



## The Historical Evolution of Intelligence and the Turkish Intelligence Tradition: Toward an Intelligence Engineering Perspective

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### Abstract

This study examines the historical evolution of intelligence from early surveillance practices to modern institutional intelligence through both chronological and methodological perspectives. The research aims to analyze the transformation of intelligence activities across different historical periods while comparatively evaluating the place of the Turkish intelligence tradition within world intelligence history. The study employs a comparative historical method and conceptual analysis approach by utilizing Ancient Near Eastern sources, Chinese dynastic chronicles, historical records, and modern intelligence literature. The findings demonstrate that intelligence activities were not limited to modern bureaucratic states but emerged in organized and functional forms within early steppe societies as well. The military and diplomatic struggles of the Huns, Göktürks, Uighurs, Seljuks, and Ottomans reveal a continuous tradition of reconnaissance, diplomatic observation, information gathering, and counterintelligence practices. The study further argues that this historical continuity constitutes an important theoretical foundation for Intelligence Engineering by demonstrating that intelligence processes have evolved into measurable, modelable, and system-oriented structures. In this respect, the article proposes a broader conceptual framework for both intelligence history and interdisciplinary intelligence studies.

**Keywords:** Turkish Intelligence Tradition, Intelligence Engineering, Intelligence Studies, Intelligence History

### İstihbaratın Tarihsel Evrimi ve Türk İstihbarat Geleneği: İstihbarat Mühendisliği Perspektifine Doğru

#### Öz

Bu çalışma, istihbaratın tarihsel evrimini, erken dönem gözetleme uygulamalarından modern kurumsal istihbarata kadar hem kronolojik hem de metodolojik perspektiflerden incelemektedir. Araştırma, farklı tarihsel dönemlerdeki istihbarat faaliyetlerinin dönüşümünü analiz etmeyi ve Türk istihbarat geleneğinin dünya istihbarat tarihi içindeki yerini karşılaştırmalı olarak değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, Antik Yakın Doğu kaynakları, Çin hanedanlık kronikleri, tarihi kayıtlar ve modern istihbarat literatüründen yararlanarak karşılaştırmalı tarihsel yöntem ve kavramsal analiz yaklaşımını kullanmaktadır. Bulgular, istihbarat faaliyetlerinin modern bürokratik devletlerle sınırlı kalmadığını, aynı zamanda erken dönem bozkır toplumlarında da organize ve işlevsel biçimlerde ortaya çıktığını göstermektedir. Hunların, Göktürklerin, Uygurların, Selçukluların ve Osmanlıların askeri ve diplomatik mücadeleleri, sürekli bir keşif, diplomatik gözlem, bilgi toplama ve karşı istihbarat uygulamaları geleneğini ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma ayrıca, bu tarihsel sürekliliğin, istihbarat süreçlerinin ölçülebilir, modellenenebilir ve sistem odaklı yapılara dönüştüğünü göstererek, İstihbarat Mühendisliği için önemli bir teorik temel oluşturduğunu savunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, makale hem istihbarat tarihi hem de disiplinlerarası istihbarat çalışmaları için daha geniş bir kavramsal çerçeve önermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türk İstihbarat Ekolü, İstihbarat Mühendisliği, İstihbarat Çalışmaları, İstihbarat Tarihi

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## Introduction

The concept of intelligence is generally defined as the process of collecting information, analyzing it, and guiding decision-makers accordingly. In the modern sense, however, intelligence extends beyond this classical definition and is directly associated with military theory, diplomacy, and international relations. Throughout the broader course of history, intelligence has gradually diverged from simple practices of “surveillance” and “espionage.” Today, the academic literature not only treats intelligence almost as a distinct scientific discipline but also continues to generate new theoretical frameworks and subfields within it (Sağır & Özdemir, 2025).

In theoretical studies independent of mainstream historical research, a dominant view holds that intelligence emerged within military history during the period of the Battle of Kadesh. According to this perspective, the Egyptians and Hittites initiated this process through the use of deception and reconnaissance during the conflict. The abundance of written sources concerning the Battle of Kadesh makes this interpretation understandable. Nevertheless, restricting the origins of intelligence solely to sedentary state structures remains methodologically debatable. In this regard, examinations of the military organizations of early non-state or semi-nomadic societies also reveal evidence of systematic surveillance, reconnaissance, and information-gathering practices (Mutlu, 2023).

In historical studies and the related literature, however, the focus differs considerably. In particular, the interaction between the early political formations that emerged in the Central Asian steppe belt and the northern frontier regions of China was shaped not only by military confrontation but also by mutual surveillance, intelligence gathering, and diplomatic representation. Chinese dynastic chronicles demonstrate that information flows were maintained through border scouts, envoys, and messengers, while also providing indirect evidence that steppe nomadic societies employed similarly mobile reconnaissance elements. Despite this, such practices have not been systematically examined within the context of the early stages of intelligence history (Di Cosmo, 2002).

The point of departure for this study is the assumption that the historical evolution of intelligence should not be investigated solely through geographies rich in written documentation, but comparatively across societies with different socio-political forms of organization. In this context, the study aims to examine, from a chronological perspective, the transformation from surveillance practices to espionage and institutional intelligence, while situating the information-gathering practices observable since the early periods of Turkish history within their broader historical context.

The research employs a comparative historical method together with a conceptual analytical approach. Ancient Near Eastern texts, Chinese dynastic chronicles, and the literature on modern intelligence theory are evaluated collectively, and information-gathering practices emerging in different geographies are compared in terms of their functional characteristics. In doing so, the study seeks to demonstrate that intelligence was not solely a product of sedentary bureaucratic state structures, but that early examples also existed within different military and social organizational forms.

This article consists of three main sections. The first section examines the historical transformation from surveillance practices to institutional intelligence within the broader framework of world history. The second section addresses the evolution of information-gathering practices beginning from the early periods of Turkish history and discusses the institutional and cultural continuities that emerged throughout this process. The third section evaluates the place of the Turkish intelligence tradition within world intelligence history from a comparative perspective.

In this respect, the study aims to contribute to the limited discussions in the existing literature regarding the role of early steppe societies in the history of intelligence and to propose a more comprehensive conceptual historical framework.

## The History of Intelligence

### From Surveillance to Espionage and the Modern Institutional Structure in Intelligence

The first part of this study examines the history of intelligence gathering, from surveillance to institutionalization, starting from the pre-historic (writing) period of antiquity to the present day. A chronological system has been followed in this examination.



## Early Surveillance, Communication Networks, and Early Espionage Activities

It is generally accepted that the phenomenon of warfare dates back to the tribal organizational processes of early human communities and that practices of surveillance and information gathering emerged within this context. However, the limited availability of direct written evidence concerning prehistoric periods makes it possible to evaluate such activities only through indirect archaeological findings and comparative studies in military anthropology. The selection of locations providing visual dominance around settlements, traces of fire and smoke signaling early warning systems, and the tracking practices of mobile hunter groups indicate that the need for systematic surveillance existed even before the invention of writing.

