32 emergency decrees were issued, resulting in the dismissal or removal of approximately 130,000 civil servants, judges, police officers, and military personnel. At the same time, the government capitalized on heightened nationalist sentiments and public support for confronting perceived domestic and external threats to consolidate its political base.

The second major event was the constitutional referendum held in April 2017. Through amendments to 76 articles of the 1982 Constitution, the referendum fundamentally transformed Turkey's institutional architecture. The office of prime minister was abolished, and executive authority was concentrated in the presidency, marking the beginning of a new phase of political centralization in Turkey (Samiee Esfahani et al., 2022, p. 311).

Analysts at the Brookings Institution, reflecting on the referendum's outcome, characterized Turkish society as deeply polarized and argued that the "new system" had been established on a weak foundation of legitimacy. From this perspective, the referendum represented the culmination of Erdoğan's long-standing efforts to replace the parliamentary system with a powerful presidential model. The constitutional amendments transformed what had effectively become a presidentialized system into a more formally consolidated institutional structure. Although these developments were accompanied in the short term by heightened nationalist mobilization, over the longer term they contributed to the weakening of institutional legitimacy and the deepening of social divisions (Brookings Institution, 2017).

A third, and perhaps decisive, factor underlying the upward trajectory of the legitimacy fragility indicator after 2018 was the emergence of structural economic crises. In 2018, Turkey experienced an unprecedented depreciation of the lira, exceeding 45%, alongside an inflation rate of approximately 18%. Analyses suggest that economic policymaking between 2018 and 2023 increasingly operated outside the constraints and steering capacity of established bureaucratic institutions. Weak responses to currency and debt pressures were closely associated with the increasing personalization of economic decision-making under the presidency.

The roots of this crisis therefore extended beyond economic variables and were deeply political. The deterioration of Turkey's political institutions, accompanied by declining state effectiveness, played a significant role in the emergence of the 2018 crisis. Between 2018 and 2024, the Turkish economy remained under persistent strain. By 2024, approximately 83% of the population reportedly believed that the country was

experiencing an economic crisis, and the year was described as one of the most difficult periods for Turkish citizens. Persistent inflation, the erosion of the national currency, and declining purchasing power undermined public confidence in the government and state institutions and, in turn, contributed to a marked deterioration in the State Legitimacy indicator.

A fourth factor affecting the legitimacy fragility indicator has been the weakening of democratic and human rights dimensions. During the AKP's tenure, freedom of expression, the right to assembly, and media activity have experienced substantial restrictions, while civil society organizations have increasingly operated under restrictive institutional and legal conditions.

The fifth factor is the intensification of regional tensions, particularly through Turkey's military interventions in northern Syria, including Operation Peace Spring in October 2019, as well as continuing confrontations with Kurdish militant organizations. By generating a heightened "external threat environment," these actions contributed in the short term to affective forms of legitimacy and nationalist mobilization in support of the government. Over the longer term, however, the substantial economic and diplomatic costs associated with these policies contributed to the deepening of domestic divisions and the accumulation of structural vulnerabilities.

An examination of Turkey's Public Services indicator between 2006 and 2024 reveals a fluctuating trajectory, with an average score of 5.09 out of 10. This trajectory can be analytically divided into three distinct phases.

First, 2012 represented a critical point in the period, with the indicator reaching 6.0, its weakest recorded level of public service performance during this phase. In response, the government, with support from the World Bank, implemented broad structural reforms in the banking and monetary-policy sectors aimed at containing inflation and controlling credit growth. Although these measures were primarily designed to achieve short-term financial stabilization, they subsequently contributed to institutional improvements in the years that followed.

Second, the Public Services indicator subsequently followed a downward trajectory, which in the FSI framework signifies improvement. In 2017, it reached its historically strongest position, with a score of 4.4. A major factor underlying this improvement was the implementation of the Health Transformation Program, which sought to enhance the efficiency, accessibility, and coverage of healthcare services. This improvement was not confined to the health sector. Large-scale investments in infrastructure, including transportation, energy, and telecommunications, also contributed to significant improvements in the provision of public services (Akça, Bekmen, & Özden, 2014, pp. 237–256).

Notably, despite the fact that Turkey recorded a historically favorable Public Services score of 4.4 in 2017, the country was simultaneously experiencing the profound

political consequences of the failed coup attempt of 15 July 2016 and the subsequent declaration of a state of emergency. The continued improvement in the Public Services indicator during this period can therefore be interpreted as evidence of the state's "operational resilience" in maintaining the delivery of essential services despite severe political disruption (Oyvatt, 2025, p. 2).

