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Review of doctoral thesis of Nir Barkan Nagar entitled *The Mechanism of 'Targeted Killing' as a Part of Israeli Counter-Terrorism Policy* written under academic supervision of Professor Radosław Fiedler and secondary supervision of Dr Artur Pohl

1. General overview

The phenomenon of terrorism is one of the key issue in the contemporary international relations. Due to permanent and global threat of terrorist attacks, governments and states' institutions, and intelligence services pay much attention to prevent and restrict terrorist activity. Similarly, researchers of international relations and security studies often concentrate on terrorism issues which are truly important for explanation and understanding modern, globalised world.

Terrorism as a permanently evolving phenomenon needs to be analysed from a varied perspectives in order to find out complexity of aspects determining terrorist activity and give explanations for terrorists' motivations, their way of acting, their connections with another groups or objects and finally to understand current dynamic of this phenomenon.

The thesis of Nir Barkan Nagar – *The Mechanism of 'Targeted Killing' as a Part of Israeli Counter-Terrorism Policy* contributed much to research on terrorism issues and gives the original perspective on complex aspects of counter-terrorism.

Firs of all, I would like to congratulate N. Barkan Nagar on taking up such demanding and still unexplored topic in the area of terrorism research and state's policy towards terrorism issues. Researching terrorism always meets a lot of difficulties with data analysis, verifications



of facts and requires putting the right thesis. It requires also having profound knowledge on terrorism aspects and the ability to present fundamental dilemmas regarding state's counter-terrorism policy in relation to the terrorists' activity. Researchers and experts working on terrorism issues must have knowledge about functioning the state's institutions and decision-making mechanisms along with appropriate terminology which is commonly used in works on terrorism. In terms of counter-terrorism which can be defined as a structural set of methods and technics of preventing terrorism, author always is obliged to know the state system including the multi-levelled legal aspects and competencies of authorities on each level. Thus, I want to underline once again the importance of topic chosen by N. Bargan Nagar for his doctoral thesis.

2. Topic of doctoral thesis

The topic of doctoral thesis properly relates to the contents of the thesis. In the title of thesis author used two categories : "targeted killing" and "counter-terrorism" which are fundamental for research in his work. The issue of "targeted killing" mechanism and "counter-terrorism policy" was based on the system of state of Israel. Topic of the doctoral thesis is enclosed within the academic discipline of political sciences and is directly connected with international relations and security studies in particular.

3. Structure of the thesis

The doctoral thesis consists of introduction, four chapters, references and appendices. Structure of the thesis is coherent and correlated with the thesis' title. However, I have just a few remarks regarding structure of dissertation. Firstly, I think that author should reconsider structure of the thesis due to the lack of part, in which Israeli Counter-Terrorism policy is profoundly analysed. First chapter refers to theoretical aspects of "counter-terrorism" and "targeted killing" what is logic. Then in second chapter author focused on mechanism of "targeted killing" in Israeli policy, however without broad explanation of Israeli Counter-Terrorism system and policy. It should be placed in second chapter which then could be renamed to "Influence of the Use of the Mechanism of "Targeted Killing" in Israeli Counter-Terrorism Policy". Secondly, it needs to be pointed that author should entitle subchapter 1.1. (Definition of the Problem) as "Definition and Theoretical Aspects", then characterise the problem. It is more clear and precise.

The last chapter is treated as a general conclusion. I do not address any remark to that, however conclusion is usually placed in final brief part of work following all chapters. To make a single chapter dedicated to discussion and conclusion was author's decision and I am not critic about that.