With the advent of antiquity and the increase in written sources, information-gathering activities became more concretely observable. In this context, *The Art of War*, one of the most influential texts of the Chinese intellectual tradition, presents one of the earliest theoretical frameworks to conceptualize intelligence as an integral component of warfare. The section entitled “The Use of Spies” emphasizes that the decisive factor in war is accurate and timely information and classifies different categories of agents according to their functions. The text identifies five distinct categories: local informants, agents operating within enemy structures, influence agents aimed at shaping decision-making processes, agents spreading deceptive information, and double agents recruited from the opposing side. This classification demonstrates that intelligence activities were not limited solely to reconnaissance but also encompassed deception and counterintelligence dimensions (Tzu, 2008).

Similarly, the *Arthashastra*, one of the foundational texts of Indian political thought, highlights the necessity of a multi-layered information-gathering network for ensuring state security. The text discusses in detail agents embedded within different social groups, provocation activities, the monitoring of internal threats, and analytical reports presented to rulers during decision-making processes. In this respect, the *Arthashastra* offers a more comprehensive understanding of intelligence that includes not only espionage but also the stages of information collection, verification, and evaluation (Muniapan & Shaikh, 2007).

Modern literature on ancient intelligence practices demonstrates that such activities were not confined to a particular geography or political structure, but emerged from similar functional necessities across different forms of social organization. Early practices of surveillance, message transmission, and agent utilization gradually evolved into more complex diplomatic and military networks, thereby forming the theoretical and practical foundations for the later institutionalization of intelligence (Andrew, 2018).

## The Era of Early States: From Messengers to Reconnaissance Units

With the emergence of early state formations, information-gathering activities acquired a more organized and multi-sourced structure. The transmission of information obtained through border scouts, military reconnaissance units, and diplomatic representatives to the central administration became an integral component of administrative control and military planning. This process is significant in demonstrating the transformation of intelligence from individual observation practices into an institutionalized communication network.

Among the most important written sources of this period are the Mari archives. Consisting of approximately twenty thousand cuneiform tablets, these documents reveal that regular reports were sent from frontier regions to the center and that multidirectional information flows were maintained through merchants, religious officials, envoys, and local informants. This demonstrates that early diplomatic relations simultaneously functioned as systematic intelligence-gathering mechanisms. Consequently, it becomes evident that a multi-layered intelligence practice developed within the early state structures of the Near East, where different social groups were utilized as sources of information (Sasson, 2015).

## The Period of the Battle of Kadesh: The Emergence of Deception and Counterintelligence Systematics

The Battle of Kadesh between Egypt and the Hittites constitutes one of the earliest examples demonstrating that intelligence activities were not confined merely to information gathering but also incorporated elements of deception and counterintelligence. Historical accounts of the battle include the use of agents disseminating false information, the interrogation of captured reconnaissance elements, and the spread of misleading intelligence regarding enemy troop movements.

Within this framework, the processes surrounding the Battle and Treaty of Kadesh reveal that methods such as psychological deception, disinformation, and the manipulation of enemy information



sources became integral components of military strategy. Consequently, intelligence activities evolved beyond simple reconnaissance and communication functions into a more sophisticated structure aimed at influencing the decision-making processes of adversaries (Searles, 1924).

### **The Era of Ancient Empires: The First Diplomatic Intelligence Networks**

During the era of ancient empires, intelligence and espionage activities became institutional instruments for supervising vast administrative territories and planning military operations. In the Assyrian Empire, the regular transmission of reports from provincial governors to the center demonstrates that internal security and frontier control were maintained through information flows. In the Persian Empire, the inspection mechanism known as the “King’s Eyes and Ears” enabled the central authority to monitor information arriving from different regions. This structure illustrates the close integration between early state supervision and intelligence activities.

In the ancient Greek world, particularly during the Peloponnesian Wars, information was gathered through diplomatic representatives, merchants, and local informants, while strategic deception and propaganda methods were also employed. In the Roman Empire, military reconnaissance units such as the *speculatores* and *exploratores*, together with the institution known as the *frumentarii*, carried out both external intelligence collection and internal security monitoring. These units are significant in demonstrating the integration of intelligence into military bureaucracy.

The multi-layered communication and supervisory mechanisms that emerged during the period of ancient empires represented a stage in which intelligence became integrated with diplomacy, military organization, and administrative control, thereby constituting the historical precursors of the institutional intelligence structures that would develop in later periods (Yarlıgış, 2022).

### **Intelligence in the Middle Ages: From Postal Networks to Multi-Layered Communication**

The medieval period may be regarded as a transitional phase during which intelligence and espionage activities evolved from military reconnaissance and message-carrying practices into institutional communication networks. Research and historical findings from this period indicate that the production and circulation of information were conducted largely through religious authorities, centralized palace bureaucracies, and trade routes.

During the Crusades, the papal communication system that emerged within the Latin Christian world established a multi-layered intelligence flow through regular reporting to the papacy, encrypted correspondence, and diplomatic representation. Papal envoys functioned not only as religious representatives but also as political observers and intelligence gatherers. Historical research demonstrates that these practices laid the foundations of the early European tradition of diplomatic intelligence.

Within the Islamic state tradition and its successor polities, the *Berid* organization emerged as one of the earliest institutional systems of internal security and communication in intelligence history. Originating during the Umayyad period and becoming institutionalized under the Abbasids, this structure:

- ensured the regular flow of reports from provinces to the central administration
- supervised local governors
- gathered information concerning public order and dissident movements while monitoring communications
- when necessary, conducted both military and political covert operations

Thus, the *Berid* functioned not merely as a postal service but also as an administrative oversight and political intelligence mechanism (Üçok, 2011).

Following the Abbasid period and the aftermath of the Battle of Talas, this tradition evolved into another major branch of intelligence history and became visible within Seljuk and broader Turkish history. In Turkish-Islamic states, this legacy was transferred into the Seljuk intelligence structure and further developed through palace-centered information gathering and frontier surveillance activities. The principle articulated in Nizam al-Mulk’s *Siyasatnama* regarding the “collection of information about everyone” demonstrates an effort to base state security upon a systematic intelligence network (Lassner, 2017).

Although difficult to separate entirely from Turkish history, Mongol intelligence history likewise appears closely intertwined with the broader history of Turkish intelligence traditions. The Yam postal and



communication network established by the Mongol Empire enabled rapid information flows across vast territories and created a direct integration between military operations and intelligence. This system offered a multi-layered network structure combining logistics, reconnaissance, and diplomatic communication within a single operational line. Following the collapse of the Roman Empire, the eastern expansion under Timur, built partly upon the legacy of the Mongol Empire, initiated a series of military campaigns that proved difficult to contain. A notable feature of these campaigns was the simultaneous existence of internal stability within Timur's domains, unrest among adversaries, and political instability among rival powers during military operations (Morgan, 2025). These developments may be interpreted as the activities of institutional structures functioning much like primitive intelligence organizations that had already institutionalized multi-layered information networks, regarded today as among the earliest predecessors of modern intelligence services (Delibalta, 2024).

The Byzantine Empire, as the successor to Rome, sought information superiority in both defense and foreign policy through thematic military intelligence, diplomatic reports, and diplomatic observers stationed in frontier regions. Within the Byzantine diplomatic tradition, the manipulation of foreign envoys, perception management, and controlled information sharing occupied an important place (Shepard & Franklin, 1992).

