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TARGETED KILLING: MANAGING AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS

ON UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLE OPERATIONS

by

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PREFACE

During my 19 years in the Air Force, I have spent all of that time in an intelligence unit that operates with an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) platform. This has given me the opportunity to explore multiple aspects of working in a UAV platform. As the use of UAVs has become more popular in the military since the attacks on 9/11/01, this has become a widely viewed and criticized area of military operation. Some critics believe that this type of operation that exploits targeted killing has encouraged more people to join terror groups. This research and the love of my work, have lead me to explore at an in-depth level how Americans view targeted killing through UAV operations. This research will look at those perceptions in relation to moral and ethical consequences, foreign relations and the effects on politics within the United States, and the legislation that guides these operations.

I have devoted a vast amount of my free time to this research, and I greatly appreciate the support of my fiancée and twin daughters. Without their support through this process, it would have been a much more daunting and less enjoyable task.

In addition, I would like to thank my Research I professor, Dr. Lessane, for her support in creating a strong research proposal to get me started in the writing of this thesis. I would also like to thank my current advisor, Dr. Andrew Niesiobedzki for his support and constructive criticism to help me to formulate a strong research paper. My classmates in Research I and II have been very supportive with their assessments and suggestions to help me along the way. Thank you to all of these people for the support and guidance.

ABSTRACT

The use of UAVs to preform targeted strikes on enemy personnel has changed the viewpoint of the American populace towards the military; in turn, causing change in how politicians choose to present their arguments for or against military campaigns. This research will analyze data from various sources in reference to the American approval rating for UAV targeted strikes. In addition, foreign policy, legislation, legal analysis, and exploration of moral and ethical consequences will be reviewed to answer the research question. This research will show that although these strikes have been useful in killing high level targets of terrorist organizations, it has also caused tension among nations and been used as a tool for terrorist recruitment. Additionally, this research will show the lack of transparency of the program, and that it continues to increase in criticism because the harm to civilians outweighs the good it does for the war on terror.

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Study

September 11, 2001, is a day most Americans recognize and will forever be embedded in the minds of many. The United States was attacked by terrorists, and the war on terror changed drastically. "On Sept.18, 2001, Congress enacted a joint resolution authorizing the President to 'use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations or persons he determined planned, authorized or committed or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on Sept. 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons.'"[1] This Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) has been cited by government officials and scholars for the continued use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in targeted killing of civilian and military personnel across the globe. Most of these UAV strikes have occurred in the Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan, and Iraq. As the use of UAVs increases, the growing concern over the United States' counterterrorism strategy and policies regarding international law for these targeted strikes will generate public and political awareness. This has become a deeply divided public issue. Many believe that these types of UAV strikes will be more precise and create less civilian collateral damage, while others believe these strikes violate international laws and are very unethical.

Nature of the Problem

The use of UAVs to preform targeted strikes on enemy personnel has changed the viewpoint of the American populace towards the military; in turn, causing change in how politicians choose to present their arguments for or against military campaigns. American politicians are using the convenience and ease of UAV targeted strikes to invoke the feeling that America is successfully detouring the insurgency of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) because the number of UAV targeted strikes has continually increased. One research study by

the Pew Research Center shows that 62% of the American people approve of UAV targeted strikes.[2] In addition, these strikes keep U.S. troops out of harm's way, while producing less collateral damage than manned aircraft strikes.[3] Some critics will contend that these targeted UAV strikes will cause an increase in recruits joining the ISIS terror cell.[4] Therefore, the American populace may never see an end to the war on terror. However, there are other factors that cause recruits to join ISIS rather than UAV targeted strikes alone.[5] The problem is that UAV strikes are causing a change in the perceptions of not only the American people, but the world audience as well. These changing perceptions are going to have a dramatic impact on how the U.S. conducts wartime operations, and possible changes in the elected officials of the U.S.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to review the history of UAV strikes in targeted killing, the legislation that supports it, how foreign relations are affected, and the moral and ethical implications involved to determine how Americans feel about targeted killings in relation to the citizens of other countries/our allies' views on targeted killings. This review will consist of the history of UAVs and U.S. military usage of UAVs. Next the review will investigate the legislation and international rules of targeted killings and warfare, in addition to researching the foreign relations implications. This review will also explore studies on populations both U.S. and internationally, and their perceptions of UAV strikes. Finally, a case study review will pull all of this information together to answer the question being asked.

The United States Air Force has been using unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or drones in one form or another since the U.S. Civil War. The use of this type of technology for targeted strikes came to light after the attacks on the World Trade Centers on September 11, 2001. The highly advanced technology of the Predator and the Reaper has been very successful in targeted

killing of terrorists in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. However, critics claim that these targeted strikes are a tool to recruit young militants to ISIS and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Although the United States UAV strike program has an approval rating of 62%, many other countries do not agree with the use of UAVs to fight the war on terror.

Although UAVs are successful in protecting allied lives, there can be downsides to their use such as a disapproval from allies who feel that targeted killings are an unethical practice. In addition, this unethical practice could possibly strengthen our enemy. This could happen through the advanced social networking systems terrorists use to promote their ideas and communicate with other groups.

Through reviewing targeted killing in the Middle East, political implications with Allied forces will be determined. These findings could influence the future of American politics by informing Americans of the ramifications of targeted strikes. In addition, these findings could be useful in making decisions on the future use of UAVs for targeted strikes.

Research Question

Due to the increased number of UAV targeted strikes and the potential for these strikes to change certain thoughts about the United States, these changes must be understood and a plan must be made to deal with them. Therefore, the research question of this study is: "How have the recent UAV targeted military strikes influenced American perceptions about the military and impacted the way American politicians choose to fight wars?"

Research Methodology

A case study methodology will be utilized in combination with a qualitative method to use narrative research, case studies, and phenomenological research to gather the essential data that will eventually answer the research question. This research will analyze data from various

sources in reference to the American approval rating for UAV targeted strikes. In addition,

foreign policy, legislation, legal analysis, and exploration of moral and ethical consequences will

be reviewed to answer the research question. The research will use the terms unmanned aerial

vehicle (UAV), remotely piloted aircraft (RPA), and drone interchangeably.

LITERATURE REVIEW

History of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPAs) or drones have

become commonly used by the United States (U.S.) military since 2001. Over the past 15 years,

their usage in fighting the "War on Terror," has become a daily part of American warfare.

