American Friends of Reichman University—IDC Herzliya

November 1, 2023 – January 1, 2024

**Executive Summary**

Issue: Concise statement (about a paragraph) of the policy issue to be addressed by the proposed project.

In today’s reality, most wars around the world are irregular and often involve violent non-state actors (VNSAs). They, like any other player using military force to attain its goals, need intelligence. To obtain it, they engage in extensive activities, including information gathering, research, analysis, counterintelligence, and more. Because of a VNSA’s unique features, its intelligence activity differs from that of state actors, presenting its enemies with a unique challenge – and threat. However, the literature on VNSA intelligence remains limited in scope, thereby hindering states from formulating and articulating a counterintelligence policy that can provide a full response. This project seeks to bridge the information gap about the unique characteristics of the intelligence threat posed by VNSAs and to offer a detailed discussion about the attendant implications and dilemmas for policymakers.

Project: Brief description (2-3 paragraphs) of the methods and program activities that will be employed to examine the issue. Describe the book that will result from the project.

**יושלם לאחר תרגום יתר העמודים**

Policy Implications: Brief explanation (about a paragraph) of the policy implications of the project’s prospective findings.

**Non-State Intelligence**

**Counterintelligence Policy in an Era of Non-State Intelligence Threats:**

**Lessons from Hizbullah and Hamas’s Intelligence Warfare**

**Smith Richardson Foundation Strategy and Policy Fellows Program Proposal**

Issue (approx. 250 words): Describe the policy issue that the proposed book will examine or address

In today’s information age, the ability of players in the international arena to strengthen their power and status largely depends on maintaining intelligence superiority over their enemies and even their putative allies. This challenge, an integral part of every military campaign for the last several decades, has become even more acute in the cyber and social media era in which information and its means of dissemination are more accessible, quicker, available at a greater bandwidth, and far less costly than ever before. Thus, unlike in the past, today’s battle over information superiority involves not only state actors but also a diverse range of non-state ones, including terrorist organizations, criminal syndicates, commercial enterprises, and so on. State systems, such as those of the United States, are trained in state thinking and in acting against state threats, including by means of counterintelligence. But the era of irregular warfare, in which conflicts rage with VNSAs, poses a different type of challenge. VNSAs, like all other entities, need intelligence to achieve their goals. This intelligence must be adapted to their needs and gathered and analyzed in light of the nature of their activities. The intelligence threat VNSAs pose call for an in-depth discussion that can then help tailor counterintelligence policies to effectively meet this unique threat. This proposed book will undertake a deep and broad examination of the key political issues that relate to counterintelligence in an era of VNSA intelligence in the context of the characteristics of the intelligence activities of these players.

Background (approx. 2,500-3,000 words): Discuss the background of the issue and the current state of the policy debate over the issue. Include in the background narrative references to the key pieces of literature that have informed the policy debate. At the end of this section, concisely identify the policy making community’s gaps in knowledge on this issue and explain how the project will fill those gaps.

Throughout history, intelligence has been a crucial and fascinating component of conflicts, in which the contending parties battle with their wits, using secrets and stratagems. Intelligence is a critical aspect of any organization that uses military force to meet its needs and is part of the essential infrastructure for the success of its operations.

Indeed, intelligence is an ancient craft. Several episodes chronicled in the Bible, for instance, reflect the use of intelligence. Consider the twelve spies deployed by Moses to explore the Promised Land, as well as the two spies sent by Joshua into Jericho before his conquest of the city; Joshua’s spies established contact with a local woman named Rahab, who provided them with information about the city’s daily operations.[[1]](#footnote-1) Human intelligence was thus the primary method of information gathering available to military leaders across the ancient world.[[2]](#footnote-2)

All political and military organizations need intelligence to inform their activities. By definition, terrorist organizations operate asymmetrically against states. They seek to attain substantive results by inflicting harm on their enemies to obtain political objectives. Because the conflict is asymmetrical, a terrorist organization – as the weaker player – wants to generate achievements with the greatest impact using the most efficient means, given the organization’s relative poverty of resources compared with those of its enemy.[[3]](#footnote-3) This holds true for all military aspects of a conflict, including, of course, intelligence.

