Technology, Organization, and the Militarization of Intelligence: The Turkish Experience*

Teknoloji, Organizasyon ve İstihbaratın Askerileşmesi: Türkiye Örneği

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Abstract

Advances in targeting technology have increasingly militarized intelligence agencies, positioning them at the forefront of unconventional conflicts such as counterterrorism. The National Intelligence Agency (MİT)'s role in counterterrorism can be studied within this context. Accordingly, this article aims to examine the underlying factors that have contributed to the militarization of intelligence activities, focusing on MİT. This transformation has been elucidated through the variables of technology and organization. The transformation was initiated by the advent of drone technology and reinforced by the introduction of novel organizational structures and mission statements. During this period, a new conceptualization of intelligence emerged, whereby intelligence and operations were unified under a single mission definition and tactical intelligence priorities assumed a greater significance. The technological and organizational transformation also impacted the MİT, which underwent a process of increasing militarization after 2019 and became a pivotal actor in Türkiye's counterterrorism operations against PKK/KCK.

Keywords: Counterterrorism, Technology, Organization, Intelligence, Operation

Öz

Hedefleme teknolojisindeki gelişimler istihbarat teşkilatlarını giderek artan bir şekilde askerileştirerek terörle mücadele gibi konvansiyonel olmayan çatışmaların merkezine yerleştirmiştir. Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı'nın terörle mücadele amaçlı olarak gerçekleştirdiği faaliyetler de bu kapsamda incelenebilecektir. Bu makalenin amacı da genel çerçevede istihbarat faaliyetinin özelde ise Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı'nın askerileşme sürecinin arkasındaki dinamiklerin tartışılmasıdır. Bu dönüşüm teknoloji ve organizasyon değişkenleri kullanılarak açıklanacaktır. Dönüşüm SİHA teknolojisi tarafından tetiklenmiş, yeni organizasyon yapılar ve görev tanımları ile tamamlanmıştır. Bu süreçte istihbarat ve operasyonun aynı görev tanımı altında toplandığı ve taktik istihbarat önceliklerinin önem kazandığı yeni bir istihbarat anlayışının oluştuğu görülmektedir. Bu dönüşüm Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı'nı da etkilemiş, kurum 2019 sonrasında giderek askerileşerek Türkiye'nin PKK/KCK'ya yönelik olarak yürüttüğü terörle mücadele operasyonlarının merkezi bir aktörü haline gelmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Terörle Mücadele, Teknoloji, Organizasyon, İstihbarat, Harekat

Introduction

Technology affects how wars are fought. This also applies to counterterrorism, which can be defined as unconventional warfare against clandestine armed cell formations. The advent of new technologies has led to significant shifts in the methods and actors involved in counterterrorism. In this new era, the organizational transformation triggered by technology has resulted in intelligence agencies assuming an operational role in counterterrorism. This transformation is referred to as the militarization of intelligence. The advancement of intelligence and firepower technologies has triggered an organizational adaptation and has led to an increasing militarization of the intelligence role in counterterrorism.

The concept of transformation of intelligence is examined in the literature from a variety of perspectives, including technological and organizational dimensions.[1] The majority of these studies concentrate on the operations of the United States (US) intelligence agency and the military special forces against al-Qaeda-affiliated organizations in the aftermath of 9/11.[2] Conversely, it is evident that this transformation, which commenced in the US following the events of 9/11, has significant ramifications for Türkiye and has also influenced the operations conducted by the National Intelligence Agency *(Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı - MİT)* in the context of counterterrorism. Despite their prominence in the media, MİT's military activities remain a relatively understudied topic in academic literature. Accordingly, this article primarily addresses the underlying dynamics of the militarization of intelligence and its impact on MİT. In this context, the study's primary objective is to establish a theoretical framework for understanding the transformation of intelligence, with a particular focus on the role of technology and organizational structures. In terms of technology, the objective is to examine the interrelationship between diverse collection and firepower instruments employed in counterterrorism and the nexus between technology and the human dimensions of targeting. In the organizational dimension, the objective is to direct attention towards and engage with the ongoing debate surrounding intelligence - operations and tactical intelligence - strategic intelligence duality. In light of the considerations mentioned above, the issue of the transformation of MİT is elucidated within the theoretical framework presented herewith.

The article proceeds from an examination of the general to an examination of the specific. In this context, the initial section defines the military model in counterterrorism and reviews the relevant literature on the role of intelligence in counterterrorism. The second section analyzes the first subcomponent of the military model, namely the technological dimension. It examines the targeting tools used by intelligence agencies, exemplifying the technology-intelligence nexus. These tools, which integrate technology and human elements, are pivotal to the targeting operations conducted by intelligence agencies in the context of

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1 William Lahneman, "Is a Revolution in Intelligence Affairs Occurring?", *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 20:1, 2007; Deborah Barger, *Toward a Revolution in Intelligence Affairs*, RAND, California, 2005; Michael Herman, "Where Hath Our Intelligence Been? The Revolution in Military Affairs", *The RUSI Journal*, 143:6, 1998; Amy Zegart, *Spying Blind The CIA, the FBI, and the Origins of 9/11*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2007; Stephen Marrin, "Evaluating CIA's Analytic Performance - Reflections of a Former Analyst", *Orbis*, 57:2, 2013; Eric Denécé, "The Revolution in Intelligence Affairs: 1989–2003", *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 27:1, 2014; John Ferris, "Netcentric Warfare, C4ISR and Information Operations: Towards a Revolution in Military Intelligence?", *Intelligence and National Security*, 19:2, 2004; Bruce Berkowitz, "Intelligence and the War on Terrorism", *Orbis*, 46:2, 2002; Michael Warner, "Reflections on Technology and Intelligence Systems", *Intelligence and National Security*, 27:1, 2012.