However, UAVs were used long ago for many different practices, and have been called many

different names over time (See Figure I). As defined by the *Dictionary of Military and*

Associated Terms, Joint Publication 1-02, a UAV is:

> A powered, aerial vehicle that does not carry a human operator,
> uses aerodynamic forces to provide vehicle lift, can fly
> autonomously or be remotely piloted, can be expendable or
> recoverable, and can carry a lethal or nonlethal payload. Ballistic
> or semi ballistic vehicles, cruise missiles, and artillery projectiles
> are not considered unmanned aerial vehicles.[6]

With this definition in mind, the first UAV can date back to the mid-nineteenth century when the

Austrian Army used pilotless balloons to carry dynamite that could be controlled with timed

fuses.[7] This is by no means the UAV that is used today. However, there were multiple attempts

and successes at creating what have eventually evolved into the current operational UAVs used

for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions.

The first technology that demonstrated the concept of the unmanned aircraft was the

Navy-Sperry "Flying Bomb," that was developed shortly before World War I (WWI). An

inventor named Elmer Sperry, was hired by the Navy to develop the Curtis biplane which was

more like an "aerial torpedo" that carried trinitrotoluene (TNT) and would be launched by

catapult to a predetermined destination where it would fall out of the sky to hit its target.[8] This

was one of the U.S. military's first attempts in regards to UAV operations, however this research

was discontinued in 1922 due to lack of funding.

The next venture for the U.S. military and UAVs happened during the same period and was commissioned by the Army. The Army began the development of the propeller driven bi-plane named the Kittering Bug. This biplane UAV was slightly more successful than the "Flying Bomb" due to a couple significant upgrades that included an onboard altimeter and gyroscope to fly along a preset course.[9] However, while the Kittering Bug had several successful test flights, it too was discontinued due to lack of funding.

The period between WWI and World War II (WWII) witnessed many tests of radio controlled aircraft. Some were launched from ships and others from land. However, no significant UAVs were designed or produced during this period.

During WWII, the U.S. Navy launched a UAV program that was designed and used for targeting German bunkers. This UAV was also devised as a sort of flying bomb not meant to return after its mission. The difference in the Navy's effort was the aircraft selected to become this flying bomb. The aircraft selected was the B-24 Liberator, which was a four-engine, purpose-built bomber meant for high-level precision bombing. The B-24 UAV was filled with explosives and guided by remote control to crash into targets in Germany and Nazi-controlled France.[10]

The Allies were not the only side thinking about the use of UAVs to deliver direct strike munitions during WWII. It was also during this time that the Germans were using the V-I "buzz bomb" to target London and other cities in England.[11] This was arguably the first successful implementation of what we now refer to as modern day cruise missiles. Through the end of WWII, the Nazis launched more than 2,000 of these buzz bombs at various targets located throughout the United Kingdom.

After WWII, there were two different types of pilotless aircraft used, the cruise missile and proto-drones/assault drones. The cruise missile could be fired at a great distance and guided by cameras, but could not linger or return to its base. The proto-drone was slower than the cruise missile and had to be used in the line-of-sight, therefore, its main job was for surveillance and intelligence gathering.[12] It was during this time period that military leadership realized there was a need for both types of UAVs.

During the Cold War, these UAVs became known as drones. They were called drones because they had limitations and were disposable.[13] A redefining of the unmanned concept occurred during the Vietnam War. Drones were used to fly reconnaissance missions in order to protect American pilots from being shot down in enemy territory.[14] This resulted in the AQM-34 Ryan Firebee drone being used to fly more than 5000 surveillance missions.[15] This type of drone could launch conventional bombs and could conduct air-to-ground strikes. The Firebee drone was controlled by a person on the ground using a remotely controlled camera.[16]

In the late 1970s and 1980s, the U.S. spent time doing research and development of the first modern UAV: Hunter and Pioneer. This was done by acquiring and studying the UAVs used by the Israelis during the Yom Kippur War.[17] The UAV would first be debuted during the Gulf War. During Operation DESERT STORM, UAVs were used mostly to gather tactical level intelligence "for battlefield damage assessment, targeting, and surveillance missions, particularly in high-threat airspace."[18]

Since there was such a high level of success with UAVs, the U.S. invested research to create a UAV to assist with combat. The first combat drone called the Predator was developed in the early 1990s. The Predator was made possible with advancements in computing and electronic controlling systems, in addition to the invention of Global Positioning System

technology.[19] However, this combat UAV was not used in war until after the attacks on the

United States on September 11, 2001 (9/11). The first UAV strike was in Afghanistan.

The MQ-1 Predator is the most widely known drone in use today. It has a 55 foot wing

span, is 27 feet long and can be remotely controlled from thousands of miles away.[20] According

to the U.S. Air Force, "The Predator system was designed in response to a Department of

Defense requirement to provide persistent intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance

information combined with a kill capability to the warfighter."[21] According to US Air Force fact

sheets, in 2011 the MQ-1 surpassed one million hours of total development, test, training,

and combat.[22]

Legislation Regarding the UAV

Long before 9/11, history explains how the UAV was used for surveillance. However,

since the attacks on 9/11, the use of the UAV has changed drastically for the U.S. With such a

horrible terrorist attack in this country, it was very urgent the U.S. take action to protect its

citizens. On September 14, 2001, the 107th Congress proposed the Authorization for Use of

Military Force (AUMF), which was subsequently passed and signed into law on

September 18, 2001.[23]

The AUMF gives the U.S. President the authority to use any force necessary and

appropriate against any entities whether they be individuals, organizations or nations involved in

the 9/11 attacks, and the ability to take action in order to prevent any future attacks on the U.S.

by such entities.[24] This legislation comes with much debate. There are many who feel this

legislation gives the President too much authority to perform strikes without the usual checks and

balances of Congress. Others feel the amount of power given in this legislation is appropriate;

however, since the legislation has not been updated since 2001, it needs to be revised in order to combat terrorist activities.