The nature of violent conflicts around the world is changing. Today, many current violent conflicts involve VNSAs, inevitably affecting how counterintelligence organizations must work. VNSAs such as Hizbullah in Lebanon, the Islamic State, and al-Qaeda are even defined as a separate category in the list of growing intelligence threats that U.S. counterintelligence efforts must confront.[[4]](#footnote-4) The Israeli Supreme Court has also recognized the importance of intelligence for terrorist organizations when discussing sentences imposed on those engaged in this activity, stating, “Terrorism in this era is characterized not only by its global nature but also by its great sophistication…in…systematic organizational activity to whose end large infrastructures are being built for the sake of training, intelligence gathering, and the execution of operational activity.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

Nonetheless, the theoretical and historical research tends to focus on intelligence operations by states rather than by non-state actors.[[6]](#footnote-6) This is true also with regard to research on counterintelligence aimed at maintaining a terrorist organization’s clandestine nature,[[7]](#footnote-7) a critical component of the longevity of such groups,[[8]](#footnote-8) which constitute a significant portion of non-state players.[[9]](#footnote-9) While some papers seeking to shed light on the topic have been written in the last decade, there is still a large lacuna in the academic discourse.[[10]](#footnote-10)

**Furthermore, the debate about counterintelligence policy focuses less on facing VNSAs and more on facing threats by states or other entities, such as commercial enterprises and informants within organizations. For example, Han Prunckun’s book,[[11]](#footnote-11) which serves as a comprehensive guide to the myriad aspects of counterintelligence, whether offensive or defensive, presents a wide range of historical examples related to counterintelligence as a reference point. While there is considerable diversity of threatening players in these examples, none is a classical VNSA. Even writing related to intelligence efforts against VNSAs tends to focus on how to operate intelligence activities against VNSAs rather than how to confront their intelligence. Thus, in his book[[12]](#footnote-12) about U.S. Special Forces and how they adapted their intelligence (as manifested in the actions of Task Force 714 in Iraq), Richard H. Shultz explicitly declares that the book’s purpose is to deal with intelligence gathering, analysis, and consequent secret operations, but not how to effect counterintelligence adaptations, i.e., confronting al-Qaeda’s intelligence activities. The only essay in that direction was penned by Shefali Virkar.[[13]](#footnote-13)**

**In the academic writing that does exist on VNSA intelligence, one finds mostly work about VNSA counterintelligence. Several essays by Carl Anthony Wege deal with the structure, functions, and processes of intelligence mechanisms, with an emphasis on the counterintelligence of** several non-state actors, especially Hizbullah and the Islamic State.[[14]](#footnote-14) He surveys the process by which Hizbullah’s intelligence bodies dealing with counterintelligence were established and their activities in the field, including these organizations’ development, prominent successes over the years, and, in general, the different intelligence capabilities they deploy. Blake W. Mobley’s comprehensive book[[15]](#footnote-15) presents different aspects of terrorist organizations’ counterintelligence activities, reviewing several terrorist organizations’ counterintelligence efforts as part of its undertaking to develop a theory about the way terrorist organizations conduct their counterintelligence efforts. An essay by John A. Gentry[[16]](#footnote-16) also compares terror/insurgent groups to NGOs, focusing mostly on their counterintelligence and covert action dimensions. He even proposes a basic theoretical model for VNSA intelligence. Benedetta Berti’s essay[[17]](#footnote-17) also deals with a very narrow aspect of Hizbullah’s intelligence activities, concentrating mostly on the organization’s counterintelligence efforts to identify spies who have worked for Israel since the Second Lebanon War.

**However, there is far less literature addressing positive intelligence, that is, the processes of intelligence gathering and analysis performed by VNSAs.** Amir Kulick’s essay[[18]](#footnote-18) describes how Hizbullah intelligence operates against Israel as part of its intelligence gathering activities and tries to characterize the organization’s modus operandi (MO) while also surveying the prominent sources it operated, especially in the 2000s. Another essay in this field by Justin R. Harber[[19]](#footnote-19) presents the threat posed to the United States by the intelligence capabilities of non-state actors. The writer provides a general characterization of these actors and focuses on showing how the United States must confront the threat they pose.

