

Information warfare in the 21st century: Ideas are sometimes stronger than bombs

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Terrorist organizations sometimes have an advantage in the media. A new study by Dr. Yaniv Levyatan of the University of Haifa, published in the journal of Israel's National Security College, describes how our side can regain the advantage in this arena too.

["Information warfare"](#) plays a crucial role in the struggle against terrorist organizations, sometimes more so than conventional weapons.

Therefore, the information warfare against terrorist organizations ought to be instigated and on the attack, and should continue even when military warring has ended. Thus concludes a new study by Dr. Yaniv Levyatan of the Ezri Center for the Study of Iran and the Gulf at the [University of Haifa](#), which was published in the National Security College's *Bitachon Leumi* journal.

According to Dr. Levyatan, in the modern field of struggle between a sovereign country and a terrorist organization it is also necessary to relate to the information warfare that is taking place in the new and traditional media as well as other technological platforms, from the Internet to computer games. "The terrorist organizations invest efforts in information warfare tools, which enables them to bridge the physical gap between them and their conventional fighting forces. Today, these organizations frequently hold an advantageous stance in this field," he points out.

The study also shows that terrorist organizations have created built-in advantages in the information warfare. For example, one of the

conclusions of the Second Lebanon War is that one of Hezbollah's targets was to drag Israel into a disproportionate response so that it would be able to exhibit Israel in the Western and Arab media as a brutal country. Hezbollah's and Hamas's use of citizen populations as human shields is also intended to display Israel in the media as an inhumane country.

In order to counter the terrorist organizations' advantages, Dr. Levyatan presents strategies that Israel ought to carry out in this field, the guiding principal being that just like in conventional warfare, the country must initiate and not be dragged behind the other side, and of course it must rely on intelligence. "There is a major difference between gathering intelligence for military fighting and gathering intelligence for information warfare. Intelligence for information warfare must relate to components such as who the enemy's elitists are, what their social structure is, and what their political and tribal affiliations are. It is important to know what symbols are significant to the opponents, what the population's primary information channels are, and which messages would be engaged or discarded," the researcher points out.

He asserts that an efficient technique in information warfare is to photograph the combat fighting against the terrorist organization. This way, the organization's claims of exaggerated use of force can be refuted, or it can be shown that the terrorists are those who are injuring the population that they claim to be defending. Another technique is to identify the point of weakness between the population and the organization, and use that to our advantage. For example, if basic needs are lacking, the army provides assistance for the population - and we point out that it does so while the terrorist organization prevents the population of its basic needs.

"Information is a weapon, and just like an army invests in tanks and planes, the army must also invest in information weapons. The army

must develop abilities and skills that are not always considered as an intrinsic part of its activities - such as computer games, culture products, video clips, and television programs. When the army succeeds in presenting a product of information that incriminates the guerilla organization, it might be able to meet its required target more efficiently than if it had acted with physical force," Dr. Levyatan concludes.

Source: University of Haifa

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