



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: **Tsuku Sibasa Lita Fani**

Title: **Dilemma of Weaponised Drone Technology: The Argument and Justification for their Deployment**

Programme/year: **2017**

Author of Evaluation (external assessor):

Raluca Csernaton, PhD
Postdoctoral Researcher & Lecturer
Institute of Political Studies (IPS)
raluca.csernaton@fsv.cuni.cz

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	9
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	22
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	35
<i>Total</i>		80	66
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	10
	Style	5	5
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	20
TOTAL		100	86

Evaluation

Major criteria: The research puts forward an impressive handle of the subject matter, offering a thorough understanding of both the empirical dimension and the academic scholarship dedicated to the US drone programme. Its main contribution is that it opens up for investigation the legitimizing strategies of the Bush and the Obama Administrations concerning the US drone programme as a preferred counterterrorism strategy post-9/11. The research lays emphasis on the discursive strategies employed by the US government to construct threats and to normalize the use of weaponized drones in conflict situations, while also providing a detailed analysis of the context in which these discourses were



FACULTY
OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
Charles University

produced, *i.e.* the so-called 'war on terror'. However, the thesis offers a disjointed theoretical and analytical framework, in which the theoretical perspective section dedicated to Realism and Liberalism seems almost epiphenomenal to the overall analytical framework. Which begs the question: why does the author choose to introduce Realism and Liberalism as theoretical perspectives, when the actual examination proceeds with a Foucauldian-inspired discourse analysis and by making use of critical post-structuralist modes of inquiry? These modes of inquiry have been largely attributed in the International Relations discipline to the very critique of positivist reigning paradigms such as Realism and Liberalism. What is the theoretical role of these two perspectives in facilitating the ensuing discourse analysis? From this point of view, the theoretical contribution of the thesis remains both problematic and confusing, not to mention the ambiguous ontological and epistemological positions taken. More analytical purchase could have been drawn from the Foucauldian perspective, in order to highlight the US truth regime of weaponized drones, the power effects of efficiently managing the American public's receptivity to new technologies, the propensity to normalize the use of drones in warfare, and so on. As well, more attention could have been given to the problematic status of new technologies such as armed drones as effective tools of last resort, and their potential to disrupt conventional warfare. This could have been better tackled in the last section of the thesis, which could have benefitted more from the valuable insights provided in the previous sections – for instance, the precision and accuracy narrative used as a discursive strategy to normalize the effectiveness of drone strikes could have been expanded in the discourse analysis section. The thesis suffers from a chronic case of missed opportunities for more in-depth analysis, mainly due to its theoretical ambiguity and the structural imbalance between the first two thirds of the thesis and the last section. Many interesting points presented in the first two thirds of the thesis could have been better put to use in the discourse analysis section, which underuses information in favour of relying on quotations, thus making the argument less analytically compelling.

Minor criteria: The thesis is very well written, being indicative of good argumentation skills and a keen attention to the linguistic details in the discourses legitimizing the US drone programme. Nevertheless, the thesis suffers from a structural imbalance between the lengthy introductory sections covering the impact of new technologies, warfare, the history of drones, the armed unmanned drone debate on the one hand, and the relatively short last section dedicated to discourse analysis and the legitimization of drone strikes in the case of Pakistan on the other hand. The introductory sections reflect a wealth of knowledge about the subject matter, but they are scarcely mirrored in the last section dedicated to the justification of the US extrajudicial drone strikes and in the critical discourse analysis *per se*. The last section of the thesis leaves the reader underwhelmed as far as the author's critical contribution to the drone debate is concerned.

Overall evaluation: The thesis presents a comprehensive understanding of the US drone programme in the context of the 'war on terror' after 9/11. The author demonstrates an in-depth knowledge of the relevant scholarship dedicated to the US drone programme, raising interesting points during the analysis as regards military-driven technological advancements, the introduction of new technologies in warfare, the normalization of drones as weapons of choice for combating terrorism, and the use of armed drones outside of the traditional battlefield.

Suggested grade: **1**

Signature: Raluca Csernatoni, PhD

Prague, 30 August 2017