As regards to references, author listed all documents, books, articles and materials in one part in alphabetical order, but from the technical point of view, this part should be divided into few sections of documents (conventions, legal acts); books, articles or papers and internet materials separated with each other. Although aforementioned remark, the bibliographical sources quoted in dissertation confirm author's profound knowledge of available literature on analysed topic. Basically N. Barkan Nagar in his work based on two types of materials. First refers to all documents and works in Hebrew language and among second type are accessible works in English language. Particularly, the first group of literature in author's native language is truly valuable and overwhelmingly contributed to dissertation, what must be underlined here. Among these works some might be particularly specified like: "Security Forces" reports of 2000-2009 and works of well-known Israeli authors which I suppose, enable to formulate background of this research (e.g. A. Shalev; E. Rubinstein; E. Sprinzak; B. Ganor). Among works in English language, author based on valuable of wide-range publications including "classic" works of authors researching terrorism like Bruce Hoffman (*Inside Terrorism*); Walter Laquer (*The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction*); Ray S. Cline and Y. Alexander (*Terrorism as State-Sponsored Covert Warfare*). What's also noteworthy, author based on works and analysis written by experts of International Institute for Counter-Terrorism in Herzliya.

In general opinion structure of the dissertation (although my few remarks) is acceptable and enables to explain scientific problems and verify hypothesis put in the introduction.

4. Methodological evaluation

The methodological elements are characterized in the introduction. Author presented there: research goals, hypotheses, research problems, applied methods and techniques in his work including analysis of existing materials and manner of choice of methodology. All these elements must be described in the introduction and so did N. Barkan Nagar. However, I address a few suggestions which may contribute to the composition of introduction. Firstly, just a technical remark, methodological description begins with research problem, then research goals. Subsequent elements placed in the description are research hypotheses and research

questions which are correlated with hypotheses and serve its verification. It is followed by explanation of applied research methods and techniques. In case of author's thesis, the methodological description isn't in a certain order. Secondly, author didn't precise to which academic discipline this doctoral thesis refers. Even if one might assume, that reviewed doctoral thesis represent interdisciplinary features, it must be attributed to exact disciplines. Thus in my opinion doctoral thesis undoubtedly refers to political science and international relations, due to analysis of Palestinian-Israeli conflict in one of the part of thesis and also to security studies in terms of threat of terrorism and counter-terrorism policy. Thirdly, my remarks also regards research methods, but I will explain that below.

Four research goals are formulated properly and all of them are directly connected with thesis title. Research problems as author pointed, "are focused on identification and definition of goals for which the mechanism of targeted killing was established"(p.7). However the key question put here is whether the mechanism of targeted killing deter Islamic terrorist organizations effectively or not (it's also connected with second and third research problem). In my opinion research problems are formulated correctly and they are correlated with the topic of research.

Author put two research hypotheses in doctoral thesis. First is related to the effectiveness of targeted killing what implicates decreasing the number of terrorist attacks. Second refers to targeted killing as a method to physical elimination of key leaders of terrorist groups what also has impact on reducing the number of terrorist attacks. Both of hypotheses are directly correlated with the topic of research, research goals and research problems.

Regarding research methods, author pointed that he applied in the dissertation following methods: comparative method, however author named that as 'comparative research study'; qualitative analysis in variable fields. Moreover author underlined that "theoretical basis relies on theoretical researchers primarily from the modern era" (p.7). According to me, author didn't present full set of applied methods and decided just to mention them cursorily without profound explanation. First of all, I agree that N. Barkan Nagar used comparative method and qualitative analysis but it need serious explanation including in-depth characteristic. What's more, I can point few more methods which were applied in reviewed dissertation and I suppose author employed them involuntarily or had no idea how to name them. Among such methods and theories are: subtheory of terrorism; institutional-legal method; elements of statistical analysis and even elements of systemic method. Research on terrorism has a long-lasting tradition. Since decades scientist and experts throughout the world have focused on many terrorism aspects, terrorist motivations, aims and methods. Thus, in current times undoubtedly we can say about

existing “subtheory of terrorism” as a domain of research. Author also applied institutional-legal method in relation to legal aspects of Israel in the context of counter-terrorism and state institutions pursuing counter-terrorism policy. Then, any information which refers to numbers or percentage can be applied as element of statistical method (it’s a qualitative method as author pointed). And lastly, counter-terrorism might be also considered state’s system. Thus, basing on Israeli counter-terrorism policy, as author does, relates to the counter-terrorism system. In this way author can easily define system in his thesis in order to apply systemic method properly. In my opinion author used elements of systemic method but he didn’t disclose it in the introduction.