In this context, medieval intelligence represents a transition to a multi-layered and semi-institutional intelligence ecosystem with the following characteristics:

- the emergence of postal networks in institutional communication
- information gathering for centralized supervision
- the acquisition of intelligence functions by diplomatic representatives
- and the role of religious authorities in the production of information

### **The Early Modern Period: The Emergence of Permanent Diplomacy and Institutional Espionage Networks**

With the Early Modern period, the dissolution of the feudal order in Europe and the rise of centralized monarchies accelerated the institutionalization of intelligence activities within the apparatus of the state. The most significant transformation of this era was the emergence of the permanent diplomatic mission system.

Originating particularly in the Italian city-states and rapidly spreading throughout Europe, the practice of permanent embassies enabled the regular collection of political, military, and economic information through resident diplomatic representatives stationed in foreign courts. This structure formed the basis of modern diplomatic intelligence. Research and historical findings concerning the Renaissance and post-Renaissance periods support this transformation (Mattingly, 1988).

In England, the network established by Sir Francis Walsingham is regarded as one of the earliest examples of a state intelligence organization composed of informants, codebreakers, and provocateurs operating on behalf of the Crown. This structure systematically carried out functions such as:

- monitoring internal threats
- tracking the activities of foreign powers
- and conducting counterintelligence operations

During the same period, the Ottoman Empire also generated intelligence through palace-centered information networks, reports arriving from frontier provinces, diplomatic observations, and commercial networks. Although permanent embassies in the European sense emerged relatively late in the Ottoman context, a multi-layered intelligence flow was maintained through the *kapıkulu* bureaucracy, the *timar* system, and frontier governors (Ágoston, 2005).

The second major transformation of this era was the institutionalization of cryptology. As diplomatic correspondence increased, encryption techniques became more sophisticated, and state-supported cipher bureaus were established in Italy and France. Cryptology acquired functions such as:

- ensuring diplomatic security



- deciphering the correspondence of rival states
- and standardizing secret communications

thereby introducing the technical dimension of intelligence. Numerous studies forming the basis of cryptological scholarship also support this process of transformation (Kahn, 1996).

The characteristic features of intelligence during the Early Modern period may therefore be summarized as follows:

- The integration of intelligence activities into state bureaucracy
- Institutional information flows through permanent diplomatic missions
- The development of counterintelligence and internal security mechanisms
- The emergence of technical intelligence through cryptology and cipher bureaus

This transformation enabled intelligence to evolve from a merely auxiliary military function into an indispensable component of state administration, thereby establishing the institutional foundations of modern intelligence organizations.

### **Toward the Modern Age: The Nineteenth Century and the Institutionalization of Bureaucratic Intelligence**

The English Revolution of 1688, the American Revolution (1776–1783), and the subsequent redefinition of the relationship between state and society created conditions in which intelligence activities expanded beyond the military sphere into the domains of public opinion management, propaganda, and political mobilization. From the late eighteenth century onward, revolutions and revolutionary movements across Europe and the Americas strengthened the internal security dimension of intelligence, leading secret and special police organizations to become permanent elements of the state apparatus (Herman, 1996).

The nineteenth century witnessed a simultaneous and competitive process of institutionalization in intelligence structures. In France, the secret bureau established by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1796 is considered one of the earliest systematic examples of a police-centered intelligence model. Subsequently, the intelligence function institutionalized within the Prussian General Staff during the early nineteenth century integrated military planning with information gathering, thereby laying the foundations of modern military intelligence (Goerlitz, 2019).

In Russia, the Okhrana, established by the Tsarist regime in 1881 to monitor revolutionary movements, represented an institutional example of an intelligence model focused on internal security (Fischer, 1999). During the same period, France's Deuxième Bureau, founded in 1871, came to be regarded as one of the first institutions producing continuous military intelligence in the modern sense. Likewise, Italy's Servizio Informazioni Militare (1863) and Germany's Abteilung III-B (1889) demonstrate the development of military intelligence within a framework of institutional competition across Europe.

With the growing strategic significance of naval power, the United States established the Office of Naval Intelligence in 1882, thereby creating a continuous and professional structure in the field of naval intelligence. Similarly, the Intelligence Bureau established in British India in 1887 demonstrated the institutionalization of internal security and political intelligence within a colonial administrative context (Kent, 1949).

In the Ottoman Empire, the Yıldız Intelligence Organization, established under Sultan Abdulhamid II in 1880, emerged as one of the earliest examples of bureaucratic intelligence through its integration of multi-source information gathering, regular reporting, and centralized analytical processes. This institution will be examined in greater detail in the following section (Safi, 2023).

When these institutions are considered collectively, it becomes evident that during the second half of the nineteenth century intelligence evolved from police-centered structures into specialized, permanent, and hierarchical organizations embedded within both military and civilian bureaucracies. With the emergence of regular budgets, personnel training, archival systems, and analytical procedures, intelligence became a permanent component of the state apparatus, and the organizational foundations of the national



intelligence agencies that would emerge in the twentieth century were established during this period (Lowenthal, 2025).

### **The Era of the World Wars: The Emergence of Modern National Intelligence Agencies**

The early twentieth century may be regarded as a period during which intelligence activities evolved from tactical and operational support mechanisms into central components of strategic decision-making processes. With the outbreak of the First World War, intelligence developed into a multidimensional structure encompassing frontline reconnaissance, signals intelligence, cryptology, propaganda, and counterintelligence activities. In this era of expanding global conflict, not only military power but also the capacity to produce and decipher information became a key element of interstate competition.

The establishment of independent intelligence organizations such as MI5 and MI6 in Britain, together with major advances in professional agent training, rapidly influenced rival states. In the United States, the Military Intelligence Division (MID), established during the war, pioneered the institutionalization of technical intelligence. These developments later provided the organizational foundation for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), established during the Second World War in 1942 (Jeffreys-Jones, 2003).

In Germany, Abteilung IIIb conducted military intelligence activities during the First World War, while intelligence structures were reorganized under different institutions in the postwar period. In the Soviet Union, the Cheka, established following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, introduced a centralized and ideologically driven model of internal security and counterintelligence. This structure later evolved into institutions such as the NKVD and ultimately the KGB (Mueller, 2017).

During the Second World War, intelligence activities created a strategic force multiplier through technological advancements. The Enigma decryption efforts conducted by Britain's Government Code and Cypher School demonstrated that signals intelligence could directly influence the outcome of war. During the same period, Germany's Abwehr organization and the Sicherheitsdienst operating under the Nazi SS represented distinct intelligence models.

In the postwar era, the establishment of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the United States in 1947 transformed intelligence into a centralized civilian structure, while the KGB, institutionalized in the Soviet Union in 1954, created an integrated model combining both domestic and foreign intelligence under a single authority. These two organizations became the principal actors of global intelligence competition throughout the Cold War.

Overall, this period demonstrates that intelligence came to be conducted through technologically supported, multi-layered national institutions operating on a global scale, while signals intelligence, cryptology, psychological warfare, and covert operations became integral components of modern intelligence doctrine. Intelligence thus emerged not only as a wartime necessity but also as a fundamental determinant of foreign policy and national security strategy in times of peace.