In 2019, the journal *Intelligence and National Security* published a special issue aimed at expanding the discussion of non-state organizations’ intelligence by focusing on five case studies. The editor, too, stresses the paucity of research into this topic.[[20]](#footnote-20) One of the essays in that issue[[21]](#footnote-21) tries to characterize how non-state organizations conduct intelligence assessments, citing Hizbullah’s intelligence assessment about the Second Lebanon War in 2006 and Hamas’s intelligence assessment of Operation Protective Edge in 2014 as examples of its proposed theory.

Additional essays in the issue examine other case studies that shed light on specific aspects of VNSAs intelligence. The essays include examinations of Gantry’s above-mentioned model in the context of the North Vietnamese in the Second Indochina War,[[22]](#footnote-22) the intelligence system of the Maoist insurgency in Nepal,[[23]](#footnote-23) the way the Loyalist supergrass trials in Northern Ireland became a valuable source of Open Source Intelligence (OSINT), and Gantry’s theory in the context of the Greek insurgency case study. New essays by the author of this document study the doubling of Hamas agents against Israel,[[24]](#footnote-24) Israel’s strategy against Hamas in the context of the Hamas crisis of 2021 including the issue of intelligence,[[25]](#footnote-25) and the characteristics of how Hizbullah and Hamas use human intelligence (HUMINT) against Israel.[[26]](#footnote-26) Currently, the author is also writing a comprehensive historical examination of Hamas’s intelligence activities against Israel.[[27]](#footnote-27)

**To summarize, to date, some essays have been written about VNSA intelligence and its implications for counterintelligence policy, but each of them has dealt with only a narrow aspect of the phenomenon, whether theoretical, historical, or political. At present, there is no comprehensive study that fully represents VNSA intelligence or presents the range of the phenomenon’s ramifications for the counterintelligence policies of democracies facing this threat. This proposed book seeks to undertake such a study for the first time.**

**In contrast to the goals of the proposed book, most of the current literature on VNSAs in their military contexts focuses on aspects other than intelligence, as demonstrated below with regard to Hamas.**

Although most of the research literature on Hamas focuses on the ideological and political aspects of its activity, some scholars have studied Hamas as a military organization and a fighting force. Some examples include Khaled Hroub’s[[28]](#footnote-28) book, which devotes a chapter to Hamas’s resistance and military strategy until the middle of the 2000s, addressing suicide attacks in particular. The third chapter of Zaki Chehab’s book[[29]](#footnote-29) describes the development of Hamas’s military wing. The seventh chapter of Jennifer Jefferis’s book[[30]](#footnote-30) deals with Hamas as military organization, including its origins, structure, and activities during the periods of combat in Gaza. Other books discuss the military components of Hamas as part of the general story of its evolution, such as the books of Tareq Baconi,[[31]](#footnote-31) Azzam Tamimi,[[32]](#footnote-32) and Sahul Mishal and Avraham Sela.[[33]](#footnote-33) In these books, Hamas’s military operations, capabilities and strategy are analyzed as part of a comprehensive analysis of the organization’s story.

Several articles published in academic journals or by research centers address Hamas as a military force. For example, Yoram Cohen and Jeffrey White’s[[34]](#footnote-34) research gives a broad picture of Hamas’s military capabilities and activity. Articles by Omer Dostri and Kobi Michael[[35]](#footnote-35) and by Guy Aviad[[36]](#footnote-36) describe Hamas’s military development in general. A number of other articles examine specific military aspects of Hamas: an article by Nicole J. Watkins and Alena M. James[[37]](#footnote-37) explores Hamas’s tunnel-digging efforts; Aviad Mendelboim and Liran Antebi’s[[38]](#footnote-38) article relates to Hamas’s use of technology; Lian Zucker and Edward H. Kaplan’s[[39]](#footnote-39) article reviews Hamas’s rocket capabilities and their potential and actual damage. Other articles disucss the broader effects of Hamas’s military activities, such as Minna Saarnivaara’s[[40]](#footnote-40) article on the repercussions of Hamas’s suicide campaigns and Somdeep Sen’s article exploring how Hamas’s military activity is perceived by the Palestinians.[[41]](#footnote-41)

The preceding is representative of the state of research in the field in general. It is notable that the conflict between Hamas and Israel has never been studied from the intelligence perspective.

