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**“Drone Wars: To What End? An Investigation into the
Long-Term Risks of U.S. Drone Warfare”**

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Pledge of Honesty

On my honour as a student of the Diplomatische Akademie Wien, I submit this work in good faith and pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Stepha Stopp". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'S' at the beginning.

Abstract

This thesis aims to investigate the risks and security implications concerning the U.S. deployment of drones in modern warfare, focusing on the case study of Pakistan. Technical advancements in drone technology have significantly shortened the time required to ascertain an individual and confirm their identity, making it an unparalleled modern weapon. Through operating drones for observation and combat, the U.S. can avoid compromise of the security of its troops and improve its scale of information gathering.

The U.S. drone war has been violent, largely unregulated and irreversibly damaging to many communities in Pakistan. Operated on the principle of self-interest, U.S. drone programmes have contributed to an offensive war strategy and continue to do so, despite the implications for long-term security risks including collateral damage, technological intimidation and ethical concerns. For these reasons, it is justifiable to identify and question the political reasons behind this choice of weapon. The distinction between drones being operated for offence as well as defence and the ramifications of both, is where this thesis will add value to current debates.

The nature of drone warfare is unique and introduces a substitution of justifiable strategic considerations for short-term tactics and gains. Drone warfare has already witnessed significant negative impacts, not only for the innocent mistaken as militants in Pakistan, but also towards the U.S. due to the increased international and moral opposition towards the possession of such a weapon and the authority to project power and justice with impunity. The long-term impacts and risks may very likely incorporate a cumulative effect and consequently unpredictable consequences.

Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht die Risiken und Sicherheitsproblematiken der modernen US Kriegsführung mittels Kampf- und Aufklärungsdrohnen an Hand des Fallbeispiels Pakistans. Der Fortschritt der Dronentechnologie führte zu einer Verringerung des Zeitraumes, welcher zum Auffinden und Identifizieren einer Person benötigt wird. Dadurch wird die Drohne zu einem Waffensystem unvergleichbarer Effizienz. Die Verwendung von Aufklärungsdrohnen ermöglichte den Vereinigten Staaten den Schutz ihrer Soldaten zu gewährleisten und Informationen in bisher unerreichter Menge und Qualität zu sammeln.

Der Dronenkrieg der USA forderte viele Opfer, weitestgehend ohne signifikante Kontrollinstanz, und führte zu anhaltenden Beeinträchtigungen des Lebens mehrerer gesellschaftlicher Gruppen Pakistans. Das Dronenprogramm, welches rein auf Grundlage, amerikanischer Sicherheitsinteressen durchgeführt wurde, sollte daher als Teil eines Angriffskrieges betrachtet werden, der als solcher, trotz ethischer Bedenken, zivile Opfer billigend in Kauf nimmt. Daher ist es von Interesse, die Wahl der Drohne, als Waffe der Moderne, zu analysieren und zu hinterfragen. Diese Studie befasst sich primär mit der Unterscheidung zwischen der Nutzung von Drohnen im Angriffs- und Verteidigungsfall, und untersucht die daraus entstehenden Konsequenzen.

Die Kriegsführung mittels Drohnen stellt eine Abwägung zwischen kurzfristigen, taktischen Interessen und langfristigen Strategien dar. Schon heute kann eine Vielzahl von negativen Konsequenzen beobachtet werden, die über die zivilen Opfer der pakistanischen Bevölkerung hinausreichen. Ein Anstieg der Ablehnung gegen die USA für den Besitz und Einsatz einer Waffe, die es erlaubt entgegen der Souveränität von Staaten, Macht auszuüben, kann beobachtet werden. Die daraus entstehenden Folgen und langfristigen Risiken könnten zu unvorhersehbaren Konsequenzen führen.

Contents

Pledge of Honesty	iii
Abstract.....	1
Zusammenfassung.....	2
Contents	3
Introduction.....	6
Research Question	7
Hypothesis.....	7
Methodology	8
Case Selection	9
Limitations	10
Theoretical Background	11
Offensive versus Defensive Realism	11
Power Struggles.....	12
Security Dilemma.....	13
Ethics in War.....	14
Literature Review	16
Technological Rise of the Robots.....	16
Power Imbalance of Drones	17
Quick Tactics over Long-term Strategy	18
Legal and Ethical Considerations.....	20
Public Opinion and Communication.....	22
Future of Drone Warfare	23
Chapter 1 - The Development of Drone Technology	27
Drone Surveillance.....	27
Drone Technology and Targeted Killings.....	28
Technological Advantages for Offensive Strategies.....	29
The Geographical Scope	29
Efficiency over Human Soldiers	31
Drone Technology and Power Imbalance.....	32

The All-Powerful User.....	32
Drone Autonomy	34
Weaknesses Remain in the Technology	36
Technical Glitches	36
Drone Data in the Wrong Hands.....	36
Human Error	37
Summary.....	38
Chapter 2 –Tactics over Strategy	39
Short-Term Tactics are Inherent in American Culture	39
Quick Results	39
U.S. Leadership Reliance on Drones	39
Aggressive Use Questions Legitimacy	40
Relationship between U.S. Citizens and the State.....	40
Americans are Sheltered from Realities of War	40
Erosion of Democracy	41
Offensive versus Defensive Strategy.....	42
Survival Argument.....	42
Lack of Evidence for Defensive Argument	43
The U.S. is not Thinking Long-Term	44
Major Short-Term Mind-Set	44
Dangerous Cumulative Impacts of Drones	46
Summary.....	48
Chapter 3 – Drones and Immorality	49
Drone Killings and Ethics	49
Morality of Drones.....	49
Is American War in General Immoral?.....	50
Future Risks of Immorality	51
Biopolitics and Patterns of Life	53
The Individual Life is a Threat	53
Distinction between Civilians and Militants.....	54
The Value of American Life over Others	55
Racism Justifies Killings.....	55
Treatment of Civilians in War	56

Summary.....	58
Chapter 4 – The Suitability and Sustainability of U.S. Drone Strikes in Pakistan.....	59
Importance of Pakistan in Context of U.S. Drone Wars	59
Relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan	60
2017 National Security Strategy	60
Citizen Viewpoints.....	61
Lack of Mutual Trust	62
An Overview of the Experience of Drone Strikes in Pakistan	64
Alienation of Population	64
Muted Public Support	65
Pakistani Support for U.S. Drone Strikes.....	66
Limited Arguments in Favour of Strikes	66
Poor Communication	67
Issue of Ownership	68
Is Pakistan more Secure as a Result of U.S. Drone Strikes?.....	70
Removal of Security Threats	70
Deepening Internal Insecurities	71
Greater Resentment Towards U.S.....	73
Are Drone Strikes in Pakistan Justifiable?	74
Chapter 5 - Reflections and Looking Forward	76
Drones as Smart Weapons	76
Issues in Counterterrorism Methods	76
Drones Act on Improper Intelligence	77
U.S. Communications	77
9/11 as Justification for Drone Warfare	78
Ambiguous Definition of Targets	80
Authority of Drone Pilots	81
U.S. Recommendations.....	81
Conclusion	83
Appendices.....	85
Bibliography	96

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to highlight the risks and security implications concerning the deployment of drones in modern warfare. This will focus on the United States' (U.S.) use of this weapon, as the U.S. is the only nation worldwide to use drones on such a pronounced scale over a significant time period.

Drones, also known as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), have been extensively developed over the last decades. They are now relatively inexpensive to produce, provide benefits in peacetime by not placing troops at risk and their maintenance is straightforward.¹ Furthermore, few personnel are required for operation, increasing the efficiency and time available for surveillance.² The main purposes of drones include persistent attack, strategic reconnaissance and air dominance.³ Drones rely heavily upon technology and complex networks, including local sensors, data from GPS satellites and control-feeds from the command centre.⁴ They can be equipped with a range of reconnaissance tools such as “long-range and wide-angled cameras, target detection sensors and military hardware such as missiles”.⁵ Progression in drone technology has significantly lessened the time it takes to locate an individual and confirm their identity,⁶ making them an unparalleled modern weapon. This has transpired in the context of targeted killings becoming a regular U.S. counter-terrorism strategy.⁷

Ever since 9/11 and the subsequent ‘war on terror’, the U.S. has increased its interest in regions across the globe that are seen as brewing grounds for terrorism.⁸ Through operating drones for observation the U.S. can avoid compromise of the security of its troops and improve its scale of information gathering.⁹ Nevertheless, the use of drones has rapidly transformed from surveillance to targeted killing. There are many factors that have influenced this transition, for example “[o]ne reason to kill rather than capture a suspected terrorist is

¹ Rosén, Frederik. 2013. “Extremely Stealthy and Incredibly Close: Drones, Control and Legal Responsibility.”

² Heatherly, Michael C. 2014. “Drones: The American Controversy”.

³ Blair, Dave. 2016. “A Categorical Error: Rethinking ‘Drones’ as an Analytical Category for Security Policy”.

⁴ Clarke, Roger. 2014. “What drones inherit from their ancestors”. P.252

⁵ Attuquayefio, Philip. 2014. “Drones, The US And The New Wars in Africa”. P.4

⁶ Pantucci, Raffaello. 2009. “DEEP IMPACT”.

⁷ Martins, Bruno. O. 2015. “The European Union and armed drones: framing the debate”.

⁸ Attuquayefio, Philip. 2014. “Drones, The US And The New Wars in Africa”.

⁹ Ibid. P.4-5

that arresting militants in the war zones and unstable areas where they are found is far more risky for U.S. forces than killing via an unmanned drone”.¹⁰¹¹ Many believe the West, particularly the U.S., is made safer when drones take out high-level terrorist leaders or groups.¹² This includes militant leaders such as Baitullah Mehsud, former leader of Tehrik-e-Taliban and Atiyah Abd al-Rahman, al-Qaeda’s top operational planner.¹³ These organisations often struggle to replace positions of leadership and their administrative structures suffer as a result. Consequently, those in favour of drones and other autonomous systems trust that they minimise the possibility of human suffering and death.¹⁴

Research Question

This thesis is an investigation into the change in approach to warfare and resulting security risks faced by the U.S. from an active use of drones in multiple nations worldwide. Through the case study of Pakistan, this thesis will explore the question: *“How is political preference for offensive realism evident in the drone warfare strategy pursued by the United States?”*

This is pertinent, as the U.S. drone war has been violent, largely unregulated and irreversibly damaging to many communities in Pakistan. Therefore, it is justifiable to identify and question the political reasons behind this choice of weapon. The defensive element of the U.S. drone programme is also worth investigating because “[i]n a world of state actors, where U.S. security abroad rests upon continued peace and prosperity among the great Eurasian powers, terrorist groups pose relatively little threat.”¹⁵ The implication of drones being operated for offence or defence, and the distinctions between these functions, is where this thesis will add value to current debates.

Hypothesis

To address the above research question, a hypothesis is advanced that: *the persistent U.S. drone war is based on self-interest and contributes to an offensive warfare strategy, as*

¹⁰ Horowitz, Michael C., Kreps, Sarah E., and Fuhrmann, Matthew. 2016. “Separating Fact from Fiction in the Debate over Drone Proliferation”.

¹¹ McCricken, Trevor. 2013. “Obama’s Drone War”. P.113

¹² Cronin, Audrey K. 2014. “The ‘War on Terrorism’: What Does it Mean to Win?” p.174

¹³ McCricken, Trevor. 2013. “Obama’s Drone War”.

¹⁴ Rosén, Frederik. 2013. “Extremely Stealthy and Incredibly Close: Drones, Control and Legal Responsibility.”

¹⁵ Hazelton, Jacqueline. 2017. “Drone Strikes and Grand Strategy: Toward a Political Understanding of the Uses of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Attacks in US Security Policy”. P.87

drones have been intensively operated in Pakistan; creating long-term security risks through collateral damage, technological intimidation and ethical concerns. Exploring this topic is significant because the nature of drone warfare is unparalleled and demonstrates a substitution of strategic considerations for short-term tactics and gains. Drone warfare has already had a negative impact on the innocent people affected by collateral damage in Pakistan. In addition, the U.S. government possessing such a weapon and projecting power and ultimate justice with impunity has created an atmosphere of concern and contempt, both on their home turf and on the international stage. The long-term impacts may result in a cumulative effect and consequently unpredictable consequences.

Methodology

An extensive collection of sources on drone warfare has been analysed from different academic materials, including journals and hardbacks, journalistic sources such as news articles, think tank research, policy recommendations and theoretical assumptions. The literature available on drones is vast; therefore this thesis aims to add to the subject by investigating the dangers and future complications of drones in the context of offensive realism. On the basis of deductive reasoning, this thesis will demonstrate how offensive realism is evident in the U.S. drone programme, starting with an understanding of offensive realism as a theory whereby states in an anarchic international system focus on self-interest and aggressive power maximisation to enhance survival. The application of this theory will be highlighted through the major risks associated with drones, supported by the case study of the U.S. drone programme in Pakistan. The majority of both journalistic and academic understandings on the offensive nature of drones are critically addressed and furthered in this thesis; likewise the future scenario of such a weapon will be contemplated. As this thesis case study is centred on the nature of drone warfare in Pakistan, local and national Pakistani news articles and sources will be similarly investigated.

The datasets on U.S. military and CIA drone strikes are classified and thence not readily available for analysis. Nonetheless, several online secondary research databases exist such as those from the Bureau of Investigative Journalism.¹⁶ This organization has collected data on

¹⁶ The Bureau of Investigative Journalism was chosen as the main dataset for this research thesis, as it has been consistently referred to by other sources in drone warfare literature and the institution is an impartial, independent media organization. As data on this topic is sensitive, journalistic sources must be consulted in order to determine the timing and effects of strikes.

drone strikes since the start of the U.S. programme from various sources including terrorist groups' propaganda.¹⁷ It is one of the few reliable datasets available displaying the estimated number of drone strikes that occur as well as their accuracy. It unsurprisingly contrasts to the official figures released by the U.S. administration in early 2016.¹⁸ This dataset on drone strikes in Pakistan will be used to complement the qualitative research in this study and demonstrate that strikes have been made in an offensive rather than defensive nature, by focusing on the statistics of the estimated number of civilians killed as well as the regularity of strikes (see Appendices 1 and 2). In addition, the U.S. National Security Strategy publications will be used to analyse the language used by the U.S. in describing threats to its national security, particularly that relating to Pakistan.

This thesis will first explore the international relations (IR) theoretical framework for how drone programmes fit into the context of modern warfare and global power relations. The first chapter of analysis will analyse the technological advancement of drones and how this displays U.S. intimidation on a global scale. The second chapter studies the various ways in which drones form a substitution of long-term strategy for short-term tactics. The third chapter examines the legal aspects of drones, including right conduct in war and the ethics of targeted killing. In the fourth chapter, the case study focuses on the experience and consequences of the U.S. drone programme in Pakistan. Finally, the fifth chapter reflects on the findings of the previous sections and offers recommendations for the U.S. drone programme moving forward.

Case Selection

There are four nations worldwide that have been major targets of the U.S. drone programme: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen (see Appendix 3). Pakistan has been chosen for investigation in the main case study, due to the prevalence of data available as well as the number of drone strikes that have occurred. Pakistan has endured the harshest impacts from U.S. drone strikes (see Appendices 1, 2 and 4), yet this pattern has begun to taper off and normalize in the last two to three years. Despite this, Pakistan remains heavily mentioned in the most recent U.S. National Security Strategy.¹⁹

¹⁷ The Bureau of Investigative Journalism. "Our Methodology".

¹⁸ The Bureau of Investigative Journalism. 2017. "White House Releases Annual Counterterrorism Civcas Figures".

¹⁹ The White House, 2017. "National Security Strategy of the United States of America".

Limitations

As this thesis explores a classified and sensitive topic, the majority of information and statistics on drone strikes come from sources other than the U.S. military or U.S. government. In addition, it is highly likely that the official figures provided by the U.S. administration are not always precise, in an effort to reduce public scrutiny. Unfortunately, “[o]btaining accurate data on ongoing conflicts is often very difficult”.²⁰ In an ideal world, the conduct of interviews with the actors responsible for committing the strikes, producing the drones and those being targeted would have been made. To combat these limitations, a wide range of sources must be examined from academic and journalistic origins to approach the topic from the IR offensive realism perspective. Furthermore, academic research based on secondary sources typically “provides an opportunity to learn what is already known, and what remains to be learned, about a particular topic.”²¹ Of course, “[o]ne cannot condemn a method without being able to suggest a better alternative”²²; consequently thoughts and predictions will be provided at the end of this study, on how the negative situation surrounding drone warfare could be resolved.

²⁰ Smith, Megan and Walsh, James I. 2013. “Do Drone Strikes Degrade Al Qaeda? Evidence from Propaganda Output”. P.325

²¹ Stewart, David W. and Kamins, Michael A. 1993. “Secondary Research: Information Sources and Methods”. P.2

²² Von Clausewitz, Carl and Graham, James J. 1873. “On War”. P.161

Theoretical Background

Offensive versus Defensive Realism

This thesis will explore drone warfare and its disputes through the international relations theory of structural realism. Realists believe because the international system is anarchic, this creates a situation of self-help that becomes the major motivating factor for a state and its foreign policy.²³ Power is understood as military capabilities distributed equally across global powers. Realists are doubtful whether moral concepts can be applied to the nature of international affairs, as morality according to them should never prescribe a state's behaviour, instead a state should emphasize state security and self-interest.²⁴ This paper will argue that the U.S. is acting on the basis of self-interest and is not considering the ethical aspects of its drone programme, thus constituting offensive realism.

John Mearsheimer's offensive realism approach focuses on aggressive behaviour and territorial expansion, in addition to the maximisation of power, as enactments of self-help on an international level. The overarching aim is to achieve greater national and international security for the state in question. This contrasts to defensive realism, whereby states wish to pursue balanced security strategies to maintain the anarchic international system. This thesis intends to explore how drones operate as part of an offensive strategy, due to the theory's focus on self-help and belligerence taking precedence over defensive themes of self-restraint and state interdependence.

Offensive realism is a significant theory for this topic, as "[i]t explains how great powers have behaved in the past and how they are likely to behave in the future...States *should* behave according to the dictates of offensive realism, because it outlines the best way to survive in a dangerous world."²⁵ The most effective way for a state to survive is outlined by: "The best defence is a good offence."²⁶ Appendix 5 establishes the differences between the major theories of offensive and defensive realism. Ultimately, justifying drone warfare through the right to self-defence is interlinked with self-help under realism, as "[s]tates operating in a self-help world almost always act according to their own self-interest and do

²³ Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy. 2016. "War".

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Mearsheimer, John J. 2001. "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics". P.11

²⁶ Ibid. P.36

not subordinate their interests to the interests of other states, or to the interests of the so-called international community.”²⁷

Power Struggles

In the mid-twentieth century, the realist school of American foreign policy believed that “[i]nternational politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power”.²⁸ Power is therefore often the driving force for states and their foreign policy, which is reflected by the U.S. weapon choice of drones. Hans Morgenthau argued similarly: “all nations actively engaged in the struggle for power must actually aim not at a balance – that is, equality – of power, but at superiority of power in their own behalf.”²⁹ One must consider drones in relation to strategic power; how “great power permits wider ranges of action, while leaving the outcomes of action uncertain.”³⁰ Developed from this idea, striving for power can create security issues while “uncertainty and miscalculation cause wars”.³¹ Morgenthau elaborates on this notion of power expansion: “[s]ince the desire to attain a maximum of power is universal, all nations must always be afraid that their own miscalculations and the power increases of other nations might add up to an inferiority for themselves which they must at all costs try to avoid.”³² Power can hence become too large a goal in war, as “[i]t is common for states, once they have embarked upon a war, to seek a level of security that is greater than what existed before the fighting began.”³³ This study will investigate the relevance of these ideas to the U.S. drone programme.

Kenneth Waltz highlights how war is an exceptionally probable event in an international system of anarchy, as “[i]n anarchy there is no automatic harmony”.³⁴ In the absence of an effective international governing body or legal system, war can be inevitable as states have their own values, beliefs and motivations to act upon. In order to then achieve the desired

²⁷ Mearsheimer, John J. 2001. “The Tragedy of Great Power Politics”. P.33

²⁸ Niebuhr, Reinhold; Kennan, George, and Morgenthau, Hans cited in Nelson, Keith and Spencer, Olin. 1979. ““Why War?” Ideology, Theory and History”. P.29

²⁹ Morgenthau, Hans. 1985. “Politics Among Nations”. P.227-228

³⁰ Waltz, Kenneth. 1979. “Theories of International Politics”. P.194-95

³¹ Blainey, Geoffrey. 1970. Pp.108-19. Cited in Waltz, Kenneth. 1979. “Theories of International Politics”. P.168

³² Morgenthau, Hans J. 1985. “Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace”. P.228

³³ Iklé, Fred Charles. 2005. Cited in Cronin, Audrey K. 2014. “The ‘War on Terrorism’: What Does it Mean to Win?” P.189

³⁴ Waltz, Kenneth N. 1959. “Man, the State and War”. P.160

outcome in war, states must depend on their own resources, which are valued in relative supply to another state and resort to the use of force as so necessary.³⁵ Each state is the ultimate judge of its own policies and must be prepared to implement force to achieve its outcomes, especially if these are more attractive propositions to peace. Thus, a tense situation is created whereby all powers are ready to exert force if needed. This reiterates how “so long as the notion of self-help persists, the aim of maintaining the power position of the nation is paramount to all other considerations.”³⁶

Security Dilemma

Jean-Jacque Rosseau’s metaphor of a stag hunt highlights the perils of actors advancing their self-interests as opposed to acting for the greater good. As Waltz analyses, “in the stag-hunt example the tension between one man’s immediate interest and the general interest of the group is resolved by the unilateral action of the one man.”³⁷ There is an inherent insecurity felt by actors that they will be manipulated and taken advantage of and it is this feeling that forms the basis of the security dilemma theorem.³⁸ The relevance of this metaphor will be applied to the case of the U.S. in this study. The perception of the threat is key: it may not be real, but the reality is often much lower than the way it is perceived. Furthermore, as decision-makers will react according to how vulnerable they feel, “we must therefore examine the decision makers’ subjective security requirements”.³⁹

Conclusively, enhancing your own security will always lead to another state feeling insecure. The most effective solution is “when defence has the advantage over offense major war can be avoided.”⁴⁰ The Thucydides trap has explored this concept: as one country ascends, another will descend, which often leads to conflict.⁴¹ In an anarchic system where ‘might makes right’, clashes will ensue, as states are acting upon their self-interests. States may resultantly decide to maximise their power by attempting to control territories outside of their

³⁵ Waltz, Kenneth N. 1959. “Man, the State and War”. P.159

³⁶ Dunn, Frederick. 1937. P. 13. Cited in Waltz, Kenneth N. 1959. “Man, the State and War”. P.160

³⁷ Waltz, Kenneth N. 1959. “Man, the State and War”. P.169

³⁸ Jervis, Robert. 1978. “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma”. P.172

³⁹ Ibid. P.174

⁴⁰ Glaser, Charles L. and Kaufmann, Chaim. 1998. “What is the offense-defense balance and can we measure it?” P.44

⁴¹ Thucydides. “History of the Peloponnesian War.”

own. Jervis refers to these areas as “buffers”⁴² and warns how this activity can lead to further insecurities. States do have an interest to also co-operate, however acting upon self-interests threatens the possibility and sustainability of interdependence. This risk is intensified when offence is not distinguishable from defence and the offence has the advantage (see Appendix 6). If the offence has the advantage, states are more likely to go to war due to greed, perceived ease of success, insecurity of the other actor and the overall attractiveness of the situation.⁴³ The arising “doubly dangerous” situation refers to dangers on both sides because of their responses to the undistinguishable offensive posture.⁴⁴ It is possible to increase one's own security without being seen on this offensive posture, though this remains strenuous. This thesis will argue that the U.S. has not adequately displayed attempts of collaboration nor reassured other actors of the defensive nature of its drone programme.

Ethics in War

Theories of ethics in war primarily concentrate on the difference between the treatment of one's own civilians or soldiers versus those of the opposing side. States should “have a duty to consider the negative effects they have on each other, as well as a duty to prevent and punish harmful actions of non-state actors and individuals for whom they are directly responsible.”⁴⁵ This is reflective of more general “us versus them” arguments. Michael Walzer discussed the moral equality of soldiers, justifying the use of force when it is known that force is also likely to be used against you. In a situation of war, both sides are vulnerable to each other and this accordingly makes for a just case.⁴⁶ As a consequence of this principle, one must be willing to put one's own side in harm's way, in order to reduce civilian casualties. This is an interesting proposition for drone warfare, where the overriding benefit of the weapon is the ultimate lack of risk felt by the attacking side. Drones fundamentally provide the moral element that one's own soldiers are not in danger.⁴⁷

⁴² Jervis, Robert. 1978. “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma”.

⁴³ Glaser, Charles L. and Kaufmann, Chaim. 1998. “What is the offense-defense balance and can we measure it?” P.48

⁴⁴ Jervis, Robert. 1978. “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma”.

