



**IMSIS**  
International Master  
Security, Intelligence  
& Strategic Studies



**Erasmus  
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## **Abstract of Dissertation**

# **Death as a Strategic Tool: Analyzing the Effectiveness of Targeted Killings in the War in Afghanistan**

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The War in Afghanistan conducted by the United States, with international allies, endured from 2001 to 2021 due to the intricacies of combating terrorist organizations, insurgent groups, and rebuilding the systems of government for the country. During this conflict, one of the most prominent tactics to combat terrorists and insurgents was targeted killings, which refers to when an individual is intentionally targeted by an air strike or a capture kill mission. However, this method of dealing with terrorist and insurgents in the War in Afghanistan is far from perfect. This research examines the efficacy of targeted killings using a mixed-methods approach by incorporating a correlation analysis of the phenomenon and detailed case studies of key targeted killing throughout the conflict. Overall, the practice is found to be relatively ineffective against preventing terrorist or insurgent activity in the long-term but somewhat effective in the short-term. However, the temporary benefits of targeted killings have to be properly exploited to make progress at the strategic level.