Aiming from a Distance: The Implications of the Use of Drones for Security

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Aiming from a Distance: What Implications does the use of Drones in the War on Terror have for Security?

Introduction

"To the United States, a drone strike seems to have very little risk and very little pain. At the receiving end, it feels like war"[1]. The use of unmanned aerial vehicles, also known as drones, by the USA in the War on Terror has attracted a lot of attention from policy-makers, scholars, the media and civil society, due to the several contentious matters it raises. This very peculiar kind of military technology that allows killing from a distance, is not only changing the way war is fought, but it is subsequently having implications for the (in)security of the different groups involved: the USA, its military, terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda, and innocent civilians.

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The new Western way of war, as presented by Martin Shaw, is all about the management of risks; initially transferred from governments to their militaries and then, to the enemy combatants. However, in the attempt to minimize their own losses, the risk is often transferred to innocent civilians[2]. This can be combined with James Der Derian's conceptualization of virtual war, which revolves around the technical capability to threaten and use violence from a distance[3]. Drones are the ultimate example of risk-transfer in a war that becomes virtual for some but remains real for others. Yet Shaw's theory can be expanded. All of the "collateral damage" caused by drones invigorates the anti-American sentiment, while creating new grievances that might generate violent responses by terrorist groups and civilians alike[4]. In return, this can threaten the American national security. This cycle of risk-transfer contextualized within a virtual war, provides a framework that allows an analysis of the implications of the use of drones in the War on Terror for war and subsequently for security.

In order to conduct such an analysis, it is fundamental to contextualize the deployment of drones by the USA in the broader setting of the War on Terror, by considering the nature of the threat, the American response to it, and the central role that identity has come to play in this war. Then, in order to understand the impact of drones in warfare, Martin Shaw's theory of risk-transfer and James Der Derian's conceptualization of virtual war will be merged. These shifts in warfare are neither completely new nor particular to drones; they simply reflect the culmination of what technological development can achieve militarily. This theoretical framework enables an evaluation of the implications that drones have for the security of four different groups, the USA, the American soldiers, terrorists and insurgents, and the civilian population being "accidentally" targeted. This will be followed by an extension of Shaw's risk-transfer theory that attempts to evaluate how the consequences of drone strikes might backfire at the USA. After all, "in war the result is never final"[5].

The War on Terror and the Misunderstood "Other"

In a time of widespread fear following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the Bush administration declared the War on Terror. Pre-emptive actions taken in the name of self-defense were directed towards an enemy broadly and unclearly defined. In a statement to the American Congress shortly after 9/11, President Bush stated:

"The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends[…]Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them. Our War on Terror begins with Al-Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated."[6]

The USA waged war against a stateless enemy of unclear nature. Its response began with the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, followed by Iraq in 2003. Over a decade later, the quest to defeat terrorism has extended to Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, countries that are not formally at war with the USA, but where various targeted missile and drone attacks have also befallen[7]. This was the result of trying to contain and defeat a network spanning a vast reach capable of travelling beyond borders. Although the exact nature of terrorism in general, and Al-Qaeda in particular, is quite abstract and has changed across time, some trends are noticeable. Audrey Cronin claims that nowadays, the wave of extremist religiously motivated terrorism poses an unprecedented and unpredictable threat whose violent asymmetrical tactics not only target Americans, but also put at risk the international system as a whole[8]. Nonetheless, because the event that triggered the War on Terror took place on American soil, there was a sense that terrorism was primarily, yet not exclusively, an American enemy.

In consequence, the construction of a collective American identity was predicated on the differences between the USA and their "enemy". In his work based on Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Alexander Hinton claims that an "us" requires a separation from a "them", to whom certain characteristics and assumptions are attributed[9]. This is evident in Bush's speech as it continues:

"Americans are asking, why do they hate us? They hate[…]a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms[…]These terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life[…]They stand against us, because we stand in their way."[10]

In a world Bush divided into zones of "good" and "evil", his discourse inevitably implies who is who. This is necessary

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in order to gather support for the war, but it fails to acknowledge that it does not apply to every American, and that those constructions are often based on half-truths, stereotypes, broad generalizations, and outright fictions, as Hinton notices[11]. This proves how powerful discourse can be, as over a decade has gone by since 9/11 and many still have a misplaced fear of terrorism[12]. That sense of collective identity, based on a set of pre-fabricated ideas regarding what forms one's "sameness" and "otherness", categorizes certain groups under misleading labels unrepresentative of reality. So while the threat posed by terrorists is misunderstood, there is a distortion of who partakes in it too. As Americans are detached from the "other", this becomes a distant war[13]. At this point it is important to mention that this process is not exclusive to the USA in this particular context, but this shall be returned to afterwards.