2 See Duane Clarridge, *A Spy for All Seasons: My Life in the CIA*, Scribner, New York, 1997; Christopher Fuller, *See It/Shoot It The Secret History of the CIA's Lethal Drone Program*, Yale University Press, London, 2017; Stanley McChrystal, *My Share of the Task A Memoir,* Penguin Books, London, 2013; Jeremy Scahill, *Dirty Wars: The World is a Battlefield*, Nation Books, New York, 2013; Richard Shultz, *Military Innovation in War: It Takes a Learning Organization A Case Study of Task Force 714 in Iraq*, The JSOU Press, Florida, 2016.

counterterrorism operations. The most prominent of these tools are drones, even though they are not the only ones. The utilization of disparate intelligence collection tools is predicated upon a conceptual framework that is analogous to a combined arms approach. This section provides an overview of the technical aspects of intelligence-based operations. The third section addresses the second dimension of the militarization of intelligence, namely the organizational transformation. The existing literature focuses on the technological aspects of transformation. Although technology is the catalyst for this transformation process, it is not the sole determining factor. It is imperative that technology become integrated into the process of organizational transformation, which can be achieved by implementing a novel organizational structure. This organizational transformation can be defined as the increasing importance of tactical intelligence and the dissolution of the distinction between intelligence and operations. This section discusses these two effects (Chart-1). The final section examines the transformation of MİT in the context of counterterrorism operations against PKK/KCK.. After the technological innovations of 2019, MİT has undergone a significant organizational transformation, becoming a prominent operational actor in counterterrorism. Following the incorporation of drone technology into its organizational structure, it has become evident that MİT has assumed a more prominent role in counterterrorism operations, with tactical target priorities becoming a significant mission within its remit. Despite the considerable attention devoted to the transformation of MİT and its new role in counterterrorism in the media, there remains a paucity of qualified academic work on this subject.[3] This is primarily due to the distinctive nature of the profession itself. The lack of transparency and secrecy inherent to this field of study creates critical constraint, leading to an absence of academic studies in the literature. This section seeks to identify MİT's transformation process by analyzing open sources.

Chart -1: Dimensions of Militarization of Counterterrorism Intelligence[4]

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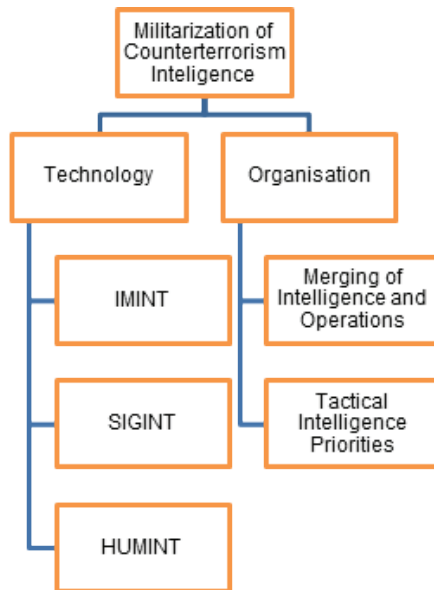
3 For some recent work see Ahmet Ateş, Understanding the Change in Intelligence Organizations: An Institutional Framework, *Doctoral Dissertation*, University of Delaware, Newark, 2020; Polat Safi, *Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı 1826-2023*, Kronik, İstanbul, 2023.
4 Chart is prepared by the author.

1. Military Model in Counterterrorism

The prevailing perspective in terrorism studies is that counterterrorism should be defined as a form of organized crime control rather than a military operation. The responsibility for countering criminal organizations lies with law enforcement agencies, which are a part of the criminal justice system. This model suggests that the methods employed in the fight against organized crime can be applied to counterterrorism. The primary objective of this model is to apprehend the perpetrators, prosecute them in a court of law, and allow the judicial system to determine the appropriate sentence. The problem is that terrorist organizations, due to their distinctive characteristics, frequently become a threat that is beyond the scope of law enforcement. In the context of counterterrorism, the question of how to apprehend cells that utilize sophisticated weaponry and are based in remote and inaccessible locations becomes a significant challenge for law enforcement. The distinction between criminal and terrorist organizations gives rise to the view that the struggle transcends the criminal law model and assumes a military dimension. This is also the case regarding the activities against armed gangs, such as the cartels in Mexico or the G9 gang in Haiti. These armed groups can be considered the counterparts of terrorist organizations in different geographical contexts, and their capacities have long exceeded the limits of the criminal justice model based on law enforcement.

The second model is designated the military model.[5] The term military, is not merely a rhetorical device but directly informs the rules of engagement. In this scenario, a distinction is drawn between legitimate targets and civilians, and the situation is characterized as a low-intensity conflict, rather than a fight against organized crime. Given the nature of the threat, in contrast to the criminal justice model, this model anticipates that an intervention is to be conducted with the utmost force, rather than minimum necessary, and with the objective of neutralize rather than arrest.[6]

The military model was a prevalent strategy employed by powers such as France and the United Kingdom throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. In the 20th century, this model was not confined to former colonial territories; the US governments also preferred this model in response to threats from overseas organizations. In the 1980s, in response to the series of attacks on American citizens and military personnel in Europe and the Middle East, the Reagan administration shifted its counterterrorism strategy into a military model, declared a "war on terrorism" and initiated intelligence-led military operations against Middle Eastern-based organizations. In the 2000s, the wave of attacks reached the US, prompting the Bush administration to declare a "global war on terrorism" in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. Military

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5 For the difference between the criminal justice model and the military model see Seth Jones and Martin Libicky, *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering Al Qa'ida*. RAND, California, 2008; Ronald Crelinsten, Alex Schmid, "Western Responses to Terrorism A Twenty-five Year Balance Sheet", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 4:4, 1992; Khusrav Gaibulloev and Todd Sandler, "An Empirical Analysis of Alternative Ways that Terrorist Groups End", *Public Choice*, 160, 2014; Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism versus Democracy: The Liberal State Response*, Routledge, London, 2011; Leonard Weinberg, *The End of Terrorism?*, Routledge, London, 2012; Paul Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy*, The Brookings Institution, Washington, 2001.

6 This study is concerned with the strategic and tactical dimensions of counterterrorism. Indeed, deploying of military techniques in counterterrorism is not merely a strategic and tactical concern, but also a matter of legal significance. In this context, there have been significant studies examining the issue from the perspective of international humanitarian law *(jus in bello)*. It should be noted that the legal dimension of the transformation of counterterrorism has been excluded from this study, given the limitations of the research. For more information see International Committee of the Red Cross, "What is International Humanitarian Law?", 2004, https://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/what_is_ihl.pdf accessed 28.04.2024; Derek Jinks, "September 11 and the Laws of War", *The Yale Journal of International Law*, 28:1, 2003; Sadi Çaycı, "Countering Terrorism and the Law of Armed Conflict: the Turkish Experience, *International Peacekeeping: The Yearbook of Intonational Peace Operations"*, 8, 2002; Michael Walzer, "Just & Unjust Targeted Killing & Drone Warfare", Daedalus, 145:4, 2016..

operations included the killing of American citizens such as Awlaki by intelligence agencies and special forces using drones without any trial.[7]

In the 21st century, the most significant factor contributing to the militarization of counterterrorism is the advancement of targeting technology. The advent of intelligence and operational technologies facilitating the identification and neutralization of targets in a specified timeframe and location has precipitated a transformation in the actors and strategies employed in counterterrorism. Intelligence agencies are among the institutions that have been most significantly affected in this new era. However, this novel scenario has not been adequately addressed in the extant terrorism literature. While intelligence is accorded significant attention in terrorism literature[8], it is typically categorized as a force multiplier, assisting law enforcement within the criminal justice model. Intelligence is also under-analyzed in the studies defining counterterrorism as a military model. Even in studies that consider intelligence as a discrete variable, the dimensions of collection and analysis are examined, yet the operational aspect of intelligence is absent.[9] Accordingly, the remainder of this article focuses on the operational role of intelligence agencies in counterterrorism, aiming to fill this gap in the existing literature. The new role and the militarization of intelligence are characterized by two key variables: technology and organization. The following section examines the technological dimension.