⁴⁵ Shapcott, Richard. 2017. “International ethics”. P.208

⁴⁶ Walzer, Michael. 1977. Cited in Shapcott, Richard. 2017. “International ethics”. P.216

⁴⁷ Shapcott, Richard. 2017. “International ethics”.

Realists tend to place emphasis on accurate, achievable outcomes as opposed to the moral considerations of the processes that lead to these outcomes.⁴⁸ However, “critics say this can slip into opportunism, making it possible to justify almost any actions on ethical grounds, realists maintain that statespeople have a duty to their own people first and that ignoring this in the name of some Kantian ideal would be a dereliction of that duty”.⁴⁹ Ultimately, realists believe that states do not act in the international sphere on the basis of universal moral principles, but in their own self-interest.⁵⁰ These principles appear to be highly relevant to the U.S. drone programme.

The rule of double effect is controversial in just war theory; the concept of making a good or moral decision with the knowledge that there will be some immoral consequence as part of it.⁵¹ For drone warfare, this refers to civilian casualties and the need to make decisions that minimize the loss of human life. The moral status of individuals targeted by drones is a significant ethical issue. Depending on whether the targets are soldiers, criminals, or mistaken civilians, different legal theories apply including *jus in bello* and due process. Generally however, “the process by which individuals are selected and ranked for execution without due process (especially in the case of those targets specified by the CIA) cannot be justified by either international humanitarian law or domestic US law.”⁵²

⁴⁸ Shapcott, Richard. 2017. “International ethics”. P.210

⁴⁹ Morgenthau, Hans 1948. Cited in Shapcott, Richard. 2017. “International ethics”. P.210

⁵⁰ Shapcott, Richard. 2017. “International ethics”.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid. P.216

Literature Review

The literature on this topic has grown extensive in recent years. For the purpose of this thesis, literature concerning the five major risks of drones as well as the future nature of drone warfare will be outlined in the following section. Within each sub-section, it will be stated to the reader how this literature theme will be linked to the thesis research.

Technological Rise of the Robots

Drones and remotely piloted aircraft systems pose the newest technological challenges of our time⁵³ and highlight how high technology systems now govern the battlefield.⁵⁴ Some believe that the development of robotic and autonomous systems represent a significant step for mankind.⁵⁵ Due to intensive research, “modern weaponry has raised the barriers that states must jump over if they are to become members of the superpower club.”⁵⁶ In order to reach the uppermost levels of technological capability required to operate drones, states would be required to cooperate with one another, yet politically this has not been fruitful.⁵⁷ Drone technology will therefore remain out of reach for many states for years to come.⁵⁸

The technological advancement of drones produces various ethical controversies. For example, “the ease and anonymity with which drone strikes are carried out (or ‘Playstation mentality’, as it has been called) raises deeper questions about the conduct of war by a democratic, constitutional society.”⁵⁹ This also links to the future prospect of the “virtual war” phenomenon.⁶⁰ There have been attempts pushing for even more autonomy in drones⁶¹ and debates between computer and artificial intelligence experts whether drones could distinguish between combatants and non-combatants in the future.⁶² Drones ultimately create

⁵³ Hopia, Henna. 2015. “Dawn of the drones: Europe’s security response to the cyber age”. P.133

⁵⁴ Waltz, Kenneth. 1979. “Theories of International Politics”. P.183

⁵⁵ Clarke, Roger. 2014. “What drones inherit from their ancestors”. P.254

⁵⁶ Waltz, Kenneth. 1979. “Theories of International Politics”. P.181

⁵⁷ Ibid. P.182

⁵⁸ Gilli, Andrea and Gilli, Mauro. 2016. “The Diffusion of Drone Warfare” cited in Horowitz, Michael C., Kreps, Sarah E., and Fuhrmann, Matthew. 2016. “Separating Fact from Fiction in the Debate over Drone Proliferation”. P.8

⁵⁹ Alston, Philip and Shamsi, Hina. 2010. Cited in McCricken, Trevor. 2013. “Obama’s Drone War”.P.106

⁶⁰ McCricken, Trevor. 2013. “Obama’s Drone War”.

⁶¹ Rosén, Frederik. 2013. “Extremely Stealthy and Incredibly Close: Drones, Control and Legal Responsibility.”

⁶² Ibid.

security subjects that are uninsurable⁶³ and “gran[t] their inexistence as individuals.”⁶⁴ Overall, “[t]he use of drones evidently benefits from the now traditional perception that technology saves time, lives and enables progress in warfare.”⁶⁵

Drones are nonetheless not immune from their own technological threats, ranging from wireless hack threats and GPS spoofing, signal jamming, malware and viruses.⁶⁶ On multiple occasions, third parties have even assumed technological control over drones in U.S. airspace or elsewhere.⁶⁷ This demonstrates that drone technology remains unstable. Regrettably, “[n]o matter how advanced military technology is, it has produced a bloody outcome throughout history”.⁶⁸ This thesis will further examine the theme of military technology exacerbating rather than limiting conflict and its link to offensive realism through intimidation.

Power Imbalance of Drones

Drones significantly alter the balance of power between the striker and the targeted, providing no major means of competition or adaptation. This theme is strongly apparent in the literature of modern warfare and will be used to focus on the disparity between offensive versus defensive strategies. The U.S. military discovered during the infamous Bin Laden raid in 2011 that drone strikes had significantly impacted Al Qaeda terrorist planning.⁶⁹ Accordingly, “drone technology [has become] a powerful means for controlling territories and persons”⁷⁰ worldwide.

The influence of drones as a weapon and the fact that they cannot be competed with, increases anger and hence support for terrorist organisations that view the U.S. as the ultimate enemy. This is amplified when one considers that the U.S. global position is “based on military primacy and its willingness to use its power to advance the interests of partners,

⁶³ Duffield, Mark. 2008. Cited in Barrinha, André and da Mota, Sarah. 2017. “Drones and the uninsurable security subjects”. P.255

⁶⁴ Barrinha, André and da Mota, Sarah. 2017. “Drones and the uninsurable security subjects”. P.262

⁶⁵ Coker, Christopher. 2009. Cited in Barrinha, André and da Mota, Sarah. 2017. “Drones and the uninsurable security subjects”. P.255

⁶⁶ Dulo, Donna. 2015. “Unmanned Aircraft: The Rising Risk of Hostile Takeover”.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Jeffrey, James. 2012. “The View from the Wreckage”.

⁶⁹ Friedman, Benjamin H. 2011. “Nobody Knows if Drone Strikes in Pakistan Work”.

⁷⁰ Rosén, Frederik. 2013. “Extremely Stealthy and Incredibly Close: Drones, Control and Legal Responsibility.” P.117

allies, and the international community along with its own.”⁷¹ It is seen as one-sided and unjust for other actors in modern warzones, as many will never achieve the technological capabilities required to develop and operate the weapon. Although this should be a relief for the international community, it does not reduce the severity of the current power disproportion, nor deter those who seek revenge on America and its perceived allies. The U.S. has held global power for decades, with drones simply being the latest tool of world domination. Nonetheless, drones have altered the traditional power balance in war, as by “[l]acking a strong framework for strategy and war termination, the United States replaced the actual threat of Al Qaeda with the *possibility* of Al Qaeda (or “associates”) in a widening range of places.”⁷² It remains unclear what the implications of this power imbalance may be; yet it is unlikely to be a reinforcement of international security.

Quick Tactics over Long-term Strategy

Grand strategy is defined as “how a state thinks about assuring its own security”⁷³, consequently in what way a military weapon should be used to complete state objectives. Drones are used to kill terrorists and insurgents, removing threats whilst also dismissing the chance to gain intelligence from them through questioning, which has been traditionally invaluable for counterterrorism operations and state security.⁷⁴ Many subsequently argue that drone strikes confirm a switch in U.S. war strategy to basic short-term tactics, with little consideration for longstanding implications.⁷⁵ Drones are a tactical, sanitary way to achieve strategic outcomes; an “easy solution”⁷⁶ that seemingly costs nothing, as troops are not placed on the ground. It is critical to pinpoint what drones entail for the future of counterterrorism efforts and the nature of offensive war.

The stationing of drones must be analysed in detail: are they a weapon used aggressively in a war, or are they needed for defensive, overhead surveillance and intelligence gathering? Do they symbolize a larger, more complex strategy or are they simply a substitution for long-

⁷¹ Hazelton, Jacqueline. 2017. “Drone Strikes and Grand Strategy: Toward a Political Understanding of the Uses of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Attacks in US Security Policy”. P.86

⁷² Cronin, Audrey K. 2014. “The ‘War on Terrorism’: What Does it Mean to Win?” P.178

⁷³ Posen, Barry R. 2003. Cited in Hazelton, Jacqueline. 2017. “Drone Strikes and Grand Strategy: Toward a Political Understanding of the Uses of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Attacks in US Security Policy”. P.74

⁷⁴ Cronin, Audrey K. 2014. “The ‘War on Terrorism’: What Does it Mean to Win?”

⁷⁵ Cronin, Audrey K. 2013. “Why Drones Fail”.

⁷⁶ Hazelton, Jacqueline. 2017. “Drone Strikes and Grand Strategy: Toward a Political Understanding of the Uses of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Attacks in US Security Policy”.

term thinking? Drone strikes do not guarantee the demise of a terrorist organisation nor a change in behaviour.⁷⁷ Targeted killings are generally effective in smaller, less well-established terrorist groups but in other cases they can simply be a waste of resources and even cause further damage.⁷⁸ In the majority of instances, “[i]f a top operative is killed, [in a drone strike], it is just a matter of time before he is replaced”.⁷⁹ One must ask whether using the tactic of drone strikes actually increases the security threat originating from a region,⁸⁰ as “[r]ather than tackling the real drivers of extremism, drone strikes create an ideal environment for Al Qaeda to grow and propagate.”⁸¹

Strategically, it remains complex to deduce the significance of drone strikes for the U.S.⁸² In 2010, White House Counterterrorism Adviser John Brennan stated: “an action that eliminates a single terrorist but causes civilian casualties can, in fact, inflame local populations and create far more problems – a tactical success but a strategic failure.”⁸³ Drones hence have many long-term risks and disadvantages. Politically they can damage alliances and diplomatic relations, sometimes permanently.⁸⁴ Concern for the ethical and moral principles of drone warfare may also lead to diplomatic issues for the US.⁸⁵ Overall, the political gains for the U.S. when using drones seem to be limited.⁸⁶

Drone attacks have neglected considerations for long-term sustainability.⁸⁷ It has not been clear for analysts what the broader plan is for using unmanned aerial vehicles in the context of American interests⁸⁸ and thus the U.S. has possibly rendered itself into an endless and self-

⁷⁷ Yadav, Vikash. 2011. Cited in Hazelton, Jacqueline. 2017. “Drone Strikes and Grand Strategy: Toward a Political Understanding of the Uses of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Attacks in US Security Policy”. P.79

⁷⁸ Jaeger, David and Paserman, Daniela. 2009. Cited in Smith, Megan and Walsh, James I. 2013. “Do Drone Strikes Degrade Al Qaeda? Evidence from Propaganda Output”. P.313

⁷⁹ Attuquayefio, Philip. 2014. “Drones, The US And The New Wars in Africa”. P.10

⁸⁰ Pantucci, Raffaello. 2009. “DEEP IMPACT”. P.72

⁸¹ Mothana, Ibrahim. 2012. “More Diplomacy, Fewer Drones”.

⁸² Hazelton, Jacqueline. 2017. “Drone Strikes and Grand Strategy: Toward a Political Understanding of the Uses of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Attacks in US Security Policy”.

⁸³ DeYoung, Karen. 2010. Cited in Enemark, Christian. 2011. “Drones over Pakistan: Secrecy, Ethics, and Counterinsurgency”. P.226

⁸⁴ Boussios, Emanuel. G. 2014. “The Proliferation of Drones: A New and Deadly Arms Race”.

⁸⁵ Hazelton, Jacqueline. 2017. “Drone Strikes and Grand Strategy: Toward a Political Understanding of the Uses of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Attacks in US Security Policy”.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Cronin, Audrey K. 2013. “Why Drones Fail”.

⁸⁸ Cronin, Audrey K. 2014. “The ‘War on Terrorism’: What Does it Mean to Win?” P.186

defeating war.⁸⁹ One could argue that this is reflective of American culture focusing on short-term rather than long-term outcomes. It is highly likely that drone strikes will have a cumulative backlash and hence their effects in the long-term are yet to become visible.⁹⁰ Many argue “the implications of drone proliferation for the international security environment are more heterogeneous and complex than most of the existing scholarship and policy commentary suggests.”⁹¹ This only makes the matter even more important to explore, as this thesis aims to do. Through this drone war, “no one seems to know what ‘winning’ means”.⁹²

Legal and Ethical Considerations

The U.S. has deployed drones beyond transparent legal or geographical boundaries in multiple instances⁹³ and these issues have been explored extensively in academic literature. It has become impossible to examine drone warfare, in particular the impacts and the nature of drone warfare, with no consideration of legal factors. Critics of the U.S. drone programme “charge that the availability of lethal UAV technologies has tempted the United States to engage in a largely covert campaign of targeted killing, creating, in effect, a “secret war” governed by secret law.”⁹⁴ This thesis will focus on three main issues within the ethical field: the value of American life, distinguishing between civilians and combatants and legal restrictions on the use of drones.

Many debate whether governments are legally allowed to deploy drones⁹⁵ or if strikes are “compatible with the principle of distinction under international law.”⁹⁶ Article 48 of the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Convention (1977) states: *“In order to ensure respect for and protection of the civilian population and civilian objects, the Parties to the conflict shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives and accordingly shall direct their operations only against*

⁸⁹ Cronin, Audrey K. 2014. “The ‘War on Terrorism’: What Does it Mean to Win?” P.195

⁹⁰ Smith, Megan and Walsh, James I. 2013. “Do Drone Strikes Degrade Al Qaeda? Evidence from Propaganda Output”.

⁹¹ Horowitz, Michael C., Kreps, Sarah E., and Fuhrmann, Matthew. 2016. “Separating Fact from Fiction in the Debate over Drone Proliferation”. P.37

⁹² Cronin, Audrey K. 2014. “The ‘War on Terrorism’: What Does it Mean to Win?” P.176

⁹³ Cronin, Audrey K. 2014. “The ‘War on Terrorism’: What Does it Mean to Win?”

⁹⁴ Stimson Center. 2015. “Recommendations and Report of the Task Force on US Drone Policy”. P.9

⁹⁵ Boussios, Emanuel. G. 2014. “The Proliferation of Drones: A New and Deadly Arms Race”.

⁹⁶ Ibid. P.389

*military objectives.*⁹⁷ The additional Geneva Protocols were originally adopted to ensure the protection of civilians during wartime, consequently issuing limitations on how wars may be fought.⁹⁸ Collateral damage has been one of the most prevalent issues of the U.S. drone programme, surrounding the issue of how to distinguish a civilian from a combatant. This significantly affects the use of force justified by self-defence⁹⁹ and is therefore deeply applicable to the U.S. drone programme.

The considerations of “just war” are pertinent for drone strikes, as despite former President Barack Obama personally ticking off each drone target on his infamous “kill list”,¹⁰⁰ many civilians and misidentified targets have been hit by drone strikes. Furthermore, the U.S. has even used drones against its own citizens, most notoriously Anwar al-Awlaki, but also Kamel Derwish and Samir Khan.¹⁰¹ Former Attorney General Eric Holder stated three factors that justify the targeting of U.S. citizens in foreign countries: “[t]hey pose an immediate threat; capture is not feasible; operation conforms to applicable law of war procedures”¹⁰², nevertheless legal issues remain, principally surrounding “deprivation of life without due process of law, the violation of territorial sovereignty, the right to self-defence, the use of battlefield equipment in situations other than armed conflict and the use of non-military pilots for drones strikes (in the case of the CIA), and civilian casualties.”¹⁰³ An ultimate moral consideration surrounds how a robot can be held accountable for its actions.¹⁰⁴

The ethical considerations of drone strikes are extensive and worrying, centred mainly on “the diminishing human penalties of engaging in battle if a nation no longer has to commit personnel.”¹⁰⁵ The Obama administration’s enthusiasm for drones created the impression that killing suspects is a more effective option than to deal with them through the justice

⁹⁷ Henckaerts and Doswald-Beck. 2005. Cited in Boussios, Emanuel. G. 2014. “The Proliferation of Drones: A New and Deadly Arms Race”. P.389

⁹⁸ International Committee of the Red Cross. 2009. “Protocols I and II additional to the Geneva Conventions”.

⁹⁹ Boyle, Michael. 2012. Cited in Barrinha, André and da Mota, Sarah. 2017. “Drones and the uninsurable security subjects”. P.254

¹⁰⁰ Cronin, Audrey K. 2014. “The ‘War on Terrorism’: What Does it Mean to Win?”

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Heatherly, Michael C. 2014. “Drones: The American Controversy”. P.35

¹⁰³ Rosén, Frederik. 2013. “Extremely Stealthy and Incredibly Close: Drones, Control and Legal Responsibility.” P.113-114

¹⁰⁴ Sharkey, Noel. 2008. P. 88. Cited in Sauer, Frank and Schörnig, Niklas. 2012. “Killer drones: The ‘silver bullet’ of democratic warfare?” P.374

¹⁰⁵ Heatherly, Michael C. 2014. “Drones: The American Controversy”. P.27

system.¹⁰⁶ President Trump's approach has seemingly continued this theme. The use of drones in targeted strikes also bears the question of whose lives matter. American life has been valued over other forms of life in American security strategies since the nineteen-thirties. Former Secretary of Defence Robert Gates described the effects of this and how drones have made wars seem "bloodless, painless, and odourless", with their practice desensitizing us to war and dehumanizing the concept.¹⁰⁷ The moral crisis has reached a point where "the extensive use of drones exact costs in alternate legal, political, and moral dimensions that are not weighed alongside the marginal short-term gain in safety that is sought."¹⁰⁸ Some believe that the weapon itself is not necessarily amoral, but its use is.¹⁰⁹ This issue will be built upon by this thesis.

Public Opinion and Communication

Throughout the history of war, it has generally been unlikely for a leader to submit his or her nation to war without public approval. Consequently, the extent of support for war is important.¹¹⁰ This is especially the case in the U.S., where civilians' or soldiers' bodies land with significant domestic political impact. Communication with the public is especially significant with new and misinterpreted technology. This will minimise perceptions of state sovereignty being threatened and reduce the likelihood of anger towards the attacking state or against their own government. This has been exceptionally apparent in Pakistan in the last decade. To progress matters, "[m]ore transparency by the United States concerning its decision making process for drone strikes could give it more credibility in seeking to convince other countries to use their newly acquired drone capabilities in ways that comply with international law."¹¹¹

Certain states may face a stronger public outcry against the unauthorised use of drones compared to others. Former President Obama stated in May 2013 that drones do not attract

¹⁰⁶ McCrisken, Trevor. 2013. "Obama's Drone War".

¹⁰⁷ Horowitz, Michael C., Kreps, Sarah E., and Fuhrmann, Matthew. 2016. "Separating Fact from Fiction in the Debate over Drone Proliferation". P.23

¹⁰⁸ Cronin, Audrey K. 2014. "The 'War on Terrorism': What Does it Mean to Win?" P.186

¹⁰⁹ Strawser, Bradley J. 2012. "Coming to Terms With How Drones Are Used".

¹¹⁰ Stoker, Donald. 30.10.2017. "Thinking About Policy, Strategy, and War: Some Tools For Analysis".

¹¹¹ Horowitz, Michael C., Kreps, Sarah E., and Fuhrmann, Matthew. 2016. "Separating Fact from Fiction in the Debate over Drone Proliferation". P.42

“the public scrutiny that a troop deployment invites”;¹¹² nonetheless they do draw controversy of a new nature. For example, the lack of public announcements on drone strikes during the Obama administration created confusion on who was accountable, who authorised the strikes and who was targeted.¹¹³ It is unlikely that the Trump administration will change in this regard.¹¹⁴ Unsurprisingly, “when citizens bear the direct burdens of war, in part through incurring casualties, they pressure leaders to be more selective about the wars they fight”.¹¹⁵ Drone warfare has been made too easily applicable as U.S. citizens do not feel the impacts of drone wars. The Pew Research Centre conducted a Global Attitudes Survey in 2012, concluding that Obama’s targeted-killing campaign was the least popular policy internationally with seventeen of twenty nations in disapproval of the U.S. conducting drone strikes to counter extremism.¹¹⁶ Much criticism has been made towards the lack of transparency in the U.S. drone programme, supporting the argument of drones constituting an offensive affront, as this thesis will highlight.

Future of Drone Warfare

Drones may make the capacity to end conflicts more difficult, as they “lower the costs of using force to the point of making war too easy and therefore more likely.”¹¹⁷ Likewise, they “revolutionize how nations and nonstate actors threaten the use of violence.”¹¹⁸ This paper will argue through offensive realism theory, that the U.S. drone programme has reformed war to a point where “America needs to readdress its approach to national security. Innocent people are dying as a result of a self-interested point of view that’s simply not working, undermining the very thing it’s trying to achieve. Each Al Qaeda leader taken out will be replaced, but you can’t replace the loss of sympathetic public opinion or reputation, which in turn spurs on those who would harm America, enabling them to recruit and sustain

¹¹² Koebler, Jason. 2013. Cited in Horowitz, Michael C., Kreps, Sarah E., and Fuhrmann, Matthew. 2016. “Separating Fact from Fiction in the Debate over Drone Proliferation”. P.14

¹¹³ McCricken, Trevor. 2013. “Obama’s Drone War”. P.101

¹¹⁴ Borger, Julian. 2018. “US air wars under Trump: increasingly indiscriminate, increasingly opaque”.

¹¹⁵ Reiter, Dan and Stam, Allan C. 1991. Cited in Horowitz, Michael C., Kreps, Sarah E., and Fuhrmann, Matthew. 2016. “Separating Fact from Fiction in the Debate over Drone Proliferation”. P.20

¹¹⁶ McCricken, Trevor. 2013. “Obama’s Drone War”.

¹¹⁷ Horowitz, Michael C., Kreps, Sarah E., and Fuhrmann, Matthew. 2016. “Separating Fact from Fiction in the Debate over Drone Proliferation”. P.8

¹¹⁸ Zegart, Amy. 2015. Cited in Horowitz, Michael C., Kreps, Sarah E., and Fuhrmann, Matthew. 2016. “Separating Fact from Fiction in the Debate over Drone Proliferation”. P.13

themselves.”¹¹⁹ This quote, albeit lengthy, was included to highlight the multiple major risks that come with the U.S. continuing to operate offensive drone programmes.

It may be impossible to prevent further development of drone technology, but perhaps it could be managed or controlled.¹²⁰ Both the available models and relative costs of producing drones are continuously adapting,¹²¹¹²² meaning that more countries will be able to acquire the weapon. For example, China is currently the dominant global producer of drones and supplies multiple countries,¹²³ with rumours that the nation has been in the process of manufacturing the Sharp Sword: a stealth drone that can carry larger weapons and is difficult to detect on many radars.¹²⁴ In addition, Chinese drone producers are reported to supply other states with the weapon, even those with poor human rights records.¹²⁵ In 2015, only the U.S., UK and Israel held drones for military purposes,¹²⁶ yet there are now over eighty countries that possess the technology to operate drones internationally.¹²⁷ Although not all have military capabilities,¹²⁸ it is clear that the U.S. no longer holds a monopoly on cutting-edge drone technology.¹²⁹ Moving forward, we must verify who exactly is developing drones and the total number of groups and people doing so,¹³⁰ as well as what restrictions are currently in place.

Another important topic to contemplate is the next generation of drones and their future capabilities.¹³¹ Different actors involved will have varied perspectives on how to use and

¹¹⁹ Jeffrey, James. 2012. “The View from the Wreckage”.

¹²⁰ Wright, David. 2014. “Drones: Regulatory challenges to an incipient industry”.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Horowitz, Michael C., Kreps, Sarah E., and Fuhrmann, Matthew. 2016. “Separating Fact from Fiction in the Debate over Drone Proliferation”.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Boyle, Michael. 2015. “Why Pakistan’s first drone strike should worry Obama”.

¹²⁶ Martins, Bruno. O. 2015. “The European Union and armed drones: framing the debate”.

¹²⁷ Taylor, G. 2013. Cited in Boussios, Emanuel. G. 2014. “The Proliferation of Drones: A New and Deadly Arms Race”. P.388

¹²⁸ Rosén, Frederik. 2013. “Extremely Stealthy and Incredibly Close: Drones, Control and Legal Responsibility.”

¹²⁹ Horowitz, Michael C., Kreps, Sarah E., and Fuhrmann, Matthew. 2016. “Separating Fact from Fiction in the Debate over Drone Proliferation”.

¹³⁰ Rosén, Frederik. 2013. “Extremely Stealthy and Incredibly Close: Drones, Control and Legal Responsibility.”