This misplaced construction of identities led to a war waged against a misrepresented enemy. This is reflected in the strategical and tactical courses of action taken by the USA. Mikkel Rasmussen argues that the USA has become a risk-society. By measuring security in terms of risk, they are trying to prevent a possible scenario from becoming real instead of fighting a concrete threat[14]. This is pre-emptive action. However, because their target is unclear, casualties and suffering occur among those who were initially called "our Muslim friends". From the beginning, the USA resorted to air tactics, which were later upgraded to drone attacks. This is, as Shaw calls it, a new Western way of warfare[15].

The New Western Way of Virtuous War

As the weapon of choice, air power has provided the USA with a superior attack capability of "greater" accuracy that diminishes their own losses[16]. This comes with the paradigm shift entitled Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). P.W. Singer defines this concept as "the introduction of a new technology or organization, which in turn creates a whole new model of fighting and winning wars"[17]. Air strikes are nothing new but the emergence of drones represents the latest RMA, which has come to be perceived as "the only game in town"[18] against terrorism. Although certain drones are solely for surveillance and reconnaissance purposes, those armed for combat possess an unmanned attack capability that is managed from a distance, like the Predator and the Avenger. Although Shaw does not mention drones, and Der Derian does so merely once, their works still constitute a theoretical framework that deepens an understanding of how drones are impacting warfare.

Risk-Transfer Theory

The way in which the West fights war nowadays comes down to the controlled transference of risks: from the governments to their militaries, and then to enemy combatants. But, in the attempt to reduce their troops' fatalities, the risk is also transferred to non-combatant civilians[19]. Shaw developed and applied this theory primarily to air strikes, but the RMA that brought drones to life, has perfected its practice. That is evident in Shaw's risk-transfer rules.

One of those rules states, "Wars must, above all, minimize casualties to Western troops" [20]. This is because of the political risks such casualties might cause, considering how society is unwilling to tolerate futile losses[21]. All risks are completely eliminated from those controlling the drones in a station in Nevada, thousands of miles away from the real war. Nothing can endanger them. In this way, the Western mission of eliminating all risks to its own troops is accomplished. At least for the drone pilots, who before would have been physically present on the battlefield.

This directly links to another rule, "Western forces should rely heavily on airpower and look to others – as far as possible – to take risks on the ground"[22]. In the case of Afghanistan and Iraq, those were the Northern Alliance-United Front and the Kurdish militia respectively. It is important to note however, that this does not necessarily mean zero casualties for the American forces, which are also constituted of ground personnel that still face the same old dangers of war.

Regarding designated targets, the rule goes as follows, "The enemy must be killed: efficiently, quickly and discreetly" and in order to do so, the West utilizes its most technologically enhanced and "precise" weapons [23]. Today those are, supposedly, the drones. At the same time, "Risks of 'accidental' civilian casualties must be minimized, but small

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massacres must be regarded as inevitable"[24]. At this point, the reliance on "precision" weaponry is questioned. Precision can be defined as:

"The ability to locate high-value, time-sensitive fixed and mobile targets; to destroy them with a high degree of confidence; and to accomplish this within operationally and strategically significant time lines while minimising collateral damage, friendly fire casualties, and enemy counter-strikes."[25]

Drones may be more precise than previous forms of air strikes. However, the way in which they are being used is indiscriminate and does not seem to minimise "collateral damage"[26]. Their impreciseness is sometimes due to human error, machine malfunction and faulty information[27]. But it is also an outcome of a new paradigm of war, which although recognized by Shaw, needs to be emphasized: the difficulty in distinguishing combatants and non-combatants[28].

Overall, drones sharpen the risk-transfer practice by escalating it to a whole new level. However, their use is not unproblematic and risk-transfer does not always follow the rules. On a different yet related note, another of Shaw's rules states, "Wars must be limited spatially to distant zones of war[…]Real war must be something that goes on 'over there'"[29]. This brings back the notion that the War on Terror is a distant war. And here is where Der Derian's conceptualization of virtual war can complement Shaw's theory of risk-transfer.