2. Technology - Intelligence Nexus

Scholarly studies on the relationship between technology and warfare can be traced back to the mid-20th century, a relatively recent period in historical terms. It is widely acknowledged that two fundamental sources, namely British historians and Soviet military circles, played a pivotal role in these studies. The debate subsequently gained traction in the US during the 1990s. These studies concentrated on precision targeting technology and its operational and strategic implications. The primary objective of precision targeting is to enhance intelligence capabilities. The advent of sophisticated intelligence technologies has enabled modern firepower to become the primary instrument in counterterrorism operations. Accordingly, military doctrine based on numerical superiority has been largely eliminated in counterterrorism operations. This doctrine has been superseded by electronic area denial and intelligence-led targeting operations. In particular, the advances in targeting technology and drones have had a profound effect on targeting activities. The advent of new intelligence technologies and their associated doctrinal implications has also precipitated a transformation of intelligence agencies, introducing novel capabilities and tasks. New technologies have significantly impacted technical intelligence, encompassing IMINT and SIGINT, and HUMINT activities.[10]

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7 It is essential to distinguish between the military model and the utilization of military forces for law enforcement purposes during a state of emergency. In numerous countries, infantry units are deployed to establish territorial control in urban areas during periods of elevated risk. First implemented in Northern Ireland in the 1970s, this measure was subsequently adopted by France and Belgium in response to the growing threat posed by ISIS between 2015 and 2016.

8 In the course of his interviews with experts in the field, Schmid identified intelligence as the most crucial variable in counterterrorism, both at the domestic and international levels. Alex Schmid, "Introduction", Alex Schmid (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research,* Routledge, London, 2011; p. 29, 31; Furthermore, there are those who posit that counterterrorism can be defined as a form of warfare between intelligence agencies and terrorist organizations. See Wilkinson, *Terrorism Versus Democracy*, p. 103; Neal Pollard and John Sullivan, "Counterterrorism and Intelligence", Robert Dover, Michael Goodman & Claudia Hillebrand (eds.), *Routledge Companion to Intelligence Studies*, Routledge, London, 2014, p. 245.

9 See Cenker Korhan Demir, *Sebeplerinden Mücadele Yöntemlerine Etnik Ayrılıkçı Terörizm: PIRA, ETA, PKK*, Nobel Kitap, Ankara, 2017; Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy*, pp. 73-123.

10 Targeting activity is not limited to firepower. The role of cyber intelligence activity in targeting cells and lone

2.1. Imagery Intelligence (IMINT)

It can be posited that IMINT plays a unique role in the targeting process. The rationale behind this is that, with precision weapons, any target that can be seen can be hit.[11] The most prevalent form of IMINT technology is the one that employs drones for reconnaissance purposes. It can also be argued that drone-based IMINT technology represents a pivotal shift in the evolution of intelligence agencies. Targeting potential targets has traditionally been the domain of manned air platforms belonging to the air forces. However, with the advent of widespread drone usage, intelligence agencies have increasingly assumed responsibility for this task.

Drones offer a several advantages. First and foremost, they present a more cost-effective alternative by eliminating the necessity for costly platforms and highly trained pilots. Compared to traditional air platforms, unmanned platforms exhibit significantly reduced costs in terms of unit price and expenditure on flight, maintenance, logistics and pilot training. The uninterrupted flow of information thus represents a significant force multiplier during the fixing of a target in a specific time and location. It is important to note that drones are employed not only for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) purposes but also as a means of firepower. In this regard, they have assumed a significant role in integrating of intelligence and operational functions. Indeed, the objective of the US-based drone program is to equip intelligence agencies with firepower capacity.[12]

In this context, the war declared against al-Qaeda can be seen as a milestone in the militarization of both counterterrorism and intelligence agencies. In a novel application of drone technology, an intelligence agency has employed these drones as a firepower element for the first time, diverging from the traditional use of such technology by military organizations. In this context, the initial drone strike was conducted on 7 October 2001, marking the commencement of Operation Enduring Freedom. However, the intended target, Taliban leader Mullah Omar, was not killed.

2.2. Signal Intelligence (SIGINT)

Targeting is typically used in conjunction with IMINT technology, with these two terms being used synonymously.[13] For this reason, SIGINT, which offers critical technical intelligence capability, has remained relatively obscure.[14] The prevailing view is that SIGINT is employed to detect intangible assets, such as verbal information, instead of tangible assets. In other words, it is used to identify messages rather than objects. Accordingly, the objective is to comprehend abstract intentions rather than concrete capabilities. Consequently, in contrast to IMINT, it is believed that SIGINT lacks the capability to fix targets at a precise time and location. Instead, it is employed to decipher the message traffic between cells. Conversely, this instrument constitutes an essential component of the targeting sequence. In particular, signals based on GPS are widely used to detect cells.

SIGINT has become a significant force multiplier in locating targets, particularly in situations where the deployment of human assets is not feasible and visual contact cannot

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actors, particularly in urban settings, has become increasingly prominent. In this context, technical targeting is not limited to IMINT or SIGINT, but also encompasses social media intelligence (SOCMINT), geospatial intelligence (GEOINT) and digital network analysis.

11 S. J. Dudzinsky and James Digby, *The Strategic and Tactical Implications of New Weapon Technologies*, RAND, California, 1976.

12 Fuller, *See It/Shoot It*, pp.104-114.

13 Glenn Goodman, "ISR Now Synonymous with Operations", *Journal of Electronic Defense*, 30:7, 2007, p. 19.

14 Herman, "Where Hath Our Intelligence Been", p. 67.

be guaranteed. In countries such as Somalia and Yemen, where intelligence capabilities are more constrained than in Afghanistan and Iraq, drone operations are focused on targeting signals rather than images. In such scenarios, obtaining visual confirmation of the target is impossible, therefore the mobile phone signal is directly targeted. This approach, often the subject of criticism due to the risk of collateral damage, was employed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) on many occasions over a sustained period.[15]

2.3. Human Intelligence (HUMINT)

As previously stated, targeting is typically equated with technical intelligence, specifically the IMINT activity in the literature. It can be argued that HUMINT activity represents a counter thesis to technocentric approaches as evidenced in the literature on counterterrorism. and counterinsurgency. This counterargument posits that cell formations and insurgencies are social networks and that is why we need human-centric approaches, rather than technological. However, it is currently not feasible to segregate the roles of humans and technology in intelligence-led targeting operations. Integrating technical and human collection assets with computer-based analysis technology has become increasingly prevalent. In this context, technical intelligence and firepower elements represent merely the tip of the iceberg of targeting operations.