**As mentioned, the nations of the world, led by the United States, acknowledge the intelligence threat that VNSAs pose as an important factor that must be considered when formulating counterintelligence policy. However, the knowledge base in the field is insufficient. This proposed project can bridge the gap in knowledge for the policy-making community in three ways. First, the project will, for the first time, present the operating methods of VNSA in the intelligence field in diverse intelligence disciplines and at all intelligence levels, from tactical to strategic. Second, it will offer policymakers an in-depth discussion of the implications and ramifications of the intelligence threat posed by VNSAs while analyzing the dilemmas and issues they must consider at several levels in the policy-making process. Third, while regular state entities are, by their nature, accustomed to thinking in formats relevant to states, this proposed project will increase policymakers’ awareness and help them adapt their thinking, thereby reducing their tendency to attribute state-like thought processes to the enemy. This project will emphasize the need for policymakers to consider VNSAs unique features also in the field of intelligence and to formulate their counterintelligence policy accordingly.**

Personnel and Methods (approx. 1,000-1,500 words): Personnel: In a short paragraph, describe the qualifications of the applicant. (Include curricula vitae as an appendix to the proposal and, if desired, one piece of policy-relevant writing that the applicant has published.)

Personnel:

Dr. Netanel Flamer is a Lecturer at Bar-Ilan University’s Department of Middle Eastern Studies and a Postdoctoral Fellow at Tufts University’s Fletcher School (ISSP). He also works at Reichman University’s (former IDC Herzliya) Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy. Flamer previously served as an Intelligence and Counterintelligence Officer for the Israeli Military Intelligence for almost a decade. At Bar-Ilan University, he wrote his PhD dissertation on the intelligence activities of Hizbullah and Hamas against Israel. He completed his MA at Tel Aviv University in Contemporary Middle Eastern Studies.

Flamer’s research focuses on asymmetric warfare, intelligence, and non-state actors in the Middle East. Currently, he is conducting research dealing with the various aspects of asymmetric intelligence and counterintelligence warfare between states and their non-state adversaries. Flamer has published several essays in journals devoted to intelligence and the Middle East in which he addresses different aspects of asymmetrical warfare in general and the war between Israel and Hamas in particular. He is currently in the final stages of completing his book *Hamas’s Intelligence Warfare Against Israel*. The book proposal has been accepted by Cambridge University Press and the full manuscript will be submitted this summer. Flamer’s research is based on sources in English, Hebrew, Arabic, and Farsi.

Methods:

Methods/Analytical Approach: What are the specific research questions that the project will seek to answer? What are the research design and methods to be used in the project? What are the principal sources for research and information? How will they answer the policy questions set forth in the proposal? Provide as much detail as possible within space constraints.

The question the proposed two-part book seeks to answer is: How should states adapt their counterintelligence policies given the intelligence threats they face from non-state actors?

The first part of the book will describe the intelligence applied by VNSAs. Each chapter in this part will discuss the characteristics of a specific aspect of VNSA intelligence activity, offering examples and demonstrations of this activity from Hizbullah and Hamas case studies. This part of the book will also classify the intelligence gathering activities of these actors according to the leading intelligence gathering methods: open source intelligence (OSINT), geospatial intelligence (GEOINT), human intelligence (HUMINT), signals intelligence (SIGINT), and cyber warfare. In addition, the project will review VNSA counterintelligence and VNSA intelligence assessment and analysis.

The book is based on my research using Arabic, Hebrew, and English sources. These include primary sources from within Hizbullah and Hamas that have never before been published, as well as primary sources from the Israeli side, including official documents and evidence and first-hand confessions obtained in legal proceedings conducted in Israel, which contain important information about intelligence activity. This wide range of sources allows me to paint a broad and original portrait of the intelligence activities of Hizbullah and Hamas.