Virtual War

From a poststructuralist approach, Der Derian explores the emergence and consequences of the military-industrial-media-entertainment network. However, what is significant about his work for this paper is not that network *per se*, but how technology and distance influence war. It is essential to reaffirm that, "At the heart of virtuous war is the technical capability and ethical imperative to threaten and, if necessary, actualize violence from a distance – with no or minimal casualties"[30]. This point is crucial seeing as drones add the factor of distance to war in unprecedented ways.

When discussing the dehumanization of war in the context of virtuality and the RMA, Singer observes that from the bow and arrow to the bomber plane, each new military equipment tends to move the soldier further and further away from its target[31]. In this sense, drones represent the peak in technological innovation of an on-going trend. Nonetheless, the effects drones have are much more profound because they are unmanned[32]. The destructive capability and lethal results of drone strikes and air bombings might be comparable, but drones "don't just create greater physical distance, but also a different sort of psychological distance and disconnection"[33]. Thus the War on Terror becomes even more distant. The factor of distance implicated upon drones, raises three fundamental matters.

The first component derives from Der Derian's statement, "virtuous wars promote a vision of bloodless, humanitarian, hygienic war"[34]. After combat, drones do not have a single scratch, giving the illusion that war is calculable and efficient. For those operating the drones, that is their (virtual) reality. However for those targeted, whether intentionally or "accidentally", a more violent reality surrounds them. In this way, a contrasting gap between the perceptions of reality and virtuality of war is created. Yet, despite this widening disparity, "virtuous war is still about killing others"[35], and is near certain to remain so.

The second component is that "virtuous war has an unsurpassed power to commute death, to keep it out of sight, out of mind. Herein lies its most morally dubious danger"[36]. Der Derian finds that distance facilitates killing, especially because it becomes an experience intertwined amidst reality and virtuality[37]. Drones reproduce this effect on those who are commanding them from a geographical and emotional distance. Adversely, this has psychological effects on those being targeted. According to Eliot Cohen, the effect of drones may be paralleled to those of strategic bombings, but with the difference that the former makes people feel like their lives are being constantly threatened[38]. This not only demonstrates the American strength, but also unintentionally terrorizes people it is not meant to scare.

The third component, deriving from both previous points is, "as the dependency on networked technologies increases[…]one cannot help but wonder if something fundamentally human is being lost"[39]. If Der Derian is correct

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in subtly implying so, then that cannot be solely analysed from the attacker's perspective. By primarily considering air strikes in Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq during the 1990s, Der Derian points to all of the "collateral damage" shaded by the virtuality of war[40]. Every RMA re-defines war, and accordingly so do drones. In very broad terms, "First, you had human beings without machines. Then, you had human beings with machines. And, finally you have machines without human beings"[41]. In this way, something human is clearly being replaced by technology. Yet, there is one constant that, although not explicitly captured in that statement, is always present: the human target. Today, similar parallels regarding the consequences of air strikes and drones can be drawn, such as civilian casualties, displaced populations, and those who helplessly know they cannot hold anyone accountable for the attacks that boost insecurity[42]. The attacker loses something fundamentally human, but that endures from the target's standpoint. It is just that the attacker is so detached from their foe, that the "other" is dehumanized and violence becomes normalized.

At this point, Shaw's comment on Der Derian's work is relevant. Their views are complementary and coincident in many points regarding how civilian casualties should be, but are not, minimized[43] [44]; and how sophisticated technology is misleadingly portraying war as less brutal than it actually is[45] [46]. The only constructive criticism Shaw makes in regards to Der Derian's work is that, "Western military power has been discussed in isolation, although Western campaigns were mostly responses to attacks by non-Western states or armed movements, either on the West itself or on civilian populations"[47]. This evokes the mutual constituency between the "us" and the "other", but it does not close the gap that distance creates between them in practicality.

Drones: The culmination of all distances

"The introduction of every new technology changes society, and how society looks at itself"[48] and at other societies. What drones bring to war is the culmination of physical and psychological distances in an unprecedented way. Physical distance means that it is geographical, spatial. Here, it is important to recall Shaw's rule of risk-transfer, in which war must happen "over there". The attacks of 9/11 mobilized such a rapid response, partially because violence was carried over to American territory[49], challenging the initial assumption that took the American security for granted. Drones take this physical distance even further by separating the pilot from its target completely, which founds an emotional detachment.