Finding targets represents a significant challenge at the outset of the targeting process. Because, clandestine cells adapt to technological advancements and attempt to reduce their visual and aural exposure through cover, concealment, and dispersion. Consequently, they modify their techniques with regarding force and space, intending to disrupt the chain of destruction by obstructing sensors. Furthermore, in addition to reducing their visibility by dispersing into smaller groups, they also utilize locations such as urban areas, mountainous regions and forests to minimize their footprint. Furthermore, they restrict their electronic communication and favor courier activities to diminish their visibility, both in the physical and virtual domains. Thus, HUMINT remains a significant force multiplier in intelligence gathering. It is, therefore, essential for intelligence to be conducted with a joint operational mindset. It is essential to support the weaknesses inherent to each intelligence collection method by utilizing alternative techniques. Furthermore, the assets employed should be diversified.

Considering the factors mentioned above, it can be reasonably deduced that something that can be seen (visual or aural) can be hit; equally, if a target cannot be seen it cannot be hit. Consequently, the human factor assumes greater significance in relation to targets that are not only physically but also electronically invisible. In the event that the cells evade the technical sensors, it would be prudent to utilize human assets to leverage technical capabilities to gain access to the cells. In order to collect a signal or image, it is necessary to take risks and approach the targets. Such activities may include the use of portable GPS devices for geolocation, photo documentation, eavesdropping, or other forms of technical surveillance. It is therefore erroneous to assume that signals and imagery intelligence are always conducted from a secure location distant from the target. Even when operations are conducted with the use of sophisticated technical intelligence, the use or involvement of a source is often necessary, playing pivotal role in obtaining images or signals from a position in close proximity to the target. In contrast to the analysis and synthesis of vast quantities of data gathered by instruments such as satellites and aircraft, human assets operate in a narrow

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15 Josh Begley, "A Visual Glossary Decoding the Language of Covert Warfare", October 15 2015 https://theintercept. com/drone-papers/a-visual-glossary/, accessed 03.05.2020

area closer to the targets. Without a human asset with the requisite capabilities, technical personnel must carry out the activity at their own risk.[16] In this context, the roles of technical and human sources of information gathering have become increasingly intertwined.

3. Organizational Transformation

So far, the impact of technology on intelligence and operations has been explained. It is clear that the combination of intelligence and firepower on a single platform has rendered drones an indispensable instrument in unconventional military operations, particularly in counterterrorism. However, it is imperative to consider technology in the broader intellectual and organizational transformation landscape, rather than in isolation. Accordingly, transformation encompasses not only technological change but also the development of new subsystems, tactical innovations and organizational adaptation.[17] The advent of new technologies has created a significant opportunity for transformation, but this will only be possible with a corresponding shift in mindset and organizational structure. In this context, the organizational transformation can be summarized as the dissolution of the wall between intelligence and operations, and a shift away from the conventional roles of intelligence agencies toward focusing on tactical intelligence priorities.

3.1. Merging Intelligence and Operations

The most crucial aspect of organizational transformation is the integration of intelligence and operations under a unified agency. This organizational model represents a departure from the conventional intelligence structure which postulates the existence of a wall between the domains of intelligence and operations. In the traditional understanding of intelligence, the primary objective is to collect and analyze of information. It anticipates potential threats and opportunities within the system, analyzes them, and disseminates the findings. In consequence, the principal beneficiaries of intelligence are politicians, diplomats, law enforcement agencies and the military. Each of these entities has distinct priorities, objectives, and instruments, while employing their requisite information in a particular manner. In counterterrorism, the primary instrument of intelligence agencies is information, not violence. This distinction is reflected in the respective roles of intelligence and military operations. Intelligence officers are gatherers while military personnel are hunters. [18]

However, in the new model, the primary consumer of intelligence in counterterrorism activities has become the intelligence agency itself. In other words, intelligence agencies are now both the producers and consumers of information. As a result, the wall between intelligence and operations, which had different mission definitions, has become blurred. Consequently, both terms have become synonymous. This has the effect of removing the friction caused by the execution of each stage of the cycle by different units and preventing interruptions in the targeting process. The new structure, operating as a network, integrates intelligence and operational tasks, enabling the targeting cycle to operate at a high speed. In the new model, intelligence is responsible for identifying targets and initiating action. Now intelligence both finds the target and pulls the trigger. This means that intelligence

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16 For example, it is known that CTC's HUMINT assets were instrumental in the identification of Osama bin Laden's hideout in Abbottabad, Pakistan, and Anwar al-Awlaki's location in Yemen.

17 Andrew Krepinevich, "Cavalry to Computer the Pattern of Military Revolutions", *The National Interest*, 37, 1994, p. 30

18 Amy Zegart, "The CIA Spent 20 Years on the Front Lines of the War on Terror. It's Time For That to Change", November 2021, https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2021/09/11/9-11-america-spycraft-510880?s=03, accessed 11.09.2023.

organizations are not just gatherers anymore but also hunters.[19] This transformation has resulted in the militarization of intelligence, with intelligence personnel assuming the role of *"modern generals waging a secret war"*.[20]

Indeed, the most crucial element of unconventional warfare was always to combine intelligence and operations. This organizational structure was also used in *pacification* operations in the 19th and 20th centuries. In that era, armies combined intelligence with their operations. In the 19th century, the French opted to emulate the *gaza* method of local tribes in Algeria. The military operations were designated as *razzias* and comprised units of 50 to 600 cavalrymen, in addition to units designated *bureaux arabes*, comprising local personnel, whose role was to gather intelligence.[21] Similar steps were taken during the revolts in the Ottoman lands and in 1902, a new group was set up to counter separatist bands in the Balkans. These counter bands were called *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* in 1912.[22] A similar thing happened in Anatolia. Local *Hamidiye* regiments were set up to fight Armenian bands in Eastern Anatolia.

It is reasonable to posit that the methodologies employed during the 19th century will prove to be illuminating in the present era. The most significant practice that emerged at this juncture was the unification of intelligence and operations under a single administrative structure. In Africa, the French adopted a hybrid organizational structure combining intelligence and operations two hundred years ago. The reason is that the transformation of intelligence into operations represents the most significant bottleneck, particularly in targets with dynamic characteristics. Separating intelligence and operations into distinct organizational entities or units gives rise to several challenges, including difficulties in planning, communication and the potential for turf wars. Integrating the various stages of target acquisition within a unified framework reduces response time and the assurance that the critical window of opportunity, which is of particular significance in counterterrorism, is not overlooked.