5. Evaluation of the contents

Author is well acquainted with the counter-terrorism issues in the theoretical aspects and in the case of Israel. He knows the essence of mechanism of targeted-killing and can explain reasons and implications of its application.

Thesis is divided into four chapters. First chapter relates to counter-terrorism and targeted-killing in the theoretical sphere. Second chapter refers to aspect of using the mechanism of targeted-killing in the Israeli counter-terrorism system in particular. In the third chapter N. Barkan Nagar concentrated on the issue of challenges of the conflict between 2000 and 2009 including al-Aqsa Intifada. Last chapter devotes to discussions and conclusions based on research conducted in previous chapters.

In a brief evaluation, first chapter contains wide spectrum of theoretical explanations. Author precisely presented the roots of term “targeted killing” (translated also as “targeted prevention – p.26) in Israeli counter-terrorism policy and explained the problems with applying mechanism of targeted-killing also connected with common difficulties of defining terrorism. The description of phenomenon of deterrence in the asymmetric strategy is also noteworthy. Pointing all dilemmas correlated with deterrence of terrorism are equally important.

Second chapter, although my remarks mentioned already, in the aspect of content-related is also highly evaluated. Author explained the application of mechanism of targeted-killing in Israeli counter-terrorism system. N. Barkan Nagar proved here his in-depth knowledge about Israeli system of preventing terrorism and described precisely circumstances which leaned Israeli government and institutions towards coming with targeted-killing into a practice. I also consider explanations of objectives of targeted-killing valuable and important component of this chapter.

Third chapter is devoted to Palestinian organizations' terrorist activity as a challenge for Israeli counter-terrorism policy. Author entirely characterised Palestinian terrorist actions with profound analysis of forms and methods used by terrorists in conducted attacks between year 2000 and 2009. In my opinion this chapter is a perfect exemplification of researched studies in thesis.

In the last chapter author decided to come to conclusions and present results of his analysis. He verified two hypotheses and presented summative discussion. I must agree that applied by author four explanations (prevention, damage, deterrence, punishment) significantly support the use of mechanism of targeted killing. Second hypothesis was also positively verified. Basing on collected data, author proved that the number of Israeli citizens wounded or killed in terrorists attacks dropped (p.181).

Moreover, author was right underlining the difficulties with the implementation of mechanism of targeted killing. It is obvious that these tactics must be adopted to individual organizations which characterize with different methods or they have it own specificity. However, N. Barkan Nagar didn't contain the dilemmas with targeted killing in a holistic view. It needs to be taken into consideration that few existing values like political environment of international politics or even changes in the internal political stage might have impact on applying targeted-killing. Using mechanism of targeted-killing against Hamas leaders in the past was very unpopular in the world opinion and currently Israeli government must also be aware of such factor before take a decision on applying targeted-killing.

Author emphasized his reflections on targeted-killing (the Main Findings pp. 184-185) which are highly valuable. Author is also conscious that targeted-killing will not solve problems with terrorism, and eventually it might deter successfully terrorist activity and reduce number of victims in potential terrorist attacks. Physical elimination of senior leaders of terrorist organisation don't disactivate entire organisation. Hamas case study and killing its leaders Ahmed Yasin and A. Rantissi were model examples. Hamas took a lesson from these accidents and has become more hermetic and began to act in greater conspiracy regarding its leadership. One of the key decision was to implement collective leadership with no exact and overt responsibilities. Thus, it was their mechanism of prevention before targeted killing applied by Israel. Actually, one may regret that author didn't touch the issue of strategy of terrorist organisation preventing targeted killing.

6. Conclusion

The doctoral thesis presented by N. Barkan Nagar represents high and valuable standard of research. Dissertation is original, contains wide-spectrum of analysis of terrorism and counter-terrorism issues and contributes much to political science with the domain of security studies in particular. Thus, I would like to admit that the doctoral thesis entitled *The Mechanism of 'Targeted Killing' as a part of Israeli Counter-Terrorism Policy* **complies with all requirements of doctoral thesis and I hereby grant my consent to Nir Barkan Nagar, M.A. for further proceeding with his Ph.D. promotion.**

