

# AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF TERRORISM ON SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS IN TRB AND TRC REGIONS

Terörün, TRB ve TRC Bölgelerindeki Sosyoekonomik Göstergeler Etkisi  
Üzerine Dönemsel Bir Değerlendirme

## TÜRKİYE ARAŞTIRMALARI DERGİSİ

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### Abstract

This study analyzes the effects of long-standing terrorist incidents on regional socioeconomic development in Türkiye's TRB and TRC level-2 regions. The study's main objective is to reveal the structural impact of terrorist incidents on fundamental socioeconomic indicators such as per capita income, unemployment rates, poverty level, and internal migration mobility. The study utilizes data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) covering the period between 2005 and 2023, and graphical analysis methods support the findings. The findings are compared with similar studies in the literature and presented in a more comprehensive framework. The results of the study show that terrorist incidents not only cause direct physical and economic losses but also seriously disrupt long-term development goals. The observed declines in per capita income levels reveal that economic growth in the regions has been destabilized. At the same time, rising unemployment rates point to severe disruptions in the participation of the productive population in economic life. On the other hand, the negative impact of terrorism-induced security risks on the investment climate has weakened private sector entrepreneurship. In contrast, public investments have been directed primarily towards security-oriented expenditures. This has led to a decline in economic activities specific to the region, such as agriculture and animal husbandry, and paved the way for poverty to become a permanent problem at the regional level. The study also emphasizes that the indirect effects of terrorist incidents are at least as significant as the direct effects. Increased internal migration mobility has caused a loss of human capital and changes in the demographic structure in the TRB and TRC regions. In particular, the young and productive population's orientation towards labor markets in metropolitan cities has negatively affected the region's long-term development potential. Considering the nature of the migrating population, the loss of an educated labor force has led to deepening inequalities in regional development, making the social and economic structure more fragile.

**Keywords:** Terrorism, TRB and TRC Regions, Unemployment, Poverty, Migration.

## Özet

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'nin TRB ve TRC düzey-2 bölgelerinde uzun süredir devam eden terör olaylarının, bölgesel sosyoekonomik kalkınma üzerindeki etkilerini derinlemesine analiz etmeyi hedeflemektedir. Araştırmanın temel amacı, terör olaylarının kişi başına düşen gelir, işsizlik oranları, yoksulluk düzeyi ve iç göç hareketliliği gibi temel sosyoekonomik göstergeler üzerindeki yapısal etkilerini ortaya koymaktır. Çalışmada, 2005–2023 yılları arasını kapsayan Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu (TÜİK) verilerinden yararlanılmış; elde edilen bulgular grafiksel analiz yöntemleri ile desteklenerek değerlendirilmiştir. Bulgular, literatürdeki benzer çalışmalarla karşılaştırmalı bir yöntemle yorumlanarak daha kapsamlı bir çerçevede sunulmuştur. Araştırmanın sonuçları, terör olaylarının yalnızca doğrudan fiziksel ve ekonomik kayıplar yaratmadığını, aynı zamanda uzun vadeli kalkınma hedeflerini de ciddi şekilde sekteye uğrattığını göstermektedir. Kişi başına düşen gelir düzeylerinde gözlemlenen gerilemeler, bölgelerdeki ekonomik büyümenin istikrarsızlaştığını ortaya koyarken, artan işsizlik oranları üretken nüfusun ekonomik hayata katılımında ciddi aksamalara işaret etmektedir. Öte yandan, terör kaynaklı güvenlik risklerinin yatırım ortamı üzerinde yarattığı olumsuz etki, özel sektör girişimciliğini zayıflatmış; kamu yatırımları ise öncelikli olarak güvenlik odaklı harcamalara yönlendirilmiştir. Bu durum, tarım ve hayvancılık gibi bölgeye özgü ekonomik faaliyetlerin gerilemesine yol açmış, yoksulluk olgusunun bölgesel düzeyde kalıcı bir sorun haline gelmesine zemin hazırlamıştır. Çalışmada ayrıca, terör olaylarının dolaylı etkilerinin en az doğrudan etkiler kadar önemli olduğu vurgulanmaktadır. Artan iç göç hareketliliği, TRB ve TRC bölgelerinde insan sermayesi kaybına ve demografik yapıdaki değişimlere neden olmuştur. Özellikle genç ve üretken nüfusun büyükşehirlerdeki işgücü piyasalarına yönelmesi, bölgenin uzun vadeli kalkınma potansiyelini olumsuz yönde etkilemiştir. Göç eden nüfusun niteliği dikkate alındığında, eğitilmiş işgücünün kaybı bölgesel kalkınmada derinleşen eşitsizliklere neden olmuş; bu durum, sosyal ve ekonomik yapının daha kırılgan hale gelmesine yol açmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Terör, TRB ve TRC Bölgeleri, İşsizlik, Yoksulluk, Göç.

## Introduction

Türkiye's TRB and TRC level-2 regions have suffered severe disruptions in socioeconomic development due to long-standing security problems. The direct and indirect effects of terrorist incidents on these two regions are realized not only on the security axis but also on economic and social indicators. In this study, the structural effects of terrorism on regional development are analyzed through various variables.

In this respect, the study aims to analyze the effects of terrorist incidents occurring in Türkiye's TRB and TRC regions over many years on socioeconomic indicators. Per capita income, unemployment rates, poverty level, and internal migration movements have been determined as the main parameters, and the economic and social effects of

terrorism have been evaluated through these indicators. TurkStat data for 2005-2023 are used as a methodology, and graphical analyses supported by a review of national and international academic literature are conducted. The study's main limitation is that the impact of terrorist incidents on economic indicators is analyzed only with statistical data, and other socio-political variables are excluded from the study. This study analyzes the impact of terrorist incidents on socioeconomic indicators in the TRB and TRC regions, revealing the relationship between security concerns and regional development dynamics. It evaluates how terrorism functions as a structural factor that exacerbates economic and social inequalities in these areas, supported by quantitative data. The findings provide valuable insights for the development of policy recommendations aimed at decision-makers.

Among the findings, it is observed that terrorist incidents cause a decline in per capita income, an increase in unemployment and poverty rates, and significant increases in internal migration mobility. In line with the data obtained, it is concluded that coordinating security policies with regional development strategies is critical in mitigating the structural economic effects of terrorism.

### 1. Terror: Concept, History, and Causes

The concept of terrorism is as old as the history of humanity and is a phenomenon that is difficult to define, multidimensional, and often cannot be objectively grounded. Research in the literature reveals that it is tough to provide a universal and generally valid definition of terrorism. This is due to the ideological burden the concept carries, historical contexts, and different political positions of states on the issue. For this reason, the etymological origin of the idea and its definitions in the literature are presented first, followed by its historical development and the reasons for its emergence in a multidimensional manner.