In this context, in the 21st century, it was the American intelligence community that initially implemented this specific organizational structure. The initial exemplar of this category of organizational transformation is the Counterterrorism Center (CTC), established within the CIA. The CTC was a hybrid mission center/fusion center that combined intelligence and operations. This novel hybrid structure has been referred to as an *"agency within an agency"*[23] and hailed as a revolutionary development.[24] The rationale behind these assertions is that the novel structure has situated beyond the conventional boundaries of American intelligence culture. Similarly, the American school of intelligence had espoused a strict separation between collection and analysis, under the prevailing understanding that these two functions should be kept distinct. The CTC, in contrast, sought to transcend these

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19 The motto was employed by Maureen Baginski, the head of the NSA SIGINT division, before 9/11.
20 Quoted from Mark Mazzetti and Nicholas Schou, "Outing The CIA's 'Undertaker'", 2016, Newsweek, https://www.newsweek.com/cia-michael-dandrea-new-york-times-mark-mazzetti-drones-pakistan-al-qaeda-war-475180, accessed 07.05.2020.
21 Thomas Rid, "Razzia:A Turning Point in Modern Strategy", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 21:4, 2009, p. 618, 627-628.
22 Zeynel Levent, Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa'dan Kuva-yı Milliye'ye Gayrinizami Harp (1913-1922), *Doctoral Dissertation*, Ankara University, Ankara, 2019, p.105
23 Greg Miller and Julie Tate, "CIA Shifts Focus to Killing Targets," *Washington Post,* 1 September 2011. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/cia-shifts-focus-to-killing-targets/2011/08/30/gIQA7MZGvJ_print.html, accessesed 11.09.2022
24 Clarridge, *A Spy for All Seasons*, pp. 323-329.

boundaries, striving to foster interconnectivity between the domains of collection, analysis, and action.[25] However, the prioritization of tactical priorities required a significant change in threat assessments. Although the unit was established in 1986, until the 9/11 attacks it was seen as a second-grade position for the staff. After the attacks, hundreds of people from other units were assigned to the CTC and it became the heart of the agency.[26] The attacks shifted priorities from producing skilled analysis to support foreign policy decisions to eliminating Al Qaeda cells.

3.2. The Growing Dominance of Tactical Intelligence

The second dimension of organizational transformation is the growing dominance of tactical intelligence priorities. The technology-triggered transformation has been most keenly felt in the shift towards tactical priorities, particularly in the context of targeting. The advent of tactical intelligence gives rise to a second source of friction in counterterrorism intelligence: the debate between tactical and strategic intelligence.[27] Prior to proceeding, distinguishing between the terms of tactical and strategic priorities is essential.

The distinction between the tactical and strategic levels of intelligence is not contingent on the collection tool employed, but instead on the characteristics of the end product. The objective of strategic intelligence activity is to provide decision-makers in political and bureaucratic spheres with information that is accurate, comprehensive, important and timely. Such information may be disseminated in various spheres, including military, diplomatic, and economic. It functions as a warning and advisory instrument for global and regional developments and threats to national power elements. The question that occupies our attention is about what the future holds. However, the question at the heart of tactical priorities is one of immediate concern: what is happening now? The objective is not to comprehend the prospective threats and opportunities and thereby forestall any inadvertent actions on the part of decision-makers. Instead, it is to initiate operations. An activity that does not result in the implementation of an operation is regarded as a futile exercise. In this process, the customer of intelligence is not the decision-maker, but rather the intelligence organization itself. The information obtained can be shared and coordinated with other shareholders (e.g. to support diplomatic and financial negotiations, military and law enforcement operations), but this is a relationship established at the lower level. Consequently, as we progress from tactical to strategic intelligence, the duration of the activity increases, decision-making durations expand, and a greater number of stakeholders are included in the equation, including

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25 Clarridge, *A Spy for All Seasons*, p. 323; Notably, this transformation is not limited to the intelligence agencies. Similarly, the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), the US Armed Forces' counterterrorism unit, has established structures that combine intelligence and operations, as did its 19th century predecessors. In other words, while the CTC has become increasingly militarized, JSOC has increased its intelligence gathering activities. Special Forces Task Forces (TF) have been deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and Yemen as autonomous actors in counterterrorism operations. TF units serve a dual function, operating both as operational cells and as intelligence collection and analysis units. See Leigh Neville and Ramiro Bujeiro, *Special Operations, Forces in Afghanistan*, Osprey, 2008.

26 Mark Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife: The CIA, a Secret Army, and a War at the Ends of the Earth*, Penguin Press, New York, 2013, p.11.

27 In the orthodox American literature, strategic intelligence is also referred to as high-level positive foreign policy intelligence. Combat intelligence and other threats to domestic security are not part of strategic intelligence activity. Combat intelligence is put under the responsibility of military departments, and the responsibility for countering domestic threats, including counterintelligence and counterterrorism, falls within the purview of law enforcement agencies. See. Sherman Kent, *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy*, Archon Books, Connecticut, 1965; For an overview of the typologies employed for the classification of intelligence priorities see also Peter Krause, "The Political Effectiveness of Non-State Violence: A Two-Level Framework to Transform a Deceptive Debate", *Security Studies*, 22:2, 2013, p. 272.

political and bureaucratic decision-makers at different levels, and regional or subject matter experts such as academics. Furthermore, strategic intelligence prioritizes dissemination over operation and is conducted close to decision-makers. In contrast, tactical intelligence focuses on the operational phase, necessitating a minimum proximity to the target (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of Tactical - Strategic Target Priorities

	Tactical Priorities	**Strategic Priorities**
Client	Practitioners	Decision Makers
Matter of Expertise	Occupational	Area – Subject
Shareholders	Narrow	Broad
Time Span	Short	Medium - Long
Product	Current	Estimative
Level of Analysis	Close to the Target	Close to Decision Makers
Focus	Operation	Dissemination

To illustrate, the advancement of Iran's nuclear weapon program represents a strategic priority, whereas the identification of the Iranian military attaché's activities constitutes a tactical priority. While the collection tools (human and technical) may be identical, the nature of the end product differs. This is also applicable to counterterrorism intelligence. It would be erroneous to assume that organizations are merely armed cells operating at the tactical level. In counterterrorism, strategic intelligence encompasses a multitude of strategic intelligence priorities, including the political and strategic directives of the leading cadre, the political, military, and economic relations with states and other organizations, and the tendencies of popular support. Furthermore, negotiations with terrorist organizations constitute a strategic intelligence subject. The responsibility for strategic intelligence priorities in counterterrorism remains within the relevant intelligence agencies. This responsibility is shared among the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Armed Forces abroad, and the Ministry of the Interior at home. On the contrary, the principal objective of tactical counterterrorism intelligence is to neutralize the capacity of terrorist organizations to attack by locating armed cells and mapping the network.[28]

