



Supervisor's Review of M.A. Thesis Written by Andrew Hawkins

Israeli Precision Strikes after the Second Intifada: On Target or Missing the Mark?

The thesis investigates an important topic of Israeli precision strikes, which are highly controversial on both normative and legal grounds. The author engages the relevant literature regarding targeting of suspected and known terrorist leaders and high value targets (HVTs) as part of an overall counterterrorism and counterinsurgency strategy. Moreover, he also challenges some of the most commonly used criteria for assessing the effectiveness of targeted killing of HVTs, thus making a genuine contribution to an existing academic debate.

The thesis is well written and structured. Following a proper introduction of the research topic and research question, the author offers a solid literature review of both the normative, legal and policy aspects of targeting killing in general and the historical account of the evolution of the Israeli policy in particular. The decapitation theory provides a suitable mid-range theoretical grounding of thesis. The thesis is also robust methodologically and the author has made a strong case for a relatively novel set of criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the Israeli targeted killing policy – 1.) Elimination of the intended target of an operation; 2.) Adverse political consequences resulting from an operation; 3.) Civilian and non-target casualties resulting from an operation; 2.) Directly-linked retaliatory attacks resulting from an operation. These differ from the more commonly used, yet inherently problematic, criteria, including number of terrorist attacks and their victims.

The subsequent application of these four criteria for the analysis of the Israeli targeted killing policy is also robust, both empirically and analytically. The author specifically analyses a dataset of 38 instances of the Israeli targeted killing attempts on Palestinian HVTs, half of which predate the Second Intifada. This in turn allows him to assess the impact of several key changes introduced to this policy by Israel in the aftermath of the second intifada. The concluding section offers a rich discussion of both the limits and implications of the thesis findings.



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Overall, the thesis more than meets the standard criteria for this type of academic work. As the supervisor, I also want to commend the unprecedented quality of the thesis preparation – I really wish all students worked so diligently on their thesis and came so well prepared for the consultations regarding their thesis progress. I therefore not only recommend this thesis to be defended and marked with an A/1/excellent, but I would also like to nominate it for the best student thesis award by the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Oldrich Bures'.

Oldrich Bures

29.5.2015