With the AUMF giving the President the ability to use necessary and appropriate force against those involved in the 9/11 attacks, the laws of war and the law of armed conflict justify and legalize the use of weaponized UAVs for targeted killing. In order for the law of armed conflict to apply, an armed conflict must exist as fact. Armed conflict is defined as an extended armed violent conflict where the parties are "states or organized armed group[s]."[25]

However, there is much debate as to whether these targeted killings are legal under these laws. It does not matter which political party people are affiliated with or how often candidates claim that these killings will cease after they are elected to office. The result is the same. The U.S. continues to use drones for targeted killings. Another thing to consider is international humanitarian laws. One of the main arguments against targeted killings by drones is that their use violates international laws. Another argument lies in executive order 12333 that prevents any U.S. Government agency or representative of the U.S Government from engaging in assassinations.[26] The term assassination can be defined in more than one way. Some would define it as the "intentional killing of individuals by the state for "political" purposes," while others would refer to it as murder of an individual.[27]

Another determination legal scholars and government officials debate is the level of support or interaction given between the targeted individual and terrorist groups. No one can debate a person picking up a rifle and shooting at coalition forces is a direct link to terrorism; however, the difficulties arise when these debates turn to people giving food, medicine or shelter to terrorists engaged in conflict. These individuals may not be picking up a rifle and shooting at coalition forces; however, most would likely argue these individuals make it possible for terrorist

activities to continue. Another type of action that enables terrorism is when individuals give monetary aid to terrorist entities meant to cause harm.[28]

Foreign Relations

In order for the United States to maintain its status in the world, it is important to have strong diplomatic relations with Allies. However, the use of UAV technology for targeted killing can bring strain upon that relationship if that country is in disagreement. Specifically, the increase in targeted strikes in the Middle East, particularly in Pakistan, has not worked to improve the relations between the two countries, or any of the other countries that have received targeted strikes.[29]

The strained relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan with respect to targeted strikes is affected by the geography of the region. One example is the large tribal area in Pakistan known as the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) that happens to be a popular hideout for terrorists who are likely to be targeted by the U.S.[30] The Pakistani Government has publicly condemned the attacks, and even uses the media to pass these drone strikes off as Western propaganda. The people in Pakistan and Yemen criticize their governments for allowing American forces to violate territorial sovereignty of the nations and the intervention into their countries without consent.[31]

Another foreign relation issue brought about by the use of targeted UAV strikes is the issue of terrorist recruitment. In fact some scholars believe killing using UAVS is used as a terrorist recruitment tool. This is done by invoking anger that is fanned by media, the internet, and Islamist preachers. This then goes global in the *ummah* as the perceived targeting of Muslims and Islam.[32] This type of blowback comes in two different types: "narrow" counterinsurgency and "broad" global counterterrorism.   The counterinsurgency recruitment is more of a local-level anti-

American operational resistance, while the global recruitment can effect terrorist recruitment that will occur on a more global level and can be further damaging to the U.S. The ISIL magazine, Dabiq, is a good example of global recruitment. The first issue of Dabiq was published in July 2014, and has continued to be circulated in several languages on webpages. ISIL is using this magazine along with other social media sites to promote their agenda to include global terrorist recruitment.

While some scholars agree that UAV strikes as a terrorist recruitment tool, others disagree. Jessica Stern, government lecturer at Harvard University and member of the Hoover Institution's Task Force on National Security and Law, stated in her article "Obama and Terrorism: Like It or Not, the War Goes On," that she has interviewed terrorists for 15 years and has found there is a combination of factors that promote engagement in terrorist violence to include "emotional, social, financial, and ideological."[33]

In reference to foreign relations and the opposition to drone strikes by the U.S., a study in 2012 by PewResearch shows that of the 20 countries polled, there are 17 where more than half those polled are in opposition to these strikes that target extremist leaders and groups in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia.[34] There is widespread perception around the world that the U.S. military uses its power in a unilateral fashion, and does not consider the interests of other countries.[35]

With respect to American political views on targeted strikes, 62% of the American population polled support targeted strikes for extremist leaders and groups, with only 28% disapproving.[36] Approval is at 74% among Republicans, 60% among Independents, and 58% among Democrats.[37] In a similar study conducted by PewResearch in 2014, 37 of 44 countries surveyed had more than half of those polled opposing these targeted drone strikes.[38] This is interesting since some of these opposing countries are major NATO allies. In addition, America's

principle Asian ally, Japan, opposes these targeted strikes by 82%, while 75% of South Koreans oppose these strikes. Again, this is telling since South Korea is considered to be one of Washington's regional security partners.[39] The opposition of these strikes by major world allies could possibly affect foreign relations in the future if the U.S. continues to be viewed by other countries as a unilateral superpower.

Moral and Ethical Implications

In order to fully understand the moral and ethical implications associated with UAV targeted strikes, it is necessary to look at the practice of targeted killing. As defined by the United Nations Human Rights Council, targeted killing can be defined as "the intentional premeditated and deliberate use of lethal force by states or their agents under the color of law, or by an organized armed group in armed conflict against a specific individual who is not in the physical custody of the perpetrator."[40] Supporters of this type of warfare seek to justify that the practice is both legal and ethical in the countries in which it is utilized.[41]

The U.S. uses a couple of different laws in order to ascertain legality of targeted killing. The International Humanitarian Law (IHL) goes into effect when the U.S. asserts the involvement in armed conflict with al-Qaeda and associated forces.[42] In addition to this law, the U.S. can assert self-defense in order to engage in armed conflict. The "*jus ad bellum*" principles of self-defense as outlined in Article 51 of the U.N. Charter also authorize the use of force in the occurrence of an armed attack.[43] This in combination with the laws of armed conflict, legally justify the use of targeted killing through the use of UAVs. With these principles and laws, those advocates of UAV targeted killing have enough legal justification to support this type of warfare.

Conversely, there are those who feel these laws need reform to clearly justify the legality and morality of targeted strikes. Since the attacks of 9/11, the U.S. administration has relied

heavily on this type of warfare, which has changed the face of war. During President Obama's first term, he approved more than six times the number of targeted strikes President George W. Bush approved during both of his terms in office.[44] This type of game-changing warfare allows the U.S. to fight long-term battles from a distance, while protecting the American soldier. With targeted killing, the U.S. focuses on a high-priority target, which may be the top-tier person in command, in order to eliminate that leader. This in turn, drives the second-in-command to potentially act in an aggressive manner to retaliate for the drone strike. Based on this premise, the "War on Terror" may never end for the U.S.