¹³¹ Horowitz, Michael C., Kreps, Sarah E., and Fuhrmann, Matthew. 2016. “Separating Fact from Fiction in the Debate over Drone Proliferation”.

manage the weapons¹³² and this will become problematic when multiple states become involved. During the Obama administration there were calls for the U.S. to establish global norms and guidelines on the use of UAVs, some even saying that there was an obligation to do so.¹³³ The U.S. should have been a step ahead of the impending situation of numerous states using the weapon,¹³⁴ but it was arguably fixated with the power the weapon provided. “In short, it is high time for democracies to bite the (silver) bullet and face the implications of their obsession with killer drones.”¹³⁵

Simply put, “[r]estricting the use of drones worldwide has the potential of reducing future conflicts.”¹³⁶ For example, there have been issues of drones violating national airspaces between China and Japan, reigniting territorial disputes rather than effectively and positively managing them. Another example would be if an autocrat established control of such a weapon and used it against the national population.¹³⁷ Or even more realistically, if a non-state actor developed the weapon or stole technology to do so. As a weapon of precision, it would remove the need for suicide bombers and hence allow militant groups who may be low on physical numbers to be more flexible in their methods.¹³⁸ We must address a real and current risk: “Do we want a world in which governments are permitted to track down their enemies in any other nation, and target and kill them, with no real oversight or accountability?”¹³⁹

Drone attacks are highly likely to lead to an increase in “homegrown” terrorism and a general rise in terror attacks against the U.S. These two issues surge in severity due to sympathy and anger over drone strikes in states such as Pakistan. “Homegrown” terrorism becomes more likely when there is a diaspora in the country, for example Yemenis in the U.S. or Pakistanis in Britain. This may therefore become an *internal* security issue for the state conducting the attacks. Interviews and extensive research with terrorists and insurgent groups affected by

¹³² Clarke, Roger. 2014. “What drones inherit from their ancestors”. P.251

¹³³ Boussios, Emanuel. G. 2014. “The Proliferation of Drones: A New and Deadly Arms Race”.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Rosén, Frederik. 2013. “Extremely Stealthy and Incredibly Close: Drones, Control and Legal Responsibility.” P.375

¹³⁶ Boussios, Emanuel. G. 2014. “The Proliferation of Drones: A New and Deadly Arms Race”. P.388

¹³⁷ Horowitz, Michael C., Kreps, Sarah E., and Fuhrmann, Matthew. 2016. “Separating Fact from Fiction in the Debate over Drone Proliferation”.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Cavallaro, James & Sonnenberg, Stephan. 2012. “U.S. Tries to Drown Out the Downsides of Drone Strikes”.

drones reveal that the anger towards the U.S. heightens after an attack and consequently the risk of future terrorist acts on U.S. territory.¹⁴⁰ Terrorist organisations are able to gain support, both in the strength and affirmation of their ideology as well as in physical numbers, due to anger over civilian casualties.

For these reasons drones may create more long-term problems than they solve. It is ambiguous whether foreign governments authorise the U.S. drone strikes or cooperate with the intelligence gathering process that leads to strikes. In Pakistan, there have been debates for years whether or not the Pakistani government is secretly in cooperation with the American drone programme. If they have supported it, it is unclear why they lie about their actions. This reflects on the issue of transparency and clear communication that is so crucially needed in drone warfare.

Looking to the future, “[f]or the sake of their own national security, Americans must *immediately* confront the huge implications of the shift towards drones that is well underway in their own military and paramilitary forces, especially the evolving terms of their employment, the legal status both of the targeted and the operators, the move toward using drones domestically, and the redistribution of resources toward drones and away from other priorities.”¹⁴¹ ¹⁴² Finally, considerations must be made for the future responsibility and implications of the U.S. drone programme, as “no country’s defence budget, not even that of the USA, is limitless.”¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Pantucci, Raffaello. 2009. “DEEP IMPACT”.

¹⁴¹ Cronin, Audrey K. 2014. “The ‘War on Terrorism’: What Does it Mean to Win?” P.193

¹⁴² Ibid. P.194

¹⁴³ Rosén, Frederik. 2013. “Extremely Stealthy and Incredibly Close: Drones, Control and Legal Responsibility.” P.364

Chapter 1 - The Development of Drone Technology

Drone Surveillance

The surveillance prospects offered by drones are vastly attractive to governments, militaries and other actors interested in defence or offence operations. Drone technology has evolved extensively in recent years, in order to provide the user with the most accurate and advanced reconnaissance opportunities. Transferring these technologies to an offensive drone surveillance strategy creates a far larger danger for all actors involved. Drones can be solar-powered in order to persist in airborne missions and constantly follow targets. They can act as a “fly on the wall”,¹⁴⁴ or hold a standard signals-collection device, enabling monitoring and tracking of where electronic devices are used, even to the detail of the apartment number of the owner and where that device tends to travel on a daily basis.¹⁴⁵ The magnitude of this development in technology is staggering, as “once you know the devices, you know their owners. When you start doing this over several cities, you’re tracking the movements not just of individuals but of whole populations.”¹⁴⁶ This explanation highlights the severe risks that come with the development of drone technology and how easy it has become to deploy the weapon on an offensive basis. Applying this example to counterterrorism efforts is straightforward; “the terror “watch-list” appears on the terminals of personnel conducting phone operations, linking unique codes associated with cell phone SIM cards and handsets to specific individuals in order to geolocate them.”¹⁴⁷

An ultimate threat lies in the speed of technological developments and the accompanying lack of contemplation as to how this will influence and be influenced by global politics, law and ethics.¹⁴⁸ Drone surveillance itself appears relatively harmless and can be easily justified by self-defence arguments. Nevertheless, pursuing technological developments that will heighten the power and intimidation capabilities of the weapon remove credibility from self-defence rationalizations. Summed up, “[t]he only thing we know for sure is the unmanned force of the future will look nothing like it does today and will be doing things no one has yet

¹⁴⁴ Bumiller, Elisabeth and Shanker, Thom. 2011. “War Evolves With Drones, Some Tiny as Bugs”.

¹⁴⁵ This has led to debates and concerns over whether drones could lead to a surveillance society, allowing authorities to monitor every move.

¹⁴⁶ Snowden, Edward. “Foreword: Elected by Circumstance.” In Scahill, Jeremy. 2016. “The Assassination Complex”. P.xvii

¹⁴⁷ The Intercept. 2015. Cited in Scahill, Jeremy. “The Drone Legacy”. P.4

¹⁴⁸ Kaag, John and Kreps, Sarah. 2014. “Drone Warfare”. P.3

thought about. These may include kinetic capabilities, but by no means should we except it simply because it happens to include them today.”¹⁴⁹ The surveillance technology offered by drones will continue to develop at a rapid rate and we can only predict what impacts this will have on future military and self-defence strategies. States, especially the U.S., should be proactively issuing stringent regulations to manage the use of drones in surveillance, both domestically and internationally, to clearly demonstrate their use in a defensive nature. As this has not happened, the U.S. risks a future where multiple international actors will use drones ambiguously and offensively.

Drone Technology and Targeted Killings

One of the major hazards surrounding drones and their advanced technology is their application in targeted killings in wartime, an unprecedented concern in modern warfare that the U.S. has been at the forefront of. Trends show that the U.S. military is focusing more on “smart weapons”, with drones being a key component of this change.¹⁵⁰ Some analysts even believe that “[t]he development of a new generation of military robots, including armed drones, may eventually mark one of the biggest revolutions in warfare in generations.”¹⁵¹ Although this may appear encouraging and commemorative of the capacities of modern research, states should remain wary of the impending outcomes of this largely offensive technological expansion. The failure of the U.S. to do so thus far provides evidence for the offensive strategy argument this thesis proposes.

Military drones represent the most accurate and complex scheme of deadly power ever known, the ideal tool for airborne warfare.¹⁵² The classification of strikes into personality and signature strikes has confirmed this status. Personality strikes refer to drone strikes explicitly targeting identified individuals, for example a known terrorist leader whose identity and location have been clearly established by intelligence efforts.¹⁵³ On the other hand, signature strikes identify multiple targets based on behavioural patterns or geographical locations,

¹⁴⁹ Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”. P.169

¹⁵⁰ Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”.

¹⁵¹ Mulrine, Anna. 2013. Cited in Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.229

¹⁵² Schachtman, Noah. 2009. Cited in Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.185

¹⁵³ Engel, Richard. 2013. “CIA didn’t always know who it was killing in drone strikes, classified documents show”.

which are typically suspicious.¹⁵⁴ Targets in a signature strike do not have to be confirmed before a strike, meaning that there are countless instances where the CIA or U.S. military has not been completely aware of who was targeted.¹⁵⁵¹⁵⁶ Signature strikes are intrinsically linked to targeted killings, as their indiscrimination regularly leads to the slaughter of crowds of civilians and the fusing of unidentifiable flesh with metal and human debris.¹⁵⁷ These repeated gruesome images haunt many involved in drone strikes and remain to be fully answered for by U.S. authorities. Worryingly, it seems unlikely for this process to be appropriately managed, as drone technology continues to advance to the point where drones themselves can now “suggest targets or objects of interest”.¹⁵⁸

Technological Advantages for Offensive Strategies

The Geographical Scope

On a global level, U.S. drones are operated to survey areas in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen, Libya and Mali (see Appendix 3). It is likely that this list of states will continue to grow in coming years, as security threats are redefined and technological developments continue. To cover this extensive global area, drones are flown out of both U.S. and allied military bases locations worldwide, including in Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, the Seychelles and the Niger.¹⁵⁹ This conclusively indicates a drone network of “overlapping circles of surveillance”¹⁶⁰ allowing the U.S. detailed coverage of major terrorist hotspots worldwide, as well as minimum active maintenance required for the upkeep of this activity. Distances have been considerably condensed by time due to technological updates.¹⁶¹ This has significantly impacted traditional theoretical explorations of space and war as well as the relationship between the individual body and space.¹⁶² The individual target is now powerless in the face of drones.

¹⁵⁴ Byman, Daniel. 2013. “Why Drones Work”.

¹⁵⁵ Cronin, Audrey Kurth. 2013. “Why Drones Fail”.

¹⁵⁶ Engel, Richard. 2013. “CIA didn’t always know who it was killing in drone strikes, classified documents show”.

¹⁵⁷ Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. “State Violence and the Execution of Law”. P.194.

¹⁵⁸ Finn, Peter. 2011. “A future for drones: automated killing”.

¹⁵⁹ Turse, Nick. 2011. Cited in Shaw, Ian. G. R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”. P.549.

¹⁶⁰ Shaw, Ian. G. R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”. P.549.

¹⁶¹ Barrinha, André and da Mota, Sarah. 2017. “Drones and the uninsurable security subjects”.

¹⁶² Ibid.

The U.S. application of drones to various terrains and political situations worldwide has enabled an expansion of “the borders of the “Global War on Terror”¹⁶³ as opposed to its containment. This has created an ““everywhere war” defined by asymmetrical and paramilitary battles in the borderland of the planet”.¹⁶⁴ The tradition of wide-ranging land battle has been surpassed by skies of armed drones capable of targeted killings on a global level.¹⁶⁵ Governments and militaries can now use drones to hunt down associates virtually anywhere on the globe.¹⁶⁶ This ease in targeting has standardised war as an everyday exercise,¹⁶⁷ rather than improved collaborative methods of self-defence. Academic explorations of the techno-military aspect of drones underline the main offensive advantage of drones as minimizing the time from drone operator to target, thereby “shortening the “kill chain”.¹⁶⁸ This has made it painless for the U.S. to secure targets and eliminate higher total numbers of perceived threats. During the Gulf War, the average time to acquire a target, obtain authorization, attack and remove the target was a total of three days, yet drones have dramatically reduced this to roughly five minutes.¹⁶⁹

Many U.S. authorities argue that alternative means of self-defence are not readily available in many regions, as arrest and interrogation may not be possible¹⁷⁰ in differing geographical or political contexts. Nonetheless, when examining U.S. drone strike statistics, it appears that this argument has been taken advantage of to validate strikes that had questionable self-defence purposes. As there are no personnel risks and minimal consequences for utilizing them,¹⁷¹ drones hold numerous advantages for missions located overseas or in hard-to-reach areas.¹⁷² They provide low-cost, continuous surveillance whilst also increasing the duration of missions so operating crews can rotate.¹⁷³ This allows for a greater awareness of events on

¹⁶³ Shaw, Ian G.R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”. P.537

¹⁶⁴ Gregory, Derek. 2011. Pp.238-250. Cited in Shaw, Ian G.R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”. P.537

¹⁶⁵ Shaw, Ian G.R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”. P.536

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. P.540

¹⁶⁷ Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. “State Violence and the Execution of Law”. P.190

¹⁶⁸ Fagan, Michael S. 2011. Cited in Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. “State Violence and the Execution of Law”. P.189

¹⁶⁹ Ignatieff, Michael. 2000. P.179. Cited in DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”. P.23

¹⁷⁰ Pantucci, Raffaello. 2009. “DEEP IMPACT”.

¹⁷¹ Bender, Jeremy. 2015. “Former US military intel chief: The Obama administration loves the ability ‘to find a guy in the middle of the desert in some sh—y little village and drop a bomb on his head”.

¹⁷² The Economist. 2011. “Flight of the Drones: Why the Future of Air Power Belongs to Unmanned Systems”.

¹⁷³ Bowden, Mike. 2013. “The Killing Machines”.

the ground through persistent surveillance¹⁷⁴ and makes it much easier to eliminate individuals as required.

Efficiency over Human Soldiers

Drones are used on the offensive rather than defensive, due to their nature in making war almost entirely “risk-free” and therefore reducing the stakes that are usually experienced. The drone pilot is unsusceptible to harm and collateral damage is also intended to be relatively low.¹⁷⁵ It is interesting to examine drones and their benefits within the context of military history, as “[w]ar has always been a powerful incentive for technological innovation. Now technology is on the verge of supplanting the human soldier altogether – with consequences we can barely imagine”.¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, humans are traditionally vulnerable in war as they are affected by the natural elements, often become fearful and exhausted and do not respond as quickly as machines.¹⁷⁷ Hence, “drones are a useful complement to multidimensional strategies that can yield game-changing interventions in the fight against terrorism”.¹⁷⁸

Over their short period of existence, drone accuracy has increased extensively.¹⁷⁹ Drones provide precise and up-to-date information on the enemy’s location, behaviour and resources, establishing “a new dimension in intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance”.¹⁸⁰ They can collect multiple forms of data including visual, infrared, signals intelligence, three-dimensional mapping and facial recognition records.¹⁸¹ For the U.S., drones allow access to multiple areas of international contention, to manage the rapid expansion of terrorist groups and non-state actor threats. There have also been developments of drone swarms - bodies of thirty odd drones operating together as a collective unit - with the capability to absorb multiple strikes and continue their operations.¹⁸² Armed drones can hover for over fourteen

¹⁷⁴ Bowden, Mike. 2013. “The Killing Machines”

¹⁷⁵ DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”. P.2.

¹⁷⁶ Benjamin, Medea. 2013. “Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control”. P.164

¹⁷⁷ Singer, Peter. 2012. Cited in DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”. P.22

¹⁷⁸ Attuquayefio, Philip. 2014. “Drones, The US And The New Wars in Africa”. P.1

¹⁷⁹ Bergen, Peter and Tiedemann, Katherine. 2011. “The Effects of the U.S. Drone Program in Pakistan”.

¹⁸⁰ The Economist. 2011. “Flight of the Drones: Why the Future of Air Power Belongs to Unmanned Systems”.

¹⁸¹ Bowden, Mike. 2013. “The Killing Machines”.

¹⁸² Hambling, David. 2016. “Drone swarms will change the face of modern warfare”.

hours and are simply replaced when battery or fuel power diminishes.¹⁸³ These continuing technological developments highlight dissatisfaction with the current advantages drones offer for self-defence, giving credibility to the argument that it is in fact offensive features of drones that are being researched and progressed.

In a 2013 speech, President Obama emphasised the strength of drones in comparison to human soldiers: *“Al Qaeda and its affiliates try to gain foothold in some of the most distant and unforgiving places on Earth. They take refuge in remote tribal regions. They hide in caves and walled compounds. They train in empty deserts and rugged mountains. ...these are places where it would pose profound risks to our troops and local civilians...So it is in this context that the United States has taken lethal, targeted action against al Qaeda and its associated forces, including with remotely piloted aircraft commonly referred to as drones.”*¹⁸⁴ This was one of the first public acknowledgements made by a U.S. official of the U.S. drone programme. Obama continued, acknowledging that *“As was true in previous armed conflicts, this new technology raises profound questions – about who is targeted, and why; about civilian casualties, and the risk of creating new enemies; about the legality of such strikes under U.S. and international law; about accountability and morality.”*¹⁸⁵ This quote demonstrates awareness of the risks that come with new military technologies, yet little action has been taken since this speech to establish effective communications to the public and initiate global discussions. On the whole, “Obama has struggled to consistently fulfil his pledge to bring the practice of the ‘war on terror’ in line with the foundational values and principles at the core of American political culture.”¹⁸⁶

Drone Technology and Power Imbalance

The All-Powerful User

In military technology theories, “technology’s main effect is thus not to strengthen state A relative to state B – it is to strengthen *attackers over defenders* (or vice versa) regardless of who attacks and who defends”.¹⁸⁷ There has been a general trend in the U.S. and other Western states to invest to achieve greater technological potential, which in turn enhance the

¹⁸³ Wenzl, Roy. 2018. “The kill chain: inside the unit that tracks targets for US drone wars”.

¹⁸⁴ Obama, Barack. 2013. “Obama’s Speech on Drone Policy”.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ McCrisken, Trevor. 2011. “Ten years on: Obama’s war on terrorism in rhetoric and practice”. P.800

¹⁸⁷ Biddle, Stephen. 2004. “Military Power. Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle”. P.15

capabilities of the user.¹⁸⁸ Nevertheless, when the U.S. shows little concern for who is being targeted and who is holding the power to target, it represents a worrying change for the future of warfare, as “with any other military technology, [drone use] is open to abuse and misuse”.¹⁸⁹ The violence and cruelty that has evolved in military drone users is exemplified by the simple instruction Colonel Eric Mathewson, a Predator drone squadron commander received: “Kill [Expletive] Heads”. There is a stark difference between a derogatory and harsh instruction like this example and the technical language typically expected for a complex and sensitive military mission.¹⁹⁰ It also highlights a racial bias in drone strikes, which will be further explored in Chapter 3.

Technological developments have led to simplistic terminology in modern war, even prompting comparisons of drone warfare to video games.¹⁹¹ Philip Alston and Hina Shamsi’s research on drone pilots displays their actions through a ‘Playstation mentality’ through killing people on a screen with a joystick, as in a video game, but with effects felt in reality.¹⁹² This behavioural pattern raises some important and pertinent questions: “Far removed from the human consequences of their actions, how will this generation of fighters value the right to life? How will commanders and policymakers keep themselves immune from the deceptively antiseptic nature of drone killings? Will the standards for intelligence-gathering to justify a killing slip? Will the number of acceptable ‘collateral’ civilian deaths increase?”¹⁹³ This concept initiates a range of ethical controversies whilst also emphasizing the uncertainty of the situation.

Pilots are detached from the significance of their activity, which creates issues for the training of drone pilots and has even led to arguments between traditional military veterans and the incoming generation of “video gamers”.¹⁹⁴ Dangers remain, as pilots have become psychologically affected through monitoring targets for extended periods and simply assassinating them by pressing a button. Being so far removed from the situation on the

¹⁸⁸ Heatherly, Michael C. 2014. “Drones: The American Controversy”.

¹⁸⁹ Whetham, David. 2013. “Killer Drones”. P.29

¹⁹⁰ Jaffe, Greg. 2010. Cited in Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. “State Violence and the Execution of Law”. P.186

¹⁹¹ Shaw, Ian G.R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”. P.538

¹⁹² Alston, Philip and Shamsi, Hina. 2011. Cited in Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. “State Violence and the Execution of Law”. P.191

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Benjamin, Medea. 2013. “Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control”. P.87

ground is difficult to psychologically process¹⁹⁵ and the restrictions in talking about these military missions make it harder to deal with the consequences.¹⁹⁶ Studies have shown that drone pilots who watch devastating scenes of war repeatedly and return to their normal family lives have a difficult time de-stressing and coming to terms with the quiet acceptance and normality of their actions.¹⁹⁷ Drones leave their targets with nowhere to hide, making war dynamics very different from what has been traditionally experienced.¹⁹⁸ We must acknowledge however that it is human beings, rather than weapons that make war.¹⁹⁹

Drone Autonomy

The capacity wielded by drones leads to the redundancy of distinction and proportionality concerns with regard to modern weapons.²⁰⁰ The development of drones has defended the U.S. position as the global superpower,²⁰¹ which perhaps was always the intended aim. Debates are becoming ever more frequent on whether drones possess more power over their operators. Humans are increasingly losing power to machines like drones, as drones do not operate within known boundaries, they cannot automatically return control to a human when so required and it is complex to deduce the autonomous decisions of drones as appropriate or not, as well as regulate the technological progress.²⁰² Scholarly literature has deduced that drone operators are merely cyborgs,²⁰³ as they are not reliant on physical reality but a particular version of this and they use various external tools to communicate with drones and conduct attacks. When acknowledging the lethal capabilities of drones, this is a frightening prospect and also challenging to classify as defensive.

With prior major technological advances in modern warfare, humans have ultimately retained control of new military systems, especially those that are lethal.²⁰⁴ Although drones can

¹⁹⁵ Bowden, Mike. 2013. "The Killing Machines".

¹⁹⁶ Aamoth, Doug. 2008. "Pilots of remote-controlled Predators suffering PTSD".

¹⁹⁷ Riza, Shane. 2013. "Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict". P.175

¹⁹⁸ Biddle, Stephen. 2004. "Military Power. Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle". P.269

¹⁹⁹ Elkus, Adam. 2011. "Weapons Don't Make War".

²⁰⁰ Kaag, John and Kreps, Sarah. 2014. "Drone Warfare". P.127

²⁰¹ DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. "Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology". P.20

²⁰² Clarke, Roger. 2014. "What drones inherit from their ancestors". P.254

²⁰³ Ibid. P.257

²⁰⁴ Riza, Shane. 2013. "Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict". P.12

operate without conscious human guidance,²⁰⁵ a pilot normally governs them, with at least one other actor monitoring the submitted drone footage.²⁰⁶ In addition, humans remain the final decision-maker as to whether a strike should be made or not.²⁰⁷ Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that drones have a significant sense of autonomy.²⁰⁸ This has been met with public criticism, as public opinion in the U.S. is increasingly influencing these significant technological developments.²⁰⁹ It is therefore vital to distinguish between a machine that kills automatically (such as a mine) versus one that actually possesses a high degree of autonomy and can make a decision to kill or not, such as a drone.²¹⁰ The disregard of the U.S. so far in this matter, shows how decisions are made in self-interest as opposed to concern for long-term sustainability of the weapon.

The increasing autonomy of drones likens their status to robots. Robots have different definitions, but Armin Krishnan outlines them as “a programmable machine, with at least some minimal autonomy, that can sense and manipulate its environment.”²¹¹ The capacity to manipulate a situation links to their autonomy, defined as “an ability to sense, perceive, and act in or on its environment”.²¹² Traditionally, an individual pilot manages each drone, however the U.S. military has allegedly planned for one pilot operating four drones at a time. This could lead to a fleet of drones able to respond to changes in their environment, particularly when in enemy territory.²¹³ Some of these responses will include “minimising collateral damage, recognizing surrender, return fire with proportionality, and in cases where it is ambiguous – wait for a human signal”.²¹⁴ Drones are even able to operate via facial recognition in order to identify and eliminate targets without a human prompt.²¹⁵ The reduction in costs of drones and their replacement of valuable manpower means that they are

²⁰⁵ Finn, Peter. 2011. “A future for drones: automated killing”.

²⁰⁶ The Economist. 2011. “Flight of the Drones: Why the Future of Air Power Belongs to Unmanned Systems”.

²⁰⁷ Finn, Peter. 2011. “A future for drones: automated killing”.

²⁰⁸ Finn, Peter. 2011. “A future for drones: automated killing”.

²⁰⁹ DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”. P.115

²¹⁰ Krishnan, Armin. 2009. “Killer Robots: Legality and Ethicality of Autonomous Weapons”. P.33

²¹¹ Ibid. P.14

²¹² Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”. P.17

²¹³ The Economist. 2011. “Flight of the Drones: Why the Future of Air Power Belongs to Unmanned Systems”.

²¹⁴ Arkin, Ronald C. 2009. Cited in Finn, Peter. 2011. “A future for drones: automated killing”.

²¹⁵ Finn, Peter. 2011. “A future for drones: automated killing”.

likely to continue to provide promise for U.S. military operations worldwide.²¹⁶ Nevertheless, some believe their value is exaggerated. We must think more about how to minimise the ethical and practical issues associated with the weapon,²¹⁷ particularly concerning their degree of autonomy.

Weaknesses Remain in the Technology

Technical Glitches

Despite the technological advances seen in military drones and their significance as a modern weapon, important fragilities remain which greatly impact their reliability and preciseness. One example seen is the “blinking” that occurs in surveillance visual footage, making it difficult to confirm positive identification of a target and minimize collateral damage.²¹⁸ A WikiLeaks revealed multiple instances where a drone pilot temporarily loses connection with the drone and hence for a brief period no longer controls it.²¹⁹ The consequences of this could be easily devastating, especially if not appropriately communicated. In addition, drones cannot consistently make well-informed decisions even with regard to simple tasks such as the aircraft’s elevation and motion.²²⁰ Hence, human control must remain relatively important in drone programmes and we should only enable drones to make regulated verdicts.²²¹ The fact that the technology has not been able to eliminate risks makes their use even more precarious.