The integration of modern firepower technology into the organizational structure of intelligence services has led to a change in their priorities. Intelligence services have been given the authority to kill because they can now do so without the need for anyone else. In this context, the role of intelligence agencies has evolved beyond that of being mere political consultants for decision-makers or force multipliers in counterterrorism. However, the growing significance of tactical counterterrorism intelligence has prompted a series of debates. Intelligence agencies, have been criticized for deviating from their core mandate of gathering strategic foreign policy intelligence. The CIA has also faced these criticisms. It is therefore asserted that the personnel recruited to the CIA over the past two decades have been primarily confined to military bases in conflict zones, and have consequently failed to gain the skills and experience (spycraft) that would be required in countries outside these zones. It is also asserted that the CIA has relegated the analysis of strategic intelligence priorities to a secondary position. CIA failed to fulfill its duty of warning against several

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28 The discrepancy in intelligence priorities is characterized by an emphasis on the direct pursuit of Zarqawi, the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, at the tactical level, as opposed to an investigation into the relationship between Iraq and al-Qaeda at the strategic level. See Nada Bakos, *The Targeter: My Life in the CIA, Hunting Terrorists, and Challenging the White House*, Little Brown & Company, 2019.

significant developments, including the Arab Spring, the attack against the US Embassy in Benghazi, the evolution of Al-Qaeda in Iraq into ISIS and its subsequent occupation of Mosul. A comparable incident also occurred in France. *The Direction du Renseignement Militaire* (DRM), the French military intelligence organization, was accused of providing the government with misleading information regarding the likelihood of a Russian invasion of Ukraine. The head of the DRM stated that the organization's role was to provide support for military operations, rather than to predict political intentions, thereby covertly indicating that the collection and analysis of tactical intelligence was of greater importance to them.

4. The Transformation of MİT

Thus far in this article, the technological and organizational variables underpinning the militarization of intelligence have been elucidated. These variables also highlight the growing involvement of MİT in counterterrorism. Indeed, the transformation initiated by technological advancement has significantly impacted not only MİT but also Türkiye's counterterrorism strategy in general. Technological advancements have had a substantial effect on Türkiye's counterterrorism operations against the clandestine cells of the PKK/KCK.[29] Before the advent of intelligence and operational technologies, military operations against clandestine cells in rural areas were based on the doctrine of area denial, relying on numerical superiority. In this classical search and destroy strategy, the necessity for labor-intensive maneuvers to visually identify, fix and neutralize targets remained.

In alignment with this overarching strategic framework, MİT has transformed, shifting its operational approach from a gatherer to a hunter in counterterrorism. The process of militarization at MİT was driven by two key factors: an increase in investment in new technologies and a transformation of the organizational structure. The introduction of drone technology and organizational changes, such as the integration of intelligence and operations, coupled with the growing significance of tactical intelligence, have contributed to the militarization of intelligence in Türkiye. This section analyzes the transformation process. The principal limitation of this study is that the information presented is only partially reflected in open sources. Due to the nature of the activity in question, information not reflected in open sources cannot be used. Nevertheless, significant conclusions can be drawn from the available data.

Firstly, the impetus for the militarization of MİT is the advent of drone technology. However, as previously stated, this represents merely the initial phase of a broader process. It is not the technology itself that is of primary importance, but how it is employed. In light of the considerations mentioned above, it can be concluded that the decision to provide intelligence agencies with drones and to permit the militarization of intelligence was a bold yet prudent one. In is noteworthy to point out that Türkiye has a history of employing drones in counterterrorism operations. The use of drones for technical intelligence purposes by the Turkish Armed Forces commenced in 1994 with the acquisition of the GNAT-750 model. This resulted in Türkiye becoming one the few countries worldwide to utilize drones. However, it became evident that the organizational structure necessary for utilizing this technical capacity was not in place then. That is why the systems were initially deployed in the Thrace region for artillery forward observation. It was not until 1997 that the systems were deployed in Batman against the PKK/KCK. Conversely, the cessation of PKK/KCK activities from 1999 onwards resulted in the cessation of additional drone procurement projects, thus preventing

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29 The armed wing of the PKK/KCK is the People's Defence Forces (Hêzên Parastina Gel – HPG). In this article, the acronym PKK/KCK is used.

the modernization of Türkiye's drone capacity. After the PKK/KCK resumed its attacks in 2004, Türkiye attempted to procure additional drones. However, the imported systems proved to be less effective than desired.[30]

The enhancement of Türkiye's drone capabilities has reached a significant milestone with the incorporation of domestically manufactured drones into the inventory, particularly the Aselsan ANKA and Baykar TB-2 models. The TB-2 were models initially delivered in November 2014, while the armed versions were delivered in October 2017. It can be argued that these instruments have influenced the new counterterrorism doctrine heavily. Despite the lack of precise data on the number of Türkiye's armed drones, it can be reasonably inferred that the country currently has over 300 operational drones.[31] Considering the fact that Türkiye had less than 100 drones in 2018, the marginal difference is noteworthy.

As evidenced by publicly accessible sources, drones were incorporated into the inventory of MİT in 2019.[32] This information also coincides with the commencement of the organization's operations against the PKK/KCK. According to open sources, the first operation conducted by MİT against the listed organization members is dated 23 March 2019. Subsequently, there has been a notable increase in the number of MİT's intelligence-led targeting operations against PKK/KCK targets abroad. This can also be elucidated through an examination of the Ministry of the Interior's list of neutralized members of the PKK/KCK organization. A review of the open source data reveals that MİT drones neutralized 22 of the 45 targets neutralized abroad between January 2019 and December 2024 (Graph-1). In addition, 14 individuals out of the total of 44 names on the red list (both in Türkiye and abroad) were targeted by MİT within the same time period (Graph 2).[33] As evidenced by the graphs, starting in 2022, MİT assumed the role of the primary actor in targeting operations abroad.[34] In 2023, these figures reached their peak. According to a press release by MİT, 201 PKK/KCK members were neutralized in 181 operations in 2023, with the many of these operations supported by drones. Furthermore, 45 energy infrastructure facilities, weapons and ammunition depots utilized by the PKK/KCK were destroyed.[35]

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30 İbrahim Sünnetçi, "İHA'lar ve Türkiye'nin İnsansız Havadan İstihbarat Çalışmaları", *Savunma ve Havacılık Dergisi,* 132, 2009.