### **The Cold War Period: Global Intelligence Competition and Proxy Wars**

The Cold War period was characterized by the transformation of intelligence activities into one of the principal instruments of global ideological competition. The deterrent effect of thermonuclear weapons limited direct military confrontation between major powers and shifted competition toward covert operations, proxy wars, psychological warfare, and technical intelligence. In this context, intelligence evolved beyond mere information gathering into an active component of foreign policy production.

During this period, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), established in the United States in 1947, and the KGB, institutionalized in the Soviet Union in 1954, emerged as the two principal actors of global intelligence competition. While the CIA conducted covert operations, regime-change initiatives, and psychological warfare activities, the KGB developed a distinct model based on counterintelligence, active measures, ideological influence, and extensive agent networks. This rivalry created a multi-layered structure not only between the two organizations themselves but also among the intelligence services of allied states (Johnson, 2014).

Significant advances also occurred in the field of technical intelligence (TECHINT). The establishment of the National Security Agency (NSA) in the United States in 1952 created a centralized structure for signals intelligence and cryptology, while the Soviet Union similarly expanded its



communication interception and electronic intelligence capabilities. With the introduction of satellite technologies, imagery intelligence (IMINT) and measurement and signature intelligence (MASINT) emerged, allowing intelligence activities to transcend the human dimension and acquire a technological character (Westad, 2005).

Proxy wars became one of the principal arenas in which intelligence activities manifested themselves operationally. In conflicts such as the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the parties involved avoided direct confrontation and instead operated through local actors. Within this framework, training, armament, propaganda, and intelligence sharing became essential instruments (Prados, 2006).

Counterintelligence activities also strengthened institutionally during this period. Double-agent operations, disinformation campaigns, and intelligence activities conducted under diplomatic cover highlighted intelligence not merely as a mechanism for gathering information but also as a means of disrupting the adversary's information-production capacity. Consequently, the "active operations" dimension of intelligence gained doctrinal legitimacy (Ball, 1985).

In the later stages of the Cold War, advances in computer technologies significantly increased data-processing capacities, making intelligence analysis more systematic and multi-sourced. Open-source intelligence (OSINT) and electronic data-collection methods became integrated with traditional human intelligence (HUMINT) into a unified structure.

Overall, the Cold War period may be defined as an era in which intelligence became globally institutionalized, technologically supported, and multidimensional, while covert operations became a routine component of foreign policy and analytical processes acquired a multidisciplinary character. This process also laid the foundations for the network-centered, digital, and multi-actor intelligence environment that would emerge in the post-Cold War era.

### **The Digital Age and the Transformation of Intelligence: Network-Centric and Multi-Actor Structures**

In the post-Cold War era, changes in the security environment diversified both the objectives and methods of intelligence activities. Classical interstate military competition was increasingly replaced by terrorism, cyber threats, economic rivalry, and hybrid warfare methods. These developments transformed intelligence into a multidimensional security instrument extending beyond the purely military sphere.

The process of digitalization fundamentally transformed intelligence collection and analysis methods. In addition to signals and imagery intelligence, cyber intelligence, big data analytics, and open-source intelligence (OSINT) acquired strategic importance, while analytical models based on multi-source data fusion were developed. Consequently, intelligence production evolved from reliance solely on classified sources into an integrated structure dependent upon digital data flows (Dover, 2020).

During this period, the range of actors involved in intelligence activities also expanded. Alongside state institutions, private technology companies, defense industry organizations, and international alliances became integral components of the intelligence ecosystem. Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, the doctrine of preventive intelligence gained prominence, and practices involving mass data collection and border security became increasingly widespread.

Another major transformation of the digital era emerged through large-scale information leaks and whistleblower disclosures. The publication of classified diplomatic and military documents by WikiLeaks in 2010 demonstrated that digital communication systems had created new vulnerabilities for intelligence organizations. Similarly, Edward Snowden's disclosures in 2013 revealed the global scale of signals intelligence and mass surveillance activities conducted by the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA). These events fundamentally altered public debates concerning intelligence, privacy, cybersecurity, and state surveillance. Consequently, intelligence activities entered a new era in which information security, cyber defense, data protection, and digital resilience became as important as intelligence collection itself (Benkler, 2011; Lyon, 2014).

The emergence of cyberspace as a new operational domain demonstrated that intelligence had become a force multiplier encompassing not only information gathering but also data manipulation and operations targeting critical infrastructure. Contemporary conflicts further demonstrate the growing importance of open-source and digital intelligence. Recent tensions between Iran and Israel have shown that satellite imagery, social media data, publicly accessible surveillance systems, geolocation technologies,



and digital footprints can provide valuable intelligence regarding military deployments, strategic movements, and operational planning. Such developments illustrate that intelligence production is no longer limited to state agencies but increasingly involves a wider ecosystem of digital actors, technological platforms, and open-source analysts (Zegart, 2022). In this context, modern intelligence has evolved into a network-centric, technology-intensive, and multi-actor structure, representing the digital phase of the historical process of institutionalization.

### **The Turkish Intelligence History and Turkish Intelligence Tradition**

The previous section demonstrated that intelligence emerged simultaneously with military strategy and constitutes a field of activity as old as the history of warfare itself. Considering that early military structures developed within the context of power struggles in Central and East Asia, it becomes evident that the rivalry between Turkish and Chinese political formations was decisive not only in military terms but also with regard to practices of information gathering and evaluation. In this respect, the historical development of the Turkish intelligence tradition deserves to be examined within the broader framework of early state formation processes centered in Asia.

Philological evidence related to early Turkish language and administrative terminology provides important clues regarding the functional equivalents of intelligence activities. Certain terms found in *Dîvânu Lugâti't-Türk*, compiled by Mahmud al-Kashgari, allow interpretations suggesting the existence of practices in which captured enemy elements were utilized not merely for punishment but also as sources of information. In this context, the concept of *tl* has been associated with the use of captives as information providers and has been interpreted by some researchers as a functional example of early human intelligence (Clauson, 1972).

Similarly, terms appearing in the sources as *körüg/körük* are associated with information-gathering activities directed toward rival political entities. The association of these concepts with individuals systematically assigned to report to specific authorities suggests that intelligence among early Turkish communities may not have been conducted randomly but rather within a certain hierarchical structure. Nevertheless, it would be more cautious to interpret these practices not as evidence of a direct institutional organization but rather as an early and functional form of organization (Sinor, 1990).

Terminology related to counterintelligence is equally noteworthy. Chinese sources contain references to agents sent among Turkish communities, while Turkish texts include concepts indicating the identification and neutralization of enemy spies. The terms *çaşıt* and *çaşıtlama* may be evaluated within this framework, demonstrating that awareness of hostile infiltration existed even under early historical conditions. These connections reveal that, alongside information gathering, measures concerning information security were also considered important (Güler, 2024a).

Within the early Turkish administrative and military structure, officials such as *ulak* and *çabış*, who fulfilled communication and representative functions, were not limited to conducting diplomatic contacts but also carried out socio-political observation and reporting activities in the regions where they served. This dual role is significant in demonstrating the historical intertwining of diplomatic representation and intelligence gathering (Yılmaz, 2023).