Psychological distance refers to the emotional, and perhaps even moral, side of the attacker-target relation. It involves primarily the idea that distance breaks down the resistance to kill[50]. David Grossman, an army psychologist, believes that, "The greater the distance, physical and emotional, from the enemy, the easier it is to kill them. Soldiers at close range or engaged in hand-to-hand combat exhibit a much higher resistance to killing, but at long range, [it] is much lower"[51]. Again, drones replicate this phenomenon.

In the context of an already distant war, other forms of distance were also expanded by the use of drones. For example, cultural distance regarding technology. Singer notes an unfamiliarity with certain kinds of technology in the Muslim world, especially in the tribes. That results from a combination of development, poor investment in sciences, and the ways in which the media portrays technology[52]. If drones were already eerie, they become even more threatening. It is the "human" versus the "machine" that will triumph. This can be potentially dangerous, as it creates more resentment than the USA realizes[53].

Drones merge those distances together. The spatial separation between the attacker and the target creates a psychological distance, enhanced by the pre-existing detachments of the War on Terror. This culmination of distances induces matters of identity. It has already been shown how the identity of the attacker is constructed and reflected in their military strategy. A similar process, of distancing and misrepresentation in a context of violence, applies to the target, but this shall be considered later on. As for now, it is intrinsic to explore the implications of drones for security.

(In)Security

By changing warfare, drones have also led to shifts in security patterns. Risk-transfer theory provides an analytical

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framework of those patterns while conceptualizing security in terms of risk. It concludes that there are inequalities of life-risks between the West and their targets[54]. However, it is important to distinguish threats from risks. Rasmussen defines a threat as "a specific danger which can be precisely identified and measured on the basis of the capabilities an enemy has to realise a hostile intent"[55], and risks as flows, "what matters is not so much what happens but what may happen, because[…]as soon as risks become real[…]they cease to be risks and become a catastrophe or at least an irritation"[56]. The main difference between these lies in the computability of danger, which is more challenging regarding risks as they are unpredictable.

Therefore, a conceptualization of security in terms of risks is more suitable to the analysis of the American and its drone pilots' security, as they are in control of the technology that allows risk-transfer. Accordingly, a conceptualization of security in terms of threats is more appropriate to those being targeted, whether intentionally or not. However, both conceptualizations need to embrace a more conventional understanding of security, which implies the existence of a condition of protection, safety, and freedom from danger[57]. In the War on Terror, such conditions cannot exist on its totality. Thus paradoxically, "in security we find insecurity"[58]. And so, drones are providing a strategic hubris to the USA, greater protection for its forces, a disadvantage to terrorists, and no chance to civilians.

USA: A Greater Sense of Security Amidst Insecurity

The USA has shown a certain willingness to use force in the War on Terror, as long as it can be done from afar. Just in his first term, President Obama allowed more drone strikes than his predecessor in two terms[59]. Politically, the rational justifications that attempt to excuse the immorality and civilian casualties behind the significant increase of drone strikes are mainly based on two threads. The first is the claim that drones are cost-effective, and much cheaper than manned aircraft[60]. The second one is based on the national (and international) security rhetoric. In a speech at the National Defence University, Obama defended the effectiveness of drones in making the USA more secure by strongly weakening Al-Qaeda. He said,

"Dozens of highly skilled Al-Qaeda commanders, trainers, bomb makers and operatives have been taken off the battlefield. Plots have been disrupted that would have targeted international aviation, U.S. transit systems, European cities and our troops in Afghanistan. Simply put, these strikes have saved lives."[61]

This is based on the calculation of risks and effectuated on the grounds of pre-emptive action. Indeed, there has not been another successful attack on American soil ever since 9/11. Besides, those justifications are necessary in order to attempt to minimize any political risks[62]. That is summarized when Obama clearly says, "These decisions must be made, given my responsibility to protect the American people"[63].

However, there is one adversity to the national security rhetoric. Although intrinsic, it is being overemphasized and reducing the attention to the effects an intensive use of drones may have for strategy itself. As Cronin argues, "the drone program has taken on a life of its own, to the point where tactics are driving strategy rather than the other way around"[64]. The broader strategy of the USA in the War on Terror, involves more than simply eliminating Al-Qaeda and its affiliated groups. Yet, that is all drones can accomplish. They cannot prevent new conflicts or the spread of terrorism. They do not have a protective capability if an attack on the USA is underway[65]. Rather, an overemphasized and abusive use of drones is fuelling long-term risks that are being overshadowed by the short-term advantages. In order to understand how that is coming to be, it is necessary to follow the path of risk-transfer.