Etymologically, the word “*terror*” derives from the Latin verb “*terere*” and means to frighten and intimidate. In Old Turkic, this concept is met with the phrase “*tedhiş*,” and its Arabic equivalent is “*horror*” (Ündücü, 2011). In the sense used today, terrorism can be defined as the acts of violence that a different group in a society resorts to break the people's resistance.

In the legal legislation of the Republic of Türkiye, terrorism is defined in the first article of the Anti-Terror Law amended by Law No. 4928 dated July 15, 2003 as follows “*All kinds of criminal acts committed by an organized person or persons to change the characteristics of the Republic, the political, legal, social, secular, economic order specified in the Constitution, disrupting the indivisible integrity of the state with its country and nation, weakening or destroying the state authority, destroying fundamental rights and freedoms by using force and violence, pressure, intimidation, intimidation, intimidation or threat*” (Official Gazette, 2003).

In this context, terrorism is a set of violent acts aimed at suppressing individuals, societies, or states through intimidation or coercion to achieve political, religious, ideological, or ethnic goals. These acts, which usually target civilians, public officials, state institutions, or infrastructure, aim to disrupt social order, weaken governments, or impose specific demands.

While “terrorism” refers to a state of fear and chaos, “terrorism” refers to the systematic and organized use of this state of fear for a specific political or ideological purpose. For example, an individual act of violence may create fear in society; however, if it does not carry a particular ideological purpose, it cannot be considered Terrorism (Caşın, 2008).

Within the framework of these definitions, the difficulty of defining terrorism at the academic level also emerges. Some researchers argue that the failure of the international community to develop a common strategy to combat terrorism is the main reason why the concept cannot be defined universally. On the other hand, some authors argue that striving for a universal definition is unnecessary and even impossible due to the complex and multi-layered nature of terrorism (Topal, 2005). In this framework, the definition developed by Alex P. Schmid is noteworthy. According to Schmid, terrorism is the repeated acts of violence perpetrated by individuals, organizations, or state actors to create fear for political or personal reasons. The main target of these acts is not the direct victims, but the wider masses to whom a message is intended to be conveyed through violence (Beşe, 2002).

“Violence”, one of the most fundamental concepts in making sense of terrorism, is seen by some researchers as a rebellion against moral norms or abuse. Michael (2007) states that terrorism is a form of imposing one’s political views and values on society through violence. Such acts aim to cause direct harm, create psychological fear in the social order, and exert political pressure (Sandler and Enders, 2003). Similarly, Article 2 of the 1999 International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism defines terrorism as “*Terrorism by its very nature is conduct that, when committed, causes death or bodily injury to a civilian or other person who is not an active party to an armed conflict, or intimidates a population or attempts to compel or prevent a government or an international organization from doing something.* Beyond these definitions, an examination of when and how terrorism emerged from a historical perspective will provide a deeper understanding of the origins of the concept.

The historical origins of terrorist acts date back to ancient times. It is accepted that the first act of Terrorism was the killing of Abel by his brother Cain as recorded in the holy books (Cütçü and Akbaş, 2009). In ancient times, it was known that communities resisting authority resorted to assassination and acts of violence. Historically, such acts have been manifested in different forms and periodically referred to by other names.

The first organized terrorist movement known in history was carried out by the Zealots, who emerged in Palestine between 66 and 73 AD. This group organized assassinations against the Roman Empire by using daggers among crowds in broad daylight and was therefore known as *the "Sicarii" (daggersmiths)* (Bulut and Koca, 2015). Founded in the 11th century in Iran under the leadership of Hasan Sabbah, the Hashshashis turned terrorism into a systematic strategy. Sabbah turned assassinations into an art form to spread his ideology and used the fear of authority at the organizational level (Cütçü and Akbaş, 2009).

There are different academic views on the beginning of modern terrorism. Post (2006) traces the beginning of modern terrorism to the Black September attack at the 1972 Munich Olympics, while Hoffman (2006) attributes it to the hijacking of an El-Al plane in 1968. Wilkinson (2006), on the other hand, is based on developments in the 20th century, while Laqueur (1999) traces modern terrorism back to the 19th century. In this context, the popular movements in Russia from the 1870s until the First World War are among the examples that contributed to the development of modern terrorism (Bulut and Koca, 2015).

Although the historical background of modern terrorism shows how this phenomenon has evolved, structural and social causes need to be examined in depth to understand the factors that trigger the emergence of terrorism today. Multifaceted factors influence the emergence of terrorism. These factors are generally categorized as economic, psychological, and socio-cultural.

One of the leading causes of terrorism is the economic inequalities that individuals and societies face. Inequitable distribution of state resources, distortions in income distribution, and structural barriers in access to financial resources create a sense of exclusion and worthlessness in individuals, which makes them vulnerable to turning to radical structures. In particular, the lack of equal opportunities leads to certain groups being excluded from the system, and this situation is being exploited ideologically. Research in this context reveals that economically disadvantaged individuals, especially the young population, can be more easily influenced by the propaganda and promises of terrorist organizations. The widespread unemployment leads individuals to give up hope in the system and to the perception of having "nothing to lose". This situation makes them the target audience of organizations. Many field studies have shown that individuals from low-income families join organizations due to economic insecurity (Urhal ve Acar, 2007).

According to Kaplan and Dayıoğlu (2017), the economic causes of terrorism can be categorized under the following headings:

"Low level of income in the society",

"Inequalities in income distribution causing class divisions",

- “High unemployment rates (hidden and open)”,
- “Increasing economic interdependence”,
- “Ineffective functioning of economic institutions”,
- “The loss of state control over the economy”,
- “Failure to control chronic inflation”,
- “Intensifying economic pressures as the external debt burden increases”.

However, terrorism imposes severe economic burdens not only on terrorist groups but also on states. Increased security expenditures put pressure on the public budget, the investment environment deteriorates, the tourism sector shrinks, and foreign investments decrease. Especially in regions with high security concerns, foreign investors’ perception of risk increases, and capital flight occurs. This hinders development-oriented social investments and slows economic growth. In conclusion, terrorism is a serious risk factor threatening financial stability and sustainable development.

The psychological underpinnings of terrorism are closely related to how individuals perceive their place in society. Individuals who feel excluded, worthless, or ignored may develop a tendency to compensate for this situation through violence over time. In particular, individuals with weak social support, who do not receive sufficient attention and love from their families, may tend to turn to terrorist organizations as a space to express themselves. Over time, these individuals develop an aggressive, maladaptive, and complex behavior pattern and identify with radical structures (Caşın, 2008).