31 In the open-source information, it is indicated that as of January 2023, Türkiye had approximately 150 Bayraktar TB2s and approximately 12 Akıncı drones. Additionally, it is noted that the production number of ANKA drones exceeded 100 by February 2024. Furthermore, it has been suggested that five Aksungur aircraft were deployed in 2022. See "Selçuk Bayraktar Açıkladı: İhraç edilen SİHA'lar Türkiye'yi Hedef Alabilir Mi?", January 3 2023, https://www.savunmasanayist.com/selcuk-bayraktar-acikladi-ihrac-edilen-sihalar-turkiyeyi-hedef-alabilir-mi/, accessed 11.09.2023; "ANKA S/İHA'da Kritik Eşik… Üretim Sayısı 100'ü Geçti", 27 February 2024, https://m5dergi.com/savunma-haberleri/anka-s-ihada-kritik-esik-uretim-sayisi-100u-gecti/, accessed 11.07.2024. It can be reasonably assumed that these figures will be considerably higher by the end of 2024. Additionally, the total number of drones produced at Baykar facilities as of June 2023 is reported to be 580. Given that approximately 300 TB2 and Akıncı are produced annually, it can be predicted that the number of drones produced will exceed 1000 by the end of 2024. However, there is currently no clear information available on the number of these vehicles that have been exported, nor on the number that have been involved in accidents or breakdowns.

32 "MİT silahlı insansız hava aracı TB2 aldı", 25 June 2019, https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/mitten-yeni-hamle-bayraktar-tb2-envantere-girdi-3496164, accessed 11.06.2024

33 Only the names with open source information available are analyzed.

34 It is important to note that a significant number of additional members of the PKK/KCK, who were not included in this list, have been neutralized by MİT. Despite the abundant information available from open sources, only those members included in the list have been taken into consideration here.

35 "MİT Operasyonları, Terör Örgütü PKK'nın Sözde Sorumlularını Hedef Aldı", 30 August 2012, https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/mit-operasyonlari-teror-orgutu-pkknin-sozde-sorumlularini-hedef-aldi/3085510, accessed 10.12.2023.

Graph 1. Neutralized PKK/KCK Members Abroad[36]
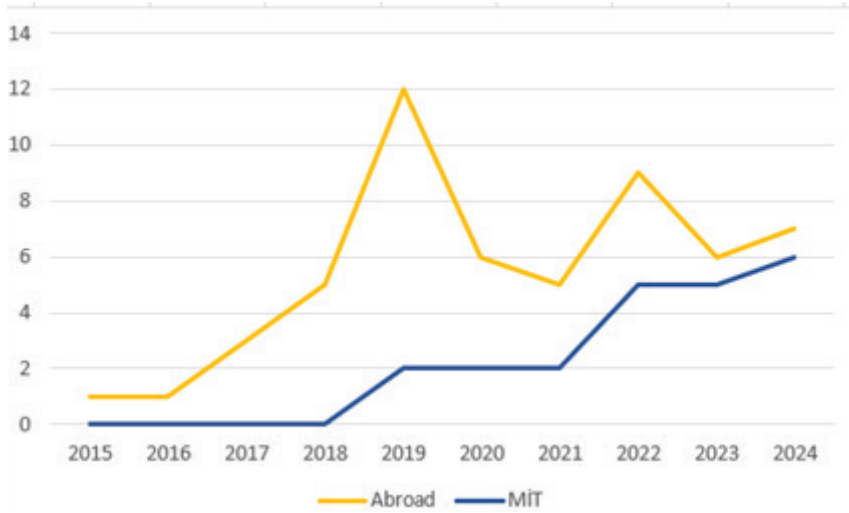
Graph 2. Neutralized PKK/KCK Members of the Red List[37]
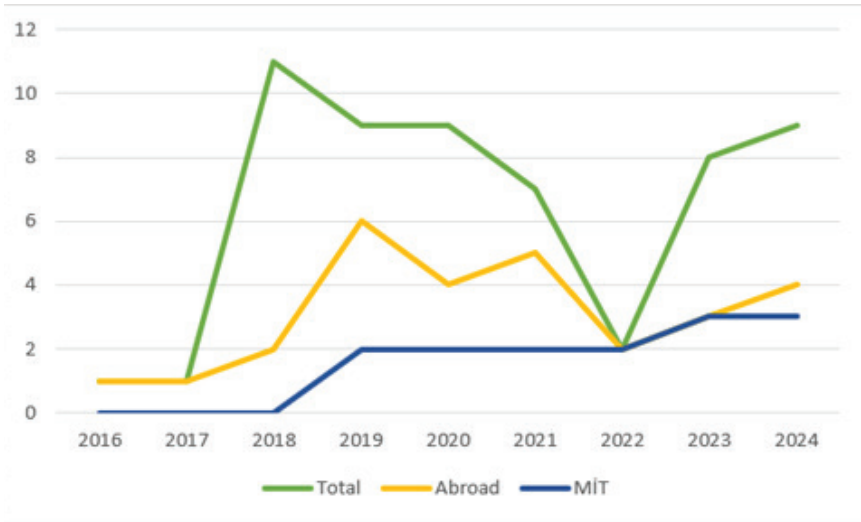
Furthermore, the capacity of the Turkish Air Forces has been employed in this process. It is worthy of note that between 2019 and 2021, a total of another nine targets identified by MİT in Northern Iraq were struck by the Air Forces. However, no evidence found in open sources that the Air Forces neutralized any target in the list between 2022 and 2024. This situation can be interpreted as the developments in drone technology (including introducing of new drone models, satellite control systems and ammunition) have augmented MİT's capacity to conduct independent operations.

36 The graphic was prepared by the author by using Ministry of the Interior's list of neutralized terrorists list and open sources.
37 The graphic was prepared by the author by using Ministry of the Interior's list of neutralized terrorists list and open sources.

The critical juncture in the transformation of MİT is 2019, the year in which started to use drones for operational purposes. As previously stated, however, this represents merely the tip of the iceberg. Beneath the surface lies a mental and organizational transformation. The organizational transformation of the agency had two significant implications for MİT's counterterrorism operations. As mentioned above, these are the growing significance of tactical intelligence priorities and the integration of intelligence and operations under a unified mission.