The New Soldier: Protected and Disconnected

In a controlling station in Nevada, no warfare-related activity can imperil the lives of drone pilots. The distance created by drones keeps them safely omnipresent on the battlefield and in the USA. If ground troops made fun of pilots for being safe at war[66], drone pilots must become the aim of mockery. They are fighting a war in which they cannot be killed, they cannot be maimed in a crash, and they cannot be captured and tortured by enemy forces[67]. They usually go to work, wearing their uniforms, everyday for twelve hours with the unit split into two shifts, the exact same as those present in war zones. However, "At the end of the duty day, you walk out of the deployment and walk

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back into the rest of life in America"[68], as a commander claims. They experience the safest side of the war. Yet, with all of this protection and distance, possible due to technology, a certain disconnection develops

Arguing against all of those who presuppose that drone operations reduce war to a video game in which the killing space appears remote, distant and virtual, Derek Gregory posits that although drone pilots are further away physically, they can see more and closer images of war[69]. The psychological and emotional impacts that virtuality has on drone pilots cannot be generalized, as their accounts demonstrate a range of experiences and emotions. One of them said, "It's like a video game. It can get a little bloodthirsty. But it's fucking cool"[70]. The role of the military is to use force, they are purposefully trained to kill and destroy brutally and lethally[71]. The same applies to drone pilots, but it does not justify the lack of sensitivity in that pilot's comment. A commander summed it up as, "We fell it, maybe not to the same degree [as] if we were actually there, but it affects us. When you let a missile go, you know that's real life – there's no reset button"[72]. There have been several reports on drone crews that are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder induced by an exposure to high-resolution images of real-time war and killing[73]. So it might be that psychologically, drone pilots are not so shielded. However, the factor of distance does have a detaching effect, and in the virtual world, people tend to do things they wouldn't do in real life[74], like describing killing as "cool".

This is the new soldier, protected yet disconnected from the real war. There is no act of courage, no fear, no sacrifice. This brings into question an ethical claim regarding armed combat, which deems that one should only be permitted to kill if one runs the risk of being killed him/herself[75]. Based on such a claim, drones are an unethical form of combat. However, is it so wrong to protect soldiers' lives by adapting a virtual tactic? In any case, for the targets, reality is not so virtual.

Al-Qaeda and Insurgents: Twenty-Two Tips on How to Survive a Drone Strike

"Today, the core of Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan is on the path to defeat. Their remaining operatives spend more time thinking about their own safety than plotting against us"[76].

These words by Obama suggest to the general public that drones are having a crucial role in bringing down terrorism. As such, surveillance and reconnaissance drones contributed to the gathering of intelligence that led to the killing of Osama Bin Laden in May 2011[77]. However, armed drones are the ones with the potential to cause greater damage.

A wide range of Al-Qaeda members have been eliminated. From Al-Qaeda's number two, Abu Yahya Al-Libi, to operatives and editors of an online magazine that tried to popularized the group in the Arabian Peninsula and to galvanize potential recruits in the West[78]. It is estimated that around 75% of core Al-Qaeda members have been eliminated in tribal areas, and that only ten to twenty main leaders remain in Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen[79]. In this way, different branches of the organization are being weakened. There has been a significant decrease in the lethality and number of terrorist attacks in tribal zones, resultant of drone strikes[80]. It is impossibly challenging to fight drones with the methods usually employed by terrorists, like explosives. However, that does not impede them from trying.

An Al-Qaeda document containing twenty-two tips on how to avoid drone strikes was found in Mali. The list includes several simplistic tactics that play against the limitations of drones. Some of the tips advise members "To deceive the drone by entering places of multiple entrances and exits", and "To hide under thick trees because they are the best cover against the planes", and even endorse the "Formation of fake gatherings such as using dolls and statues to be placed outside false ditches to mislead the enemy"[81]. The extent to which these are effective is unknown, but some other rules seem more serious. Some recommend specific devices to interfere in drones' frequencies and waves. It has been reported that insurgents in Iraq have been able to hack a drone by using software that can be purchased online for £16[82]. This is worrying for the USA because if insurgents are able to intercept footages and uncover the locations under target, they can evacuate. Every new military technology is eventually countered by the adoption of suitable tactics that in turn will demand for another technological innovation[83]. Hacking represents the very initial counteracting of drones, originating from the enemy's necessity to assure its own security.