Research shows that most of the individuals who join organizations were exposed to violence in childhood, lost at least one family member, or grew up without basic support systems. Such individuals have strong feelings of exclusion and the urge to take revenge. Organizations manipulate young individuals by developing discourses such as freedom, belonging, heroism, justice, and having a say in governance (Öztürk and Çelik, 2009).

One of the main theoretical approaches used to explain this process is the Diffusion/Convergence Theory. According to this theory, which was developed based on Gustave Le Bon’s mass psychology studies, individuals lose their individuality in a crowded group and begin to exhibit emotional and irrational behaviors. This state of collective consciousness causes the individual to lose responsibility and legitimizes radical behavior.

The second necessary approach is the Theory of Relative Deprivation. According to this theory, when individuals feel a mismatch between their social expectations and the opportunities they access, they feel excluded and wronged. This perception may lead them to radical tendencies (Dücan and Özsoylu, 2016). In this context, terrorism is not only a result of objective conditions but also of perception.



Another dimension as crucial as economic and psychological factors is socio-cultural factors. Cultural elements of societies, such as religion, language, history, identity, traditions, and customs, shape individuals' sense of belonging. However, conflict or change in these elements can open individuals to radical tendencies (Kılıç, 2007). Especially in multicultural societies, when different groups feel that their identities are under threat, this leads to conflict and segregation.

The institution of the family also has a critical place among the sociological causes of terrorism. The family plays a key role in the individual's socialization, value acquisition, and social integration. Feelings of love, trust, solidarity, and responsibility are acquired mainly within the family. However, individuals who do not receive adequate support from the family tend to turn to alternative, often illegal, social structures. At this point, the family is essential not only as a protective unit but also as a structure that provides value transmission (Kızmaz, 2006).

Another effective factor in the spread of terrorism is communication and media tools. Especially since the 19th century, with the spread of newspaper reading culture, terrorist organizations have become more effective in conveying their ideologies to the masses. Today, the development of digital media has multiplied this effect on a global scale. Terrorist groups can make propaganda, recruit new members, and manipulate world public opinion through social media (Rustemova, 2006).

The concept of identity also comes to the fore among socio-cultural reasons. Individuals' inability to meet their need for belonging leads them to search for new identities. Adolescents can especially join terrorist organizations by identifying with alternative identities offered by radical structures. In this process, the individual avoids social responsibilities and seeks structures where they can feel strong, vital, and meaningful. Terrorist organizations try to fill this gap with ideological and rhetorical tools (Özeren et al., 2010).

## **2. A Brief Overview of the Course of Terrorism in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia**

Since the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye; ethnic, religious, and ideological problems within the country have been influential in determining the security policies of the state. Especially the Kurdish uprisings in the early years of the Republic and the emergence of the PKK terrorist organization have led to permanent changes in internal security strategies.

The founding of the Republic in 1923 aimed at both ideological and structural transformation. However, these reforms created discontent among tribal and religious leaders, especially in eastern and southeastern Anatolia, and formed the basis of early rebellions (Olson, 1989). In this context, the Beytüşşebap Uprising 1924 was the first uprising against the state apparatus in these regions (Bozarslan, 2003).

Such regional uprisings soon became the starting point for larger-scale revolts. Accordingly, the 1925 Sheikh Sait Rebellion, which took place in a more organized and ideological manner against the existing Republican regime and state structure, is considered a critical turning point for the Republican administration. Sheikh Sait found broad support by combining religious discourses with Kurdish nationalism, and the rebellion spread throughout the region in a short time. The Republican administration took extraordinary measures, enacted the Takrir-i Sükûn Law, and suppressed the uprising through martial law and the Independence Courts (Zürcher, 2004). After the suppression of the Sheikh Sait Rebellion, the state developed more comprehensive policies to control regional structures regarding security problems in the region.

The rebellions suppressed during this period soon turned into more organized uprisings. Especially the Ağrı and Dersim rebellions of the late 1920s have taken their place in history as organizations that terrorized ethnic and cultural identity. The Ararat Rebellion (1926-1930) was organized by the Hoybun organization and became an armed uprising within the framework of Kurdish nationalism (Jwaideh, 2006). During the suppression of this rebellion, Türkiye used its air force for the first time in internal security operations to increase the effectiveness of its security forces (Zürcher, 2004). This historical case demonstrates the state's determination to maintain public order and protect its territorial integrity.

Similarly, the Dersim Rebellion (1937-1938) emerged as a movement with elements of not only ethnic but also sectarian identity. To strengthen its regional authority and ensure public order, the state enacted the Tunceli Law, directly linking the area to the Ministry of Interior (Kieser, 2006). After the suppression of the rebellion, social and cultural policies in the region were developed in line with the restoration of public order. This process should reflect the Republican administration's efforts to establish law and administrative authority throughout the country (McDowall, 2000).

The transition to multi-party political life in the 1950s and the greater rights and freedoms granted by the 1961 Constitution transformed social and political dynamics in Türkiye's eastern and southeastern regions and across the country. These developments enabled citizens in the area to more visibly voice their demands in various fields (Watts, 2010). In this period, some Kurdish intellectuals started to express their needs for economic justice and cultural identity on democratic platforms by participating in various political parties, especially in leftist movements (Bozarslan, 2003).

However, the increasing social mobility in the 1960s and 1970s evolved into different orientations. During this period, organizations that openly defended the Kurdish identity emerged, and especially the Eastern Revolutionary Culture Ocakları (DDKO) became an essential representative of this process (Yalçın-Heckmann, 1991). This process paved the way for the emergence of a more organized terrorist organization with a higher propensity for violence in the following years, and the PKK terrorist organization was



founded by Abdullah Öcalan in 1978. The PKK, acting in line with a Marxist-Leninist ideology, aimed to establish an independent socialist Kurdish state (Marcus, 2007; Gunter, 1990).

With the Eruh and Şemdinli attacks in 1984, the PKK officially emerged as an active terrorist organization with its armed actions, and this development necessitated a restructuring of Türkiye's internal security policies (Barkey and Fuller, 1998). In the face of this threat, the state expanded the village guard system and subjected the region to a special administrative status through the State of Emergency (OHAL).

Between 1984 and 1990, the PKK sought to increase its influence in rural areas. The state strengthened internal security measures and developed policies to protect the region's people. However, civilians were also severely affected from time to time during this period of conflict, leading to village evacuations and forced migrations. The 1990s were a period of intensified PKK activity and heightened domestic security concerns in Türkiye. In these years, Türkiye made various diplomatic attempts to isolate the PKK in the international arena, and the changing global balances, especially with the collapse of the Soviet Union, were effective in this process (Romano, 2006).