Drone Data in the Wrong Hands

There are more complex technical weaknesses assumed with drones including risks of hacking and poor data encryption. Many drones do not automatically encrypt the data they collect and transmit to American pilots or troops in the field. In 2009, U.S. forces discovered that Shiite Iraqi militants held days worth of drone footage on their laptops, enabled by a \$26 piece of software called SkyGrabber that allowed them to view the videos by hacking into the

²¹⁶ Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”. P.172

²¹⁷ Ibid. P.169

²¹⁸ Scahill, Jeremy. 2016. “Find, Fix, Finish”. In Scahill, Jeremy. 2016. “The Assassination Complex”. P.52

²¹⁹ Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. “State Violence and the Execution of Law”.

²²⁰ Clarke, Roger. 2014. “What drones inherit from their ancestors”. P.251

²²¹ Ibid. P.255

drone feeds.²²² Furthermore, in 2011 a keystroke logger virus was discovered at Creech Base in Nevada, which logs the strokes of drone pilots as they fly in missions around the world.²²³ At the time, the virus even persisted despite several security efforts to remove it.²²⁴ These risks show that technological advancements do not come without their own security limitations.

It has been remarkably easy for non-state actors to manipulate and gain access to supposedly advanced and complex U.S. military technologies and it remains unclear if these problems have been totally resolved.²²⁵ Drones are fundamentally perilous as they are remote-controlled, they send and receive data over long distances,²²⁶ they rely on removable hard drives for data transfers²²⁷ and they depend heavily upon cyber connections.²²⁸ Traditional security responses cannot be trusted, as they solely focus on known vulnerabilities.²²⁹ Some believe that drones can never be depended on as military weapons, as “[r]eliable and predictable behaviour of drones is only feasible where an unambiguously specific procedure has been defined. Because all computer models on which computing is based are simplifications of a complex reality, and because meaning is absent within computerised systems, attempts to delegate less than fully-structured decisions to drones will result in unreliable and unpredictable behaviour.”²³⁰ As drones are such a powerful and unstable weapon, their multiple technical and behavioural deficiencies further produce a questionable future for international security.

Human Error

Conventional and unassuming risks remain in drones with regard to human error. Firstly, there tends to be a significant time lag between the stage where new technology is established and used and when the institutions and people who control it adapt to this change.²³¹

²²² Gorman, Siobhan, Dreazen, Yochi J and Cole, August. 2009. “Insurgents Hack U.S. Drones”.

²²³ Politact. 2011. “US Drones Contaminated By Key Logging Virus”.

²²⁴ Shachtman, Noah. 2011. “Exclusive: Computer Virus Hits U.S. Drone Fleet”.

²²⁵ Gorman, Siobhan, Dreazen, Yochi J and Cole, August. 2009. “Insurgents Hack U.S. Drones”.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Shachtman, Noah. 2011. “Exclusive: Computer Virus Hits U.S. Drone Fleet”.

²²⁸ Cronin, Audrey Kurth. 2013. “Why Drones Fail”.

²²⁹ Ackerman, Spencer. 2011. “CIA drones kill large groups without knowing who they are”.

²³⁰ Clarke, Roger. 2014. “What drones inherit from their ancestors”. P.251

²³¹ DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”. P.viii

Secondly, there remains a natural tendency for mistakes to be made when operating drones, yet with such a weapon the risks are much deadlier.²³² Thirdly, “[t]he essential incapacity of computer models to reflect the many indeterminacies of human behaviour is mirrored in the still running debates about whether ‘emotional intelligence’ can be designed into computer-based systems.”²³³ Finally, it is important to remember that drones are not indestructible or immune to threats from the ground. As seen in the NATO mission in Kosovo in 1999, ground forces can shoot down drones.²³⁴ Thus, U.S. pilots and militaries should be well informed on the restrictions of machines like drones.²³⁵

Summary

This chapter has explored the technological background of drone warfare, its advantages for offence and defence, as well as factors highlighting the risks and weaknesses of this weapon. The minimal dangers to the attacking side and precision in targeting that drone technology provides, ultimately demonstrates their use as an offensive strategy pursued by the U.S. These technological capabilities also indicate why the U.S. deploys drones to act in self-interest and how they assist in the maximisation of U.S. power globally.

²³² DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”. P.123

²³³ Clarke, Roger. 2014. “What drones inherit from their ancestors”. P.249

²³⁴ Cohen, William and Shelton, Henry. 1999. P. 14. Cited in Biddle, Stephen. 2004. “Military Power. Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle”. P.265

²³⁵ Clarke, Roger. 2014. “What drones inherit from their ancestors”. P.255

Chapter 2 –Tactics over Strategy

Short-Term Tactics are Inherent in American Culture

Quick Results

Drones are growing in popularity in the U.S. due to the ease and speed at which they can eliminate perceived national security threats. In a general culture of “have to have it now”, the prestige of drones and their military results succinctly fulfil this sense of urgency.²³⁶ Furthermore, drones can be operated “without worrying about a public backlash over U.S. soldiers coming home in body bags.”²³⁷ The current situation in the U.S. reflects a lack of overall direction and strategy, as displayed by the list of unfilled positions worldwide in Ambassadorships.²³⁸ Hence, drones have been used as a sanitary and rapid procedure in which to remove potential threats to the U.S., whilst also avoiding lengthier and more complex traditional counterterrorism efforts. Their short-term gains are a significant factor as to why they are deployed repeatedly on a pre-emptive nature. It remains difficult to predict the long-term impacts of this self-focused attitude, not only for the U.S. but also globally. It is clear nonetheless, that there has been no indication of military drone usage slowing. In fact, as drone usage develops, so too does the U.S. National Security Strategy.²³⁹

U.S. Leadership Reliance on Drones

The seductiveness of drones has increased U.S. leaders’ reliance on them, especially when deterred by the political effects of capturing alleged terrorists.²⁴⁰ In his May 2013 speech, Former President Obama admitted he had come “to view drone strikes as a cure-all for terrorism.”²⁴¹ This is understandable when considering the technological capabilities drones provide, but it is a process of normalization that is burdensome to reverse. By relying on drones, U.S. authorities and intelligence bodies require fewer personnel for operation, allowing them greater time to monitor targets in order to collect surveillance data.²⁴² Furthermore, “drones kill more terrorists per dollar spent while preserving lives for those on

²³⁶ Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”. P.9

²³⁷ Hastings, Michael. 2012. “The Rise of the Killer Drones: How America Goes to War in Secret”.

²³⁸ McCarthy, Niall. 2018. “45 Countries Still Don’t Have a U.S. Ambassador”.

²³⁹ Shaw, Ian. G. R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”. P.551

²⁴⁰ Kaag, John and Kreps, Sarah. 2014. “Drone Warfare”. P.64.

²⁴¹ Bruce, Mary. 2013. Cited in Kaag, John and Kreps, Sarah. 2014. “Drone Warfare”. P.19

²⁴² Heatherly, Michael C. 2014. “Drones: The American Controversy”.

the prosecuting side that arguably equate to risk-free warfare.”²⁴³ It is clear that U.S. leaders may be aware of the long-term risks of drones, yet are not keen to dwell on them.

Aggressive Use Questions Legitimacy

Although the reasons behind using drones seem fairly straightforward, their multiple negative effects bring into question the sustained U.S. drone policy. Drones are a simple assassination tool²⁴⁴ and secret files highlight how strikes are glorified with terminology including “jackpot” and “touchdown”.²⁴⁵ There is a strong “preference for assassination rather than capture”²⁴⁶ but the aggressive use of drones and frequent targeted kills do not always guarantee greater security for the U.S.²⁴⁷ It also reflects negatively on the national image of the U.S., as a state whose leader allows himself unrestrained power to take lives, regardless of who is a confirmed terrorist or not.²⁴⁸ Therefore, overall the U.S. drone policy “can indeed offer some real practical and ethical advantages over other military tools, [but] drones may not always be the right means to match the political ends.”²⁴⁹ This offensive nature undermines the credibility and accountability of the self-defence component of the U.S. drone programme.

Relationship between U.S. Citizens and the State

Americans are Sheltered from Realities of War

The U.S. drone war programme has naturally had impacts on the relationship between the state and its citizens. Although very few individuals in the U.S. are directly affected by drones, such as drone pilots,²⁵⁰ public opinion still has a significant impact on the nature and continuation of the drone programme. Drone strikes shelter the American public from the realities and costs of war and therefore increase the likelihood of public approval.²⁵¹ As a

²⁴³ DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”. P.22

²⁴⁴ Scahill, Jeremy. “The Drone Legacy”. In Scahill, Jeremy. 2016. “The Assassination Complex”. P.2

²⁴⁵ Reed, Betsy. 2016. “Preface”. In Scahill, Jeremy. 2016. “The Assassination Complex”. P.IX

²⁴⁶ Scahill, Jeremy. “The Drone Legacy”. In Scahill, Jeremy. 2016. “The Assassination Complex”. P.5

²⁴⁷ Benjamin, Medea. 2013. “Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control”. P.131.

²⁴⁸ Greenwald, Glenn. “Afterword: War without end”. In Scahill, Jeremy. 2016. “The Assassination Complex”. P.186

²⁴⁹ Whetham, David. 2013. “Killer Drones”. P.30

²⁵⁰ Shaw, Ian. G. R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”. P.552

²⁵¹ Kaag, John and Kreps, Sarah. 2014. “Drone Warfare”. P.16

result, “armed conflict may become so routinized and sanitized that even a democratic society willingly accepts a *de facto* permanent state of war as long as it amounts to a risk-free choice for those pulling the trigger.”²⁵² This has led to a position where the American public has become exempt from feeling the impacts and horrors of war²⁵³ and though it remains unknown what long-term impacts this may lead to,²⁵⁴ complacency to moral implications is an obvious threat.^{255 256} It is interesting that the American authorities have been able to avoid severe public criticism – there has only been minimal public protest on the accountability of drone strikes and the legitimacy of their security efforts.²⁵⁷ The current public acceptance of drone strikes may be reflective of the short-term benefits drone strikes are portrayed as bringing to the state. If the occurrence of homegrown terrorism starts to increase however, the situation may change.

Erosion of Democracy

The unaccounted acts of war committed by the U.S. in nations in which it is not formally at war with extends the distance between the drone empire and the public.^{258 259} The U.S. government and authority bodies have a duty to enable the American people’s understanding and space for debate on actions that are made on their behalf. Historically, citizens have always had an influence on decisions made to go to war,²⁶⁰ nonetheless modern transparency and accountability issues have made this very difficult.²⁶¹ Another result of the increased disconnect between the public and the state with regard to drone warfare is an erosion of democratic values, as “declarations of war are no longer determined by elected officials acting on behalf of the American people, but by unknown, anonymous contractors and government assassins who kill with regularity but face no requirement of responding to those

²⁵² DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”. P.93

²⁵³ Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”. P.176-177

²⁵⁴ Ibid. P.175.

²⁵⁵ Heatherly, Michael C. 2014. “Drones: The American Controversy”. P.27

²⁵⁶ McCrisken, Trevor. 2013. “Obama’s Drone War”.P.106-7

²⁵⁷ Mazzetti, Mark. 2013. Cited in DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”. P.5

²⁵⁸ Shaw, Ian. G. R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”. P.552

²⁵⁹ Bumiller, Elisabeth and Shanker, Thom. 2011. “War Evolves With Drones, Some Tiny as Bugs”.

²⁶⁰ Singer, Peter W. 2012. “Do Drones Undermine Democracy?”

²⁶¹ Kucinich, Dennis. 2012. “Obama administration must account to Congress for targeted assassinations”.

Americans”.²⁶² With many actors involved in the drone programmes, the new technology “is short-circuiting the decision-making process for what used to be the most important choice a democracy could make.”²⁶³ In addition, it is likely that many American citizens are unaware of the damage and destruction being caused in other nations on their behalf.²⁶⁴ The enlargement of governmental authority in these instances tends to be represented as an emergency situation or sincere patriotism, which then justifies the need for force.²⁶⁵ This has been interpreted as a governmental decision, with no consultation of the public, “that the battlefield is everywhere. Individuals who don’t represent an imminent threat in any meaningful sense of those words are redefined, through the subversion of language, to meet that definition.”²⁶⁶ It is interesting to question “to what degree is the U.S. defence establishment considering these most fundamental questions about the very nature of war and how the pursuit of technologies farther removing humans from the field of battle impacts our views of it?”²⁶⁷ From current developments, one would argue that the U.S. is not paying adequate attention to these issues.

Offensive versus Defensive Strategy

Survival Argument

Terrorism is viewed by most Western nations as “an existential threat to society”²⁶⁸ and hence essentially any pre-emptive or responsive military or non-military action is justified. The politicization of terrorism and the pressure on U.S. leaders to act appropriately and with enough rigour to defend the nation has been a noteworthy development in the establishment of drones that now operate with “unmatched capability, unrestrained by policy”.²⁶⁹ The concept of response versus anticipatory action is highly applicable to the U.S. drone programme. This is especially dangerous when the long-term effects are unpredictable, with “the largest unchallenged military machine in the history of the world, and it’s backed by a

²⁶² Benjamin, Medea. 2013. “Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control”. P.125

²⁶³ Singer, Peter W. 2012. “Do Drones Undermine Democracy?”

²⁶⁴ Boyle, Michael J. 2013. “The costs and consequences of drone warfare”.

²⁶⁵ Mayer, Milton. 1955. P.166. Cited in Kaag, John and Kreps, Sarah. 2014. “Drone Warfare”. P.123

²⁶⁶ Snowden, Edward. “Foreword: Elected by Circumstance.” In Scahill, Jeremy. 2016. “The Assassination Complex”. P.xvii

²⁶⁷ Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”. P.6

²⁶⁸ Snowden, Edward. “Foreword: Elected by Circumstance.” In Scahill, Jeremy. 2016. “The Assassination Complex”. P.xvi

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

political system that is increasingly willing to authorize any use of force in response to practically any justification.”²⁷⁰ The war on terror aimed to remove the fear and tragedy that came with terrorist organizations operating in various locations worldwide, yet the violent impacts of drones and their consolidation of power as an aerial empire have simply replaced the previous regime of terror with a new one.²⁷¹ The argument used to explain the need for this type of war relates to the “battle for hearts and minds”.²⁷² Nevertheless, something that was initiated on the basis of survival is now a long-term, no longer pre-emptive, but *violent* war that shows no sign of easing.

Lack of Evidence for Defensive Argument

State actions made in defence tend to be calculated and cautious to reduce the likelihood of aggression or retaliation. Nonetheless, U.S. operation of drones has largely been reported as unchecked and unregulated, exerting power over individuals and organisations in countries worldwide by holding the right to their execution.²⁷³ U.S. administrations have attempted to justify the issuing of drone strikes by stating that they are only issued in situations of immediate threat and if it was approximately certain that the target would be taken out.²⁷⁴ However, the track record for drone strikes and their successful targeting has largely been negative. In addition, the language surrounding drone strikes is never relayed in a manner of defence or severity from the side of the U.S. but always in terms of violence and from a stance of attack. This is compounded by the fact that U.S. drone strikes have occurred in multiple locations that are not classified as active war zones.²⁷⁵

Many have criticized the argument that the U.S. activates drones in self-defence, when it has become progressively accepted that their use heightens the future risk of attacks on American citizens and the state,²⁷⁶ by creating new enemies.²⁷⁷ One infamous example was Anwar Al-

²⁷⁰ Snowden, Edward. “Foreword: Elected by Circumstance.” In Scahill, Jeremy. 2016. “The Assassination Complex”.

²⁷¹ Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. “State Violence and the Execution of Law”. P.217

²⁷² Kerry, John. 2008. Cited in Bacevich, Andrew J. 2010. “Washington Rules: America’s Path to Permanent War”. P.212

²⁷³ Snowden, Edward. “Foreword: Elected by Circumstance.” In Scahill, Jeremy. 2016. “The Assassination Complex”. P.xvii

²⁷⁴ Scahill, Jeremy. “The Drone Legacy”. In Scahill, Jeremy. 2016. “The Assassination Complex”.

²⁷⁵ Jaffer, Jameel. 2016. “How the US justifies drone strikes: targeted killing, secrecy and the law”.

²⁷⁶ Benjamin, Medea. 2013. “Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control”. P.132

²⁷⁷ Boyle, Michael J. 2013. “The costs and consequences of drone warfare”.

Awlaki killed in 2011 and whether or not he was actually a grave threat to the United States.²⁷⁸ The greater the number of operatives killed, the greater the validation envisaged by military authorities for implementing supplementary drone strikes.²⁷⁹ This reflects how easy it has become for the U.S. to go to war in areas worldwide. These patterns highlight a loss and ignorance of fundamental human values when it comes to the basic concept of war; “[w]hen we go to war we fail ourselves, and we fail those who will surely pay the highest price.”²⁸⁰

The U.S. is not Thinking Long-Term

Major Short-Term Mind-Set

The U.S. through its drone programme seemingly believes that repeated displays of military force will promise triumph in war, with no future repercussions,²⁸¹ including the fairly obvious risk of a new global arms race.²⁸² The U.S. drone programme has shown that drones do not contribute to the peace process of nation-formation nor stabilization during a conflict or in the post-conflict stage, an absence “which has proven to be the greatest barrier to successful intervention”.²⁸³ Although it is clear that terminating the drone programme would not halt or delay terrorist activities, their continued use most certainly aggravates the issue²⁸⁴ and makes the current U.S. use of drones unsustainable.²⁸⁵ Furthermore, it is impossible to judge how the U.S. programme will be viewed in forthcoming years,²⁸⁶ not only by the future U.S. society and U.S. federal government but also the international governing community. Future punishment would not be such an improbable picture; nonetheless it does not seem to be a significant deterrence for current U.S. governance.

²⁷⁸ DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”. P.105

²⁷⁹ Bergen, Peter and Tiedemann, Katherine. 2010. Cited in McCrisken, Trevor. 2013. “Obama’s Drone War”. P.110

²⁸⁰ Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”. P.177

²⁸¹ Biddle, Stephen. 2004. “Military Power. Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle”. P.5

²⁸² Boyle, Michael J. 2013. “The costs and consequences of drone warfare”.

²⁸³ DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”. P.85

²⁸⁴ Benjamin, Medea. 2013. “Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control”. P.206.

²⁸⁵ Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”. P.169

²⁸⁶ Ibid. P.174

The U.S. drone wars have opened up Pandora's box in terms of twenty-first century military power arguments and it remains unclear where the U.S. stands on the moral side of such a powerful technology.²⁸⁷ "Any effective grand strategy should begin with a clear understanding of American long-term interests and objectives – i.e., how to protect and pursue those interests"²⁸⁸, although U.S. drone strikes close doors to multiple sources of intelligence gathering²⁸⁹ including interrogation, electronic data access, strategy acquisition and local witnesses.²⁹⁰ These are all factors that can considerably increase the likelihood of long-term security for an unstable situation. For example, Bilal el-Berjawi was a British citizen killed by a U.S. drone strike in Somalia in 2012. Both American and British intelligence services had watched him for years, but then he was killed and not even questioned.²⁹¹ This sequence of drone strikes features "the normalization of assassination"²⁹² as a vital part of U.S. counterterrorism. As a result, the legitimacy of U.S. drone attacks and their defensive nature have been questioned.²⁹³ We should remember that "this is currently a war based on intelligence gathering so every target killed forgoes any attempt to glean more information through capture and interrogation, by cultivating an informant, or by seeking out some ultimate peace process to gain a settlement."²⁹⁴ These arguments highlighting the significance of the information war seemingly fall upon deaf ears, as democracies like the U.S. do not realise that drones are not a solve-all solution and in fact "by relying on these systems in an attempt to satisfy the said interests and norms, democracies may end up thwarting them in the long run and render themselves only more war-prone."²⁹⁵

The longer this U.S. drone usage has gone on, the more obvious it is that many are undecided on the ultimate goal of this programme. Targeted strikes and severe violence have become an all-too-regular occurrence.²⁹⁶ There remains a strong need for the U.S. "to engage in a serious analysis of the strategic costs and consequences of its use of drones, both for its own

²⁸⁷ Yin, Tung. 2015. "Game of Drones: Defending Against Drone Terrorism".

²⁸⁸ Cronin, Audrey K. 2012. "U.S. Grand Strategy and Counterterrorism". P.213

²⁸⁹ Scahill, Jeremy. "The Drone Legacy". In Scahill, Jeremy. 2016. "The Assassination Complex".

²⁹⁰ Cronin, Audrey Kurth. 2013. "Why Drones Fail".

²⁹¹ Scahill, Jeremy. "The Drone Legacy". In Scahill, Jeremy. 2016. "The Assassination Complex".

²⁹² Ibid. P.6

²⁹³ Strawser, Bradley J. 2012. "Coming to Terms With How Drones Are Used".

²⁹⁴ DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. "Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology". P.124

²⁹⁵ Sauer, Frank and Schörnig, Niklas. 2012. "Killer drones: The 'silver bullet' of democratic warfare?" P.363

²⁹⁶ Bacevich, Andrew. J. 2010. "Washington Rules: America's Path to Permanent War". P.182

security and for the rest of the world.”²⁹⁷ The U.S. drone programme seemingly does not recognize that hard power must be complemented by soft power²⁹⁸ and that often soft power achieves sustainable peace and stability. Therefore, people have begun to question the overall aim of the U.S. drone programme. Is the goal the complete elimination of those with views that go against the U.S. and their communities? Is it the establishment of a new government in the states concerned? Is it submission?²⁹⁹ It is important to consider that “in the information age, it is not whose army wins, but whose story wins.”³⁰⁰ If the terrorist organizations such as the Taliban or Al Qaeda are still able to recruit as many, or more, individuals than are being killed by drone strikes, this war seemingly has no end in sight.³⁰¹ This is why some refer to this current state as “the Forever War or the Eternal War”.³⁰² It is likely to remain this way until the U.S. envisages a strategy for a clear end-state.³⁰³ Its reluctance or inability to do so thus far credits the offensive realism proposal.

Dangerous Cumulative Impacts of Drones

Peter Asaro sums up the major risks of drones as follows: “autonomous weapon systems also have the potential to cause regional or global instability and insecurity, to fuel arms races, to proliferate to non-state actors, or initiate the escalation of conflicts outside of human political intentions.”³⁰⁴ It is these liabilities that the U.S. drone programme endures and further boosts the prospect of far-damaging international security impacts. Through their technological competences and the secretive nature of the programme, “[t]he use of drones is rapidly transforming the way we go to war”.³⁰⁵

The growing numbers of non-state actors involved in the process of acquiring and striking targets further confuses accountability and transparency of the drone targeting process. Within the Obama administration, there were many components of the drone war which were

²⁹⁷ Boyle, Michael J. 2013. “The costs and consequences of drone warfare”. P.27

²⁹⁸ Taylor, Philip M. “Public diplomacy and the information war on terror”. P.224

²⁹⁹ Ibid. P.159

³⁰⁰ Ibid. P.224

³⁰¹ Ibid. P.224

³⁰² Ibid. P.159

³⁰³ Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”. P.168

³⁰⁴ Asaro, Peter. 2012. Cited in DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”. P.10

³⁰⁵ Hastings, Michael. 2012. “The Rise of the Killer Drones: How America Goes to War in Secret”.

subcontracted to different agencies, such as take-off and landing of the drones, yet when the drone came into proximity with a target the controls were then handed over to a federal employee, thus a CIA officer or equivalent.³⁰⁶ The streamlining of this process not only makes it easier to obtain new targets but also increases the complexity of such operations, as there are no longer only two clearly defined actors, the attacker and the targeted. As a result, the transparency surrounding the process is significantly reduced as well as the ambiguity surrounding defence versus offence.

Moreover, researchers have now confirmed that non-state militant groups have gained access to drone technology and operate the vehicles on a regular basis, mainly for surveillance purposes. These actors include ISIS, Hezbollah, Hamas, Farc and both Libyan and Syrian rebel groups.³⁰⁷ Access for these organisations has been made possible as drone technology has become cheap and readily available. Even though these drones are not capable of targeted killings as such, they can still observe targets, carry dangerous materials including bombs and film propaganda material.³⁰⁸ Undercover journalistic work has discovered that the deployment of drones by ISIS in Iraq, for example, is startlingly detailed and complex, “using off-the-shelf technology to bedevil the militarily superior American armed forces.”³⁰⁹ ISIS has actually operated military drones since 2015, demonstrating such effective weapon proficiency that the U.S. military deployed more technical specialists to stations in the Middle East to adapt to this new threat.³¹⁰ Hence, it is only a matter of time before these actors develop the capabilities to operate military-armed drones, on a large-scale and regular basis,³¹¹ as “counterterrorism officials said that drone technology and expertise were rapidly evolving” in these terrorist organizations.³¹²

Collateral damage is an aspect of war that unfortunately cannot be avoided in the majority of instances, no matter how precise the military technology. However, for drone warfare the situation is somewhat different as the U.S. claims it is fighting for “the hearts and minds” of

³⁰⁶ Priest, Dana and Arkin, William M. 2011. Cited in Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. “State Violence and the Execution of Law”. P.216

³⁰⁷ New America. Cited in Sims, Alyssa. 2018. “How do we thwart the latest terrorist threat: swarms of weaponised drones?”