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Although drone strikes hinder terrorist activity, it only does so to a certain extent considering how such strikes can also instigate a response. In December 2009, a suicide bombing of a CIA base in Khost, Afghanistan, was said to be an act of revenge for the deaths of militants in drone strikes in Pakistan[84]. According to Paul Wilkinson, "There is no technological quick-fix to deal with terrorism"[85]. Drones are not an exception. They might have weakened Al-Qaeda, its affiliates and insurgents, who are and feel less secure. However, that immediate insecurity might have future adverse implications due to the adaptation of tactical responses to drones, and all the "collateral damage".

Civilians: Not-So-Collateral Damage

Involuntarily exposed to war, civilians are extremely insecure. The USA justifies the civilian casualties from drone strikes under the quite ironic pretext that they are trying to protect them. To quote Obama, "Remember that the terrorists we are after target civilians, and the death toll from their acts of terrorism against Muslims dwarfs any estimate of civilian casualties from drone strikes. So doing nothing is not an option"[86]. This is neither a novelty nor a peculiarity of the War on Terror and the use of drones, but it is being intensified and raising controversies.

While the USA promotes drone strikes as being precise enough to reduce civilian casualties[87], reality disproves it. Recently, the Pakistani Ministry of Defence released a figure stating that only 67 civilians have died amongst the 2,227 who were killed in drone strikes since 2008, a number much lower than previously estimated by independent groups[88]. For instance, the London-based Bureau of Investigative Journalism's count was of 830 civilians in Pakistan, 138 in Yemen and 57 in Somalia[89]. A difference of 763 casualties matters significantly as it reinforces the statement that civilians are seen as collateral damage, a lamentable but acceptable cost of virtuous war. Furthermore, because it is difficult to distinguish combatants from non-combatants, many counterterrorist officials justify civilian casualties by saying that, "People in an area of known terrorist activity, or found with a top Al-Qaeda operative, are probably up to no good"[90]. Besides the fact that this is an unfair generalization, it fails to account for all the innocent women, children and men, who will forever live in misery and pain. It becomes intrinsic to include the accounts of those who are often seen as figurants:

"If the drones had not become routine, and my father had not died and I hadn't lost my leg, today I would have completed my MA in Political Science[…]I can't dream of going back to college."[91]

"When the weather is clear, three or four drones can be seen[…]They are in the air 24/7[…]When there were no drones, everything was all right[…]The drone strikes have caused many problems: first, it's psychological[…]Secondly, a lot of men have been killed[…]and now the kids and the families don't have a source of income."[92]

The USA does not realize the extent to which their actions are negatively impacting civilians. It seems as if civilian casualties have not hindered the deployment of drones, putting into question whether the killing of civilians is a genuine or deliberate "accident". Not all drone strikes that hit innocent civilians are intentional, but it seems that its misuse has contributed to the normalization of civilian casualties, which are becoming more permissible in a war fought from a distance in which killing is easy. In the words of Patricia Owens, "Accidents don't just happen"[93]. So even if the USA claims to be making an effort to reduce civilian casualties, those on the ground seeing their loved ones loosing their lives, are unaware of those "efforts". All they can see around them is destruction, which may backfire to the USA and the West in a future not so distant.

Towards a New Phase of Risk-Transfer?: The "Other's Other" and the Implications for the American Security

For the USA it seems like drones are fortifying its national security. However, without fully understanding the unintended consequences of the " collateral damage" of its destructive actions[94], the USA is imperilling its future security. Unfortunately, Shaw did not take full advantage of his own insight. By containing his analysis neatly within the risk-transfer framework in a one-way direction (starting with the Western governments and ending with the civilians), he did not acknowledge the possibility of there being inadvertent implications for Western security in return. This is not so much a new phase in the risk-transfer flow, as it is not being managed by the new Western way of warfare. Rather, it is consequential of the conditions created by risk-transfer, which might backfire, posing new

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threats to Western security. In turn, this will trigger responsive actions by the West, and this process becomes cyclical. Particularly, it is applicable to the USA, drone strikes and the broader context of the War on Terror, in which matters of identity become, once again, intrinsic.

