



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Bc. Marek Třeštk

Title: Assessment of Drone Strikes as Just Counterterrorism Method

Programme/year: International Relations/2016

Author of Evaluation (supervisor/external assessor): Jan Daniel

Criteria	Definition	Maximm	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	8
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	20
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	35
<i>Total</i>		80	63
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	9
	Style	5	5



	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	19
TOTAL		100	82

Evaluation

Major criteria:

The author has decided to write his thesis on highly topical and relevant issue, which is currently debated far beyond the academic community. Specifically, the thesis investigates the ethical dimension of the drone warfare conducted within the War on Terror by its compliance to the notion of just war. Just War theory and its distinction between *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* provides the author with a set of standards, which needs to be fulfilled in order to determine whether is the particular war and act of use of force „just“, or not. It should be highlighted that the author provides detailed, even though understandably still rather ambiguous, operationalization of each of the criteria and he is able to more or less comprehensibly apply them to the available data.

While the author's conclusions are within his research framework reasonable, the design of the research is far from unproblematic. Author's decision to treat War on Terror as a war is perhaps understandable as an analytical point of departure (even though the supposedly Wendtian constructivist justification of this move is not very convincing), however it leads him to an analytical deadlock, when he lumps together different campaigns waged in the name of War on Terror. The author discusses in detail all the relevant criteria with reference to the invasions to Afghanistan and Iraq, but there is no analysis of the US engagement in Yemen or Pakistan (even though the latter could be probably justified as being connected to



war in Afghanistan). In the other words, the author seems to apply *jus ad bello* to the invasions to Afghanistan and Iraq, but *jus ad bellum* to a very different forms of engagement elsewhere. This leads me to wonder, e.g. what connection does have a sum of funds intended for the post-conflict reconstruction of Iraq to drone strikes in Yemen and the criterion of the „right intention“?

This mismatch could be a very good starting point for a critical discussion of applicability of the Just War theory to a conflict between the state and non-state transnational network, recent low-profile War on Terror carried out by drones and special forces beyond the borders of originally invaded (and reconstructed) states, or critical commentary on blurred lines between war, „small war“, or isolated strikes. Unfortunately, such a discussion and a critical evaluation of the applicability of the Just War theory (e.g. the Waltzer's version) are missing. This is even more striking and problematic if the title of the thesis refers to „just counter-terrorism“and not „just war“.

My second remark concerns the author's discussion of the Al-Awlaki's case. Even when we assume that all the information regarding the case are public (which is quite unlikely) and they could be thus properly assessed with the Just War criteria, it is extremely difficult to decide e.g. the true nature of threat that Al-Alwaki presented to the US. Here, the author again encounters the limit of the Just War theory and its applicability to the case of transnational terrorism. Even though he briefly acknowledges the blurred lines between war and counterterrorist operations, his assessment remains locked in the Just War paradigm (Al-Awlaki does not present a threat to the USA because he is not a combatant), which he justifies by stating that the US refer to the War on Terror as a war and thus it should be evaluated as such. Again, this could lead to an interesting discussion regarding the highly problematic applicability of the Just War theory to cases such as this one and potentially discussion of some alternative ethical frameworks, but these promises remain unfulfilled.

Minor criteria:

The thesis is well-written and structured. My only substantial critique in this regard concerns the organizing of the literature review. The present structure that divides monographs from articles and other studies does not make sense. There are minor issues with some of the references as well (e.g. pages 5, 6, or 39).



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Overall evaluation:

The author has written a solid thesis that unfortunately suffers from some theoretical and conceptual problems. However, the thesis certainly meets the standard criteria of this type of academic work and I recommend it to be defended.

Suggested grade:

2

Signature: