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Whose Life Is Worth More?

Hierarchies of Risk and Death in Contemporary Wars

YAGIL LEVY

"A tour de force. Theoretically innovative and empirically rich. With devastating precision Yagil Levy dismantles many of the myths of heroic soldiers and hapless civilians. He shows that the wages of war are far more calculated and deliberate than previously thought."

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Modern democracies face tough life-and-death choices in armed conflicts. Chief among them is how to weigh the value of soldiers' lives against those of civilians on both sides. The first of its kind, *Whose Life Is Worth More?* reveals that how these decisions are made is much more nuanced than conventional wisdom suggests. When these states are entangled in prolonged conflicts, hierarchies emerge and evolve to weigh the value of human life.

Yagil Levy delves into a wealth of contemporary conflicts, including the drone war in Pakistan, the Kosovo war, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the US and UK wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Cultural narratives about the nature and necessity of war, public rhetoric about external threats facing the nation, antiwar movements, and democratic values all contribute to the perceived validity of civilian and soldier deaths. By looking beyond the military to the cultural and political factors that shape policies, this book provides tools to understand how democracies really decide whose life is worth more.

Yagil Levy is Professor of Political Sociology and Public Policy at the Open University of Israel. He is the author of several books, most recently *The Divine Commander: The Theocratization of the Israeli Military* (2015).