Targeted strikes are known to produce some collateral damage, which is inevitable in any type of warfare. While traditional warfare allows for the civilians to be more aware of the conflict at hand, UAV targeting warfare is usually very covert and unannounced. Mistakes are made in all warfare, and the cost at hand is severe. For example, in 2002, a predator UAV killed a tall man believed to be Osama bin laden around the Afghan/Pakistan border; however, the individual was not Osama bin Laden.[45] It is extremely important the U.S. review the intelligence procedures to help ensure civilian casualties do not occur during these strikes. Although Al Qaeda's lawless behavior does not obviate the U.S. from its moral obligations,[46] some would argue the unintended deaths of civilians caused by terrorists hiding and operating amongst these civilians would place moral responsibility on the terrorist.[47] This is why intelligence used during these operations must be 100% correct to avoid unintended collateral damage.

Another consequence of drone warfare is the desensitization of military personnel and the intelligence units that conduct this type of targeted killing. In traditional warfare, soldiers are exposed to the daily consequence and reminders of what happens during war. However, some scholars believe that sitting 1,000 miles away from boots-on-the-ground warfare, as those involved

in UAV targeted strikes do, does not cause the normal feelings of witnessing the consequences of warfare in person. As noted by U.S. Army Chaplain, Keith Shurtleff, "as wars become safer and easier, as soldiers are removed from the horrors of war and see the enemy not as humans but as blips on a screen, there is very real danger of losing the deterrent that such horrors provide."[48] Although this technology does eliminate the risk of soldiers conducting UAV targeted strikes, some scholars would argue that it does not eliminate some of the effects experienced with traditional warfare. In fact, drone operators and intelligence personnel spend long hours searching for and watching an individual target. These troops also are exposed to seeing the aftermath of their strikes through video feed. Although these operators are at a safe distance from the violence itself, there are still operational stresses associated with this type of warfare.[49]

With UAVs increasingly being used for targeted strikes and surveillance, it is safe to assume that this practice will continue. Many debate the issue as to whether or not these strikes are ethical or moral. There are good arguments on both sides. However, it is imperative for the future of this type of warfare for the U.S. to be more transparent in its practice. Without transparency and some legal revision, many will continue to be misinformed as to the meaning and purpose of these strikes for the safety of the U.S. and its citizens.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to review the history of UAV strikes in targeted killing, the legislation that supports it, how foreign relations were affected, and the moral and ethical implications involved that determined how Americans felt about targeted killings in relation to the citizens of other countries/our allies' views on targeted killings. This review consisted of the history of UAVs and U.S. military usage of UAVs. Next the review investigated the legislation and international rules of targeted killings and warfare, in addition to the research about the foreign relations implications. This review also explored studies on populations both U.S. and internationally, and their perceptions of UAV strikes. Finally, a case study review will pull all of this information together to answer the question.

This research will carefully analyze the effects of targeted strikes in three major categories. First, the study will examine the foreign relationships between the U.S. and Middle Eastern countries since the increase in targeted killings after 9/11. Next, the research will analyze the utilization of UAV targeted strikes and the impact on terrorist recruitment. Finally, the research will attempt to discover if UAV targeted killings in some way violates international law, as well as possibly violating the moral and ethical standards of the U.S. populous. Additionally, the research will determine if these targeted killings have any impact on the world view of the U.S. and our status as a world-leading country.

A study of the independent and dependent variables will allow this analysis to answer the research question. The independent variable being represented in this study is the increased UAV targeted strikes after 9/11. Since an extensive terrorist network orchestrated the attacks, rather than a single government or collective of governments, the rules of warfare were almost certain to

change. The utilization of UAV targeted strikes increased in order to combat the threat of having

to fight an enemy in multiple Areas of Responsibility (AOR) with lack of collaboration from locals

in those theaters. The independent variable carries through this study due to the fact that the U.S.

has no plans to cease UAV targeted killings, and will most certainly increase this practice as time

moves forward.

The dependent variables in this study will be the foreign political implications of UAV

targeted strikes, the growing concern regarding the legality of the practice, and the use of targeted

strikes for terrorist organization recruitment. The research will focus on foreign relations between

the U.S. and its allies, as well as the countries where targeted strikes occur. The literature review

exposed tension between the U.S. and the Middle Eastern countries. In addition, there are terrorist

organizations that do recruit through social media and other sources, citing collateral damage as a

reason to join these specific groups. This research will also look at the practice of UAV targeted

strikes in relation to the ethical and potentially illegal practice. In addition, this research will

examine the legislation and the lack of checks-and-balances that allow the U.S. to employ UAVs

with destructive capability without adhering to ethical standards.

Research Design

A case study methodology will be utilized in an exploratory approach using knowledge

based facts gathered from experience. This research will utilize the qualitative method to use

narrative research, case studies, and phenomenological research to gather the essential data that

will eventually answer the research question. This paper will analyze research data from various

sources in reference to the American approval rating for UAV targeted strikes. In addition,

foreign policy, legislation, legal analysis, and exploration of moral and ethical consequences will

be reviewed to answer the research question. A secondary narrative research approach will be

used to obtain quantitative data through documented public opinion and polls. The target

population for this research will consist of the constituents of the U.S.

Data Analysis

During the examination of the results, the information provided will reflect that most

people polled or surveyed by research companies were not aware of the truth about targeted strikes

within their country, and were not able to make an educated decision regarding this practice.

Additionally, this research project will analyze the moral and ethical consequences of the practice

of UAV targeted strikes. This is because it is important to determine if the data being analyzed is

from a credible source rather than a public commentary that only reflects on the negative aspects

of the study. Multiple resources from the military and government will assist with filling in

questions about foreign and domestic consequences of this practice. However, all resources will

be reviewed in order to determine credibility.

This research will be conducted through a review of public opinion and through the use of

secondary source analysis of polls and other research. This research will attempt to show the

extent of public concern that the U.S. is violating its own systemic moral code through UAV

targeted killing. Additionally, the qualitative research will attempt to validate the concern that the

use of UAVs for this practice somewhat eliminates the reality of true warfare to those soldiers who

facilitate this practice therefore leading to detachment. Finally, the research analysis findings will

attempt to show if the practice of targeted killing needs further research to determine if it should

remain a standard military combat practice.