When these findings are evaluated collectively, it becomes evident that the origins of the Turkish intelligence tradition possess a historical depth that cannot be confined solely to imperial periods. The military and diplomatic struggles conducted with China during the Hun, Göktürk, and Uighur periods demonstrate the development of information-based decision-making processes through reconnaissance activities, prisoner interrogations, diplomatic reporting, and frontier observations. Although the practices that emerged during this process cannot be directly equated with the core functions of modern intelligence, they may nevertheless be regarded as early functional examples.

Accordingly, the Turkish intelligence tradition was shaped through the nomadic-sedentary interaction in Central Asia and acquired historical continuity through the combination of military reconnaissance, diplomatic observation, and internal security practices. This continuity later manifested itself as an institutional legacy in the formation of Seljuk, Ottoman, and Republican intelligence structures.

### **The Huns Period: Reconnaissance, Envoys, and Counterintelligence Practices**

The prolonged military and diplomatic struggles conducted by the Hunnic political structure against China provide some of the most visible examples of early Turkish intelligence practices. The primary information concerning Hun–Chinese relations has largely survived through Chinese dynastic chronicles,



particularly the Shiji and Hanshu, which constitute the principal historical sources in this regard. These texts record that the Huns dispatched reconnaissance units to frontier regions prior to military mobilization, monitored the logistical lines of Chinese armies, and followed developments within Chinese internal politics through diplomatic envoys (Di Cosmo, 2002).

The intelligence activities of the Huns were not limited solely to military reconnaissance. Envoys sent to the Chinese imperial court not only fulfilled diplomatic functions but also observed internal power balances, rivalries among commanders, and frontier defense preparations, subsequently reporting their findings. This demonstrates that diplomatic representation and intelligence gathering were intertwined from an early period onward. Chinese sources further indicate that Hunnic envoys were incorporated into court protocol while simultaneously being kept under strict surveillance, revealing that both sides possessed mutual intelligence awareness.

It is also understood that prisoner interrogations were systematically employed within Hunnic military strategy as a means of acquiring information. Captured Chinese soldiers reportedly provided information concerning frontier fortifications, troop numbers, and supply routes, and such information was subsequently used in planning future raids. This practice may be regarded as an early example of human intelligence (HUMINT).

Moreover, the Huns' use of withdrawal maneuvers to lure Chinese armies into particular regions and ambush them cannot be explained solely through tactical mobility but also through prior knowledge of enemy movements. These outcomes demonstrate the direct influence of battlefield intelligence on decision-making processes. Indeed, Chinese chronicles indicate that during the campaigns conducted under Mete (Modu), the deployment formations of Chinese armies had been learned in advance and military movements were planned accordingly (Loewe, 2018).

Evidence concerning counterintelligence practices also appears within the Hun–Chinese struggle. In response to Chinese attempts to infiltrate agents among the Huns, the Hunnic administration reportedly maintained strict control over foreign elements in frontier regions and monitored the movements of suspicious individuals. These findings are significant in demonstrating that measures related to information security were adopted even during early historical periods.

In conclusion, intelligence activities during the Hunnic period displayed a multidimensional structure consisting of frontier reconnaissance, diplomatic reporting, prisoner interrogations, and counterintelligence measures. Although these practices did not indicate the existence of a modern institutional organization, they nevertheless reveal the presence of information-based military decision-making processes and constitute the early functional foundations of the Turkish intelligence tradition.

### **Institutionalization during the Göktürk Period and the Intelligence Struggle with China**

The Göktürk period (6th–8th centuries) stands out as a stage during which early Turkish intelligence evolved toward institutionalization and during which intensive diplomatic and military struggles with China took place. Military reconnaissance and counterintelligence activities that had begun during the Hun period became more systematic under Göktürk rule, both within the geographically expanding imperial sphere and within the framework of diplomatic relations conducted with China (Ertem, 2022).

Within Göktürk–Chinese relations, China's policy of marriage diplomacy (heqin) transformed into a strategic intelligence instrument. China dispatched princesses and envoys in order to maintain political stability in frontier regions and intervene in Göktürk internal politics. In response, Göktürk envoys and agents also became increasingly active within China. These diplomatic missions simultaneously carried agents and observers, thereby increasing China's information-gathering capacity concerning the Göktürks. Such practices may be regarded as an early example of the intertwining of diplomatic contact and intelligence collection (Fairbank & Twitchett, 1979).

Diplomatic representation among the Göktürks developed extensively as a mechanism of control across vast territories. Envoys not only conducted diplomatic negotiations but also transmitted information concerning military movements in frontier regions, economic conditions, and the attitudes of local populations to the center. These reports enabled the Göktürks to base their military and diplomatic decisions upon information-driven processes.

The Orkhon Inscriptions (8th century) constitute one of the most concrete sources concerning Göktürk state administration and intelligence practices. The inscriptions contain references to rulers' observation, internal security, and information-gathering activities concerning both the population and



military commanders. In particular, the references to rulers instructing officials to monitor the condition of the people and submit reports demonstrate an early form of information-based governance. These findings reveal the significant role of information gathering within Göktürk strategies for preserving frontier security and maintaining central authority.

In summary, intelligence practices inherited from the Huns acquired a more institutional character during the Göktürk period and became integrated with diplomacy, military planning, and internal security. The struggles conducted with China acted as a catalyst for the development of both intelligence gathering and counterintelligence functions within early Turkish intelligence practices. This period may therefore be regarded as a stage representing early functional examples of institutional continuity (Avşaroğlu & Özen, 2025).

### **The Uighurs and Central Asian Intelligence Networks**

The Uighur period (8th–9th centuries) represents a stage during which intelligence became institutionalized in Central Asia in terms of both diplomacy and military planning. The Uighur Khaganate employed both traditional diplomatic reporting and covert observation mechanisms within its relations with China, Tibet, and other steppe communities (Güler, 2024b).

The Uighurs maintained close diplomatic relations with the Tang Dynasty of China, although these contacts were not limited merely to peace and trade. In accordance with the classical intelligence practices of nomadic states, envoys simultaneously fulfilled intelligence-gathering functions. Information obtained from envoys sent to the Chinese court was directly utilized in the Uighur administration's frontier security and military strategies.

The Uighurs also accelerated information flows through the establishment of land routes and communication stations (ulak systems) across their extensive territories. This system ensured secure and regular information transfer between the central authority and provincial regions. Couriers not only carried messages but also monitored frontier movements and, when necessary, reported them to the center.

As was typical among Central Asian nomadic states, intelligence activities were conducted within a structure directly connected to central authority. The Uighur Khaganate organized observation mechanisms concerning the population, commanders, and frontier regions through official directives, thereby enabling rapid and effective responses to both internal security concerns and external threats. This structure represented a more advanced form of the traditions inherited from the Huns and Göktürks.

The Uighur period therefore constitutes a stage during which the Turkish intelligence tradition began to acquire a more institutional and organized character. Intelligence gathering through diplomatic representation, land routes, and diplomatic reports was systematically implemented and integrated with central authority. The communication and observation networks established during this period later formed the foundations of intelligence structures in the Seljuk and Ottoman eras (Atsız, 2014).

### **Intelligence in the Seljuk Period and Its Imperial Legacy**

The Turkish intelligence tradition was shaped through practices emerging during the Hun, Göktürk, and Uighur periods in Asia and acquired continuity as it expanded westward through migrations and conquests. This accumulated experience evolved into a distinctly centralized and institutional structure for the first time during the Seljuk period (Demircioğlu et al., 2024).