During this period, the PKK tried to increase its influence by organizing terrorist acts both within the country and across borders, and carried out heavy attacks against security forces and civilian areas, especially in the Southeastern Anatolia Region between 1992 and 1995. Türkiye. On the other hand, the Turkish state further strengthened its security policies, expanded the village guard system, and targeted the organization's logistics lines and headquarters with cross-border operations (Jenkins, 2008).

In 1993, the search for a solution initiated by President Turgut Özal was supported by a unilateral ceasefire declared by the PKK, raising hopes for peace in the society. However, the political uncertainty following Özal's death caused this process to remain inconclusive (McDowall, 2000).

Towards the mid-1990s, violent tendencies within the PKK began to predominate, and attacks against civilian targets increased. Bombings, especially in metropolitan areas, demonstrated the organization's tactics change and efforts to establish a presence in urban centers (Marcus, 2007). During this period, the region suffered severe economic and social devastation, and millions of citizens were forced to relocate.

An important turning point occurred in 1999. The arrest of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in Kenya and his extradition to Türkiye (February 1999) led to a serious breakdown in the organization's morale, and soon after, the organization declared a unilateral ceasefire and decided to withdraw from Türkiye (White, 2000). Öcalan's emphasis on "solution and negotiation" during his trial in İmralı marked the beginning of a new era in the organization's discourse.

Nevertheless, in the early 2000s, new structures such as the Kongra-Gel emerged within the PKK following an evolutionary process (Gunter, 2010). However, the inability to fully dismantle the violent wing of the organization has led to an escalation of violence from time to time.

In the 2020s, the PKK was forced to limit its armed activities primarily in the traditional rural areas, and the organization focused more on strengthening its presence in Syria and northern Iraq. Türkiye's cross-border operations and security policies have severely weakened the PKK's operational capacity inside Türkiye. In the same period, the organization sought international legitimacy through its Syrian affiliate YPG/PYD and maintained indirect contacts with the US and some Western actors. However, Türkiye's diplomatic pressure and regional security moves have narrowed the scope of these attempts. On the other hand, the PKK's ideological structure underwent a significant change, shifting its discourse from the goal of independence to demands for autonomy and local governance. Nevertheless, the organization continued to be designated as a terrorist organization both nationally and internationally. As of 2025, it has been trying to develop different political and military tactics to maintain its regional presence.

### 3. Economic Reflections of Terrorism in TRB and TRC Regions

Terrorism is considered a multidimensional security problem that disrupts economic development processes, negatively affects investment decisions, and causes severe fractures in the social structure. Türkiye's TRB and TRC level 2 regions are among the geographies most affected by this phenomenon in economic terms, as they have historically been areas where ethnic, political, and security-based conflicts have been concentrated. The fact that development processes in these regions lag behind national averages is mainly due to the disruption of macro- and micro-economic dynamics by long-standing terrorist incidents.

In this study, the economic effects of terrorism are evaluated through four basic parameters: "*per capita income, unemployment, poverty rates, and internal migration dynamics*". The low level of per capita income is associated with insufficient productivity and investments, and with the deterrent effect of security risks on economic activities. Similarly, the shrinking demand for labor and the weak development of the private sector in the region have perpetuated high unemployment rates. Moreover, poverty rates are higher than the national average, exacerbating economic inequalities caused by limited access to public services and security risks.

One of the direct and indirect effects of terrorism is forced internal migration movements. Due to security concerns, population movements, especially from rural areas to urban centers or western regions, transform the demographic structure and cause new social and economic problems in migration areas. In this context, it is necessary to determine the impact of the negative economic momentum created by terrorist incidents in

the TRB and TRC regions and to re-evaluate regional development policies in the light of these parameters.

This study aims to analyze the effects of terrorism on the four leading indicators using TurkStat data and academic literature.

TRB and TRC regions, within the scope of Level-2 Region classification, are located in the Eastern Anatolia Region and the Southeastern Anatolia Region of Türkiye. The TRB Region is divided into two sub-regions, TRB1 and TRB2. TRB1 Region includes the provinces of “*Malatya, Elazığ, Bingöl, and Tunceli*”, while TRB2 Region includes the provinces of “*Van, Muş, Bitlis, and Hakkari*”. When the geographical structure of these regions is analyzed, it is seen that they have been affected by long-standing socioeconomic and economic problems and security-based threats. In addition, studies on the financial effects of terrorism in the regions, the production, employment, migration, and poverty rate caused by security problems stand out. Security is seen as an indispensable condition for economic development. Countries are generally considered directly or indirectly dependent on the perception of security to achieve and maintain macroeconomic stability.

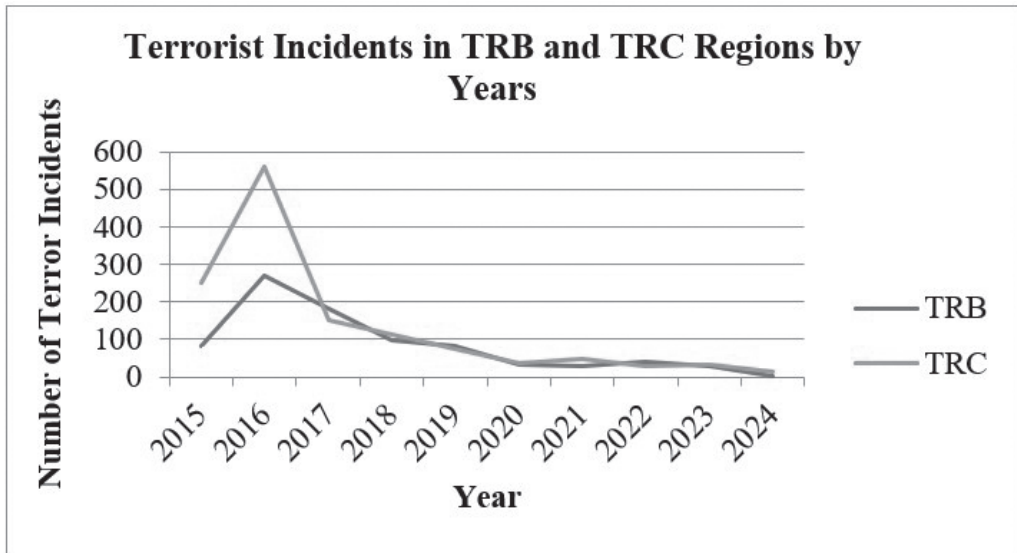
In Türkiye, the PKK terrorist organization, which has been effective in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia Regions since the 1980s, has severely disrupted both the social life and economic activities of the people of the region with its systematic oppression and intimidation methods. In particular, many cities in the TRC region are among the places with the lowest socioeconomic development index in Türkiye. Terrorist activities have led to unemployment, poverty, and migration. At the same time, temporary village evacuations on security grounds, highland bans, and the shrinking of rural production areas have negatively affected basic livelihoods such as agriculture and animal husbandry. In this context, it can be said that the economic underdevelopment in the TRB and TRC regions is not based solely on geographical or structural reasons, but mainly on ongoing security problems (Diler and Karabulut, 2022).