³⁰⁸ Sims, Alyssa. 2018. “How do we thwart the latest terrorist threat: swarms of weaponised drones?”

³⁰⁹ Schmitt, Eric. 2017. “Papers Offer a Peek at ISIS’ Drones, Lethal and Largely Off-the-Shelf”.

³¹⁰ Schmitt, Eric. 2017. “Pentagon Tests Lasers and Nets to Combat a Vexing Foe: ISIS Drones”.

³¹¹ Schmitt, Eric. 2017. “Papers Offer a Peek at ISIS’ Drones, Lethal and Largely Off-the-Shelf”.

³¹² Schmitt, Eric. 2017. “Pentagon Tests Lasers and Nets to Combat a Vexing Foe: ISIS Drones”.

people in states at risk of terrorist-rule, whilst simultaneously bombing and disrupting these communities with often little explanation or justifiable reasoning.³¹³ The attempted Times Square bombing in 2010 by Pakistani-American Faisal Shahzad was initiated as revenge for drone strikes worldwide.³¹⁴ On a defensive or even pre-emptive self-defence line of thought, these actions taken by the U.S. are extremely difficult to validate. Drones are precise, smart weapons and their minimal intended collateral damage is their major attraction. Nevertheless, their damage upon impact makes it impossible for local communities to rebuild their livelihoods and neighbourhoods, nor save injured family members (who are blown up into multiple pieces). The U.S. drone programme hence pays little attention to long-term security and peace for the U.S. itself nor the areas it targets.

There is a significant risk that when more nation-states on the international stage begin to use drones, a drone arms race may emerge in which the U.S. will have little footing to stand on when it comes to international management and regulation.³¹⁵ This is not such an unlikely scenario, as multiple other states globally have begun to develop drone technology. Thus, “America’s unique standing may not last long”³¹⁶ especially when one considers the realities of contested airspaces³¹⁷ and how drones would be normalized within these.

Summary

The violent nature of the U.S. drone programme in unofficial war zones worldwide demonstrates the U.S. exploiting the anarchic international system according to offensive realism. The desire to gain quick results by eliminating targets fuels the continuation of the aggressive drone programme despite the clear future risks. This signifies that the U.S. perceives multiple threats to its own security, but does not acknowledge that by enhancing its own security, other areas become more insecure. This creates an uncertain environment for the future usage of such weapons.

³¹³ DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”. P.41

³¹⁴ Boyle, Michael J. 2013. “The costs and consequences of drone warfare”.

³¹⁵ DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”. P.43

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”. P.169

Chapter 3 – Drones and Immorality

Drone Killings and Ethics

Morality of Drones

For the CIA and U.S. military, the drone programme is an asset to national security as drones are able to kill and eliminate human life without displaying emotion or responding to the consequences of their actions. If a soldier were as capable, they would be categorized as a psychopath and would not be entrusted to such advanced military technology.³¹⁸ The basis for ethical concerns of drone warfare centres on a “discomfort with so-called “riskless warfare”.”³¹⁹ Therefore, drones are fundamentally immoral as they “undermine the foundation of the laws of war by removing the moral equality of combatants.”³²⁰ As Michael Walzer argues, “minimizing one’s own casualties at the expense of those on the opposing side can constitute a substantial transgression.”³²¹ Drones and other evolving military technologies grant full control and power to one side whilst completely rendering the other vulnerable and at risk of destruction.³²² ³²³ The knowledge that the latter will suffer enormous human consequences is unethical and requires further action both by the U.S. authorities and international bodies. Drone operators are not subject to equal treatment as to those they are targeting, thus “autonomous weapons lack moral agency and accountability.”³²⁴ In addition, “[t]he attempted characterization of drones as a precise weapon is irrelevant and chilling because it values the alleged high-tech efficiency of the killing above the rule of law.”³²⁵

Nonetheless, the ethical issues that drones propose are not new. In fact, some deduce this category of problems all the way back to Plato, when he stated in the story of Gyges in *Republic*: “The technological advantage provided by the ring ends up serving as the

³¹⁸ Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”. P.176

³¹⁹ Henriksen, Anders and Ringsmose. 2015. “Drone warfare and morality in riskless war”. P.285

³²⁰ Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”. P.168

³²¹ Kaag, John and Kreps, Sarah. 2014. “Drone Warfare”. P.99

³²² Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”. P.5

³²³ Rosén, Frederik. 2013. “Extremely Stealthy and Incredibly Close: Drones, Control and Legal Responsibility.” P.129

³²⁴ Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”. P.30

³²⁵ Kucinich, Dennis. 2012. “Obama administration must account to Congress for targeted assassinations”.

justification for its use. Terrorists, whatever the moral value of their deeds, may be found and punished; as humans, they are subject to retribution, whether it is corporal or legal.”³²⁶ Another counterargument for accountability can be found in the thinking of Friedrich Nietzsche, with which one can deduce that the drone is responsible for killing and that the operator who instructs the drone to act and pushes the trigger is disconnected from the drone and thus the killing process.³²⁷ It is interesting to contemplate the ethics of who is more suited to live through the conduct of targeted killings and its repercussions – the drone or the human operator.³²⁸ The distinction between the operator commanding the drone and the associated killing nature of the drone is a complex and significant concern within legal debates.³²⁹ These discussions can assist academics and policy-makers deliberating over drones being granted more autonomy.

Is American War in General Immoral?

The most commonly used international law case stated by the U.S. to justify its drone programme is United Nations Charter Article 51, the self-defence clause.³³⁰ In line with self-defence ethics, there are some who truly believe that “war, at its heart, is a moral activity”.³³¹ Perhaps this is due to the notion of war being conducted to “right a wrong”, demonstrating people standing up for their beliefs and values. Relating this back to drones, there are arguments that their use is morally obligatory as they are vital in reducing civilian casualties and protecting many others at risk to terrorist groups.³³² This thesis argues that despite these ideas, the U.S. drone programme is an inherently immoral practice and its continued implementation echoes an immorality of this American war. The U.S. has skilfully manipulated the law to “enable and legitimate the execution while simultaneously suspending the connection between the doer and the deed.”³³³ The relationship between the law and war has been built upon throughout history, largely centred on how humans relate to and behave with one another and how morality and justice should regulate these interactions in times of

³²⁶ Kaag, John and Kreps, Sarah. 2014. “Drone Warfare”. P.111

³²⁷ Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. “State Violence and the Execution of Law”. P.187

³²⁸ DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”. P.91

³²⁹ Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. “State Violence and the Execution of Law”. P.184

³³⁰ United Nations. 1945. “Charter of the United Nations”.

³³¹ Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”. P.26

³³² Kaag, John and Kreps, Sarah. 2014. “Drone Warfare”.

³³³ Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. “State Violence and the Execution of Law”. P.184.

war.³³⁴ Known as the laws of war, they first emerged in relation to the just war tradition and were then formally established at the 1899 Hague Convention.³³⁵ The U.S. drone programme has essentially changed the way humans relate to each other.

The frequently used argument defending drones and unmanned aerial vehicles in war has been “it is legal”, yet this should not be a justification or moral argument for developing further authoritative technologies, notably because the law has proven insufficient so far in these arguments.³³⁶ In general, “[t]he law is useful to justify past or desired future courses of action, but it is a poor predictor of what should be done.”³³⁷ The law is hence “a reflection of norms built over time and therefore lags current events...it relies on precedent and sits atop the moral, ethical, legal pyramid”.³³⁸ It is clear that drone technology has developed rapidly and the law has so far been unable to adapt accordingly. Nevertheless, these issues must be addressed. Drones are part of a greater surveillance state network intent on collecting data on its citizens and threats, including biometric records such as handwriting and DNA strands.³³⁹ Foucault questioned why the state should be able to exert control over livelihoods and decide who lives and who does not.³⁴⁰ Targeted killings have become so routine and normalized that the Obama administration and those after will merely look for ways to speed up and simplify this process.³⁴¹ Targeted killings used to be “antiethical to the American way of war”³⁴², however through offensive realism we see a distinct emergence.

Future Risks of Immorality

Removing threats and dangers for the attacking side has become a clear trend in military techniques in recent years. The moral implications have not been analysed in enough depth and they may lead to severe repercussions,³⁴³ as “the law lags, and the advent of autonomous weapons seems likely to widen the gap between what is possible in war and what should be

³³⁴ Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid. P.28

³³⁷ Ibid. P.28

³³⁸ Ibid. P.28

³³⁹ Scahill, Jeremy and Devereaux, Ryan. 2016. “Death and the Watchlist”.

³⁴⁰ Foucault, Michel. 2003. “Society must be defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76”.

³⁴¹ Shaw, Ian G.R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”. P.537

³⁴² Ibid. P.536

³⁴³ Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”.

legal.”³⁴⁴ This is an issue that we will be unlikely to fully understand for years to come. Realistically, it is implausible that the category of moral and ethical arguments will strongly influence the continuation or discontinuation of this policy, however we can hope that the adverse impacts will lead to some suspension in policy.³⁴⁵

The drone assassination of Anwar al-Awlaki in 2011, an American-Yemeni cleric, has been described as a “bizarre death penalty case in which there was no indictment, the accused was in hiding overseas, and the prosecutors, who had already pronounced the sentence, were apoplectic at the suggestion that there should be anything resembling a trial.”³⁴⁶ It was unclear what threat he posed to the U.S. and what legal justification existed for eliminating him, yet they acted regardless. This is an example of a severe abuse of international law and confusion on what is deemed acceptable. The actions the U.S. took were described later as “law without limits – law without constraint.”³⁴⁷ The immorality of this particular strike, especially because al-Awlaki held American citizenship and was on foreign soil at the time of the strike, shows the U.S. as a violator of international law and a greater target for Al Qaeda militants and wronged citizens of the Yemen state.³⁴⁸

For drone pilots and intelligence analysts, accepting the ethical and moral issues surrounding their actions is not easy. In particular, “viewing the real time video feed is often the biggest stressor related to the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Soldiers on the ground engage in brutal and deadly combat – and drone operators watch. That exacts a toll.”³⁴⁹ Therefore, it has become accepted that drone operators must have appropriate training and expertise to control these weapons as well as the tools needed to accept and consider the implications of their role.³⁵⁰ These psychological impacts can be extremely harmful especially when untreated and this will create significant concern for the U.S. military and CIA in the future. Moving forward, “there must be some moral basis for warfare”³⁵¹ as if this is unclear, it will

³⁴⁴ Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”. P.35

³⁴⁵ Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”.

³⁴⁶ Jaffer, Jameel. 2016. “How the US justifies drone strikes: targeted killing, secrecy and the law”.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Boussios, Emanuel. G. 2014. “The Proliferation of Drones: A New and Deadly Arms Race”. P.389

³⁴⁹ Benjamin, Medea. 2013. “Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control”. P.95

³⁵⁰ Ibid. P.89

³⁵¹ Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”. P.25

attract the attention of war-sceptics and discredit the integrity and necessity of the drone campaign. Many argue this process however has already started and it may be too late to turn back. Ethical considerations could therefore lead to a novel security problem; the idea that drones and their power have become too influential.³⁵²

Biopolitics and Patterns of Life

The Individual Life is a Threat

Drones have facilitated the development of an ultimate aerial power that can reach any target in the world,³⁵³ furthering U.S. global surveillance and information gathering to protect their interests. The primary target of drone strikes is simply life itself, otherwise known as the practice of biopolitics.³⁵⁴ Biopolitics concerns the controlling of the spaces and interactions of humans,³⁵⁵ with life as the major source of interest. Linking this to military targets, these are either known individuals to the state or those who behave in a particularly threatening way. Their patterns of life are thus analysed and coded by operators to categorize them as targets and sentence them to death.³⁵⁶ A human suspect is identified by a drone's cameras and transformed into an algorithmic series of digital ones and zeros. This digital data forms the 'pattern of life' information, with the anonymous subject being followed and then easily eradicated by the drone operator.³⁵⁷ These human subjects are classified, analysed and essentially made anonymous, increasing the likelihood of false identifications and mistaken identities. All individuals under the gaze of the drone are dehumanized: "They have no rights. They have no dignity. They have no humanity to themselves."³⁵⁸ Individuals are simply an object to an operator, constantly followed, observed and eventually not even referred to by their name but by code or number.³⁵⁹ Some contend that it is ironic that the CIA is forbidden from spying on and monitoring Americans on U.S. soil, but can give authorization to kill anyone, including American citizens, in international territories.³⁶⁰

³⁵² Shaw, Ian G.R. 2013. "Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare".

³⁵³ Ibid. P.540

³⁵⁴ Ibid. P.545

³⁵⁵ Foucault, Michel. 1976. P.24. Cited in Shaw, Ian. G. R. 2013. "Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare". P.550

³⁵⁶ Shaw, Ian G.R. 2013. "Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare".

³⁵⁷ Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. "State Violence and the Execution of Law". P.193

³⁵⁸ Scahill, Jeremy. "The Drone Legacy". In Scahill, Jeremy. 2016. "The Assassination Complex". P.9

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Benjamin, Medea. 2013. "Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control". P.66

Individuals are being categorized and monitored by the U.S. according to their respective behaviours, characteristics and the potential risks they pose, in what is now the largest permanent war space ever experienced.³⁶¹ The state has become much more involved in the regulation of human life and biology, whether this is man-as-body (anatomo-politics) or man-as-species (biopolitics).³⁶² Biopolitics consequently serves as a form of discipline and ruling, projected into all corners of the world, with a sense of urgency that has preceded the importance of safeguarding territory in the traditional sense. For Foucault, “this means that dangerousness, what is to be secured, is no longer an actualised danger, but is located within behavioural potentialities.”³⁶³ Thus, “dangerous signatures or patterns of life are assessed on their very potential to *become* dangerous.”³⁶⁴ These individual assessments become securitized through the prediction and eradication of potential future threats.³⁶⁵ Dillon maintains that this idea makes it easier to target life, as our behaviour is constantly changing and thus making it likely for more people to be categorized as threats.³⁶⁶ Managing potentially threatening behaviours is extremely relevant for U.S. drone warfare as it explains the reason for both the global reach of the programme and the many contested cases of individual targets.

Distinction between Civilians and Militants

Distinguishing between a civilian and militant is one of the most complex issues for drones and targeted strikes. The many instances where civilians have been mistaken in strikes show it is inherently problematic to differentiate and often ambiguous legally as to what or who constitutes a militant. Furthermore, there is no due process for those who die in drone strikes.³⁶⁷ Policymakers argue that the major targets of drone strikes are high-level militants, yet in reality it tends to be lower-ranked individuals who are purged based on their patterns of

³⁶¹ Shaw, Ian G.R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”. P.536

³⁶² Foucault, Michel. 1976. P.249. Cited in Shaw, Ian. G. R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”.

³⁶³ Foucault, Michel. 1976. Cited in Shaw, Ian. G. R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”. P.548

³⁶⁴ Shaw, Ian. G. R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”. P.548

³⁶⁵ Shaw, Ian. G. R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”.

³⁶⁶ Dillon, M. 2007. P.24. Cited in Shaw, Ian G.R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”. P.549

³⁶⁷ Shaw, Ian G.R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”. P.543

life.³⁶⁸ This brings into question the accuracy of drone strikes. Patterns of life and the U.S. military use of this term has allowed them to target a much wider range of people through signature strikes, even if their full identities are unconfirmed.³⁶⁹ Signature strikes mean that the CIA is not required to pinpoint targets by name, hence they only analyse the similarity in behaviour to their expectations and this becomes the appropriate justification.³⁷⁰ These strikes on unidentified individuals indicate a biopolitical dimension of the U.S. “doctrine of ‘preventative’ war.”³⁷¹ The viability of this practice is limited.

The Value of American Life over Others

Racism Justifies Killings

Foucault believed that racism was a fundamental factor influencing the justification to kill.³⁷² Relating his theories to modern-day drone warfare, drone attacks have formed a technical variation of ethnic cleansing, eliminating specific life forms by “sanitiz[ing] the battlefield.”³⁷³ The elimination of civilians in many communities by drone strikes has led to debates as to whether intensive, large-scale ethnic purging is occurring, as “civilian women and children are, through the implementation of the biopolitical caesura, reduced to pathogenic life forms that need to be ‘sanitized’ through the exterminatory process of ethnic cleansing.”³⁷⁴ This is a highly concerning depiction, as Hina Shamsi, director of the National Security Project of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) said: “Instead of a watchlist limited to actual, known terrorists, the government has built a vast system based on the unproven and flawed premise that it can predict if a person will commit a terrorist act in the future”.³⁷⁵

Drone warfare can hence be described as a form of racial imperialism exerted by the U.S., compounded by Islamophobia and a general anti-Arab sentiment.³⁷⁶ Many traditional U.S.

³⁶⁸ DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”. P.123

³⁶⁹ Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. “State Violence and the Execution of Law”.

³⁷⁰ Sanger, David E. 2009. Cited in Shaw, Ian G.R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”. P.546

³⁷¹ Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. “State Violence and the Execution of Law”. P.208.

³⁷² Foucault, Michel. 2003. Society must be defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76

³⁷³ Singer, Peter. 2009. Cited in Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. “State Violence and the Execution of Law”. P.198

³⁷⁴ Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. “State Violence and the Execution of Law”. P.198

³⁷⁵ Scahill, Jeremy and Devereaux, Ryan. “Death and the Watchlist”. P.17

³⁷⁶ Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. “State Violence and the Execution of Law”.

interventions have been initiated under the publicized premise to educate or enlighten Arab communities, with no mention of an aspiration to take advantage of resources.³⁷⁷ In reality, the latter has consistently happened and has been exacerbated by targeted killings and interventions based on pre-emptive self-defence or a desire to control large areas of insecurity. Furthermore, the language used by drone pilots and operators when eliminating their targets is highly derogatory. The term “bugsplat”³⁷⁸ or the need “to kill bugs”³⁷⁹ is frequently mentioned on drone crew tapes, almost creating an animated, imaginary aspect to the process, further suggesting that these lives are worthless. In addition, the term “bugsplat” builds upon the unsanitary links between drone warfare and video games.³⁸⁰

Treatment of Civilians in War

Due to the unavoidable nature of civilians mingling with and having similar daily lives with militants, it is greatly probable for civilians to be caught in the crossfire in drone strikes.³⁸¹ The Intercept, an online publication, discovered that the real figures for the number of people killed in drone strikes are much higher than the number of people listed as targets. The numbers in some instances can be astonishing – as many as ninety percent of those killed in an attack may not have been intentional targets. To help minimise these stark figures, the U.S. military merely categorises the unidentified targets as “enemies killed in action”,³⁸² thus essentially declaring them also terrorists and justifiable deaths. This makes the work of the Bureau for Investigative Journalism (see Appendices 1 and 2) and of other journalistic sources complex to deduce militant to civilian casualty rates. The only reason why this classification of a strike victim would change is if posthumous evidence is found clarifying that the individual concerned was not in fact an “unlawful enemy combatant”,³⁸³ yet this process seldom occurs. Therefore, this ensures that civilian casualty figures remain lower than their reality and improves the statistical accuracy of U.S. drone strikes.³⁸⁴ A clear example of this was Operation Haymaker which took place in Afghanistan from January 2012 to February 2013, with a total of 200 people killed by drone strikes even though there

³⁷⁷ Salaita, Steven. 2006. Cited in Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. “State Violence and the Execution of Law”. P.202

³⁷⁸ The Economist. 2011. Cited in Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. “State Violence and the Execution of Law”. P.210

³⁷⁹ Martin, Matt and Sasser, Charles. 2010. P.200. Cited in Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. “State Violence and the Execution of Law”. P.210

³⁸⁰ The Economist. 2011. Cited in Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. “State Violence and the Execution of Law”. P.210

³⁸¹ Shaw, Ian G.R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”.

³⁸² Reed, Betsy. 2016. “Preface”. P.IX

³⁸³ Scahill, Jeremy. “The Drone Legacy”. P.10

³⁸⁴ The Intercept. 2015. Cited in Scahill, Jeremy. “The Drone Legacy”. P.4

were only 35 originally identified targets.³⁸⁵ This is unfortunately just one of the many examples of numerous civilian deaths. These risks are heightened when U.S. operations are subcontracted to other external or national bodies, where there have been many cases of human rights violations, which of course is linked back to the U.S.³⁸⁶ The legal parameters of this practice are also debateable.³⁸⁷

Cases of mistaken identity are one issue, notwithstanding the continuation of human rights violations and abuse of U.S. power, which together lead to more devastating and long-lasting impacts for communities worldwide. These concerns also place the U.S. in an unfavourable position on the international stage. Proportionality in war is a key point for policy-makers and the military to think about: the importance of the military target versus the expected or likely number of civilian casualties.³⁸⁸ Proportionality focuses on the minimization of these civilian casualties. Luis Moreno-Ocampo, Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, wrote *“International humanitarian law and the Rome Statute permit belligerents to carry out proportionate attacks against military objectives, even when it is known that some civilian deaths or injuries will occur. A crime occurs if there is an intentional attack directed against civilians or an attack is launched on a military objective in the knowledge that the incidental civilian injuries would be clearly excessive in relation to the anticipated military advantage.”*³⁸⁹ When examining the statistics of civilian deaths in drone strikes, crimes as so defined have transpired on multiple occasions.

Whilst drones are constantly hovering over communities and territories, their threat of death from the skies has a significant psychological impact on the wellbeing of civilians in observed areas.³⁹⁰ The publicised focus to capture the “hearts and minds” of communities in the states the U.S. is targeting is somewhat oxymoronic, considering their treatment in reality.³⁹¹ It is highly likely that the views of these communities and their beliefs will form against the U.S. and its mission, which is purely counterproductive. It is inevitable in any war

³⁸⁵ Scahill, Jeremy. 2016. “The Drone Legacy”. P.4

³⁸⁶ Scahill, Jeremy. 2016. “Find, Fix, Finish”. P.49

³⁸⁷ Cronin, Audrey K. 2014. “The ‘War on Terrorism’: What Does it Mean to Win?” P.187

³⁸⁸ Benjamin, Medea. 2013. “Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control”. P.146

³⁸⁹ Moreo-Ocampo, Luis. 2006. “Letter from the Office of the Prosecutor to the International Criminal Court”. P.5.

³⁹⁰ Shaw, Ian G.R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”. P.544

³⁹¹ DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”. P.2

for a certain proportion of strike casualties to be accidents and innocent people to lose their lives, with drones being a key example.³⁹² Civilians are also aware of this, yet the more often this occurs and the more people who are “accidents”, the greater the fear and psychological damage felt in these communities. Populations are increasingly vulnerable and at risk of repression due to drone warfare.³⁹³

Summary

The list of ethical concerns of drone strikes is extensive, including the poor distinction between civilians and militants, the authority of drone pilots to act as executioners and the actions taken by the U.S. in undermining principles of international law. These various issues reflect how under offensive realism, morality is seen as a choice as opposed to an obligation and more often than not, security matters will take precedence over moral decisions. Values of ethics and law have not been enough to regulate the practice of drone warfare nor control the rise of worrying practices such as biopolitics.

³⁹² Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.214

³⁹³ DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”. P.128

Chapter 4 – The Suitability and Sustainability of U.S. Drone Strikes in Pakistan

Importance of Pakistan in Context of U.S. Drone Wars

The drone programme in Pakistan is the most extensive U.S. deployment of drones on both a global and temporal scale. This programme has acted as a significant site for academic explorations of drone warfare and its implications. Known as the “Pak Syndrome”, general “debates on the utility of drones are heavily influenced by their application to the war on terror in Pakistan and Afghanistan.”³⁹⁴ With the number of strikes persisting in the country, the strategic risk also endures.³⁹⁵ A significant aim and component of this programme is not only the elimination of militants but also gaining the trust of the Pakistani public.³⁹⁶

From as early as 2004 onwards, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in north-western Pakistan have been the major focus for CIA drone attacks (see Appendix 7).³⁹⁷ The CIA implements drone strikes in FATA and tribal regions in Pakistan where Al Qaeda and other terrorist networks hold safe havens, whereas the U.S. military launches strikes in Afghanistan.³⁹⁸ The Pakistani government and its linked institutions, including the Inter-Services Intelligence agency, have been targeted by various internal terrorist groups, including the Taliban and Al Qaeda, hence making the state unstable and in need of international support.³⁹⁹ Pakistanis deem it highly important that drone strikes limit the loss of Pakistani soldiers’ lives; in a nation that has seen more dead soldiers in its battle with the Taliban than all U.S. alliances in Afghanistan.⁴⁰⁰

Pakistan has been a focal point for the U.S. drone programme, due to the multiple terrorist threats that prosper in the state, the strategic importance of Pakistan’s stability in relation to nuclear tensions with India⁴⁰¹ and the sovereignty and territorial complexities of the state that

³⁹⁴ Attuquayefio, Philip. 2014. “Drones, The US And The New Wars in Africa”. P.7-8

³⁹⁵ Stimson Center. 2015. “Recommendations and Report of the Task Force on US Drone Policy”.