FINDINGS

The primary objective of this research is to prove that UAV targeted killing has moral and ethical consequences that should be considered as the use of UAVs for this practice continues to increase. This continued practice will have more documented information about the effects of the practice on politics in the U.S. and the relationship the U.S. has with other countries in the world. Additionally, this research has shown how the moral and ethical dilemmas associated with UAV targeted killing have also affected the political position in the United States.

Increase in UAV Warfare

In order to analyze the moral and ethical consequences of UAV targeted strikes, the research must determine and prove that UAV targeted warfare is utilized as a main component of the U.S armed combat tactics. This practice and type of program is a very top secret program, and therefore, exact numbers may be difficult to locate; however, there is information that exists in order to substantiate this type of warfare practice. There have been times in the past that the U.S. has publically acknowledged the usage of UAV targeted strikes in order to eliminate a high profile terrorist target. Therefore, this type of information can be utilized to prove an increase in UAV targeted killing since 9/11.

It is normal for the average U.S. citizen to lack any knowledge about the development and usage of UAV targeted strikes to eliminate high profile terrorist in parts of the Middle East. Since 9/11, the U.S. has successfully eliminated some publically known high profile terrorist through the use of UAV targeted strike practice. One such target was Osama bin Laden, leader of Al Qaeda.[50]

Due to the extreme clandestine nature of the UAV targeted strike program, the agencies that run this program cannot be identified. However, there is some public information that indicates the program is being run by the U.S. Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).[51] Additionally, the targeted strike statistics also remain highly protected. However, there is enough public information to show how the Obama administration has increased its usage of UAV for combat. This type of combat has increased by 1,200 percent since 2005.[52] During this same time period, these UAVs killed between 2,640 and 3,474 people in Pakistan.[53] In addition, the following statistics were reported in January of 2013 by James Kitfield, a senior fellow at the Center for the Study of the Presidency & Congress:

- "In Pakistan, CIA drones struck seven times within a 10-day span in 2013, marking a major escalation in the pace of the controversial attacks. Likewise in Yemen, after a lull in activity, U.S. counterterrorism forces have reportedly conducted five drone strikes since Christmas, equaling in a matter of days half the total strikes in that country in all of 2011."

- "In Obama's first term, the U.S. launched six times more lethal drone strikes in Pakistan than during George W. Bush's two terms in office."

- "An analysis by the New American foundation of thousands of credible media reports about the strikes found that the Obama administration's drone strikes had killed between 1494 and 2618 people, or more than four times the death toll during the Bush years."[54]

Also, 89 of the 99 UAV targeted strikes in Pakistan between 2004 and 2010 occurred once Obama was in office.[55] These are only some of the statistics published about Pakistan, and not about any other UAV targeted strikes in other locations such as Yemen or Iraq. Therefore, this research does show evidence that supports the continued use of UAV targeted strikes as U.S. combat programming.

Americans and Drone Strikes

The American perception of drone or UAV targeted strikes by the United States military is important in the determination of the political implications faced within the U.S. government. In 2014, PewResearch conducted a research study to look at how the world viewed the targeted killing program. The following findings were determined in relation to the United States:

- 52% of Americans polled support the strike program[56]

- 54% of young Americans between the ages of 18-29 "disapprove of the use of drones, compared with just 32% of Americans 50 years of age and older"[57]

- "There is also a partisan divide among Americans on drone use. By more than two-to-one (66% to 28%) Republicans approve of targeting extremists with missile strikes from pilotless aircraft. Roughly half (53%) of independents agree. Democrats are divided on the issue (47% approve and 47% disapprove)."[58]

- 70% of American males support drone strikes, while only 53% of women do[59]

In reference to women and their support of military action, a study by Tufts University's Richard C. Eichenberd, reported that "women were less likely to support military action by 12%."[60] In addition, he reports that women were more sensitive and negative in terms of civilian and military

casualties in war. Consequently, these results listed may have been obtained due to the specific polling language used.[61]

Allied Relations

In order for the United States to operate in the world as a superpower, and to ensure the protection of its citizens, it is a must to have a strong relationship with allies. Studies show that allied countries are not in favor of targeted killing. These other countries have concerns that the U.S. is acting in a unilateral fashion without concern for any other country than itself.[62] It is dangerous for the U.S. to put the diplomatic relations in jeopardy in order to fight a non-traditional war. No matter the AOR of the war that the U.S. is participating in, it is very important to attempt to maintain a successful relationship with allies in order to eliminate threats to the U.S.

The U.S. has always deemed itself a moral nation in the world, but research findings indicate that targeted killing is not moral or ethical, therefore jeopardizing the morality the U.S. claims to uphold. This very practice of targeted killing has been condemned by the United States in reference to others conducting this practice.[63] A 2013 United Nations investigation revealed that aspects of the practice of targeted killing were viewed in an uncomfortable light by much of the world.[64] Based on research conducted by PewResearch in 2012 and 2014, "In 17 of 20 countries, more than half disapprove of U.S. drone attacks targeting extremist leaders and groups in nations such as Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia."[65] It is not reasonable for the U.S. to frown upon others in the world practicing targeted killing when it is so freely done by the U.S. This condemnation may result in the loss of allies and diplomacy.

In order for the U.S. to continue promoting itself as a moral leader in the world, the government and the agencies responsible for the targeted killing programs must hold themselves accountable to the same laws and regulations as others in the international community. Without

this accountability, the U.S. risks alienation from allies. As stated by Kurt Volker, former U.S. Ambassador to NATO, "Reliance on drone strikes allows our opponents to cast our country as a distant, high-tech, amoral purveyor of death. It builds resentment, facilitates terrorist recruitment and alienates those we should seek to inspire."[66] With this being a non-traditional warfare in questionable AORs, this is dangerous to the allied relations with the U.S.. Reformation of this practice of targeted killing could greatly increase a positive relationship with allied nations. This could be done if there was increased accountability and transparency with the program. This would potentially have to be done through a more military type protocol; therefore, changing the managing agency from the CIA to the Pentagon. Additionally, there should be some guidelines set up in order to ensure a more allied diplomatic relationship between the U.S. and other countries.