The trajectory changed, however, from 2019 onward. As Turkey's overall FSI score reached 80.3, the Public Services indicator became subject to two contrasting dynamics. On the one hand, the government sought to mitigate social divisions and contain public dissatisfaction by strengthening large-scale infrastructure and healthcare projects. Relatively favorable economic conditions at certain points provided the fiscal space necessary for continued resource allocation. On the other hand, these initiatives were implemented within an increasingly constrained political environment characterized by mounting structural pressures.

Over time, this tension became increasingly visible. Reports by the Fund for Peace in 2023 warned of a widening gap between public expectations and government performance. This concern reflected the expansion of critical discourses surrounding the concentration of political power, declining inclusiveness in the provision of public services, and the broader movement toward authoritarian governance. The situation has not stabilized in recent years. Since 2022, the Public Services indicator has maintained an upward trajectory, signifying deterioration in service quality, with Turkey's score increasing from 4.8 in 2023 to 4.9 in 2024. This pattern indicates the persistence of structural challenges in delivering effective and equitable public services to citizens.

The deterioration in public service quality should not therefore be understood as merely a temporary fluctuation. Rather, it reflects a deeper structural process. The analysis of the causal chain of state fragility in Turkey indicates that the interaction between the driving variables, Political Elite Divergence and External Intervention, has generated reinforcing effects through intermediary variables, particularly Uneven Economic Development and Poverty and Economic Decline, thereby facilitating the country's movement toward greater instability.

The statistical evidence is consistent with this interpretation. The historical peak in Political Elite Divergence, with a score of 9.1 in 2017, coincided with intensified political conflict and worsening security conditions, contributing to distortions in the country's development trajectory. This structural blockage generated significant economic consequences, including the Poverty and Economic Decline indicator reaching 7.5 in 2024, substantially above the global average of 5.54, alongside an inflation rate of 44.38%, a relative poverty rate of approximately 13%, and a widening social divide reflected in a Gini coefficient of 0.413.

Overall, the four-variable model derived from the MDI and MII analyses demonstrates that Uneven Economic Development and Poverty and Economic Decline function not merely as direct outcomes of fragmented elite politics and external

intervention, but also as intermediary mechanisms through which the adverse effects of these two upstream variables are transmitted to downstream consequences. These consequences include the weakening of governance capacity, increased human capital outflows, and, ultimately, the reproduction of state fragility.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that state fragility in Turkey over the 2006–2024 period is neither a linear nor a simple phenomenon. Rather, it emerges from complex and nonlinear interactions among multiple driving variables. The analysis indicates that Political Elite Divergence, reaching a peak influence score of 9.1 in 2017, constitutes a central component of the crisis. By transforming the political environment from one characterized by “democratic competition” toward one increasingly marked by “systematic exclusion,” elite divergence has created conditions conducive to the intensified effects of other fragility-related variables.

Within this configuration, Human Rights functions as an independent driver whose erosion of civil liberties and restriction of institutional channels for political participation have played a critical role in undermining “procedural legitimacy.” This erosion has been transmitted through linkage variables, particularly the Security Apparatus, whose increase to 8.3 in 2017 and again in 2024 reflects the growing securitization of politics, and Public Services, which have increasingly shifted from merit-based provision toward forms of governance based on political loyalty, thereby contributing to the reproduction of instability. At the same time, the interaction between geopolitical pressures arising from external interventions and structural economic crises, including inflation reaching 44.38%, has enabled external shocks to systematically penetrate the socioeconomic foundations of society and reinforce the feedback dynamics of fragility. This process demonstrates how political and economic crises in Turkey have been transformed, through linkage variables, into a self-reinforcing system of fragility.

Based on the systematic analysis undertaken in this study, Turkey has undergone a structural transition over the past two decades from a condition of relative neoliberal-democratic stability toward a more fragile governance configuration. The increase in Turkey’s overall FSI score from 74.1 in 2014 to 84.0 in 2024, together with its placement among the forty most fragile countries globally, supports the argument that the country has entered a condition of “fragile stasis.” In this study, the concept of *fragile stasis* refers to a condition in which, despite the absence of immediate institutional collapse, governance structures have undergone sustained erosion while remaining highly sensitive to economic and social shocks and therefore increasingly vulnerable to institutional breakdown.

The persistence of this condition poses a significant challenge to Turkey’s structural resilience. Breaking this vicious cycle requires a return to structural reform, the reconstruction of elite consensus, the restoration of the rule of law, and the reinstatement of human rights at the center of political processes. Given the prevailing trajectory of

power centralization, however, the realization of these reforms over the medium term faces profound structural obstacles and would require a fundamental reconsideration of the country's prevailing model of governance.

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Ethical considerations

This article is not sponsored.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest. The authors further confirm that all applicable research-ethics standards have been fully observed, including the avoidance of plagiarism, duplicate publication or simultaneous submission, inappropriate replication of previous research, fabrication or falsification of data, fabrication or manipulation of sources, lack of informed consent where applicable, research misconduct, and other forms of academic malpractice.

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