³⁹⁶ Fair, Christine, Kaltenhalter, Karl and Miller, William J. 2014. “Pakistani Opposition to American Drone Strikes”.

³⁹⁷ Shaw, Ian G.R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”.

³⁹⁸ Iqbal, Anwar. 2017. “Drone strikes in Pak-Afghan border region reflect changing moods in Washington”.

³⁹⁹ Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.190

⁴⁰⁰ Taj, Farhat. 2010. “Drone attacks: challenging some fabrications”.

⁴⁰¹ Enemark, Christian. 2011. “Drones over Pakistan: Secrecy, Ethics, and Counterinsurgency”.

make traditional ground operations more difficult. The extent of cooperation between the CIA and the Inter-Services Intelligence to conduct these strikes remains unclear and the two organizations do not always release details of neither their targets nor the results from drone strikes.⁴⁰² It is thus challenging to deduce the success of the drone strikes; nevertheless there are multiple other factors that have been visible in the public domain that will be analysed.

Relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan

2017 National Security Strategy

In the 2010 U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS), the “frontline of the fight”⁴⁰³ against terrorism was stated as Pakistan and Afghanistan; collectively forming “the epicent[re] of the violent extremism”.⁴⁰⁴ The most recent NSS from 2017, the first under President Trump, clearly states the centrality of Pakistan and the various security threats arising from the country for the U.S.: *“The United States continues to face threats from transnational terrorists and militants operating from within Pakistan.”*⁴⁰⁵ In terms of concrete goals, the U.S. is mainly interested in *“countering terrorist threats that impact the security of the U.S. homeland and our allies, preventing cross-border terrorism that raises the prospect of military and nuclear tensions, and preventing nuclear weapons, technology, and materials from falling into the hands of terrorists.”*⁴⁰⁶ These quotes clearly validate the threats that the U.S. perceive in Pakistan and are a stark contrast to the previous NSS from 2015 which simply mentions Pakistan in passing: *“We will also work with the countries of the region, including Pakistan, to mitigate the threat from terrorism and to support a viable peace and reconciliation process to end the violence in Afghanistan and improve regional stability.”*⁴⁰⁷ These statements are suggestive of U.S. desire to become a regional hegemon under principles of offensive realism. In order to realize these heightened security aims, the U.S. has established a dominant presence in the region for a number of years, whilst *“seek[ing] a Pakistan that is not engaged in destabilizing behaviour”* and is *“resistant to becoming [a]*

⁴⁰² Fair, Christine. 2013. “For Now, Drones are the Best Option”.

⁴⁰³ The White House. 2010. “National Security Strategy of the United States of America”. P.4

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid. P.20

⁴⁰⁵ The White House. 2017. “National Security Strategy of the United States of America”. P.50

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid. P.50

⁴⁰⁷ The White House. 2015. “National Security Strategy of the United States of America”. P.10

jihadist safe have[n]”.⁴⁰⁸ Drone strikes have become a long-standing addition to this bilateral dynamic.

The 2017 NSS also provides evidence to President Trump regime’s offensive rather than defensive position towards Pakistan. An article from Dawn indicates this: “Terror sanctuaries have been a major irritant in Pak-US ties for long, but gained special focus after the Trump administration announced its strategy for South Asia and Afghanistan. The language of the US administration officials on Pakistan has also gradually turned harsher as the ties deteriorated sharply.”⁴⁰⁹ The terminology used by President Trump in the 2017 NSS supports this, stating: “*We will press Pakistan to intensify its counterterrorism efforts*”⁴¹⁰ and “*We will insist that Pakistan take decisive action against militant and terrorist groups operating from its soil.*”⁴¹¹ The language indicates the need for survival as well as uncertainty of other actor’s intentions; both crucial components of offensive realism. Whilst the background explanation as to why Pakistan is a matter for concern comes across as defensive, the language surrounding how the U.S. intends to address this threat is more aggressive and proactive.

Citizen Viewpoints

As explored earlier, American citizens have been sheltered from the reality and devastation of drone strikes in Pakistan, where “nearly all the victims have remained faceless and the damage caused by the bombings has remained unseen.”⁴¹² The distance between Americans and the destruction in Pakistan has understandably created resentment towards the U.S. in Pakistan. Pakistani citizens believe that “the CIA ignores the huge diplomatic cost that comes from strikes that now increasingly kill mere Taliban foot soldiers.”⁴¹³ The Guardian made a contrast between American children killed in the shooting at Sandy Hook in 2012 and the coverage this received, versus the many children who were killed by drone strikes in Pakistan over the past fifteen years.⁴¹⁴

⁴⁰⁸ The White House. 2017. “National Security Strategy of the United States of America”. P.50

⁴⁰⁹ Syed, Baqir Sajjad. 2018. “Pakistan, US spar over drone attack target”.

⁴¹⁰ The White House. 2017. “National Security Strategy of the United States of America”. P.50

⁴¹¹ Ibid. P.50

⁴¹² Mayer, Jane. 2009. Cited in Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.220

⁴¹³ Entous, Adam, Gorman, Siobhan and Barnes, Julian E. 2011. “U.S. Shifting its Policy on Drones”.

⁴¹⁴ Monbiot, George. 2012. “In the US, mass child killings are tragedies. In Pakistan, mere bug splats”.

It has become overt that the U.S. is fighting a losing battle with regard to gaining the support of Pakistani citizens in this war. This is demonstrative of actions made in self-interest that contradict the greater good. The drone strikes have created severe anti-Americanism within Pakistan, involving collective outrage over collateral damage (including women, children and tribal people) associated with U.S. drone strikes.⁴¹⁵ Despite these widespread protests, the U.S. has not adapted its drone programme in the state sufficiently nor publically addressed these concerns. America's implementation of drone strikes on Pakistani soil has also created numerous issues for the Pakistani government, who has been accused of failing to prevent the "bully" U.S. from killing many Pakistani citizens and tribal elders and even being complicit in the atrocities.⁴¹⁶⁴¹⁷ This has created a significant "wedge between the government and the tribal people" that is damaging to the future security of Pakistan,⁴¹⁸ showing a lack of long-term considerations in U.S. policy.

Lack of Mutual Trust

The lack of trust between the two states has been symbolic over the last fifteen years, worsened by attempts to remove terrorist organizations in Pakistan through drone strikes. In a 2008 visit by the U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Anne Patterson was met with strong criticism from Pakistanis protesting the drone strikes in the country. Former Pakistani President Zardari said to General David Petraeus, the head of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) at the time, "continuing drone attacks on our territory, which result in loss of precious lives and property, are counterproductive and difficult to explain by a democratically elected government. It is creating a credibility gap."⁴¹⁹ An example of this has been internal concerns that the Pakistani Foreign Office has not been strong enough in its condemnation of U.S. strikes.⁴²⁰

The accountability issue over drones has been significant in Pakistan where differing reports on strikes are circulated in the media. For example, "[t]he revelation that the CIA drones were being secretly flown from the Pakistani air base at Shamsi in southeastern Pakistan, with the obvious compliance of Pakistani authorities, seriously undermined the government's

⁴¹⁵ Perlez, Jane. 2008. "Petraeus, in Pakistan, Hears Complaints About Missile Strikes".

⁴¹⁶ Williams, Brian G. 2013. "Predators: The CIA's Drone War on Al Qaeda". P.208

⁴¹⁷ Ibid. P.207

⁴¹⁸ Perlez, Jane. 2008. "Petraeus, in Pakistan, Hears Complaints About Missile Strikes".

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ DAWN. 2018. "NA seeks briefing about govt stance on US drone attacks".

credibility with its own people.”⁴²¹ Trust between the two states further worsened after the Musa Nika raid in September 2009⁴²², the Navy SEAL mission to capture and kill Osama bin Laden in May 2011⁴²³ and the botched 2011 NATO airstrikes at Shamsi air base that killed twenty-four Pakistani soldiers and led to the expulsion of CIA forces.^{424 425} These incidents abused Pakistan’s sovereignty and displayed the political complexities of ground-forces.⁴²⁶ After a recent strike in 2018 on the Pakistani-Afghan border, there were disputes once again between the Pakistan and U.S. authorities, this time over whether the intended target of the strike had been a refugee camp.⁴²⁷ In a rare occurrence, the U.S. embassy in Islamabad publically denied these accusations as “false”.⁴²⁸ These events establish the regularity of scuffles between the U.S. and Pakistan, yet despite these pressures the drone programme continues.

Since the inauguration of President Trump, the U.S. has looked into harsher conduct towards Pakistan as terrorist organizations remain in the country that commit attacks in neighbouring Afghanistan, affecting U.S. operations there.⁴²⁹ Various options are being considered, including more drone strikes, reducing the status of the U.S.-Pakistani relationship from a major non-NATO ally and reducing aid flows to the state.⁴³⁰ The largest concern for the U.S. and the international community is the risk of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons getting into the hands of a terrorist organization.⁴³¹ Considering the instability of the state, these fears are not completely unfounded. Research and statistics on drone strikes initiated under President Trump have shown that from the day of the presidential inauguration on January 20 2017 to March 2 2017, thirty-six drone strikes were conducted in forty-five days, which equates to one every 1.25 days, significantly higher than one every 5.4 days under Obama.⁴³² There were reports from 2017 that President Trump had planned to remove two Obama-era restrictions on drone strikes: targeting only high-level militants that pose a threat to the U.S.

⁴²¹ Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.208

⁴²² Rondeaux, Candace and DeYoung, Karen. 2008. “U.S. Troops Crossed Border, Pakistan Says”.

⁴²³ Baker, Peter; Cooper, Helene and Mazzetti, Mark. 2011. “Bin Laden is Dead, Obama Says”.

⁴²⁴ DAWN. 2013. “Report reveals Pasha’s admission of Pak-US ‘understanding’ on drones”.

⁴²⁵ Masood, Salman. 2011. “C.I.A. Leaves Base in Pakistan Used for Drone Strikes”.

⁴²⁶ Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.182

⁴²⁷ Syed, Baqir Sajjad. 2018. “Pakistan, US spar over drone attack target”.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Stewart, Phil. 2017. “Exclusive: Trump administration eyes hardening line toward Pakistan”.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Goldberg, Jeffrey and Ambinder, Marc. 2011. “The Ally From Hell”.

⁴³² Zenko, Micah. Cited in Helmore, Edward. 2017. “US retires Predator drones after 15 years that changed the ‘war on terror’”.

and having high-security vetting before each drone strike.⁴³³ However, delicate measures must be taken to ensure that Pakistan is not blamed for all the problems in the region nor made into the scapegoat.⁴³⁴ It would be “better to seek cooperative solutions than push Pakistan into a corner from which no side can realistically benefit.”⁴³⁵ Nevertheless, at the same time the trust between the two sides has not been well displayed (see Appendix 9). For example, it is highly likely that Pakistani authorities had knowledge of Osama bin Laden’s whereabouts, they have hidden their nuclear facilities from the knowledge of the U.S.⁴³⁶ and there was evidence in 2010 of communication from the Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs to its embassy in Washington, giving instruction to sabotage the CIA.⁴³⁷ This highlights the insecurity felt by both sides in this bilateral dynamic.

An Overview of the Experience of Drone Strikes in Pakistan

Alienation of Population

The main source of conflict over drone strikes in Pakistan has been due to tribal elders and civilians mistakenly killed or injured, with no compensation or firm solution offered by the U.S. as an afterthought (see Appendix 12). This leads to severe alienation of locals, as they lose loved members of the community and perhaps more significantly: tribal leaders promoting peace.⁴³⁸ There are many cases where civilians are forcibly accepted to host armed Taliban militants out of fear and then they too are punished and hit by drone strikes.⁴³⁹ The tribal elders have been a great source of peace and reconciliation in communities affected by the Taliban and other militant groups, yet whilst they are establishing an anti-Taliban environment, a U.S. drone creates more devastation in the area and their voices become drowned out by the anger from civilians and anti-Americanism response.⁴⁴⁰ Furthermore, it is unsurprising that “the reaction among villagers who had lost their respected elders in the notorious strikes ranged from sorrow to vows of baldal-style revenge.”⁴⁴¹ In

⁴³³ Iqbal, Anwar. 2017. “Drone strikes in Pak-Afghan border region reflect changing moods in Washington”.

⁴³⁴ Stewart, Phil. 2017. “Exclusive: Trump administration eyes hardening line toward Pakistan”.

⁴³⁵ DAWN Editorial. 2018. “Pak-US drone dispute”.

⁴³⁶ Goldberg, Jeffrey and Ambinder, Marc. 2011. “The Ally From Hell”.

⁴³⁷ Miller, Greg and Woodward, Bob. 2013. “Secret memos reveal explicit nature of U.S., Pakistan agreement on drones”.

⁴³⁸ Walsh, D. 2011. Cited in Shaw, Ian. G. R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”. P.553

⁴³⁹ Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”.

⁴⁴⁰ Latif, Aamir. 2009. “Pakistani Tribes Caught Between Taliban and U.S. Airstrikes”.

⁴⁴¹ Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.215

total, by 2013 over 2000 people were killed by U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan, “more than the total U.S. combat losses in Afghanistan in a decade of fighting.”⁴⁴² In Appendices 1 and 2, one can see the estimated number of recorded strikes as well as high casualty rates that have been experienced from drone strikes. The statistics also reflect that it is difficult to deduce civilians from militants when examining casualties. Likewise, one must therefore consider that “[w]hile violent extremists may be unpopular, for a frightened population they seem less ominous than a face-less enemy that wages war from afar and often kills more civilians than militants.”⁴⁴³

The Washington Post gained access to CIA documents and memos from the Pakistani diplomatic community, which showed that Pakistan has in fact secretly given access to U.S. drone strikes in the country. The documents provided information on multiple attacks in the tribal regions of Pakistan, in addition to detailed maps and photos showing before and after footage of targeted compounds. These materials focused on the period of late 2007 to late 2011, when the drone campaign was at its highest intensity. This investigation provides evidence as to the disputed military relationship between the two sides, neither of which have ever fully admitted to in public,⁴⁴⁴ instead they “played a dangerous game of publicly denying what was obvious to all”.⁴⁴⁵ Consequent reports further entangle the already complex trust between Pakistani citizens and their government over U.S. drone strikes.

Muted Public Support

There are mixed reports over the degree of public support for drone strikes in Pakistan. Some argue that Pakistani civilians are intrigued and in awe of drones when they see them flying above, appreciating the protection they offer to them.⁴⁴⁶ Those who worry about militants hiding in their villages and their heightened risk at being targets themselves are more encouraged to stop providing refuge and forcibly remove them from the villages.⁴⁴⁷ People

⁴⁴² Roggio, Bill and Mayer, Alexander. Cited in Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.235

⁴⁴³ Kilcullen, David and Exum, Andrew. 2009. “Death from Above, Outrage from Below”.

⁴⁴⁴ Miller, Greg and Woodward, Bob. 2013. “Secret memos reveal explicit nature of U.S., Pakistan agreement on drones”.

⁴⁴⁵ DAWN Editorial. 2018. “Pak-US drone dispute”.

⁴⁴⁶ Khan, 2009. P.178. Cited in Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.203

⁴⁴⁷ Nadim, Hussein. 2012. “How Drones Changed the Game in Pakistan”.

are confident in the drones and their precision in targeting the correct individuals⁴⁴⁸ and believe the psychological impacts on terrorist groups are also significant.⁴⁴⁹ They also recognize the fear drones instil in the various terrorist organizations in Pakistan and the impacts on their ability to coordinate themselves.⁴⁵⁰ Moreover, some reason that the radicalization of Pakistan began before drones operated in the country, that the influences of Taliban activities in the nineteen-nineties initiated this process.⁴⁵¹ In this regard, “the real tragedy is that it is acceptable for the Taliban to radicalize and kill, but it is considered a breach of sovereignty for the United States, in pursuit of those radicalizing Pakistan’s people, to do the same.”⁴⁵² Despite these arguments in favour of drone strikes, the picture remains mixed and public support is generally subdued. Nevertheless, the continued deployment of drone strikes should be made with caution, as both Pakistan and the U.S. must ensure that they do not drive militants and insurgents into cities, as this will make it near to impossible to selectively target and avoid collateral damage.⁴⁵³

Pakistani Support for U.S. Drone Strikes

Limited Arguments in Favour of Strikes

U.S. drone strikes are indeed supported by parts of the Pakistani population due to their record of success against domestic terrorist groups. Those who argue this, believe that public protests against drone strikes in the nation are merely theatrical⁴⁵⁴ and their symbolic significance exaggerated. In fact, in late 2011 when the CIA paused its programme of drone strikes, there were alleged widespread demonstrations in Pakistan requesting a reinstatement of the strikes in order to “save the lives of thousands.”⁴⁵⁵ The terrors faced by Pakistani villagers in regions such as Waziristan and FATA due to the Taliban, Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations, is a terrible fate and therefore drone strikes, no matter who they are authorized by (whether this be the U.S., Israel or even India) are welcomed.⁴⁵⁶ Consequently,

⁴⁴⁸ Fair, Christine. 2010. “Drones over Pakistan – Menace or Best Viable Option?”

⁴⁴⁹ Nadim, Hussein. 2012. “How Drones Changed the Game in Pakistan”.

⁴⁵⁰ Taj, Farhat. 2010. “Drone attacks: challenging some fabrications”.

⁴⁵¹ Nadim, Hussein. 2012. “How Drones Changed the Game in Pakistan”.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Horowitz, Michael C., Kreps, Sarah E., and Fuhrmann, Matthew. 2016. “Separating Fact from Fiction in the Debate over Drone Proliferation”.

⁴⁵⁵ Change.org. 2012. Cited in Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.197

⁴⁵⁶ Taj, Farhat. 2010. “Drone attacks: challenging some fabrications”.

those who protest drone strikes in Pakistan have arguably forgotten the violent rule of the Taliban, their universal disregard for the state and the number of Pakistani civilians they have killed.⁴⁵⁷

In general, communities in the tribal regions of Pakistan who are most at risk of drone strikes, have differing standpoints on drone attacks.⁴⁵⁸ Many do not and cannot admit that national terrorist organizations are a threat to the state, nor do they believe that the U.S. is helping the situation. The power of emotions can be very strong in matters such as these concerning national pride and sovereignty, with some seeing “Taliban militants as misunderstood fellow Pakistani Muslims who have been scapegoated by the “imperialist American infidels.””⁴⁵⁹ Once again, themes of uncertainty and ambiguity are clear in this anarchic international system. Although it is extremely difficult for journalists and academics to gain access to these disputed regions in order to speak with individuals at risk, it is generally known that educated tribal people are in support of the strikes, but struggle to persuade others to follow.⁴⁶⁰

Poor Communication

Public knowledge of drones and drone strikes is relatively high in Pakistan, with sharp debates on the issue and contestations of strike legitimacy. This particularly surrounds photographic images and physical proof of civilian bodies after a drone strike, which provides verification as to the strikes and their degree of devastation. Nonetheless, determining resultant accountability is complex as the bodies are frequently never found or are simply unidentifiable after a drone strike.⁴⁶¹ These complications have led to multiple conflicting reports within Pakistan on the drone strikes and the national view towards it, compounded by the government privately supporting the strikes. This highlights the importance of clear communication, predominantly so concerning a sensitive issue.

When so many strongly opposing viewpoints emerge across political and cultural spectrums, a direct and official line of statements on the matter, whether this comes from the U.S. or Pakistani militaries, governments or media, is needed but has not been appropriately

⁴⁵⁷ Williams, Brian Glyn. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.170

⁴⁵⁸ Sarwar, Nadeem. 2010. “US Drone Brings Torment, Hope in Pakistan”. *Deutsche Presse Agentur*.

⁴⁵⁹ Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.189

⁴⁶⁰ Hoodbhoy, Pervez. 2010. Cited in Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.193

⁴⁶¹ Barrinha, André and da Mota, Sarah. 2017. “Drones and the uninsurable security subjects”. P.262

delivered. As a result, “[d]rone strikes excite visceral opposition across a broad spectrum of Pakistani opinion. The persistence of these attacks on Pakistani territory offends people’s deepest sensibilities, alienates them from their government, and contributes to Pakistan’s instability.”⁴⁶² The U.S. officials should explain to the Pakistani population why drones are needed in their country, as other methods of counterterrorism have not succeeded, in order to ensure that all groups of the population understand who the real enemy is.⁴⁶³ Moreover, civilians living in areas at risk of strikes should be well informed on impending strikes and receive resources in preparation and assistance in the aftermath. Although many in the FATA know that drone strikes are targeting militants and not civilians, the risk of collateral damage is still high and leads to a constantly state of fear.⁴⁶⁴ Masood Khan, the Pakistani envoy to the UN in 2013, told a UN committee that because of the severe psychological impacts on civilians, “drone strikes are therefore counterproductive in countering terrorism”.⁴⁶⁵

Issue of Ownership

The lack of clarity regarding who is accountable for drone strikes in Pakistan, who authorizes them and who supports them, has created an almost impenetrable cloud around the issue. Pakistani citizens generally “liked to know what was going on in their own backyard”⁴⁶⁶ therefore the atmosphere surrounding drone strikes has made this desire very problematic. In mid-2010, a Pew Research Centre poll determined that ninety-three percent of Pakistanis aware of drone strikes disapproved them and ninety percent believed drone strikes killed too many.⁴⁶⁷ Appendix 8 shows a March 2013 Pew Survey establishing that only five percent of Pakistanis surveyed approved of drone strikes, whereas in the U.S. this figure was as high as sixty-one percent.⁴⁶⁸ In 2017, Pakistani Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwar declared that the Pakistani government would be able to take care of domestic security matters if intelligence was shared with them appropriately, indicating tensions in international cooperation.⁴⁶⁹ Although many Pakistani citizens understand the accuracy of drones in limiting civilian deaths compared to traditional ground-operations, there “was no

⁴⁶² Fick, Nathaniel. C. 2009. “From Strategy to Implementation: Strengthening U.S.-Pakistan Relations”.

⁴⁶³ Afzal, Madiha. 2013. “Drone Strikes and Anti-Americanism in Pakistan”.

⁴⁶⁴ Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”.

⁴⁶⁵ DAWN. 2013. “Pakistan urges end to drone strikes in UN General Assembly”.

⁴⁶⁶ Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.209.

⁴⁶⁷ Pew Research Center. 2010. Enemark, Christian. 2011. “Drones over Pakistan: Secrecy, Ethics, and Counterinsurgency”. P.227.

⁴⁶⁸ Pew Research Center. 2013. “Chapter 1. Attitudes toward the United States”.

⁴⁶⁹ DAWN. 2017. “Drone strikes counterproductive, against spirit of cooperation: COAS”.

such thing as an “acceptable” number of civilians being killed in the process” and “they could not tolerate the idea of a distrusted foreign intelligence service killing large numbers of Pakistani men, women, or children who were uninvolved with terrorism, even by accident as collateral damage.”⁴⁷⁰ The impacts of this can be seen in a 2012 poll, which revealed only twelve percent of respondents in Pakistan viewed the U.S. in a good light.⁴⁷¹ If it had been clear that the Pakistani authorities were in cooperation with the U.S. in drone operations, this figure would possibly be much higher.

There have been instances where Pakistan has specifically asked for help from the U.S. to take out individuals, representing successful cooperation between the two parties. This included Baitullah Mehsud, the alleged perpetrator in the assassination of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in December 2007.⁴⁷² These requests have been recorded by WikiLeaks from January 2008.⁴⁷³ This thesis argues that this should be important public knowledge so the national population can support it. Nevertheless, despite these improved notions of collaboration, the strike that finally killed Mehsud in August 2009 was not the first, not the second, but the *fifteenth* U.S. Predator attempt on his life. It is unknown how many civilians were killed in the other attempts.⁴⁷⁴ What is also undetermined is why domestic support for his death was minimally reported. This bears the question of why Pakistani citizens are not more vocal about their support for drone strikes⁴⁷⁵ and if it is linked to the lack of clear announcements and interaction with the government. A solution to the issue of drone programme ownership is a collective agenda between the U.S. and the Pakistani government and military, to combine the capacities of both states.⁴⁷⁶ The absence of this so far indicates ultimate mistrust between the two actors and the dominance of self-interest and personal security-maximisation.

⁴⁷⁰ Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.207

⁴⁷¹ McCricken, Trevor. 2013. “Obama’s Drone War”.

⁴⁷² Enemark, Christian. 2011. “Drones over Pakistan: Secrecy, Ethics, and Counterinsurgency”.

⁴⁷³ The Express Tribune. 2011. “WikiLeaks: Kayani wanted more drone strikes in Pakistan”.

⁴⁷⁴ Enemark, Christian. 2011. “Drones over Pakistan: Secrecy, Ethics, and Counterinsurgency”.

⁴⁷⁵ Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”.

⁴⁷⁶ Blair, Dennis C. 2011. “Drones Alone Are Not the Answer”.

Is Pakistan more Secure as a Result of U.S. Drone Strikes?