Foreign Relations

Dealing with foreign relations in countries where targeted strikes by the U.S. are taking place is a very delicate subject. Some of these countries may support terrorist organizations and even participate in hiding these terrorists. These countries may be uneducated about the organizations and terrorism they are supporting, and do not have the ability to take a fully educated political stance. In order for the U.S. to be successful in combating terrorism within the borders of these foreign countries, it is important for the U.S. to have the approval and support of the citizens. Without the proper education of these foreign citizens, terrorist organizations may have the ability to compromise public opinion as to the means of that organization.

The U.S. targeted UAV strike program is a mystery to those in the U.S. It is even more mysterious to those in the countries where these strikes take place. This does not forge a good relationship with the Middle East. Pakistan, for example, is a primary target location where targeted strikes have been taking place. Due to the secrecy of the program, the U.S. government
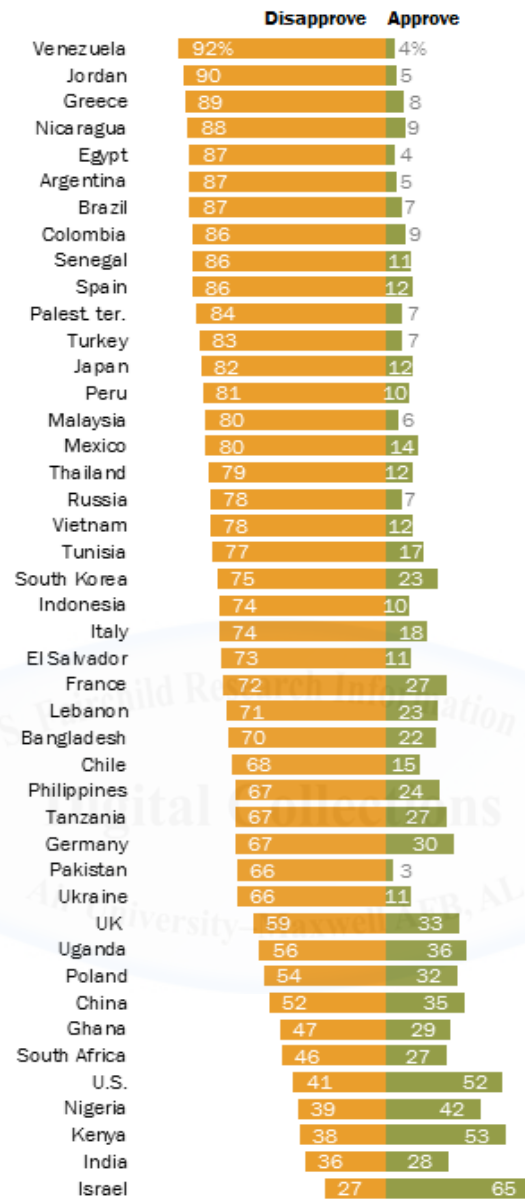
and the Pakistani government most likely have not discussed this program being used against terrorism during this war on terror. These frequent attacks against Al Qaeda in Pakistan have led to mistrust in the United States. In 1999/2000, U.S Favorability in the realm of American foreign policy from Pakistan was 23%. In 2012, the favorability had dropped to 12%.[67] In the 2014 PewResearch study, the following was noted:

> The use of pilotless aircraft against suspected terrorists is widely criticized throughout much of the Middle East. More than seven-in-ten in all six Muslim majority nations surveyed in the region disapprove of the policy. That includes 90% of Jordanians, 87% of Egyptians and 84% of Palestinians.

> Two-thirds of Pakistanis are also against the use of drones. The opposition is relatively low, however, compared with that in other nations, possibly because 30% of Pakistanis declined to answer the question. In many countries where publics are already strongly opposed to drone use, there has been no significant change in attitudes since 2012[68]

Figure I. listed below summarizes the widespread opposition to the drone campaign by country.

Widespread Opposition to Drones

	Disapprove	Approve
Venezuela	92%	4%
Jordan	90	5
Greece	89	8
Nicaragua	88	9
Egypt	87	4
Argentina	87	5
Brazil	87	7
Colombia	86	9
Senegal	86	11
Spain	86	12
Palest. ter.	84	7
Turkey	83	7
Japan	82	12
Peru	81	10
Malaysia	80	6
Mexico	80	14
Thailand	79	12
Russia	78	7
Vietnam	78	12
Tunisia	77	17
South Korea	75	23
Indonesia	74	10
Italy	74	18
El Salvador	73	11
France	72	27
Lebanon	71	23
Bangladesh	70	22
Chile	68	15
Philippines	67	24
Tanzania	67	27
Germany	67	30
Pakistan	66	3
Ukraine	66	11
UK	59	33
Uganda	56	36
Poland	54	32
China	52	35
Ghana	47	29
South Africa	46	27
U.S.	41	52
Nigeria	39	42
Kenya	38	53
India	36	28
Israel	27	65

Source: Spring 2014 Global Attitudes survey. Q63.

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Figure I: Widespread Opposition to Drones by Country

One reason that Pakistan may be so negative about the use of targeted killing is due to the media's estimations of civilian casualties. Listed below are statistics compiled by Ophir Falk from the International Relations Division at the University of Haifa, Israel in 2014:

- "In April 2009, 687 civilians have been killed along with 14 al Qaeda leaders by American drones since January 2008 - over 50 civilians killed for every Al Qaeda target."

- "For each Al Qaeda and Taliban terrorist killed by the American drones, 140 civilian Pakistanis also had to die. Over 90 percent of those killed in the deadly missile strikes were innocent civilians."[70]

These statistics could definitely cause the Pakistani citizens to be unfavorable to this types of military action. However, there are reports that conflict with the numbers posed by Pakistani media outlets. In 2009, American journalists, Peter Bergman and Katherine Tiedeman reported the total casualties of both Taliban and civilians from 2006-2009 were approximately 760-1000 deaths.[71] While the exact number of civilian casualties may never been known, there is evidence the Pakistani media overestimates the number to increase anti-American sentiment.

It is important that the U.S. maintains healthy relationships with allies, as well as a balance with non-allied countries. While maintaining this balance, it is necessary that the U.S. work diligently to protect its citizens from terrorism. It is easy for the terrorist organizations in the Middle East to influence government and its citizens through media, but another factor that is involved is that these are Muslim countries, and the terrorist organizations are primarily Muslim extremists. This helps to facilitate an anti-Christian message.