Within the Great Seljuk State, intelligence activities were conducted through the berid organization operating under the authority of the Sultan. The berid system functioned not merely as a communication network but also as a mechanism of surveillance and early warning through which military, administrative, and political developments in the provinces were regularly reported to the center. In this manner, the central authority was able to maintain control over the provinces and detect potential rebellions and emerging power centers in advance.

A dual supervisory structure is particularly notable within the Seljuk understanding of intelligence. On the one hand, independent information concerning governors and military commanders was collected; on the other hand, social and political movements among the population were monitored. This perspective demonstrates that intelligence was employed not only against external threats but also for ensuring internal security and preserving administrative stability.



The centralized reporting and supervisory model that emerged during the Seljuk period created an institutional legacy for subsequent Turkish-Islamic states. The communication networks, courier systems, and palace-centered surveillance mechanisms observed in the Ottoman Empire represented continuations of the Seljuk berid tradition on different scales. This continuity is significant in demonstrating the historical roots of institutionalization within Turkish intelligence practice (Delibalta, 2018).

### **The Ottoman Empire and the First Institutional Intelligence Organization**

When the imperial period is examined, it becomes evident that the Turkish intelligence legacy that began with the Huns in Asia and acquired institutional characteristics during the Seljuk era became integrated across a much broader geographical sphere under the Ottoman Empire. Until the Ottoman rise period, intelligence activities conducted through travelers, frontier agents, and diplomatic contacts gradually acquired a systematic character through diplomatic missions. The regular acquisition of reports from centers such as Vienna, Venice, and Paris demonstrates that foreign intelligence was conducted through diplomatic channels.

In the field of domestic intelligence, information concerning the provinces was transmitted to the center through judges (kadı), provincial governors (sancak beyi), and civil administrators, while surveillance activities carried out around the palace fulfilled counterintelligence functions. This multi-layered structure enabled Ottoman intelligence to preserve institutional continuity over an extended period.

By the late nineteenth century, the establishment of the Yıldız Intelligence Organization centralized intelligence activities that had previously been conducted in a fragmented manner. Diplomatic reports, provincial intelligence, and palace surveillance were thus brought together under a single coordinating structure, representing an important step toward modern institutionalization.

However, operating during a period in which the empire was weakening politically and militarily, this organization was increasingly compelled to prioritize palace security against mounting internal and external threats. Although this necessity limited the strategic capacity of the institution, it nevertheless facilitated the emergence of professional intelligence cadres within the state bureaucracy (Ortaylı, 2008).

During the First World War, cadres emerging from this structure established the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa (Special Organization), which moved beyond classical intelligence gathering and developed a broader intelligence practice encompassing propaganda, covert operations, and irregular warfare elements. Operations conducted in regions such as the Caucasus, the Balkans, the Middle East, and Crimea constituted examples closely resembling the operational dimension of modern intelligence (Ortaylı, 2016).

Although the institutional structure disappeared with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, a significant portion of the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa cadres participated in the Turkish War of Independence, and this accumulated experience was subsequently transferred into the intelligence structures of the Republic of Türkiye. This continuity demonstrates that the Turkish intelligence tradition evolved not through historical rupture but rather through institutional transformation (Inalcik, 2013).

### **Institutional Continuity from the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa to MAH and MIT**

Following the First World War and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa formally ceased to exist; nevertheless, its trained cadres played active roles in conducting intelligence and covert activities during the Turkish War of Independence. This continuity of personnel enabled the institutional memory of the Turkish intelligence tradition to be transferred uninterruptedly to the newly established state.

After the proclamation of the Republic, intelligence activities were reorganized within a more systematic framework through the establishment of the Millî Emniyet Hizmeti Riyaseti (MAH) in 1926. MAH represented the first stage of the modern institutionalization process of Turkish intelligence as an intelligence body with clearly defined duties and authorities, positioned within a bureaucratic hierarchy and attached to the centralized state structure.

The security dynamics of the Cold War period made it necessary for intelligence to evolve beyond an organization focused solely on domestic security into one possessing strong capacities in foreign intelligence, technical intelligence, and strategic analysis. In line with this transformation, the National Intelligence Organization (Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı – MİT) was established in 1965, assuming the responsibilities previously held by MAH.



The establishment of MİT represented three major structural transformations in Turkish intelligence history:

- the institutional consolidation of intelligence activities under a single authority
- the development of foreign intelligence and strategic analysis capacities
- and the increasing professionalization and specialization of technical intelligence

This process enabled intelligence practices that had been conducted in different forms from the Hun, Göktürk, Seljuk, and Ottoman periods onward to evolve into a bureaucratic and professional organizational model compatible with the modern state structure of the Republic period. Institutional continuity demonstrates both the historical depth of the Turkish intelligence tradition and its capacity to adapt to changing security environments.

Under contemporary conditions, MİT has undergone a transformation combining its historical legacy with a modern intelligence approach by developing an integrated structure encompassing human intelligence, technical intelligence, and open-source intelligence. This transformation has enabled intelligence activities to rely not solely upon field operations but also upon data analysis, technological utilization, and institutional adaptability against multidimensional security threats. Türkiye's strategic geopolitical position at the intersection of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East has further increased the significance of intelligence capabilities within national security and foreign policy processes (Fuller, 2008). Consequently, while preserving its historical continuity, the Turkish intelligence tradition has reached an institutional framework compatible with the contemporary intelligence paradigm (Seren, 2021).

### **From Turkish Intelligence Tradition to Intelligence Engineering**

The continuity argued in this study should not be interpreted as the uninterrupted existence of a single institutional organization extending from the Huns to the Republic of Türkiye. Rather, continuity refers to the persistence of intelligence-related state practices, strategic culture, and information-oriented decision-making mechanisms across successive Turkish political formations. Historical evidence demonstrates that reconnaissance activities, diplomatic observation, messenger networks, prisoner interrogations, frontier surveillance, and information-reporting mechanisms repeatedly appeared within Hunnic, Göktürk, Uighur, Seljuk, Ottoman, and Republican state structures. While organizational forms changed according to historical conditions, the functional logic of intelligence remained remarkably consistent. Therefore, the Turkish intelligence tradition may be understood as a process of institutional transformation rather than historical discontinuity (Andrew, 2018; Demircioğlu et al., 2024).

When the historical process is examined, one of the most distinctive characteristics of the Turkish intelligence tradition is its flexible structure, capable of adapting to changing security environments across different periods. Mobile information-gathering practices suited to the dynamic warfare conditions of the Hun and Göktürk eras, centrally supervised communication and reporting networks during the Seljuk period, multi-layered intelligence structures focused on diplomacy and internal security in the Ottoman era, and bureaucratic institutionalization during the Republican period constitute the principal stages of this transformation. This historical continuity demonstrates that intelligence has been not merely a practical field of activity, but also a systematic process of knowledge production (Cabrayilov, 2025).