Removal of Security Threats

Well-targeted drone strikes in Pakistan have established that “[t]he strikes are the ultimate form of deterrence and are saving countless civilians from future terrorist attacks against the West, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.”⁴⁷⁷ Studies have found that drone strikes reduce the intensity of terrorist incidents and thereby the number of people killed by terrorists.⁴⁷⁸ Following the event where Baitullah Mehsud was killed by a drone strike in 2009, former Pakistani President Ali Zardari announced: “Due to his death the Taliban leadership is in disarray, the major suicide bombing network and Taliban patronage has been disrupted. Acts of terror have considerably decreased in the border area.”⁴⁷⁹ Investigations involving Taliban militants seem to confirm this. As a result of drone strikes, the militant organization has been forced to radically change their management and structure; no longer meeting in large groups, using satellite or SMS messaging services, planning meetings in advance, nor issuing large security teams for Taliban leaders.⁴⁸⁰ A further fruitful example is the drone strike of June 3 2011 that killed Ilyas Kashmiri, the Pakistani terrorist mastermind who was assigned the task of carrying out an assassination attempt on former U.S. President Obama.⁴⁸¹ Other instances include Taliban leader Nek Muhammad killed in 2004,⁴⁸² Hassan Ghul, a militant who provided the CIA with information on Osama bin Laden, killed in a Pakistani tribal area in 2012⁴⁸³ and the son of Mullah Fazlullah, head of the Pakistani Taliban, killed in 2018.⁴⁸⁴ The list of individuals continues and it is clear that numerous high-level targets are being eliminated by drone strikes.

As a result of effective strikes, Pakistani civilians and local Pashtun tribesmen are more reluctant to provide rank-and-file Taliban and foreign Al Qaeda fighters with shelter or other personal resources, as they know that their presence attracts the attention of drones and

⁴⁷⁷ Williams, Brian Glyn. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.170

⁴⁷⁸ Johnston, Patrick B. and Sarbahi, Anoop K. 2016. “The Impact of US Drone Strikes on Terrorism in Pakistan”.

⁴⁷⁹ Bokhari, Farhan. 2009. Cited in Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.174

⁴⁸⁰ McGregor, Andrew. 2009. “Pakistani Taliban Commander Describes Counter-Measures against UAV Attacks”.

⁴⁸¹ Ignatius, David. 2012. “The bin Laden plot to kill President Obama”.

⁴⁸² Helmore, Edward. 2017. “US retires Predator drones after 15 years that changed the ‘war on terror’.

⁴⁸³ Miller, Greg; Tate, Julie and Gellmann, Barton. 2013. “Documents reveal NSA’s extensive involvement in targeted killing program”.

⁴⁸⁴ Tomlinson, Hugh. 2018. “US drone strike kills son of Pakistan Taliban leader Mullah Fazlullah”.

greater likelihood of drone strikes.⁴⁸⁵ This is a significant accomplishment of the U.S. drone programme, as it is more burdensome for terrorist groups to plan complex attacks when “their sanctuary in the FATA is “neither safe nor a haven”, as stated by former CIA chief Michael Hayden.⁴⁸⁶ Thus, some studies have shown that Pakistani civilians feel content with drones flying above and appreciate their precision and minimal damage, especially in comparison to the Pakistani army’s experiences combating the Taliban that have often been clumsy, land-based, and permanently disruptive to communities.^{487 488}

Deepening Internal Insecurities

However, overall a decade of drone strikes in Pakistan has not achieved enough in terms of concrete impacts on terrorist organizations. Al Qaeda continues to operate north of Pakistan and the Taliban still retain control of large parts of Afghanistan, with President Trump promising to send thousands more troops to the region in the near future. Drones have so far been an inadequate solution for long-term security in the region.⁴⁸⁹ Despite the removal of certain security threats, the perseverance of drone strikes in Pakistan has had damaging impacts on Pakistani citizens, both in their trust of their government as well as their personal sense of peace and security, hence increasing the total insecurity felt in the state.⁴⁹⁰ When drones circulate or track a target from above, it is impossible for civilians on the ground to deduce whether or not they are also potentially at risk, thence “[t]he buzz of a distant propeller is a constant reminder of imminent death.”⁴⁹¹ The chronic state imbalance and political volatility with regard to U.S. drone strikes has led some to believe that the U.S. has paid insufficient attention to the possibility of strikes being counterproductive and strategically ineffective.⁴⁹² In addition, the collaboration between Pakistani and American military and intelligence bodies has been questioned, as there have been proven instances where the U.S. gave warning to Pakistan of an impending strike, which then led to the

⁴⁸⁵ Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.179

⁴⁸⁶ Walsh, Declan. 2009. “Mysterious ‘chip’ is CIA’s latest weapon against al-Qaida targets hiding in Pakistan’s tribal belt”.

⁴⁸⁷ Taj, Farhat. 2010. “Drone attacks: challenging some fabrications”.

⁴⁸⁸ Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.186

⁴⁸⁹ Akbar, Shahzad. 2017. “Why Pakistanis are terrified Trump will bring back drone strikes”.

⁴⁹⁰ Smith, Megan and Walsh, James I. 2013. “Do Drone Strikes Degrade Al Qaeda? Evidence from Propaganda Output”.

⁴⁹¹ Rohde, David. Cited in Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.176

⁴⁹² Enemark, Christian. 2011. “Drones over Pakistan: Secrecy, Ethics, and Counterinsurgency”. P.225

Pakistanis alerting the targets.⁴⁹³ As a result of the drone experience in Pakistan, the major lesson to be learned is that “the practice should be maintained within a theatre of war or with the explicit consent of the host state.”⁴⁹⁴

The alienation felt by Pakistani communities across the state should have been a warning sign for the U.S. as an obstacle to the long-term success of the drone programme. Drone strikes lead to the estrangement of tribes, pushing them towards Taliban alliances, ultimately making matters of peace in the FATA much more unlikely and multifaceted (see Appendix 11).⁴⁹⁵ In addition, the drone strikes often do not actually eliminate terrorist groups, but only suppress them. Finally, “[a]t a certain point, the negative political effect from killing civilians starts to outstrip its military utility in suppressing the target.”⁴⁹⁶ A radical issue lies in the sovereignty of the state being attacked⁴⁹⁷ in order to kill some militants, but mostly innocent civilians.⁴⁹⁸ The Pakistani Foreign Office has even issued complaints to the U.S., including after the Balochistan strike in 2016, yet the issue persists.⁴⁹⁹ This particular strike was the first in the region (see Appendix 7), which had always been a red line for the Pakistani authorities.⁵⁰⁰ Some still essentially believe that in order to win a successful war, there must be some ground-forces in the local region. This will involve a mixture of hard and soft power exertions across the state for long-term sustainable change, including one of the most contested regions: North Waziristan (see Appendix 7).⁵⁰¹ Furthermore, in order to sustainably prevent Al Qaeda from using Pakistan as a haven, the Pakistani government must be reinforced by international support of a different nature that has been seen thus far.⁵⁰²

⁴⁹³ Fair, Christine. 2013. “For Now, Drones are the Best Option”.

⁴⁹⁴ Ward, Maren I. H. 2015. “Tacit Consent and Vocal Opposition: The Consequences of the American Drone Campaign on Pakistani Government Legitimacy”. P.62

⁴⁹⁵ Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”.

⁴⁹⁶ Biddle, Stephen. Cited in Helmore, Edward. 2017. “US retires Predator drones after 15 years that changed the ‘war on terror’”.

⁴⁹⁷ DAWN. 2018. “NA seeks briefing about govt stance on US drone attacks”.

⁴⁹⁸ Asrar Bukhari Sayeda. 2011. Cited in Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.189

⁴⁹⁹ Dawn Report. 2016. “US drone attack violation of Pakistan’s sovereignty, says PM”.

⁵⁰⁰ Syed, Baqir Bajjad. 2016. “US strike crosses ‘red line’ on Balochistan”.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid. P.230

⁵⁰² Byman, Daniel. 2009. “Taliban vs. Predator”.

Greater Resentment Towards U.S.

For Pakistani-U.S. relations and the effects of strikes in Pakistan, “much of the damage was done under President Obama, but President Trump’s record has the potential to be even worse.”⁵⁰³ The U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan increase a general sense of resentment and animosity from Pakistani citizens, terrorist organizations and even authority bodies towards the U.S. that may drive threatening ramifications. The issues of collateral damage and civilian protests against drone strikes are used by terrorist organizations including as-Sahab within Al Qaeda, to show that the U.S. “can be painted as cruel, brutal, and capricious to a mass audience, further legitimizing the political stances of Al Qaeda.”⁵⁰⁴ Political leaders in Pakistan have placed pressure on the government to do more to address this concern, including shooting down U.S. drones (which the Pakistani military most definitely has the capability to do).⁵⁰⁵ ⁵⁰⁶ In addition, as of September 2015 Pakistan joined the elite group of states worldwide to use armed drones for targeted killings and “in doing so, it shattered the assumption that armed drones and the practice of targeted killing will diffuse slowly to the rest of the world”.⁵⁰⁷ Analysts were notably surprised at the sophistication of the state’s technological developments.⁵⁰⁸ The future effects of such an advancement on U.S. troops stationed in Pakistan and neighbouring Afghanistan is precarious.

Pakistani citizens conclusively distrust the U.S. as there is a strong belief that the majority of individuals killed in U.S. drone strikes are innocent non-combatants.⁵⁰⁹ This proves Rousseau’s stag-hunt metaphor: that acting in one’s own interest damages the greater good. It is important to hear these wary voices and give them a platform, to make all actors aware of the ethical and damaging impacts of drone strikes.⁵¹⁰ For example, in 2013 survivors of an alleged U.S. drone strike in Pakistan spoke for the first time in front of U.S. Congress on the impacts of the strikes. The individuals, including Rafiqul Rehman, asked to be treated as equals by America and explained how their always positive view of Obama and the U.S.

⁵⁰³ Akbar, Shahzad. 2017. “Why Pakistanis are terrified Trump will bring back drone strikes”.

⁵⁰⁴ Smith, Megan and Walsh, James I. 2013. “Do Drone Strikes Degrade Al Qaeda? Evidence from Propaganda Output”. P.316

⁵⁰⁵ Kugelman, Michael. 2013. “Shooting down a drone isn’t so hard to do”.

⁵⁰⁶ Ahmed, Dawood I. 2013. “Can Pakistan legally shoot down U.S. drones?”

⁵⁰⁷ Boyle, Michael. 2015. “Why Pakistan’s first drone strike should worry Obama”.

⁵⁰⁸ Ansari, Usman. 2015. “Pakistan Surprises Many With First Use of Armed Drone”.

⁵⁰⁹ Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.206

⁵¹⁰ Shaw, Ian. G. R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”. P.554

were now confused as a result of the strikes (see Appendix 10).⁵¹¹ An Amnesty International report based on the exact strike that killed Rafiqul Rehman's sixty-eight year old mother stated that even a year after her death, the family had received no explanation, compensation or justification from the U.S. authorities.⁵¹² Ultimately, "[a]s the drone campaign wears on, hatred of America is increasing in Pakistan."⁵¹³

Are Drone Strikes in Pakistan Justifiable?

Various legal disputes have been raised over the classification of U.S. strikes in Pakistan as "just force" and who remains responsible for resultant ethical issues.⁵¹⁴ A significant proportion of Pakistanis deem their nation's sovereignty comes under assault all too easily by drone strikes.⁵¹⁵ This underlines the importance of transparency in the context of drone strikes and accountability. One argument proposes that drone strikes violate the sovereignty not of Pakistan but of the terrorist groups that operate in the domestic territory and who are themselves violating Pakistani sovereignty by launching attacks on Pakistani soil.^{516 517} The U.S. therefore perhaps avoids placing soldiers on Pakistani soil for reasons of sovereignty.⁵¹⁸

It is undeniable that the experience of drone strikes in Pakistan has been overwhelmingly uneven⁵¹⁹ and those affected by strikes will live with the damages and repercussions indefinitely.⁵²⁰ For those who land themselves on the target list, this is referred to within Pakistan as "execution without trial",⁵²¹ which not only indicates the violence of the drone programme but also the secrecy surrounding it. There is a risk that "once a target has been added to the kill-or-capture list, the imperative of moving quickly to secure a kill overrides

⁵¹¹ Henneberger, Melinda. 2013. "From Pakistan, family comes to tell of drone strike's toll".

⁵¹² Amnesty International Publications. 2013. "'Will I be next?' US Drone Strikes in Pakistan".

⁵¹³ Blair, Dennis. 2011. Cited in Williams, Brian G. 2013. "Predators: The CIA's Drone War on Al Qaeda" p.211.

⁵¹⁴ Enemark, Christian. 2011. "Drones over Pakistan: Secrecy, Ethics, and Counterinsurgency".

⁵¹⁵ Bukhari, Sayed. 2008. Cited in Williams, Brian G. 2013. "Predators: The CIA's Drone War on Al Qaeda". P.172

⁵¹⁶ Taj, Farhat. 2009. Cited in Williams, Brian G. 2013. "Predators: The CIA's Drone War on Al Qaeda". P.192

⁵¹⁷ Gwakh, Ahmad Bashir. 2011. "Drones: Pakistan Has No Leg To Stand On".

⁵¹⁸ McCracken, Trevor. 2013. "Obama's Drone War".

⁵¹⁹ Sharp, J. 2011. Cited in Shaw, Ian G.R. 2013. "Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare". P.545

⁵²⁰ Khan, Ayaz. 2009. Cited in Williams, Brian G. 2013. "Predators: The CIA's Drone War on Al Qaeda". P.205

⁵²¹ Star. 2009. Cited in Williams, Brian G. 2013. "Predators: The CIA's Drone War on Al Qaeda". P.205

all other concerns, and that so-called ‘cubicle warriors’, who deploy the drones remotely from thousands of miles away, have considerable authority to act.”⁵²² It is consequently understandable why Pakistani citizens demand greater clarity in the acquisition of targets. Moreover, “[s]een in terms of proportionality, the targeting of low-level individuals inside Pakistan who exhibit a threatening pattern of life might constitute excessive use of force if the damage caused includes unintended noncombatant deaths.”⁵²³ During his leadership, Obama individually approved and gave the authorization for drone strikes in states such as Yemen and Somalia that were under the U.S. military, but for CIA strikes in Pakistan, he only overviewed and authorized a third of strikes.⁵²⁴ This is reiterative of the notion of survival as a primary goal of states, with a key component being a maximization of offensive military capabilities as understood by offensive realism.

⁵²² McCricken, Trevor. 2013. “Obama’s Drone War”. P.103

⁵²³ Enemark, Christian. 2011. “Drones over Pakistan: Secrecy, Ethics, and Counterinsurgency”. P.232

⁵²⁴ McCricken, Trevor. 2013. “Obama’s Drone War”. P.104

Chapter 5 - Reflections and Looking Forward

This chapter will reflect on several topics that have arisen in this thesis and case study, to highlight the issues that drones still pose and answers that remain to be given from U.S. officials as to their unsustainable practice. The structure of this chapter will follow the main three analysis themes: technology, strategy and ethics.

Drones as Smart Weapons

Notwithstanding the damaging and dangerous impacts of drones that this thesis has explored, their practice continues due to the various rationalizations deployed by their operators. There is a major case put forward that drones are smart weapons of the highest technological capability and are fair to all actors involved. Their status as a devastating weapon that only brings harm, as portrayed in the media, is argued to be a risk but not a guarantee. So, drones “*can* unarguably protect humans in various ways, they *might* eventually turn out to be cheaper in some respects, and they do not violate international law *per se*.”⁵²⁵ The technological strengths of the weapon and its transformative stance in modern warfare are hence repeatedly emphasised to vindicate deployment. Drones provide soldiers and intelligence services with the most accurate distinction between militants and civilians in targeting operations, thus “[s]marter weapons like the Predator make for a more moral campaign”.⁵²⁶ These arguments continue to be maintained despite the high statistics of civilian casualties and technological weaknesses that remain evident.

Issues in Counterterrorism Methods

The extensive terrorist watch-lists that form the basis of many U.S. counterterrorism operations are purposed to streamline the process for finding, capturing and interrogating targets. Nevertheless, there have been multiple challenges to this procedure. For example, Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmuttallab who was behind the failed 2009 Detroit aircraft bombing had been placed on “no-fly” lists before the incident, yet he was still able to board

⁵²⁵ Rosén, Frederik. 2013. “Extremely Stealthy and Incredibly Close: Drones, Control and Legal Responsibility.” P.375

⁵²⁶ Wall Street Journal. 2010. Cited in Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.183

the plane and attempt a terrorist attack. As a result of this event, former President Obama placed higher pressure on the organizations responsible for adding names to these lists, which in turn led to longer lists, a reduction in criteria needed to become placed on the list⁵²⁷ and the hurdles were raised to getting oneself off from this watch list, even if one had been acquitted of a terrorism-related offence.⁵²⁸ There is an undeniable link between this process and the individuals who not only find themselves on drone strike target lists but are also subsequently eliminated.

Drones Act on Improper Intelligence

Drone operations have seen many failures in intelligence gathering. Drone strikes have regularly not only missed their intended targets, but have also been frequently issued on faulty intelligence altogether. High-target individuals, who were presumed terminated by a drone strike, can emerge months later unscathed and evermore intent on harming U.S. citizens. Non-governmental research has highlighted that for drone strikes under Obama, on average it took three strikes to actually kill the intended target.⁵²⁹ Another example was the need for six U.S. strikes to successfully eliminate Qari Hussain, deputy commander of Tehreek-e-Taliban in Pakistan.⁵³⁰ For each of the strikes before his death, it is unknown how many innocent civilians died.⁵³¹ The Obama administration often referred to drone strikes as “surgical” in their precision and accuracy, yet many strongly dispute this terminology, as not only would a surgeon never be able to accidentally create multiple casualties but the language also belittles the violence and gruesome devastation unavoidably instigated by drones.⁵³²

U.S. Communications

The arguments over whether or not the U.S. government and military are obliged to communicate the nature of drone war programmes to the public re-emerge whenever a new controversy arises. In September 2011, U.S. District Judge Rosemary Collyer directed that “the CIA is not legally required to inform the public about the use of drones in the killing of

⁵²⁷ Scahill, Jeremy and Devereaux, Ryan. “Death and the Watchlist”.

⁵²⁸ Ibid. P.25

⁵²⁹ Akbar, Shahzad. 2017. “Why Pakistanis are terrified Trump will bring back drone strikes”.

⁵³⁰ Khan, Hassaan. 2014. “‘Precise’ drone strikes: 874 killed in US hunt for 24 terrorists in Pakistan”.

⁵³¹ Akbar, Shahzad. 2017. “Why Pakistanis are terrified Trump will bring back drone strikes”.

⁵³² Friedersdorf, Conor. 2012. “Calling U.S. Drone Strikes ‘Surgical’ Is Orwellian Propaganda”.

suspected terrorists.”⁵³³ Legally, this may be the case, however when taking into account the arguments against U.S. drone strikes, accountability and transparency are key concerns. It was as far back as 2002, when the U.S. authorized the first drone strike outside of an official war zone. Yet it wasn’t until May 2013 that the White House finally decided to release standards and procedures on these strikes, in addition to making public remarks on the drone programme.⁵³⁴ This study hence recommends for U.S. officials to be more open with the American public and international community on the acquisition of targets, issuing of strikes and aftermath of these events. This would eventually give greater credibility to the self-defence argument.

9/11 as Justification for Drone Warfare

International law states only three conditions that justify state utilization of force: “self-defence, a UN Security Council authorization to use force, or the invitation of a host state.”⁵³⁵ U.S. drone strikes tend to be authorised under Article 51 of the UN Charter in the name of self-defence,⁵³⁶ as well as domestic legality and host state consent.⁵³⁷ David Kretzmer explains how under international human rights law, targeted killings are rationalized “when carried out to prevent an imminent attack that cannot be stopped by other means” and under international humanitarian law “such killings may be lawful if the suspected terrorists are to be regarded as combatants.”⁵³⁸ Nevertheless, international humanitarian law does not distinguish whether or not U.S. strikes are legal, efficient, moral or in line with U.S. values.⁵³⁹ U.S. government lawyers also argue that the war on terrorism has no territorial restrictions in the conventional sense of nation-state boundaries, as terrorists are constantly on the move. Furthermore, if a state cannot or will not rid itself of a terrorist threat, external powers have the authorization to defend themselves through pre-emptive self-defence.⁵⁴⁰ We

⁵³³ Yost, P. 2011. Cited in Shaw, Ian G.R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”. P.539

⁵³⁴ Scahill, Jeremy. “The Drone Legacy”. In Scahill, Jeremy. 2016. “The Assassination Complex”.

⁵³⁵ DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”. P.55

⁵³⁶ Shaw, Ian G.R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”.

⁵³⁷ DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”. P.56

⁵³⁸ Kretzmer, D. 2005. “Targeted Killing of Suspected Terrorists: Extrajudicial Executions or Legitimate Means of Defense?” p.171

⁵³⁹ Sadat, Leila Nadya. 2012. “America’s Drone Wars”. P.231

⁵⁴⁰ DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”.

see this category of language in President Trump's most recent National Security Strategy with reference to Pakistan's instability.⁵⁴¹

The drone programme has been warranted under U.S. "domestic legal authority to prosecute the war against Al Qaeda, the Taliban and associated forces by all means deemed necessary by the president under the September 18, 2001 congressionally approved Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF)."⁵⁴² This explanation links to the UN Security Council Resolution 1373 issued on September 28, 2001 in the aftermath of 9/11, which outlined terrorism as a danger to global safety.⁵⁴³ The U.S. argues that it has remained within these values from the UN and this compliments its domestic authorization from AUMF.⁵⁴⁴ Placing the U.S. drone programme in the context of the global war on terror post-9/11, Christof Heyns, Former UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, questioned whether "killings carried out in 2012 can be justified as in response to [events] in 2001".⁵⁴⁵ Nonetheless, it is now 2018 and self-defence, at least of a pre-emptive nature, is still used as the principal argument by drone defenders, which is reflective of reactions to 9/11. Response to 9/11 has cost the U.S. state trillions of dollars and it remains unclear whether or not the security and counterterrorism goals have been met.⁵⁴⁶ More so, analysts seem unsure as to what exactly terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda actually are.⁵⁴⁷ As a result, even though Al Qaeda and associates may be feeling the effects from drones, the U.S. is not necessarily triumphing in this war.⁵⁴⁸ The big question is how long 9/11 can remain a justification for U.S. drone strikes.

In an official war zone, "uniformed military personnel...are legally entitled to employ lethal force, a fact that the U.S. government has itself cited in order to declare its Taliban opponents in Afghanistan "unlawful" combatants."⁵⁴⁹ However, for drone strikes, although there may be

⁵⁴¹ The White House. 2017. "National Security Strategy of the United States of America".

⁵⁴² Ibid. P.54

⁵⁴³ United Nations Security Council. 2001. "Security Council Unanimously Adopts Wide-Ranging Anti-Terrorism Resolution; Calls for Suppressing Financing, Improving International Cooperation".

⁵⁴⁴ DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. "Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology". P.56

⁵⁴⁵ Bowcott, Owen. 2012. Cited in Shaw, Ian. G. R. 2013. "Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare". P.548.

⁵⁴⁶ Cronin, Audrey K. 2012. "U.S. Grand Strategy and Counterterrorism".

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁹ Benjamin, Medea. 2013. "Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control". P.143.

troops on the ground assisting operations, their activities and allegiances are not clearly recognizable. Furthermore, having uniformed military personnel on the ground is not even a prerequisite for drone strikes, as pilots can act based on their surveillance and intelligence gathered, situated in the U.S, thousands of miles away. In addition, the “law has never been a guaranteed check on sovereign power, whether declared or not – often enabling and exacerbating it”⁵⁵⁰ and we therefore cannot rely upon it alone to solve the current crisis surrounding drone wars. This situation is made more complex as the U.S. military is separate from the CIA, though both organisations are responsible for significant drone programmes.⁵⁵¹ The U.S. has used drones in states in which it is not officially at war with, exerting a new form of imperialism through its aerial fleet of intimidation: “[t]he imperial right of invasion and the overriding of a nation’s sovereignty are now accomplished through the prosthetics of empire: drones. The domineering right to kill those ‘patterns of life’ whose identities remain unknown can now be exercised, through the prosthetics of empire, from the safety of home turf without putting the lives of U.S. personnel at risk.”⁵⁵² In an unofficial war zone, law enforcement is the mandatory course of action as opposed to militarized powerful drones, which cannot ensure that a suspect can be taken for questioning afterwards.⁵⁵³ On the other hand, some believe that the use of drones outside official war zones is accepted when the host state has consented.⁵⁵⁴ The case study of Pakistan has shown that this consent is neither always clear nor guaranteed.

Ambiguous Definition of Targets

The U.S. government’s public policy standards documents state that targets are struck if they pose “a continuing, imminent threat to U.S. persons”⁵⁵⁵ or if the current situation “presents a threat to U.S. interest or personnel”.⁵⁵⁶ This latter definition is so ambiguous that almost any individual in the ‘wrong place at the wrong time’ could fall under it. The U.S. criteria for qualifying individuals as targets thus remain vague, especially in the context of signature strikes. The controversy surrounding this issue of civilians being marked as militants unless

⁵⁵⁰ Shaw, Ian G.R. 2013. “Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare”.

⁵⁵¹ Stone, Kathryn. 2003. Cited in Enemark, Christian. 2011. “Drones over Pakistan: Secrecy, Ethics, and Counterinsurgency”. P.234

⁵⁵² Pugliese, Joseph. 2013. “State Violence and the Execution of Law”. P.216.