Moral and Ethical Benefits

When dealing with foreign political relations with other countries, it is important to look at how the practice of targeted killing has both moral and ethical consequences. There are both positive and negative consequences associate with this warfare. Targeted killing is a way of controlling a kill against those who cause harm to the U.S. and the American way. Some of the significant benefits of targeted killing are outlined by the University of London's Stephanie Carvin. First, using UAVs allow the United States to focus directly on terrorists rather than fighting an entire country to get the target. Additionally, these targeted strikes by UAVs can disrupt daily terrorist operations, and can assist in preventing future planning by forcing clandestine conditions. Finally, targeted killing is a more cost effective measure and is easier because only the required amount of force is used to accomplish the task.[72] There are many benefits to targeted killing, allowing a successful argument for these benefits.

An argument for the use of UAV targeted killing pertains to the international human rights laws and the protection of the right to life. In times of emergency, these laws agree the right to life cannot be deviated from, but there are no laws that indicate this right is absolute.[73] The targeted terrorist individuals have been selected due to their involvement in terrorist activities, therefore, giving up their right to life. This statement hold true if the terrorist is considered a combatant rather than a criminal. Using this type of logic has allowed the targeted killing program to prevent future terrorist attacks by Al Qaeda. This targeting aims to eliminate the leadership component of the organization. The top tier leaders tend to be educated and skilled individuals rather than the subordinate type, which mostly comprises these terrorist organizations. The targeted elimination of these top leaders can do substantial damage to a terrorist organization. This breakdown of the organization works to eliminate their knowledge and skills to create further

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terrorist activities against the U.S. Since 9/11, the United States has justified all targeted killing through the right to self-defense. The right to self-defense is justified by Article 51 of the UN Charter, international human rights law, the laws of armed conflict, and some domestic laws of engaged states.

Moral and Ethical Consequences

As previously addressed, there are some definite benefits to the practice of targeted killing. However, there are certain moral and ethical consequences that must be addressed. Upon the review of ethical principles, the consequences of targeted killing can violate the principle of utilitarianism, which means that it does not promote maximum utility as it relates to the well-being of others. Hence, this utilitarianism is a component of consequentialism as it does not consider all parties equal when looking at the moral standards of right and wrong. Therefore, examination of requirements for targeted killing must be reviewed in order to understand these consequences. As stated by Ophir Faulk, there are some compliance criteria requirements for targeted killing, which include:

1. "Targeting must be of military necessity;
2. Targeting must distinguish military targets from civilians;
3. There is no alternative mean that would minimize necessary suffering; and
4. Targeting is assessed to cause collateral damage that is proportional to the expected advantage to be gained by the attack"[74]

It can be noted that the United States has followed some of these requirements for targeted killing, but in this practice, there are some discrepancies that do exist. These discrepancies are evident in two realms, "distinction" and "proportionality." These two principles are of great importance when assessing the legality of this type of operation.[75] Therefore, research indicates that moral and ethical dilemmas arise as these lack of requirements cannot be reconciled. This leads to the need of reexamination of the targeted killing program as it continues to advance. There

are certain aspects and dilemmas that will be addressed. First, the U.S. must examine the effectiveness of targeted killing against the moral consequences. Second, the morality in regards to the legality of this practice must be examined. Third, some of these targeted terrorist may actually be considered a criminal rather than an armed combatant. Fourth, this type of warfare and the effects it has on the soldier's implementation of the practice causes desensitization. Lastly, the lack of transparency of the practice of targeted killings creates a lack of accountability.

Case studies of conflicts have lead researchers to indicate the effectiveness of targeted killing may be not as high as the U.S. administration would lead the public to believe. Based on information from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the information confirms the Israeli strategy of targeted killing between 2000 and 2004 had no impact on the Palestinian violence.[76] These killings led the Palestinians to retaliate and continue the violence. These results in conflict would question the effectiveness of this strategy.

The justification the U.S. uses in this immoral practice and questionable practice of targeted killing poses a danger. The effects of this practice cannot be predicted, and there is nothing that will prevent a terrorist organization from retaliation. A poll conducted after the death of Osama bin Laden indicated that only 16 percent of participants felt safer.[77] The blowback of these strikes not only effect the country that conducts the strike, but other supporters of that country in reference to religious or political sentiments. This practice of targeted killing and the lack of morality leads to continued immoral practices. The UAV targeted strike program is intended to prevent terrorism, but research suggests that it may do the opposite. Without more transparency and limitations in place in an international sense, there would be a world where states can kill without justification.

After 9/11, decisive and swift action was taken to pass the AUMF with legal justification through self-defense. Without this action, the U.S. might send a message that a terrorist organization could bring harm to the U.S. and its citizens without recourse. Since the 9/11 attack and the inception of the UAV targeted strike program, there have been many scholarly and political debates as to the morality of the practice. This type of practice would lead to questioning of morality even when such a decisive and somewhat effective practice had to be done to kill those responsible for those attacks. As the program has continued, politicians have come to debate the morality of this practice in relation to the effectiveness. While the international community's views of the practice have shifted, the U.S. continues to advance this type of warfare. Prior to 9/11, the U.S. government criticized Israel for this type of targeted warfare against Palestinian terrorists.[78] Although, today the U.S. government fails to acknowledge the daily practice.

As stated through research, the United States uses the AUMF, the law of armed conflict, and the Geneva Convention to legalize the use of UAV targeted killing. However, moral dilemmas arise because the war on terror is not being fought against a formal state. The law of armed conflict involves an armed conflict of hostility between two or more groups.[79] As stated in Article 2 of the Geneva Convention, "the Convention shall apply to all cases of declared war or of any other armed conflict which may arise between two or more of the High Contracting parties, even if the state of war is not recognized by one of them."[80] Therefore, if the U.S. were to target the leader of an official state, the Geneva Convention would apply, even if that state did not acknowledge the conflict. In reference to Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations, the leaders are not considered states leaders because they lack sovereign control.[81] When examining the targeted leaders, it is noted they would not be considered a combatant because they are not

directly engaged in combat at the time of the targeted strike. This premise creates moral dilemma because combatants in traditional warfare are subject to rules of battle, but these targets would be considered criminals, which would be subject to a different set of rules. This research indicates that these terrorists are targeted for their criminal activities rather than armed combatants in war. A dilemma is then created because these criminals are not given due process for their actions; rather they are tried, convicted, and executed by the United States.[82] Consequently, the current targeted killing program does not afford the due process, and is not likely to change in the future. This research does not attempt to argue that these terrorists should be afforded the same rights as a U.S. citizen, but it does attempt to show that this practice does come with moral consequences.

