



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Tomáš Veselý

Title: 'Living in the Droneworld: A Re-Assessment of Realist Conception of Sovereignty'

Programme/year: Security Studies/2020

Author of Evaluation (supervisor/external assessor): Anzhelika Solovyeva

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	9
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	30
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	37
<i>Total</i>		80	76
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	10
	Style	5	5
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	20
TOTAL		100	96

Evaluation

Major criteria:

This is a very strong theoretically driven work, which clearly reflects the author's deep knowledge of the problematic and related literature. Three key issues can be pointed out as potential avenue for improvement:



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While defining objectives, there lacks elaboration on how this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge (there have already been studies analyzing the relationship between drones and sovereignty, as well as studies applying post-humanist lenses to understand hybrids of a man and a machine). This is not meant to question the author's contribution because it is considerable and clear for those well oriented in related literature, but more explicit definition of the niche at the outset could be helpful.

While it may be challenging to collect empirical data for this project, more empirical material could be featured to support theoretical claims, especially as the focus is largely on the War on Terror (perhaps the most vivid illustration of drone warfare).

While the author recognizes the role of human operators, it is repeatedly suggested that drones may be able to kill ('Killing is being outsourced to the algorithm' p.44; 'innovations that enabled drones to kill' p.42, etc.). However, there is a difference which could have been better captured while thinking about drones as of agency (or, more specifically, as of hybrids or combinations of human and non-human elements). Drones currently relying on human operators do not really engage targets on their own, despite other – unarguably advanced – autonomous functions. This is why they are sometimes called uninhibited, rather than unmanned. Another category of drones that the author sometimes refers to ('Drones...present a brand-new way of warfare, practically outsourcing the act of killing to a machine' p.26; 'drone-administered and drone-decided killings' p.45, etc.) are fully autonomous drones. They fall under the category of lethal autonomous weapon systems (LAWS) that are not operational yet despite on-going R&D, and have never been deployed (still unclear if will ever be) in no small part due to normative considerations (Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, proposals for their preventive/preemptive ban, deliberations at UN CCW, etc.). While such nuances do not call into question key goals or findings of this thesis, this difference could have been acknowledged more explicitly when relevant aspects were discussed.

Minor criteria:

This works relies on an impressive body of literature covering both key titles and recent debates. It is also appropriate in terms of its style, as well as conforms to formal requirements.

Overall evaluation:

This thesis is outstanding. Apart from minor issues pointed out above, the presented analysis is remarkably deep and highly advanced in its conceptual vocabulary. With no hesitation, I suggest "A" (upper A / A1) for the overall evaluation.

Suggested grade: A

Signature: Anzhelika Solovyeva (31.08.2020)