In particular, the migration of skilled labor from the region to the west reduces local productivity and causes per capita income to remain low. In addition, inequalities in basic services such as education, health, and infrastructure weaken the region’s development dynamics. Therefore, TRB and TRC regions are of critical importance for analyzing the consequences of terrorism on economic development in Türkiye.

TRB and TRC Level-2 regions, which cover the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia regions of Türkiye, are among the areas that have been under the influence of intense security problems and terrorist activities for many years. While the TRC region has become a propaganda, organization, and action area for terrorist organizations due to its strategic geographical location and ethnic structure, the TRB region has been directly targeted due to its strategic transit routes and rural socioeconomic structure. The impa-

ct of terrorism in these regions remains at the security level. It has multidimensional socioeconomic consequences such as losing human capital, reduced production capacity, deepening regional development disparities, and perpetuating structural poverty. In particular, the mass migration of skilled labor to Western provinces weakens local productivity, leading to low per capita income levels and increasing regional economic inequalities. In addition, disruptions in access to basic public services such as education, health, and infrastructure severely limit the region's capacity for sustainable development and create permanent disruptions in social welfare. In this context, TRB and TRC regions provide a critical analytical framework for analyzing the structural effects of terrorism on economic development in Türkiye, and demonstrate the determining role of the security-economy relationship on regional development dynamics.

**Graph 1: Terrorist Incidents in TRB and TRC Regions by Years (Crisisgroup)**

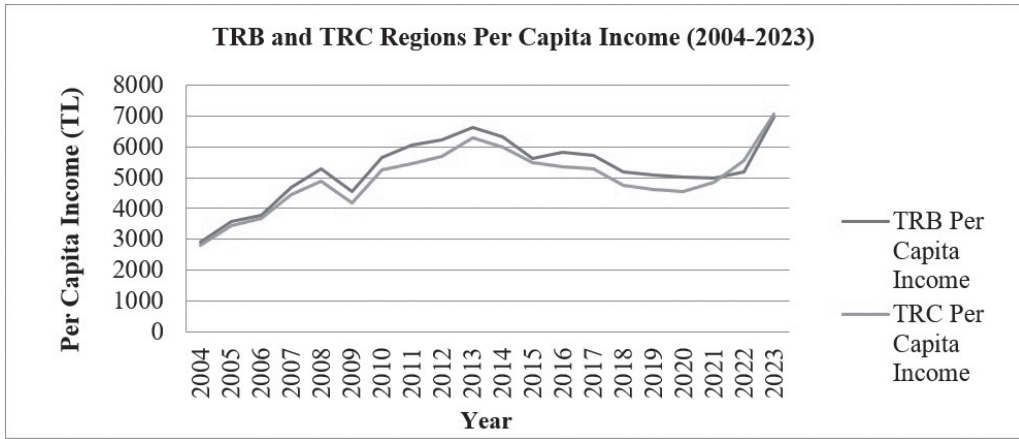


To reveal the structural effects of terrorism on regional development more concretely, the course of terrorist incidents in the TRB and TRC regions between 2015 and 2024 is analyzed graphically. Chart 1 shows the change in terrorist incidents in Türkiye's TRC and TRB regions by year between 2005 and 2024. It is noteworthy that the most intense year of terrorist incidents for both regions was 2016. In the TRB region, terrorist incidents more than tripled compared to 2015. In 2016, the TRB region, which had a relatively lower number of incidents in 2015, reached an intensity approaching that of the TRC region. This sharp increase is primarily attributed to the intensification of organizational activities in rural areas and terrorist incidents and structures in urban cen-

ters. In the TRC region, terrorist incidents, which were already at high levels, increased further in 2016 and reached their highest level. This shows that 2016 was a period of low security in the TRC region, and the socioeconomic balance was seriously disrupted. After 2016, a significant decline in terrorist incidents started in both regions in 2017. This decline is directly related to intensifying security policies and measures, such as strengthening internal security operations and tightening border controls. Since 2020, terrorist incidents have remained relatively low and stable in the TRB and TRC regions. However, slight fluctuations were recorded in the TRC region in 2021 and 2023.

Beyond threatening the security of individuals, terrorist incidents also have direct and indirect effects on economic indicators. Especially in prolonged conflict and terrorist environments, investor confidence is undermined, economic activity decreases, leading to a decline in per capita income.

**Graph 2: Per Capita Income in TRB and TRC Regions**



In light of these findings, it is essential to examine the effects of terrorist incidents on socioeconomic indicators, especially on regional development. When Chart 2 is analyzed, the data obtained between 2005 and 2023 reveal that periodically increasing terrorist incidents in both regions put pressure on per capita income. Especially in 2016, terrorist incidents significantly increased in both the TRB and TRC regions. For example, terrorist incidents in the TRC region increased from 252 in 2015 to 563 in 2016, while in the TRB region, they increased from 83 to 270 in the same period. Although there was a short-term increase in per capita income during this period, a significant decline was observed in the following years.

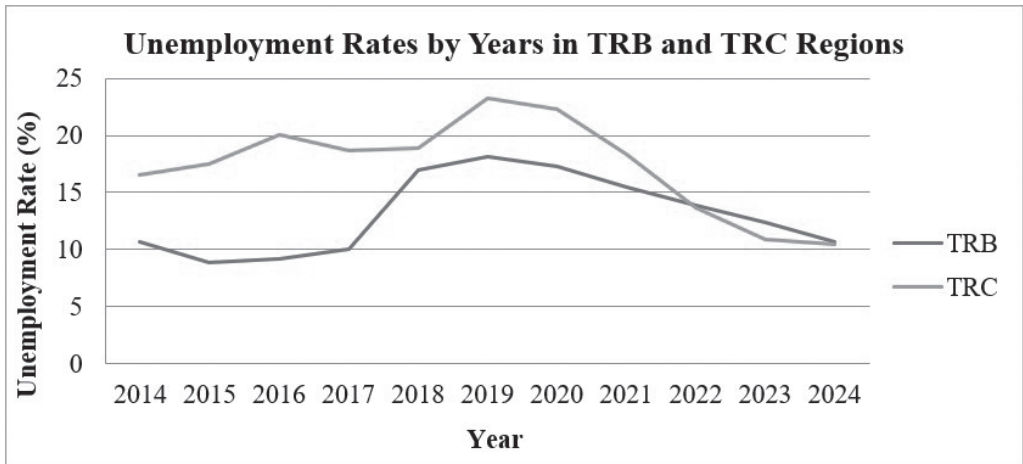
While income per capita in the TRC region was 5,370 ₺ in 2016, it decreased to 4,634 ₺ in 2019. In the TRB region, per capita income declined from 5,809 ₺ in 2016 to 5,072

₺ in 2019. This shows that the economic impact of terrorist incidents emerged with a lag and structurally weakened the regional income level.