The international laws are in place to outline the way that criminals should be treated. In reviewing these laws, there are two provisions that are violated by targeted killing. First is unnecessary suffering (Law of Armed Conflict), which the avoidance of unnecessary suffering is required, and next is the right to life (International Human Rights Law). The justification of preventing future crime is used to target these individual, when they may only be in the planning stage. A country should not have the right to punish an individual who has yet to commit the crime of the terrorist act. In terms of the right to life in the International Human Rights law, the provision prohibits the "arbitrary deprivation of life" requiring that lethal force should be utilized only when all other less harmful methods have been exhausted.[83] If the U.S is unable to prove that effort was made to capture the individual or not feasible, then the U.S. is in violation of this law. Even though UAV targeted killing prevents the loss of life by preventing future attacks, it does allow the U.S. to not justify the treatment of these targeted individuals.

Considering the new and advanced technology of the UAV and the ability to conduct targeted strikes in addition to gathering intelligence, a huge responsibility is put on the United

States military and governing agencies to examine the moral dilemmas that are faced. Additionally, another consequence of this type of warfare is the ability to fight a long distance war from a computer screen where the physical distance and moral distance lead to a desensitized soldier. The lack of empathy created in this type of warfare prevents military personnel from exercising and accepting moral responsibility for his/her actions.[84] This lack of an empathetic response for the target and civilian casualties is a direct consequence of targeted warfare practice. These soldiers that take part in these strikes may have less personal guilt or remorse because the physical and personal act of warfare is not present. Former C.I.A. lawyer, Vicki Divoll stated, "People are a lot more comfortable with Predator Strikes that kill many than with a throat-slitting that kills one."[85]

Since the moral consequences are affecting both the soldiers involved and the reputation of the United States, it is the responsibility of the government to examine the public concern regarding the practice. The number of civilian casualties incurred by the program have been significant. It is reported that the program has claimed over 3000 lives, which has caused anti-American and anti-Western backlash in the Middle East.[86] The American populous wants answers to this secret program. As stated by Retired Admiral Dennis Blair, the former Director of National Intelligence,

> "There is not enough transparency or public justification of this program to remove not the secrecy that surrounds it but the mystery. The Obama administration has made the cold-blooded calculation that it's better to hunker down and take the criticism of the program rather than get into a public debate that will be hard to win. But I think that public debate will be essential in the long run… In a democracy, you want people to know that military force is used in ways that they can be proud of, and there has been far too little debate about that"[87]

In addition, Paul Pillar, formerly the CIA's national intelligence officer for the Near East and South Asia, was quoted saying, "Given that these lethal drone operations are clearly becoming part of the 'new normal' for America, I think the White House will have to be a little more forthcoming about the criteria for who the government decides to kill, and who it does not."[88] If these officials have problems with this program, then the government should be working to address these concerns.

These ethical and moral consequences of the UAV targeted strike program are prevalent and will not disappear. It is the responsibility of the United States government to address these consequences and the concerns of the world as a whole. Without a more transparent program, the United States stands to lose allies, and its potential status as a world superpower.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research project was to review the history of UAV strikes in targeted killing, the legislation that supports it, how foreign relations are affected, and the moral and ethical implications involved to determine how Americans feel about targeted killings in relation to the citizens of other countries/our allies' views on targeted killings. Specifically, the research sought to answer the question: How have the recent UAV targeted military strikes influenced American perceptions about the military and impacted the way American politicians choose to fight wars? The results of the analysis indicated that the increased use of UAV targeted killing has led to negative domestic and international political consequences, increased anti-American and anti-Western sentiment among nations of the Middle East, and several moral and ethical dilemmas which have not been addressed or resolved by the United States government.

The project started with an examination of the increase in UAV targeted killings. It discovered the program does exist in secrecy, and the exact numbers are not known to the public. In addition, the research indicated that there has been an increase in this type of warfare since President Obama took office. Consequently, this increased practice of targeted killing has created civilian casualties.

When looking at the approval ratings of American's, it is clear that more than half of Americans support the use of drones for targeted killing; however, it was determined that men are more likely than women to support this type of military action. In addition, politically, both republicans and independents support this practice by more than half, while democrats support is around 47 percent.

With the increased utilization of this practice, the research analyzed political implications with both foreign allies and other foreign countries where these strikes were conducted.

Research has confirmed that this practice and the lack of transparency is not supported by many allies or other nations. Some major allies are not in agreement with this type of warfare. In countries where these attacks take place, the media has exploited the numbers of civilian casualties and created more confusion with the populous of that country. This type of reporting has caused anti-American sentiment with the governments of those countries, as well as the people that live in those nations.

In analyzing the effectiveness of the practice, it was noted that targeted killing has been less effective in stopping violence. In addition, the success of killing a leader of a terrorist organization may actually have no significant effect on that organization if the chain of command is as skilled and capable.

When analyzing the moral and ethical consequences of targeted killing, it was discovered that there are dilemmas that exist. When examining the legality of targeted killing in relation to the moral aspect, it was determined that the U.S. does have the legal authority to do so, however, the morality in reference to the legality is flawed. Second, when targeting individuals, the U.S. treats these individuals as combatants when according to the legal definitions, they would be considered criminals. This practice denies the criminal to due process under the law. Third, the physical and moral distance of the soldier from the actual combat creates a desensitized military force. Finally, the secrecy of the program prevents the American populous from having any knowledge of the program. Overall, the lack of clarity on the legality and moral front of targeted killing will not prevent the United States from continuing the program. However, if this type of technology becomes more readily available to the enemy, the international law debate and lack of transparency of the program will be a major concern for the United States government. There is no evidence that this practice will cease or

decrease in the future. Regardless, the United States has a responsibility to protect its citizens.

The findings in this research have created much debate throughout the United States, as well as other nations. The secrecy of the UAV targeted killing program has left the American population with many questions and a lack of information and education on these issues. The political implications and American perceptions would possibly be different than what this research shows if there were more transparency in this program. Although, the research supports the increased usage of the practice, there is no evidence that shows the practice of targeted killing making any major strides in ending the war on terror.

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