Firstly, in the traditional understanding, MİT, essentially a civilian intelligence organization, has been tasked with two primary functions: providing qualified tactical intelligence to operational units and providing strategic intelligence to decision makers. In the context of military intelligence, strategic priorities have traditionally been regarded as of being greater importance than tactical ones. The main rationale is that the agency has consistently been the primary entity engaged in strategic intelligence operations, encompassing not only foreign policy but also counterterrorism issue. In addition, as the focus of tactical priorities is not on assisting those in the decision-making process, resulting the fact that that receive less attention than strategic intelligence. Furthermore, the activities associated with tactical intelligence have historically been perceived as analogous to police work and, thus have been regarded with a certain degree of disdain. Therefore, it is unsurprising that MİT attaches more importance to strategic intelligence. In this manner, the motto *"the intelligence officer's weapon is his/her pen"* reflected this distinction. However, tactical intelligence products may lack the sophistication of their strategic counterparts, yet they are instrumental in the sustained effort to degrade and ultimately defeat terrorist organizations.

The second, and arguably more significant reason is that the intelligence gathered in counterterrorism could not be effectively transformed into operations then. Thus, MİT was a giant in intelligence but a dwarf in operations. Consequently, counterintelligence and foreign intelligence activities, which constitute agency's remaining responsibilities were regarded as the primary focus. The involvement of the police, gendarmerie, and armed forces in counterterrorism operations, coupled with the fact that these institutions possess operational capabilities, resulted in a notable asymmetry in the roles and responsibilities of the agency. MİT was traditionally regarded as an auxiliary actor in targeting operations. Even the question of whether MİT should be involved in counterterrorism intelligence was raised. This lack of clarity has been a persistent challenge for MİT in its role as a provider of counterterrorism intelligence. The operational dependence of MİT on other institutions has resulted in many challenges, including turf wars, bottlenecks, loss of time and an asymmetry of authority.

The new technologies have enabled MİT to address the imbalance in tactical priorities. As a result, MİT underwent a transformation, becoming increasingly militarized and assuming a prominent role in the tactical priorities of counterterrorism. At this juncture, the second pillar of the organizational transformation, namely the integration of intelligence and operations, assumes particular significance. MİT formed new units and established new mission statements aligned with its organizational formation. This is why the transformation in question is not merely mechanical, but also mental. In this context, MİT utilizes its own personnel for the drone fleet and recruits drone pilots.[38] MİT has also recruited personnel from Special Forces units, to conduct military operations abroad. [39]

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38 MİT's official web site, 30 September 2012, https://www.mit.gov.tr/ozgecmis-gonder_iha-sistemleripilotu_6. html, accessed 11.05.2024.
39 "MİT'ten 'operasyonel' transfer!", 30 September 2012, https://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/780974-mitten-operasyonel-transfer, accessed 11.09.2023.

In conclusion, while MİT possesses considerable capabilities in intelligence collection for counterterrorism, its lack of operational authority and capacity has resulted in a notable asymmetry vis-à-vis its counterparts. The operational symmetry recently provided by drones has enabled MİT to translate its strength in intelligence gathering to the field, thereby enhancing its operational capabilities. This signifies that MİT has transitioned from its conventional role of collector and auxiliary to its newly assumed role of autonomous drone operations. In other words, in counterterrorism, the weapon of the intelligence officer has become not only the pen but also the drone, representing a significant shift in the nature of the tools at their disposal. Combining modern firepower with traditional tactical intelligence activities has transformed MİT into a highly effective actor in counterterrorism. In the present era, and for the first time in the history of the Republic of Türkiye, MİT has become a principal actor in targeted operations abroad.

Conclusion

In the 21st century, intelligence agencies have assumed a prominent role in armed conflicts. They are particularly active in unconventional conflicts, such as counterterrorism. The article examines this new mission in the context of technological and organizational variables. It proposes that the organizational transformation prompted by technological advancement has resulted in the militarization of intelligence agencies and a shift in their role in counterterrorism.

The technological aspect of the transformation encompasses the use of targeting intelligence tools and advanced firepower technology. The advent of drone technology has precipitated a shift in the role of intelligence agencies, positioning them at the forefront of combat operations. Prior to this advent, intelligence agencies were regarded as a means of collection and analysis, and the final stage of the process, which is to take action, was under the purview of executive agencies such as the military or law enforcement. However, drones have allowed intelligence agencies to possess their own firepower capabilities at a relatively low cost. Consequently, the phases of intelligence and operations, which were previously conducted by disparate units or organizations, have been consolidated under a unified command structure, thereby increasing the frequency of operations against cells to an unprecedented degree. Thus, intelligence agencies like MİT have become increasingly militarized, assuming not only the role of collector but also that of hunter.

Nevertheless, the transformation of MİT is not solely a technological transformation. Although technology is the catalyst for the militarization of intelligence, it is merely the initial aspect of a much larger phenomenon. The organizational transformation combining intelligence and operations within the scope of militarized tactical priorities represents the submerged portion of the iceberg. This novel organizational structure unites case officers, target analysts, special forces, local armed groups, host nation militaries, and cutting-edge technology to address tactical target priorities in counterterrorism. In counterterrorism, the primary objective of tactical intelligence is the neutralization of clandestine cells. Under the tactical intelligence priorities, mentioned before, the conventional structure entails the analysis of information procured from disparate sources by intelligence agencies, which is subsequently conveyed to the executive authorities responsible for the operation. This can be seen as creating a virtual organizational wall between the domains of intelligence and operations. The principal rationale for separating intelligence and operations is civilian intelligence agencies' lack of operational capacity. However, the advent of drone technology has progressively militarized tactical intelligence priorities, closing the gap between

intelligence and operations. This development has also resulted novel hybrid organizational structures integrating intelligence and operations.

Accordingly, the article examines the militarization of MİT in the context of MİT's drone program against the PKK/KCK in Iraq and Syria. After 2019, MİT has become a significant instrument in counterterrorism activities in these regions. This transformation of MİT is initiated by technological advancement but ultimately achieved through organizational adaptation. In this context, the military activities of MİT offer a rich field of research potential for those engaged in the study of intelligence and terrorism. In light of Türkiye's engagement with non-state actors exhibiting diverse characteristics across numerous conflict zones, the activities of MİT present a compelling avenue for scholarly inquiry. Furthermore, it is the police and gendarmerie units responsible for providing counterterrorism intelligence in Türkiye could be subjected to a similar analysis.

However, the confidentiality of intelligence activities precludes the availability of sufficient information from publicly accessible sources. Thus, the most significant challenge has been to obtain precise and pertinent information about the military activities of MİT. It is reasonable to conclude that it is not feasible to utilize information not made publicly available by official authorities in open sources for the purposes of this study. Consequently, this study analyses MİT's military activities in counterterrorism by examining press releases and the Ministry of the Interior's list of neutralized members of the PKK/KCK in Iraq and Syria. As further information becomes available, it will be possible to conduct more detailed studies on this subject, and future studies may examine not only the military aspects of the issue, but also its legal and political dimensions.

Conflict of Interest Statement:

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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