By 2023, although income levels in both regions have increased compared to 2005, this increase is considered a nominal increase driven by inflation rather than overall economic growth. In the international literature, various studies have revealed the adverse effects of terrorist incidents on economic development and income levels. Gaibullov and Sandler (2008) argue that terrorism permanently reduces the rate of economic growth in developing countries. Blomberg, Hess, and Orphanides (2004), on the other hand, state that terrorist incidents slow down the economic development of countries and reduce the level of welfare by negatively affecting production and capital flows. Studies on Türkiye also point to similar results. Bilgel and Karahasan (2016) reveal that terrorism has a significant impact on per capita income, especially in the Southeastern Anatolia Region, and that there are significant declines in income levels during periods of intensified violence.

To better understand the dynamics of high unemployment rates in the region, it is necessary to examine the main factors surrounding terrorism and economic instability. TRB and TRC regions are among the most vulnerable areas of Türkiye, struggling with structural unemployment. The problem of unemployment in these regions is closely related not only to economic but also to social and security dimensions. In particular, terrorist incidents that have been going on for many years, an unstable investment environment, a low education level, and intensive migration mobility cause regional unemployment rates to remain high.

**Graph 4: Unemployment in TRB-TRC Regions**





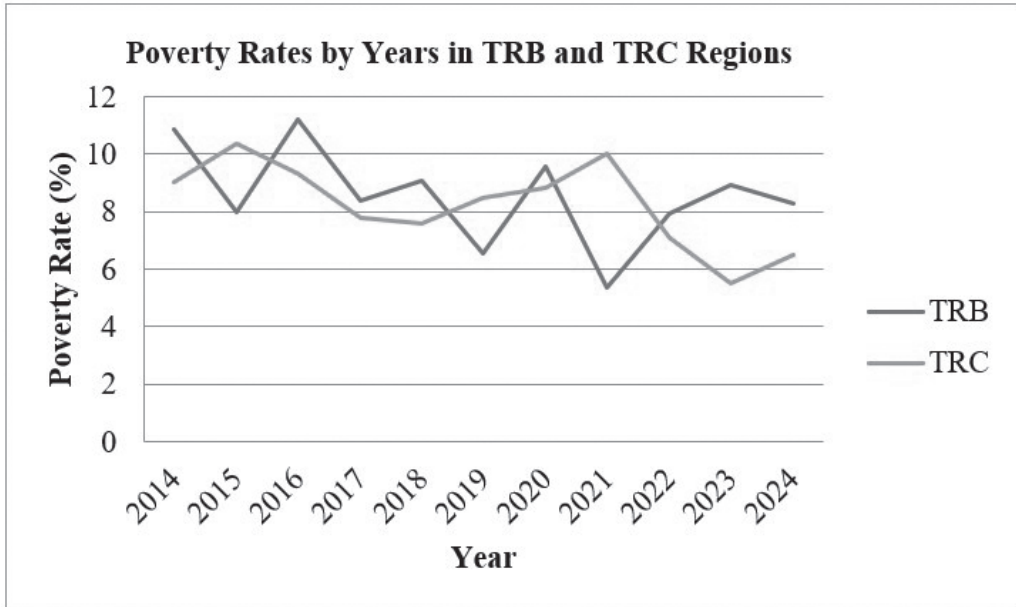
Following the impact of terrorist incidents on unemployment rates, it is essential to examine how poverty-level changes shape the regional development process. In light of Graph 4, an analysis of data for the 2005-2023 period reveals that terrorist incidents in the TRC region peaked in 2015-2016, followed by a downward trend. Similarly, in the TRB region, 2016 was the year in which there was a significant jump in terrorist incidents. Interestingly, unemployment rates fluctuated similarly in both areas during the same period. For example, the unemployment rate in the TRC region increased from 17.5% in 2015 to 20.03% in 2016, while in the TRB region it increased from 8.85% to 9.17% in the same years.

Although there has been a noticeable decrease in terrorist incidents in the following years, it is noteworthy that unemployment rates have not decreased; on the contrary, they have increased even more in some years. In the TRC region, the unemployment rate reached 23.28% in 2019, while in the TRB region, it was as high as 17% in 2018. This table reveals that terrorist incidents can cause both short-term and medium and long-term increases in unemployment. In the post-2020 period, it is observed that terrorist incidents followed a fluctuating course in both regions, whereas a significant downward trend was observed in unemployment rates. This suggests that public support programs, regional development incentives, and employment policies implemented especially after 2020 have positively affected the labor market. However, the fact that terrorist incidents have not entirely disappeared still negatively affects investment and production decisions in the region. Nevertheless, the decline in unemployment rates indicates that the economic confidence environment has partially improved with the decrease in terrorism.

On the other hand, the economic effects of terrorist incidents are not limited to unemployment; they also leave deep traces on poverty rates, one of the most fundamental indicators of social welfare. Especially in developing countries, the interaction between security problems and economic vulnerability stands out as an essential factor that increases the persistence of poverty.

These structural vulnerabilities are more clearly illustrated in Chart 3, which shows how poverty rates in TRB and TRC regions have evolved over the years.

The main determinants of poverty in the TRB and TRC regions are low education levels, limited industrial investments, a fragile economic structure based on agriculture, and long-standing security problems. Especially during periods of intense terrorist incidents, the decrease in public investments, the slowdown in private sector initiatives, and the increase in internal migration movements cause poverty to deepen even more. Gümüş (2024) states that the economic pressure created by terrorism in the TRC region has weakened basic livelihoods such as agriculture and animal husbandry, leading to severe declines in household incomes.

**Graph 5: Poverty in TRB-TRC Regions**

The parallelism between the changes in poverty rates in the TRB and TRC regions and terrorist incidents has been analyzed in more detail in light of periodic data.