⁵⁵³ Benjamin, Medea. 2013. “Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control”. P.141.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid. P.141.

⁵⁵⁵ BBC News. 2013. “US drone strikes: Memo reveals case for killing Americans”.

⁵⁵⁶ Scahill, Jeremy. 2016. “The Drone Legacy”. P.11

there is direct proof otherwise is now well known, unsustainable and dangerous for the U.S. programme. It also reinforces the offensive status of U.S. drone warfare and the U.S. acting in self-interest.

Authority of Drone Pilots

We must question for how much longer U.S. drone pilots should be allowed to act as “judge, jury, and executioner”.⁵⁵⁷ The U.S. reliance on drones is disassociated from the moral values stated in the U.S. national constitution: “The U.S. constitution’s bill of rights guarantees that no person shall be “deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law” (fifth amendment), that “the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial” (sixth amendment), and no “cruel and unusual punishments” should be inflicted (eighth amendment).”⁵⁵⁸ Those who defend the ability of drones to carry these actions out without due process believe that in times of security threat, unique techniques are justified.⁵⁵⁹ Whilst this may be true in a situation of impending national security disaster, the number of drone strikes in Pakistan over the twenty-first century contest that each strike was initiated on a serious matter of concern.

U.S. Recommendations

The U.S. and international law must clarify the contested relationship between drone strikes, ethical concerns and just war theory.⁵⁶⁰ It remains the case that “many people – including members of the armed forces – acknowledge that armed drones offer an expedient and legally defensible solution to pressing security challenges and yet feel uncomfortable about them”.⁵⁶¹ As war may remain unavoidable for future societies, the U.S. should clearly state the regulation of drone warfare for states and international bodies.⁵⁶² If not, this will lead to significant likelihood of abuse of such a weapon.

⁵⁵⁷ Williams, Brian G. 2013. “Predators: The CIA’s Drone War on Al Qaeda”. P.213

⁵⁵⁸ DeShaw Rae, James. 2014. “Analyzing the Drone Debates: Targeted Killing, Remote Warfare, and Military Technology”. P.105

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid. P.107

⁵⁶⁰ Kaag, John and Kreps, Sarah. 2014. “Drone Warfare”.

⁵⁶¹ Henriksen, Anders and Ringsmose, Jens. 2015. “Drone warfare and morality in riskless war”. P.285

⁵⁶² Sidgwick, Henry. 1891. Cited in Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”. P.25.

First, international law must establish whether the use of drones are appropriate under *jus ad bellum* principles in particular with regard to the implementation of force in unofficial war zones, as currently this “violate[s] international understandings of when it is acceptable to use force.”⁵⁶³ Second, regarding *jus in bello*, clear attitudes on the treatment of civilians in drone wars must be established, as the effects of this new weaponry on civilian rights are devastating and should be categorised.⁵⁶⁴ Third, the law must also distinguish whether or not there is a situation of “war” when there is no state-on-state attack, as is the case for the majority of terrorism cases.⁵⁶⁵ Currently, war with non-state actors is extremely complex to conceptualize guidelines for, as “even if the terrorist groups were state-sponsored, the United States would have to be in a continuous conflict with the state sponsors for the use of force to be legal under international law.”⁵⁶⁶

Due to the significant advantages provided by drones in times of war, it is very likely that their technological capabilities will be highly sought after by other states and non-state actors worldwide.⁵⁶⁷ This is an opportunity for international law to be proactive – whilst it may not be able to stop the rising popularity of drones and unmanned aerial vehicles; it can manage the legal repercussions that come from their use.⁵⁶⁸ Particularly, three things must be clarified by the U.S. and other drone-operating states: “publicizing targeting criteria *ex ante*; keeping records on the consequences of drone strikes; and explaining targeting decisions *ex post*.”⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶³ Kaag, John and Kreps, Sarah. 2014. “Drone Warfare”. P.79.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid. P.79.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid. P.84.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid. P.85.

⁵⁶⁷ Ephron, Dan and Peraino, Kevin. 2006. Cited in Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”. P.170.

⁵⁶⁸ Riza, Shane. 2013. “Killing Without Heart: Limits on Robotic Warfare in an Age of Persistent Conflict”. P.170.

⁵⁶⁹ Jill, Danina. 2015. “The Informal Regulation of Drones and the Formal Legal Regulation of War”. P.52

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated how political preference for offensive realism is dominant in the drone warfare strategy pursued by the United States, as evidenced by the experience in Pakistan. Hence, the hypothesis of this study has been proven: *the persistent U.S. drone war is based on self-interest and contributes to an offensive warfare strategy, as drones have been intensively operated in Pakistan; creating long-term security risks through collateral damage, technological intimidation and ethical concerns.*

By way of three major themes – technological intimidation, substitution of long-term strategy by short-term results and disregard for ethical values – this thesis has highlighted how in an anarchic international system, the U.S. has relied upon self-help and security-maximisation to enlarge its power. The U.S. perception of a security threat remains ambiguous; therefore, this paper has interpreted drone strikes portrayed as defensive as *de facto* offensive. Efforts to enhance U.S. security have often led to greater insecurity risks for other actors. This is not only true for Pakistan, as displayed by deepening socio-political uncertainties, but also for the future security of the U.S. with its drone programmes continuing to alienate and anger international bodies worldwide.

The invention of such a weapon cannot be reversed. The risk of further proliferation of drones is severe when one considers low production costs and continuing technological advancements. Furthermore, neither a national nor international governing system is required to monopolise drone technology, as can be seen by organisations such as Amazon developing and operating their own models.⁵⁷⁰ Since it is unlikely for the development of drones to cease, the likelihood of counter-weapons being produced also rises. This could lead to a dead-end in terms of an international military arms race. However, the situation remains precarious.

This study has reflected upon the major contentions of the U.S. drone programme and provided pointers as to how the future of such a weapon may develop. A key vulnerability remains in the difficulty for other actors to distinguish between the offensive versus defensive nature of the U.S. drone programme. This impacts perception and attitude towards the U.S.,

⁵⁷⁰ BBC News, 2016. “Amazon makes first drone delivery”.

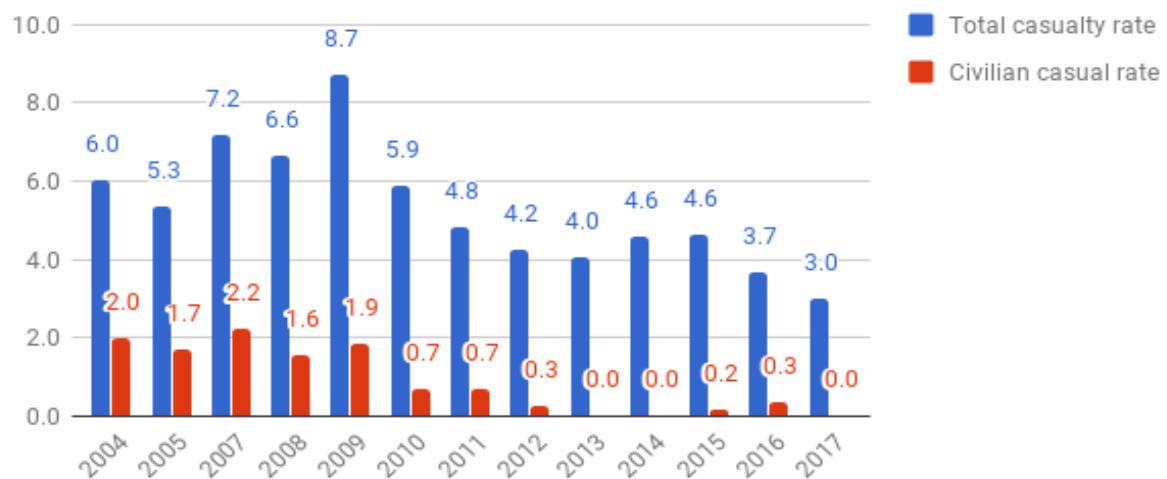
increasing the prospects of homegrown and international terrorism responses – particularly those by non-state actors. Greater transparency and communication surrounding this topic increases the likelihood of state collaboration and decision-making that benefits mutual self-interests.

In situations of state insecurity there need to be trust-inducing methods to explain why certain actions are being taken and why these actions are defensive rather than offensive. If there are no clear rules for the nature of drone warfare, any nation may choose to use these weapons for their domestic benefit, greatly heightening the risk of full-scale war. Unfortunately, methods of cooperation do not often occur and the U.S. has not effectively portrayed reasoning for drone strikes as self-defence. It is understandable for the U.S., like any other actor, to create buffer zones of protection in areas where it feels threatened. Nonetheless, these should be made into participation opportunities rather than war zones. It is of the utmost importance for actors to signal why they are doing what they are doing in order to minimize confusion and miscommunication. This is not only important for the bilateral relationship in question, but also for the wider international governing community. Nonetheless, this remains a mere possibility. In the face of other state and non-state players advancing their military technologies, the future dangers resulting from U.S. drone wars are both imminent and inherently complex.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Pakistan: casualty rates for CIA drone strikes, 2004 to present (people killed per strike)



Note: 2006 data has been excluded as an attack in October that year,

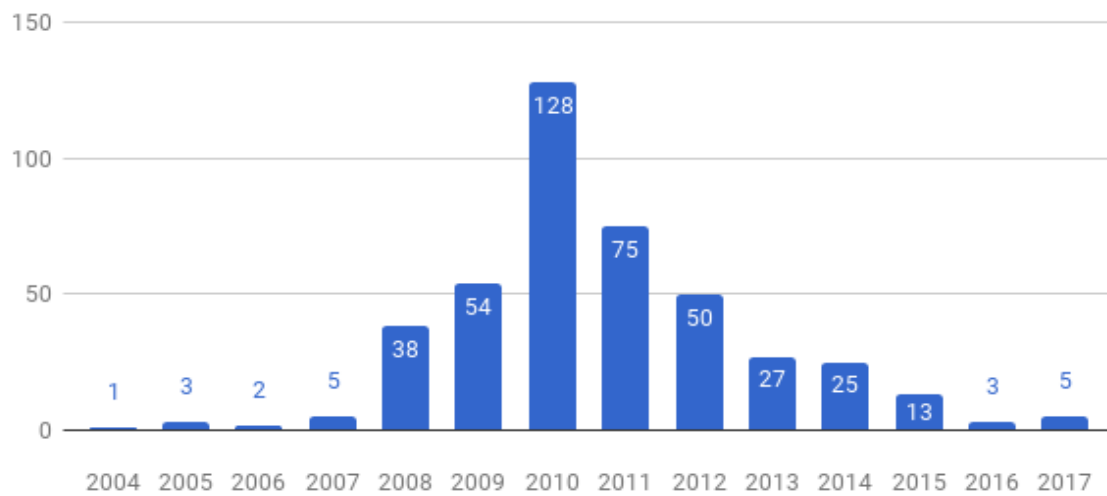
The Bureau of Investigative Journalism. "CIA and US military drone strikes in Pakistan, 2004 to present".

Accessed 02/05/18. Available at [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1NAfjFonM-](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1NAfjFonM-Tn7fziqiv33HIGt09wgLZDSCP-BQaux51w/edit#gid=1189885667)

[Tn7fziqiv33HIGt09wgLZDSCP-BQaux51w/edit#gid=1189885667](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1NAfjFonM-Tn7fziqiv33HIGt09wgLZDSCP-BQaux51w/edit#gid=1189885667)

Appendix 2

Pakistan: CIA drone strikes, 2004 to present



Source: *The Bureau of Investigative Journalism (TBIJ.com)*

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism. "CIA and US military drone strikes in Pakistan, 2004 to present". Accessed 02/05/18. Available at <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1NAfjFonM-Tn7fziqiv33HIGt09wgLZDSCP-BQaux51w/edit#gid=477128060>

Appendix 3



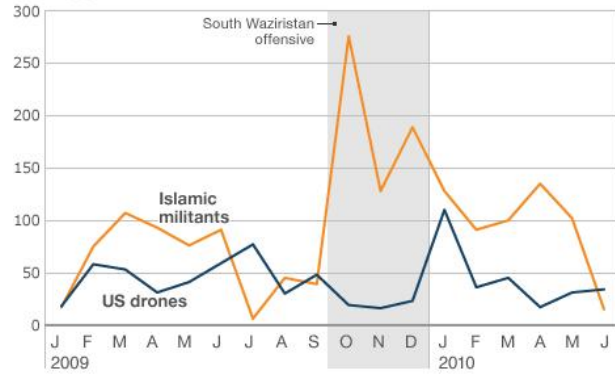
Pande, Aru. 2016. "US Drone Strike in Pakistan Renews Calls for Transparency". *VOA News*. Accessed 08/02/2018. Available at: <https://www.voanews.com/a/us-drone-strike-in-pakistan-renews-calls-for-transparency/3356692.html>

Appendix 4

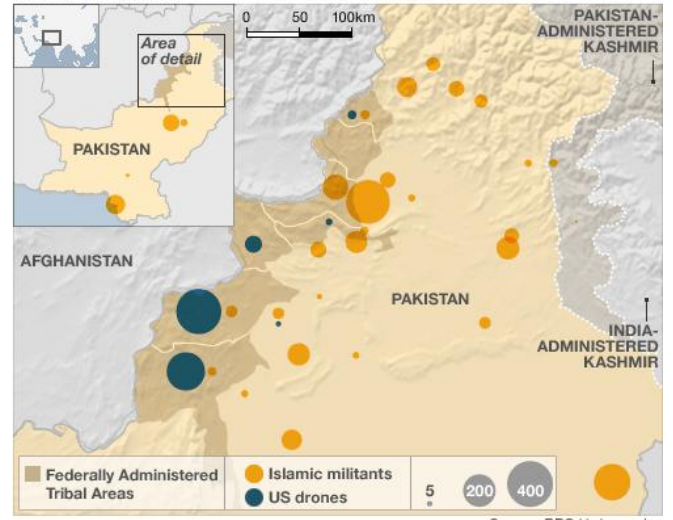
TOTAL DEATHS CAUSED BY US DRONE AND ISLAMIC MILITANT ATTACKS: 2,459



DEATHS OVER TIME



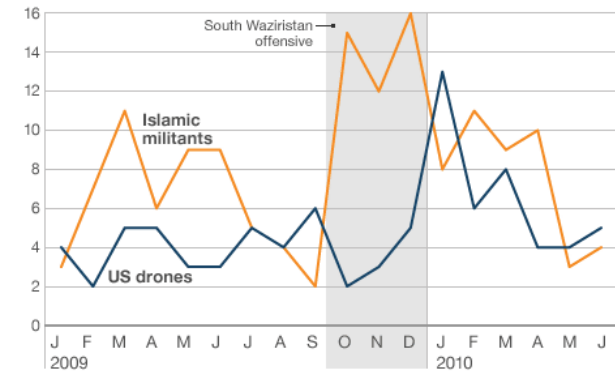
DEATHS BY REGION



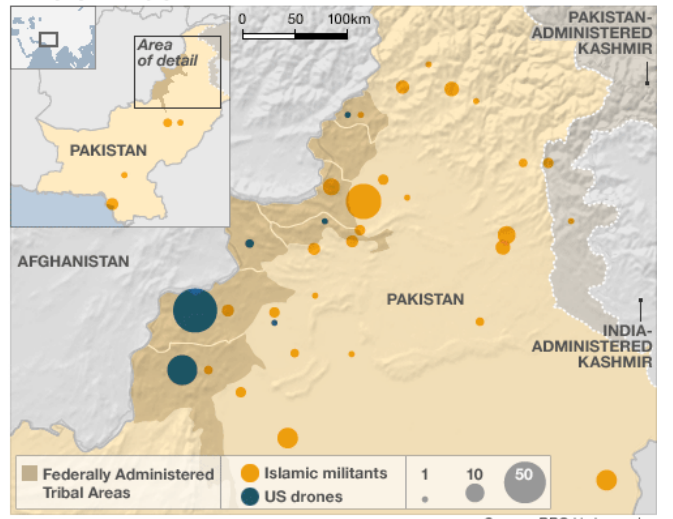
TOTAL ATTACKS BY US DRONES AND ISLAMIC MILITANTS: 231



ATTACKS OVER TIME



ATTACKS BY REGION



Pakistan Defence. 2010. Accessed 08/02/2018. Available at <https://defence.pk/pdf/threads/mapping-us-drone-and-islamic-militant-attacks-in-pakistan.66891/>

Appendix 5

The Major Realist Theories

	Defensive Realism	Offensive Realism
What causes states to compete for power?	Structure of the system	Structure of the system
How much power do states want?	Not much more than what they have. States concentrate on maintaining the balance of power.	All they can get. States maximise relative power, with hegemony as their ultimate goal.

Mearsheimer, John J. 2001. "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics". New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. P.22

Appendix 6

The Security Dilemma

	Offence has the Advantage	Defence has the Advantage
Offensive posture not distinguishable from defensive one	Doubly dangerous	Security dilemma, but security requirements may be compatible
Offensive posture distinguishable from defensive one	No security dilemma, but aggression possible. Status-quo states can follow different policy than aggressors. Warning given.	Doubly stable

Jervis, Robert. 1978. "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma". *World Politics*, 30(2). P.211

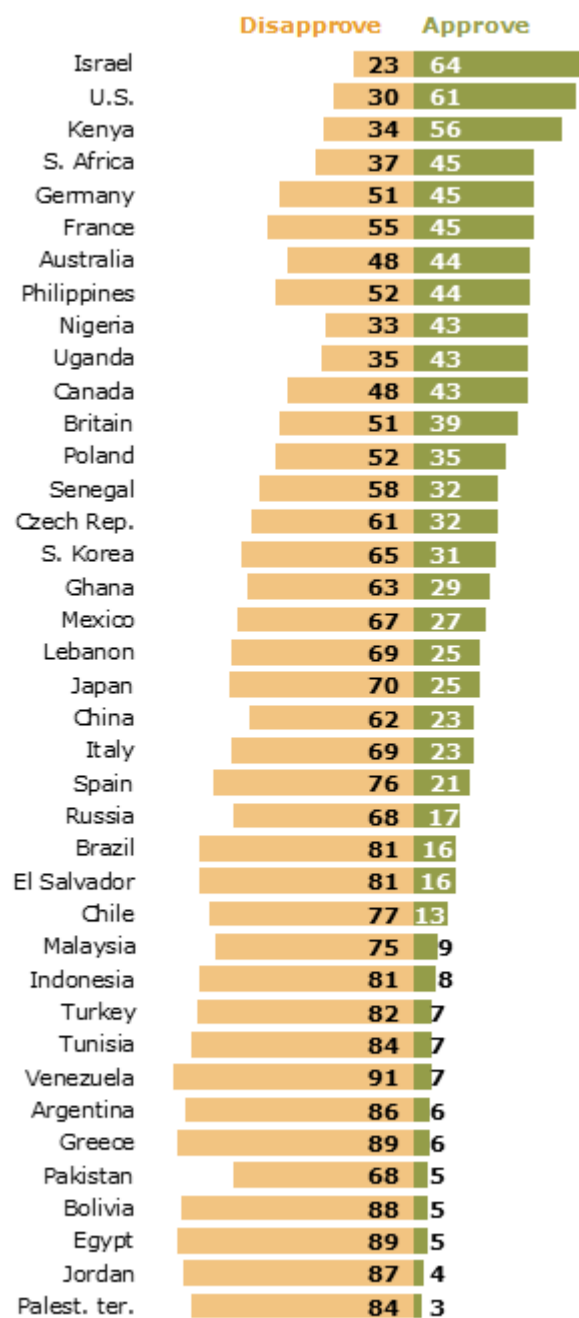
Appendix 7



Amnesty International Publications. 2013. ““Will I be next?” US Drone Strikes in Pakistan”. Accessed 26/04/2018. Available at <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/12000/asa330132013en.pdf>

Appendix 8

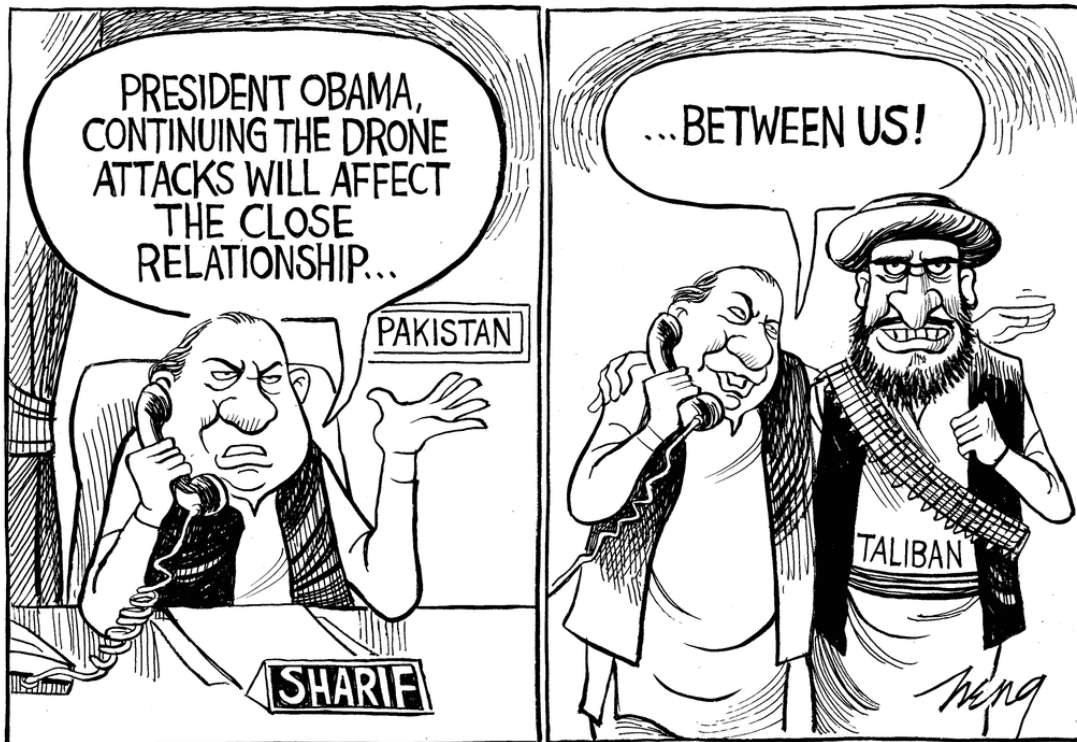
Widespread Opposition to Drones



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q53.

Pew Research Center. 2013. "Chapter 1. Attitudes toward the United States". *Pew Research Center: Global Attitudes and Trends*. Accessed 03/05/18. Available at <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/07/18/chapter-1-attitudes-toward-the-united-states/#drone-strikes>

Appendix 9



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Appendix 10



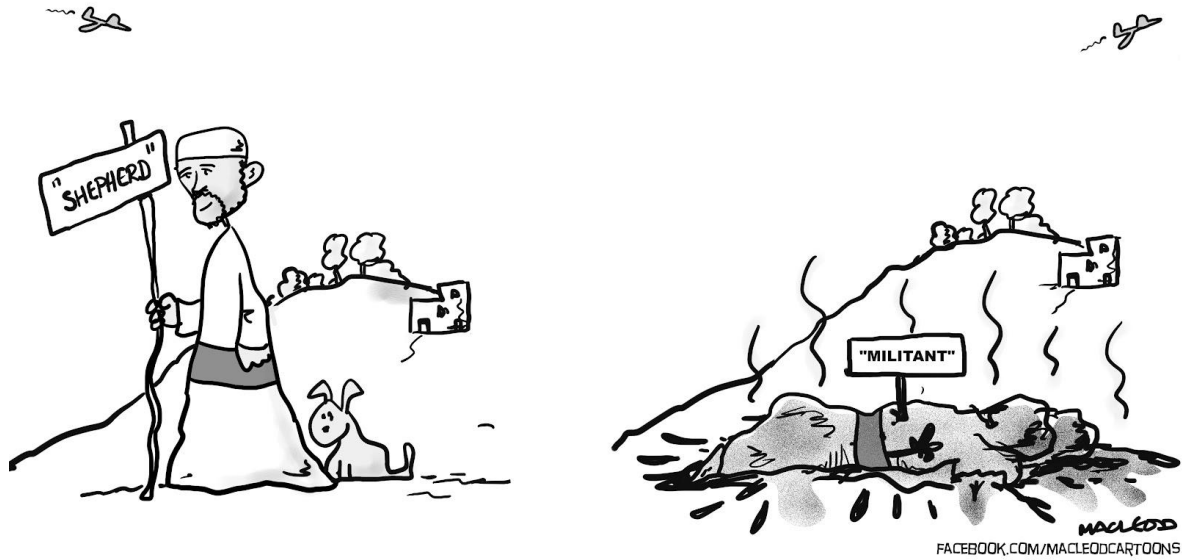
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Appendix 11



Hands, Phil. 2009. "Drone Cartoons: The Elite Eight". *Council on Foreign Relations*. Accessed 04/06/18. Available at <https://www.cfr.org/blog/drone-cartoons-elite-eight>

THE TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT OF DRONE STRIKES



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