In the modern era, the scope of intelligence activities has evolved into a multidisciplinary structure encompassing data collection, processing, analysis, modeling, and decision-support processes. This transformation necessitates the examination of intelligence through engineering methodologies. In particular, big data analytics, signal processing, network analysis, artificial intelligence-supported predictive models, and decision-support systems have become fundamental components of contemporary intelligence activities. In this context, Intelligence Engineering may be defined as an interdisciplinary approach that conceptualizes the intelligence cycle as a measurable, modelable, and optimizable system (Sağır, 2019).

The historical flexibility of the Turkish intelligence tradition, grounded in human-centered practices, combined with modern technical intelligence capabilities, provides a suitable theoretical foundation for the intelligence engineering approach. This perspective enables the integration of historical experience with analytical methodologies and facilitates the reconstruction of intelligence processes within a scientific framework. Accordingly, intelligence evolves beyond a mere information-gathering activity into a data-driven strategic decision-support system (Sağır & Özdemir, 2026).



When the historical evolution of intelligence activities is analyzed, it becomes evident that the intelligence cycle consisting of information collection, verification, analysis, and presentation to decision-makers has gradually transformed into a more systematic and measurable structure. This transformation shifts intelligence beyond being solely a historical and institutional activity and moves it closer to a process-oriented discipline that can be modeled and evaluated through performance criteria. Within this framework, Intelligence Engineering emerges as an interdisciplinary field that approaches the classical intelligence cycle through an input–process–output logic and examines data collection architectures, analytical algorithms, decision-support systems, and feedback mechanisms within a holistic systems-design perspective. Such an approach makes it possible to measure the effectiveness of intelligence activities, optimize resource allocation, and develop adaptive structures capable of operating within multi-layered threat environments.

### Conclusion

This study has examined the history of world intelligence not only through a chronological perspective but also through a methodological approach. The transformation of intelligence throughout world history from surveillance to espionage and ultimately to modern intelligence under contemporary conditions has been analyzed through objective scholarly findings. The evolution of intelligence across different historical eras and under varying conditions has been demonstrated through the documented findings of scholars who have conducted extensive research in the field over extended periods of time. In this way, the transformation process of intelligence throughout world history has been presented in a manner that allows readers to develop their own interpretations.

Parallel to the broader historical development of world intelligence, the study has also explored the historical trajectory of Turkish intelligence through historical, linguistic, and scientific evidence. The collected findings have been presented in an objective manner, avoiding subjective judgments, while demonstrating the place of Turkish intelligence history within the wider context of world history.

This study demonstrates that the origins of intelligence were not limited solely to modern state structures but emerged in functional and organized forms beginning with early steppe societies. The historical continuity observed through the Huns, Göktürks, Uighurs, Seljuks, and Ottomans reveals that the Turkish intelligence tradition possesses an uninterrupted institutional memory and a strong capacity for adaptation. This continuity later became integrated with modern bureaucratic and technical capacities through the transformation extending from the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa to MAH and ultimately to the National Intelligence Organization (MIT). Accordingly, the continuity emphasized in this study refers not to the survival of a single institution across centuries, but to the persistence of information-oriented governance practices, intelligence culture, and adaptive security mechanisms within successive Turkish political entities.

The principal contribution of this study lies in its treatment of intelligence history not merely as a chronological narrative, but from the perspective of institutional evolution and functional transformation, while also demonstrating that this historical accumulation may be situated within a theoretical framework through the concept of Intelligence Engineering. The intelligence engineering approach offers a conceptual framework for the future of the field by conceptualizing the intelligence cycle as a measurable, modelable, and optimizable system.

In conclusion, with its historical depth, institutional continuity, and multidimensional capacity for adaptation, the Turkish intelligence tradition constitutes a distinctive example in which the perspective of Intelligence Engineering may be applied. This not only provides an interdisciplinary expansion for intelligence studies but also enables the reinterpretation of historical accumulation within the contemporary security environment.

### Ethical Declaration / Etik Beyan

During the writing process of the study “*The Historical Evolution of Intelligence and the Turkish Intelligence Tradition: Toward an Intelligence Engineering Perspective*” scientific rules, ethical and citation rules were followed. No falsification was made on the collected data and this study was not sent to any other academic publication medium for evaluation. Ethics Committee Permission is not required. / “*İstihbaratın Tarihsel Evrimi ve Türk İstihbarat Geleneği: İstihbarat Mühendisliği Perspektifine Doğru*” başlıklı çalışmanın yazım sürecinde bilimsel kurallara, etik ve alıntı kurallarına uyulmuş; toplanan veriler üzerinde herhangi bir



tahrifat yapılmamış ve bu çalışma herhangi başka bir akademik yayın ortamına değerlendirme için gönderilmemiştir. Bu araştırma da etik kurul kararı zorunluluğu bulunmamaktadır.

### Statement of Contribution Rate of Researchers / Araştırmacıların Katkı Oranı Beyanı

The contribution rates of the authors in the study are equal. / Yazarların çalışmadaki katkı oranları eşittir.

### Declaration of Conflict / Çatışma Beyanı

There is no potential conflict of interest in the study. / Çalışmada herhangi bir potansiyel çıkar çatışması söz konusu değildir.

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### Statement of Use for Artificial Intelligence and Its Types / Yapay Zeka ve Türleri Kullanım Beyanı

Artificial intelligence and its various types were not used in the writing of this article. / Bu makalenin yazımında yapay zeka ve türleri kullanılmamıştır.

### Data Sharing Statement / Veri Paylaşım Beyanı

We declare that, upon reasonable request for the purpose of verifying the findings, we can share the data of this study according to the conditions specified in the relevant section of the "ethical principles and publication policy". / Bu çalışmanın verilerini bulguların doğrulanması amacıyla makul bir talep üzerine "etik ilkeler ve yayın politikası"nın ilgili kısmında belirtilen şartlara göre paylaşabileceğimizi beyan ederiz.

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## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