When the data for the 2015-2024 period is analyzed, it is seen that there has been a significant increase in terrorist incidents in both regions, especially in 2016. In the TRB region, terrorist incidents increased from 83 in 2015 to 270 in 2016, while in the TRC region, terrorist incidents increased from 252 to 563 in the same period. This significant increase indicates that the security environment has deteriorated, and economic activities have contracted.

The change in poverty rates in the relevant years is also striking. While the poverty rate in the TRB region was 8% in 2015, it increased to 11.2% in 2016. On the other hand, the poverty rate in the TRC region decreased from 10.37% in 2015 to 9.33% in 2016. However, it was observed that the poverty rate in the TRC region started to increase again in the following years. This situation reveals that the impact of terrorist incidents on poverty is indirect, lagging, and structural.

As of 2021, the poverty rate in the TRC region increased to 10.03%, while it decreased to 5.35% in the TRB region. The fact that terrorist incidents are more limited and under control in the TRB region compared to the TRC region may have enabled economic activities to continue more stably. In addition, the fact that the demographic

structure of the TRB region is less migratory, has a lower urbanization rate, and is more economically stable than the TRC region may have created a more manageable environment in the fight against poverty.

In the TRC region, on the other hand, the increase in terrorist incidents is considered to have damaged investor confidence, slowed down investments, and disrupted basic economic activities such as agriculture and animal husbandry. This situation has been effective in increasing poverty rates in the region.

In this framework, Bilgel and Karahasan (2016) also conclude that terrorist incidents in Türkiye have increased poverty and deepened regional inequality, especially in the Southeastern Anatolia Region.

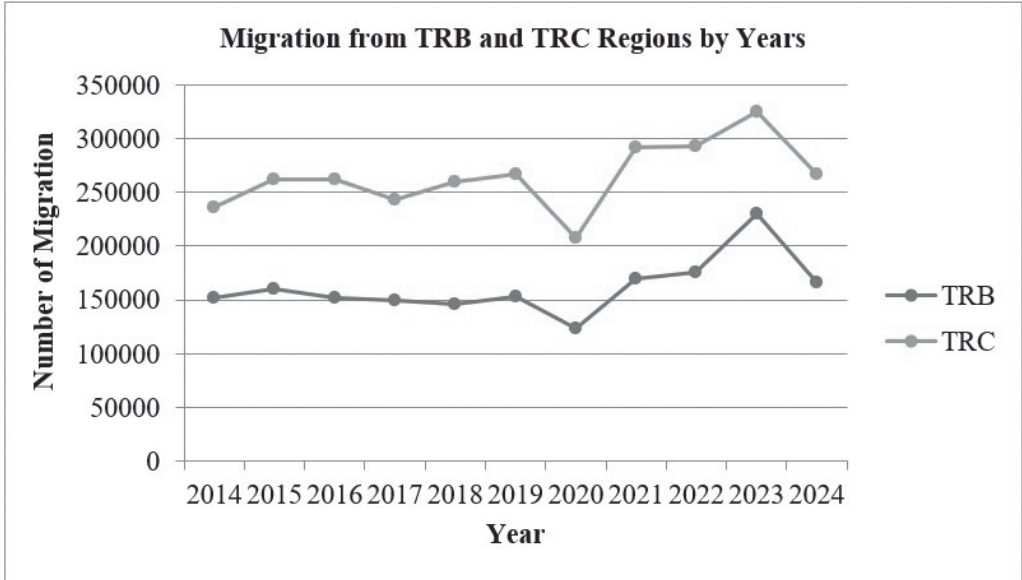
Migration movements triggered by terrorist incidents significantly affect economic indicators, social cohesion, and urban life.

Terrorist incidents have a profound impact not only on security but also on economic development and social welfare. The environment of insecurity plays a decisive role in production, employment, investment, and especially migration dynamics. Migration, in turn, changes the distribution of the labor force and human capital, directly affecting the level of per capita income. Terrorist incidents disrupt the regional security environment and cause forced migration of individuals from the regions where they live, and this mobility creates permanent effects on economic structures. Especially in the areas based on agriculture and industrial production, migration due to security threats reduces the local labor supply, shrinks the investment environment, and leads to a decline in per capita income.

Melander and Öberg (2006) show that terrorism triggers internal migration and that this migration is mostly security rather than economically motivated. Similarly, Moore and Shellman (2004) show that internal conflict and terrorist incidents affect migration decisions in combination with rational economic preferences and that this population mobility increases poverty. In this context, the impact of terrorist incidents on migration should be considered not only as a humanitarian crisis but also as a structural economic issue that affects per capita income levels.

Avşar (2009) states that terrorism-induced migration from the Eastern and Southeastern regions causes serious problems in areas such as infrastructure, housing, and employment in the cities of migration. Similarly, in a study conducted by Güneş (2013) on the case of Mersin, it is stated that migration due to terrorism contributes to increased crime rates in urban areas.

**Graph 6: Migration in TRB-TRC Regions**



Graph 6 shows the migration movements from the TRB and TRC regions by year. When the data covering the 2014-2024 period is analyzed, it is seen that the migration phenomenon is continuous in both areas and shows an upward trend in certain years.

In the TRC region, a relative increase in the number of migrants is observed in 2015-2016, which coincides with the intense terrorist incidents in the relevant period. Especially in 2016, when terrorist incidents peaked, there was a remarkable increase in the number of individuals migrating from the TRC region. In the following years, a fluctuating course was observed in migration rates; a slight decrease in migration rates was observed in 2019, and after 2021, migration figures entered an upward trend again. In 2023, the significant increase in migration from the TRC region can be explained by the impact of the breakdown in the security environment and the economic contraction.

In the TRB region, migration rates were lower compared to the TRC region. While there was a relatively stable trend in the number of migrants between 2014 and 2019, there was a gradual increase after 2020. In 2022 and 2023, there was a significant increase in individuals migrating from the TRB region. This increase can be directly attributed to the deterioration in the perception of security, the decline of economic conditions in the area, and the rise in unemployment rates.

Graphical data reveal that migration in the TRC region has followed a more intense and fluctuating course. In contrast, although more limited, migration movements in the TRB region have shown a significant upward trend in recent years. These results are

consistent with the security-induced migration dynamics mentioned in previous studies (Melander and Öberg, 2006; Moore and Shellman, 2004; Avşar, 2009). It is observed that migration accelerates especially during periods when terrorist incidents intensify, while migration rates stabilize during periods when the security environment partially improves.

The graph reveals the migration dynamics shaped by the direct and indirect effects of terrorist incidents in the TRB and TRC regions. It shows that migration is an individual security measure and a factor that reshapes the regional economic structure.