When the response to 9/11 fostered a discourse based on the formulation of identity through a separation of an "us" from a "them", a parallel rhetoric occurred on the "them's" side. Bin Laden's words claim, "Carry arms against the Kufr[non-believers]until they are expelled, defeated, and humiliated[…]While you carry arms on our land, our legitimate and moral duty is to terrorize you"[95]. In many of his statements, distinctions between American freedoms and Islamic values can be found[96]. And so, the enemy they are trying to fight is the USA, and to destroy their way of life by deliberately targeting the most vulnerable part of the American society, its civilians[97]. In regards to drones, because many of its victims have been civilians, this phenomenon is expanded and even re-created. Perhaps, this is best exemplified by the account of Khalid Raheem, a drone strike survivor:

"We did not know that America existed[…]until America invaded Iraq and Afghanistan[…]We didn't know how they treated a common man. Now we know[…]We know that the consequences of drone strikes are extremely harsh[…]We're just always in fear."[98]

Thus, the USA becomes their "other's other", based on the unintended consequences of their drone strikes. Predator is not only the name of the drone, but what the USA becomes for their targets. There might be different, unclear and misrepresented perceptions of the USA as an enemy, but all of them are quite dangerous, especially if combined. From their viewpoint, drone strikes are an attack on the Muslim identity, and as such are creating more enemies than those being killed by drones[99].

As Cronin suggests, drones have not halted the activities of Al-Qaeda and its affiliates. For instance, they advantageously incorporate drone strikes within their propaganda as a way of instigating anti-Americanism, attracting new recruiters and gathering resources[100]. A former CIA Official, Robert Grenier, is worried that the indiscriminate character of drone strikes is leading to political instability that instigates the creation of terrorist safe havens, especially in Yemen, where Al-Qaeda insurgents have taken over some territory from the local army[101]. Also, pools in July and August 2009, have shown that Pakistanis are becoming more distrustful and suspicious of the USA. 80% refuse to cooperate with them. 76% oppose to their drone strikes in the region[102].

Besides, it has also perpetuated violence in the USA. This is perhaps best exemplified by the attempt of Faisal Shahzad to bomb Times Square in May 2010 by loading a car with explosives. As a Pakistani naturalized American citizen, married and a financial analyst, Shahzad was an unforeseen terrorist. However, when he pleaded guilty, he showed an aversion towards the drone strikes in Pakistan[103]. His actions posed a threat to the USA national security, and could have killed many American civilians in New York, again. The battle for "the hearts and minds" of the peoples has already been lost[104].

All of this might exacerbate if the use of drones remains indiscriminate. The outcome of this war waged under a national security rhetoric, will most likely backfire. It is true that terrorists are being put down, but at the cost of various civilians. The psychological effects of such actions might generate violent responses towards the USA. It is important to point out that this does not necessarily mean that uninvolved civilians will instantaneously join Al-Qaeda, instead that the USA is creating new grievances and making new enemies. "What unifies them is us"[105]. And this might increase American insecurity. Simply put, drones are slowly creating a not so-distant future insecurity amidst a temporary apparent sense of security for the USA.

Conclusion

There is nothing inherently wrong with drones insofar as a machine replaces a pilot on the battlefield[106]. However, the morality of drones begins and ends at that point. Shaw's risk-transfer theory and Der Derian's conceptualization of virtuous war, have allowed an in-depth understanding of the contentious deployment of drones in the particular context of the War on Terror. By adding to war the factor of distance, drones create points of disjunction between the attacker and its targets in an already distant war, enlarging the physical, psychological, and perhaps even moral,

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distances.

Overall, the implications that drones are having for security can be summed up in five points that follow the risk-transfer flow plus its extension. First, drones provide an apparent strategical and tactical superiority to the USA that in the short-term makes them feel more secure. Secondly, spacial distance shields drone pilots, but it is possible that they are still psychologically affected by an ease to kill and/or by post-traumatic stress disorder. Thirdly, drone strikes contribute towards Al-Qaeda and other targeted groups worrying about their security whilst hindering some of their activities. Fourthy, it has reduced civilians to a not-so-collateral damage, making them more insecure and fearful of drones and Americans alike. Finally, all the above factors create new conditions for violence and hatred that can backfire at the USA.

It is not that the USA should shut their drone programme down, as this kind of military technology can be valuable against terrorism. To borrow from Clausewitz, "The greater the success we seek, the greater will be the damage if we fail"[107]. It must be ensured that the broader strategy of the War on Terror is not solely based upon a tactic, and that new standards for a less indiscriminate target of civilians are taken. Or else, the repercussions for the USA will vividly bring back the memories that triggered this war in the first place.

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