İstihbarat kavramı tarih boyunca çoğu zaman savaş, casusluk ve devlet güvenliği ile ilişkilendirilmiş olsa da, modern akademik literatürde çok daha geniş ve çok disiplinli bir çalışma alanına dönüşmüştür. Özellikle modern devletlerin ortaya çıkışıyla birlikte kurumsal bir yapı kazanan istihbarat faaliyetleri; bilgi toplama, analiz etme, karar vericilere sunma ve stratejik yönlendirme süreçlerini kapsayan sistematik bir faaliyet alanı hâline gelmiştir. Bununla birlikte istihbarat tarihine ilişkin hâkim yaklaşımlar, çoğunlukla modern devlet merkezli bir perspektife dayanmakta ve erken dönem göçebe ya da yarı göçebe toplumların bilgi toplama pratiklerini ikincil düzeyde değerlendirmektedir. Bu durum, istihbaratın tarihsel kökenlerinin yalnızca yerleşik bürokratik devlet yapılarıyla açıklanmasına neden olmakta; özellikle Orta Asya bozkır toplumlarının askerî ve diplomatik bilgi üretim süreçleri literatürde sınırlı biçimde ele alınmaktadır. Bu çalışma, istihbarat tarihini yalnızca kronolojik bir savaş ve casusluk anlatısı olarak değil, aynı zamanda kurumsal dönüşüm, bilgi üretimi ve karar destek süreçlerinin tarihsel evrimi olarak ele almaktadır. Çalışmanın temel amacı, dünya istihbarat tarihindeki dönüşüm sürecini incelemek ve Türk istihbarat geleneğinin bu tarihsel akış içerisindeki yerini karşılaştırmalı bir perspektifle değerlendirmektir. Bu bağlamda çalışma, istihbarat faaliyetlerinin kökenlerinin modern devletlerden çok daha eskiye dayandığını ve erken dönem Türk siyasal oluşumlarında işlevsel bilgi toplama mekanizmalarının bulunduğunu ortaya koymayı hedeflemektedir. Araştırmada karşılaştırmalı tarihsel yöntem ve kavramsal analiz yaklaşımı birlikte kullanılmıştır. Antik Yakın Doğu metinleri, Çin hanedanlık yıllıkları, diplomatik kayıtlar, tarihsel belgeler ve modern istihbarat literatürü birlikte değerlendirilmiştir. Böylece istihbarat faaliyetlerinin farklı coğrafyalarda nasıl ortaya çıktığı, hangi işlevleri üstlendiği ve zaman içerisinde nasıl kurumsallaştığı karşılaştırmalı biçimde analiz edilmiştir. Çalışma aynı zamanda dilbilimsel ve filolojik verilerden de yararlanarak erken Türk topluluklarında kullanılan bazı kavramların istihbarat faaliyetleriyle ilişkisini incelemektedir. Araştırma bulguları, istihbarat faaliyetlerinin insanlık tarihi boyunca farklı biçimlerde var olduğunu göstermektedir. İlkçağ toplumlarında gözcülük, haber taşıyıcılığı ve keşif faaliyetleri ile başlayan süreç; zaman içerisinde diplomatik temsil, karşı istihbarat, kriptoloji ve teknik istihbarat boyutlarını içeren çok katmanlı yapılarla



dönüşmüştür. Kadeş Savaşı sürecinde görülen aldatma ve yanlış yönlendirme faaliyetleri, istihbaratın yalnızca bilgi toplama değil aynı zamanda rakibin karar alma sürecini etkileme amacı taşıdığını göstermektedir. Antik imparatorluklarda ortaya çıkan haberleşme ağları, Orta Çağ'daki posta sistemleri ve diplomatik temsilcilikler, modern istihbarat teşkilatlarının tarihsel öncüllerini oluşturmuştur. Türk istihbarat geleneği açısından elde edilen bulgular ise dikkat çekici bir tarihsel sürekliliğe işaret etmektedir. Hunlar döneminde Çin ile yürütülen askerî mücadelelerde sınır keşifleri, elçi raporları, esir sorgulamaları ve karşı istihbarat uygulamalarının kullanıldığı görülmektedir. Göktürkler döneminde diplomatik temsil ile bilgi toplama faaliyetleri daha sistematik hâle gelmiş; Orhun Yazıtları'nda merkezi otoritenin bilgiye dayalı yönetim anlayışını yansıtan ifadeler yer almıştır. Uygurlar döneminde ise haberleşme ağlarının ve diplomatik gözlem mekanizmalarının geliştiği anlaşılmaktadır. Selçuklular döneminde berid teşkilatı ile birlikte istihbarat faaliyetleri merkezî bir denetim mekanizmasına dönüşmüş; Osmanlı Devleti'nde ise çok katmanlı diplomatik ve iç güvenlik odaklı bir istihbarat yapısı ortaya çıkmıştır. XIX. yüzyılda kurulan Yıldız İstihbarat Teşkilatı, Türk istihbarat tarihinde modern bürokratik kurumsallaşmanın önemli örneklerinden biri olarak değerlendirilmektedir. I. Dünya Savaşı sürecinde faaliyet gösteren Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa ise propaganda, örtülü operasyon ve gayrinizamî harp unsurlarını içeren operasyonel bir istihbarat modeli geliştirmiştir. Cumhuriyet döneminde MAH ve sonrasında Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı'nın kurulmasıyla birlikte Türk istihbarat geleneği modern devlet yapısına uyum sağlayan profesyonel ve teknik bir organizasyon yapısına dönüşmüştür. Çalışmanın en önemli sonuçlarından biri, Türk istihbarat geleneğinin yalnızca tarihsel bir miras değil, aynı zamanda değişen güvenlik ortamlarına uyum sağlayabilen dinamik bir yapı olduğunu göstermesidir. Hunlardan Cumhuriyet dönemine kadar uzanan süreçte istihbarat faaliyetlerinin askerî keşiften diplomatik gözleme, insan istihbaratından teknik istihbarata kadar genişleyen bir dönüşüm geçirdiği görülmektedir. Bu durum, istihbaratın tarihsel süreç içerisinde giderek daha sistematik, ölçülebilir ve analiz odaklı bir yapıya dönüştüğünü ortaya koymaktadır. Bu dönüşüm, çalışmanın teorik boyutunu oluşturan istihbarat mühendisliği yaklaşımı açısından da önem taşımaktadır. Modern dönemde büyük veri analizi, yapay zekâ destekli karar sistemleri, ağ analizi ve teknik istihbarat yöntemlerinin gelişmesiyle birlikte istihbarat faaliyetleri klasik casusluk anlayışının ötesine geçmiştir. Bu bağlamda istihbarat mühendisliği; veri toplama, analiz, modelleme, karar destek ve geri besleme süreçlerini bütünlük bir sistem mantığıyla ele alan disiplinler arası bir yaklaşım olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Çalışma, Türk istihbarat geleneğinin tarihsel birikiminin bu yaklaşım için uygun bir teorik zemin sunduğunu ileri sürmektedir. Sonuç olarak bu çalışma, dünya istihbarat tarihini yalnızca modern devlet merkezli bir perspektifle değerlendiren yaklaşımların ötesine geçerek erken dönem bozkır toplumlarının rolünü görünür hâle getirmektedir. Türk istihbarat geleneğinin tarihsel derinliği, kurumsal sürekliliği ve adaptasyon kapasitesi; istihbarat çalışmalarının yalnızca tarihsel değil aynı zamanda analitik ve disiplinler arası bir alan olarak yeniden değerlendirilmesine imkân sağlamaktadır. Bu yönüyle çalışma, hem dünya istihbarat tarihine hem de Intelligence Engineering literatürüne kavramsal düzeyde katkı sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca çalışma, istihbarat tarihini yalnızca geçmişe yönelik betimleyici bir alan olarak ele almamakta; tarihsel birikimi çağdaş güvenlik ve analiz süreçleriyle ilişkilendirerek yeni bir teorik tartışma alanı açmaktadır. Bu yönüyle makale, istihbarat faaliyetlerinin tarihsel gelişimini sistem yaklaşımı çerçevesinde değerlendirmekte ve istihbaratın veri üretimi, analiz, karar destek ve geri besleme süreçlerinden oluşan bütüncül bir yapı olarak incelenebileceğini ileri sürmektedir. Böylece çalışma, klasik istihbarat tarihi araştırmalarından farklı olarak, tarihsel istihbarat birikimini modern analitik yöntemlerle ilişkilendirerek Intelligence Engineering yaklaşımına teorik bir zemin sunmaktadır. Bu durum, çalışmanın özgün yönlerinden birini oluşturmakta ve istihbarat çalışmalarının geleceğine yönelik disiplinler arası yeni araştırma alanlarının geliştirilmesine katkı sağlamaktadır.