### Conclusion and Evaluation

This study aims to analyze the effects of long-standing terrorist incidents on economic and social dynamics in Türkiye's TRB and TRC level-2 regions. The findings reveal that terrorism has a profound and lasting impact on security and fundamental socio-economic indicators such as per capita income, unemployment rates, poverty levels, and internal migration mobility.

In light of the data for the period between 2005 and 2023, it is observed that following the increase in terrorist incidents, especially in 2015-2016, per capita income levels decreased, and unemployment and poverty rates increased significantly. This is in line with the findings of studies such as Gaibullov and Sandler (2008) and Blomberg, Hess, and Orphanides (2004) that terrorism permanently weakens the economic growth rate and negatively affects the welfare level. Moreover, the findings of Melander and Öberg (2006) and Moore and Shellman (2004) that security-induced internal migration deepens this study also support regional imbalances. Migration data show that security-based forced migration is more intense in the TRC region, while in the TRB region, this effect is more limited, but has been on the rise in recent years. This situation creates long-term structural effects on production, investment, and employment, making inter-regional development disparities even more pronounced.

In line with the findings, various policy recommendations are proposed to support regional development and break the negative cycle of the security-economy relationship. First of all, security and development strategies should be integrated, and regional development programs that are not only based on security measures but also strengthen the investment environment should be implemented simultaneously. Strengthening the human capital in the region by supporting education and professional development programs and integrating the young and female workforce into economic life will provide a positive economic impetus. Within the scope of the fight against poverty, direct income supports and projects promoting rural development should be expanded, and projects that will ensure in-situ development in regions that emigrate should be among the priority projects. Strengthening social cohesion policies in cities receiving migration and taking supportive measures in infrastructure, housing, and employment will nega-

tively affect security problems. In addition, investment incentives and financial support packages specific to regions should be offered to boost local production capacity and entrepreneurship potential. This multidimensional approach will mitigate the effects of terrorism-induced economic and social disruptions over time, and regional economic negativities will disappear.

As a result, the most fundamental finding of the study is that combating the economic effects of terrorism in TRB and TRC regions should be carried out from a security perspective and with holistic development policies that will repair socioeconomic vulnerabilities. As frequently emphasized in the literature (Bilgel and Karahasan, 2016; Gaibullov and Sandler, 2008), lasting peace and sustainable development can only be possible through the coordinated design and implementation of security, economic, and social policies.

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### Extended Abstract

This study analyzes the effects of the long-standing terrorist incidents in Türkiye's TRB and TRC regions on regional socioeconomic structures. The study aims to demonstrate that terrorism is not only a security problem but also a structural factor that directly affects economic and social development. The research's central values are per capita income, unemployment rates, poverty levels, and internal migration mobility. Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) data for 2005-2023 are evaluated through quantitative analysis. In addition, the findings are interpreted from a comparative perspective within the literature framework.

The study's main objective is to show with concrete data how regional inequalities are deepened not only by economic reasons but also by security-based factors and how sustainable development goals are hindered by terrorist incidents. In addition to quantitative analysis methods, the study draws on regional development literature, theories of the security-development nexus, and current academic debates in the sociology of migration. Graphically supported data analysis and periodic comparisons were used, and the literature interpreted and supported the findings.

The effects of terrorist incidents on regional economies have been evaluated multidimensionally. Per capita income data show that the TRB and TRC regions experienced severe declines in 2015-2016. The terrorist incidents, which increased especially in 2015, directly impacted economic activities and led to principal contractions in traditional sectors such as agriculture and animal husbandry. Private sector investments in the region declined, while public investments were directed towards security expenditures.

This has led to a slowdown in economic growth, higher unemployment rates, and a decline in regional welfare.

Unemployment data also clearly shows the effects of terrorism. The unemployment rate in the TRC region showed a serious jump in 2016. Although there is a recovery trend in the post-2020 period, the structural unemployment problem in the region has become permanent. The adverse effects of terrorist incidents on the investment climate prevented the creation of new business areas and further increased unemployment rates among the young population. This situation triggered regional migration movements and led to significant changes in the social structure.

Internal migration dynamics are also discussed in detail in the study. In the post-2016 period, migration flows from the TRC region to western provinces increased significantly. The fact that most of the migrant population is young, educated, and working-age individuals has deepened the problem of human capital loss. The difficulties faced by those migrating from the region, especially in metropolitan cities, in finding jobs and adaptation processes, have led to new social problems. On the other hand, population decline in the regions that emigrated weakened the economic dynamism of rural areas and led to a decrease in production capacity in the long run.

In addition to the direct effects of terrorism, the study also emphasizes its indirect effects. The negative perception of security caused by terrorist incidents reduced existing investments and discouraged new investment initiatives. In this context, it has been observed that the impact of publicly supported development projects and incentives for the region has been limited. The fragility of the investment climate has weakened economic diversification in the area, narrowed labor markets, and reduced competitiveness.

In terms of poverty rates, it was found that both absolute and relative poverty increased during the years when terrorist incidents intensified. The population living in rural areas was particularly affected due to the decline in agricultural production and difficulties in accessing infrastructure services. Difficult access to education and health services in the region led to a decline in social welfare and the interruption of the development process.

The conclusion section of the study includes a holistic evaluation of the findings. It has been revealed that terrorist incidents have created a structural crisis area in the TRB and TRC regions, not only in the context of security but also directly affecting economic and social development. This finding indicates that regional development policies should be implemented simultaneously and integrated with counterterrorism strategies. It was also emphasized that development tools should be used effectively, such as increasing investments in education, supporting regional entrepreneurship, modernizing agricultural production, and direct income support.

Policy recommendations include establishing a stronger coordination mechanism between security forces and local development actors, developing employment programs to encourage the return of migrant populations, and increasing investments in rural infrastructure. It is also proposed that comprehensive social policy programs be implemented to strengthen education and employment opportunities for the region's young population.

In conclusion, this study reveals that terrorist incidents should be addressed not only from a security perspective but also from a socioeconomic development perspective. To create a sustainable development process in the TRB and TRC regions, it is understood that taking only military measures against the effects of terrorism will not be sufficient; instead, holistic strategies should be developed in the economic, social, and cultural fields. To accelerate regional development and ensure social integration, it is imperative to harmonize anti-terrorism policies with long-term development goals.

In this context, the study contributes to the academic literature and provides an essential theoretical and empirical basis for regional policy development processes. It develops a strong suggestion that policies to mitigate the socioeconomic effects of terrorism in Türkiye's eastern and southeastern regions should be security-based and inclusive development-based. In future studies, conducting comparative analyses on different regional cases will contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between security and development.