Hizbullah and Hamas are excellent case studies for the proposed project. First, both organizations have evolved over their course of their existence. Having started as small terrorist organizations executing tactical actions, they transitioned to carrying out more spectacular acts. Later still, they succeeded in seizing and holding territory (Hizbullah in parts of Lebanon and Hamas in all of the Gaza Strip) and, to a large degree, assimilating and integrating into the governing entities of their respective territories. Thus, an analysis of their intelligence activities can help generate insights about VNSA intelligence activity at different stages of a VNSA’s development and at different intelligence levels, from tactical to strategic. Moreover, both organizations receive support and backing from Iran, which also has an impact on aspects of intelligence, although Hizbullah’s ties with Iran are much stronger than those of Hamas. This Iranian connection enables us to also discuss the effect of state support for a VNSA on intelligence. In conclusion, Hamas and Hizbullah are two veteran VNSAs with extensive and varied activities, thus making it possible to examine the subject studied from every relevant aspect.

In light of the analysis of the book’s first part, the second part will address the implications of the unique intelligence characteristics of VNSAs for the counterintelligence policies of states. Chapters will be dedicated to discussions of setting targets for concealment, analyzing human security, publishing information and censorship, engaging in activities in the areas of cyberspace, monitoring, supply chains, and propaganda, and raising awareness about the intelligence threat, fraud, intelligence, discovery, and exposure. Each chapter will analyze the challenges and opportunities for nations in the field under discussion and offer recommendation and directions of thought for policy makers.

This section will both draw on existing research literature on counterintelligence to identify elements that need reexamination or refinement in light of both the intelligence characteristics of VNSAs and the new conclusions emerging from the first part of the book regarding aspects of VNSAs that have not yet received adequate attention. Furthermore, the second part of the book will discuss the inherent tensions within democracies regarding their counterintelligence policies against the VNSA intelligence threat, given that providing a more appropriate response to this threat requires a reexamination of the balance of various liberties and rights, the very lifeblood of every democracy.

The following is a preliminary table of contents for the book:

**Introduction**

**Part 1 Characterization of VNSA counterintelligence activities**

Chapter 1: VNSA information collection and gathering

Chapter 2: VNSA counterintelligence

Chapter 3: VNSA analysis

Chapter 4: Analyzing VNSAs’ intelligence activity

**Part 2 Policy remarks for counterintelligence in an era of VNSAs intelligence threat**

Chapter 5: Publishing information and censorship

Chapter 6: Planning counterterrorism operations

Chapter 7: Cyberwarfare

Chapter 8: Security clearance

Chapter 9: Deception

Chapter 10: Intelligence

Chapter 11: Threat awareness

**Conclusion**

Product: Please provide any relevant information regarding your plans to publish the proposed book; e.g., whether a publisher has indicated an interest in your book.

**The plan is for the proposed book to be sent to one of the following publishers: Columbia Studies in Terrorism and Irregular Warfare, Cambridge Studies in International Relations, or Georgetown Studies in Intelligence History (series).**

**Once the project gets under way, these publishers will be sent a detailed prospectus about the proposed book for the purpose of entering into an agreement with one of them about publishing the book.**

Status of the Proposed Book Project: In a short paragraph, describe the status of the proposed book project (e.g., it builds on your completed Ph.D. dissertation or a published article or book chapter; substantial research or writing has already been completed prior to application for the grant; or it is an entirely new research project).

**Certain parts of the book, especially the historical ones, will be based on the author’s PhD dissertation, sections of which have already been reworked into several academic essays; about half of the dissertation is currently being turned into a book. Nonetheless, the dissertation and the book currently in progress are written almost entirely from a historical perspective, whereas the proposed book develops a completely new level of examination that reorganizes historical knowledge to draw conclusions that can facilitate the formulation of a comprehensive theory of VNSA intelligence. Furthermore, the second part of the proposed book, analyzing the implications and ramifications for policymakers, will consist of totally new research.**

**Budget**

**Salary:**

Researcher: $15,000

Research Assistants: $28,000

**Travel:**

Research trip to the United States: $3,500

Research trip to Europe: $2,500

**Research expenses:**

Archives Access and Release of sources: $2,000

**Publication costs:**

Editing costs: $5,000

**Administrative Expenses:**

Printing and Scanning: $1,000

**Organizational overhead:** $3,000

**Total: $60,000**

The name of the organization that will handle the project payments is the American Friends of Reichman University– IDC Herzliya.

Signing the letter and administering the grant will be:

Ms. Leslie Skyba

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