

“The New Guantanamo”: The Psychological Impact of US Drone Strikes in Pakistan

Written by Vijay Luhan

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“The New Guantanamo”: The Psychological Impact of Targeted Killings by Drone Strikes by the United States in Pakistan

The psychological effect of drone warfare to the people of Pakistan is not a new topic of study. However, it has not been discussed in the level of depth that it should be. In order to understand the reasoning behind various terrorist activities directed toward the United States, there needs to be a proper recognition of the psychological impact of drone strikes on the people of Pakistan.

Various attempts have been made by terrorists to justify the use of terrorist bombings by claiming revulsion towards American drone strikes. In June 2010, Pakistani American Faisal Shahzad blamed the United States for its worldwide use of drone strikes as well as the death of Pakistani Taliban leader, Baitullah Mehsud, who was killed in a drone strike in August 2009.[1] Advocates of drone warfare have mostly dismissed these claims without recognising their true merit.[2] This study argues that this method of tackling terrorism is a mistake, as drone strikes have become a recruiting tool for extremist networks and are not purely hypothetical.

Recent studies on the negative impact of drone strikes tend to draw an inherent link between the impact of civilian casualties of drone strikes and the motivation for revenge against their perpetrators.[3] Although the author does not wholly disagree with this assumption, this study believes that this is an incomplete observation. My dissertation research question seeks to provide an adequate and proper understanding on the psychological impact of drone strikes in Pakistan, and why they have led to the further radicalisation and destabilisation of Pakistani society.

Since September 11th, 2001, the United States has conducted a global ‘War on Terror’, which has led to the formulation and implementation of a global security policy to fight terrorism. The primary theatre of operations of the ‘War on Terror’ has been in Afghanistan and Iraq, where military operations have been widely and publicly acknowledged. However, there are have also been secondary operations that have taken place in northwest Pakistan, where covert programmes are run by the C.I.A. and are specifically aimed at targeting terrorists.[4] In the 2003 National Security Strategy of the United States, President George Bush made his case that the U.S. would use:

‘...All elements of our national power and international influence to attack terror networks; reduce their ability to communicate and coordinate their plans; isolate them from potential allies and from each other, and identify and disrupt their plots before they attack’.[5]

The use of predator drones in ‘Targeted Killings’ against ‘militants’ in northwest Pakistan represents the most brutal and efficient use of American national power and international influence to combat terrorism.[6] However, the overwhelming majority of focus in existing reports, studies and literature has focused on analysing the political, legal and moral challenges to drone warfare. The political and moralistic overtones of these studies has come at the expense of analysing the impact of drone warfare and its effect on the civilians who have been targeted as ‘militants’ and their subsequent radicalisation. A greater depth of analysis into the psychological impact of drone warfare in Pakistan allows policy-makers to comprehend how targeted killings has shaped and developed the alienation and

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radicalisation of the Pakistani population. This has policy implications at both the domestic and international level.[7] It is this neglected area of analysis that my study seeks to fill.

It is not under the purview of this dissertation to assess the evolution of drone warfare, nor the political, legal and moral challenges to drone warfare that has been discussed by authors of other studies. These studies have provided readers and policy-makers with an incomplete observation on the effects of drone warfare. In order to provide a more comprehensive understanding to the impact of drone warfare in Pakistan, it requires a closer examination of the ‘baseless’ references made by ideological figures such as Baitullah Mehsud, on the use of drones in Pakistan.[8] This allows policymakers to recognise the Pakistani national psyche towards American drone strikes.

This study will look at the situation in Pakistan since the incumbent President, Asif Ali Zardari, of the Pakistani People’s Party took office. Although, certain references will be made on the period prior to his premiership, militancy and extremism in Pakistan has seen a marked increase since 2008. It has been reported that this has been due to Zardari’s cooperation with the United States and Western allies.[9]

Research Question and Objectives

The author of this study intends to address the following research questions:

1. What is the background to the drone conflict in Pakistan and who are the key actors and regions involved?
2. How has the psychological impact of targeted killings through the use of drones further radicalised and destabilised Pakistan?
3. What are the domestic and international implications of the continued use of drones in Pakistan between militants, the Pakistani government and the United States?
4. Is there a viable alternative to the use of drones in Pakistan?

The general objectives of this study:

1. To move the focus away from political, legal and moral arguments made against the use of drone warfare.
2. Adds an additional dimension to the analysis on the civilian effect of drone warfare and builds on the shortcomings of existing research in Pakistan.
3. Emphasise the importance of the claims made by the victims of drone warfare in the far regions of northwest Pakistan as a legitimate claim against its use.
4. Understand the policy implications on the use of drones at both the domestic and international level.

The significance of this study serves to add additional depth to the existing discussion on the use of drones. Specifically, it focuses on the knowledge that militants in the FATA region are aware of the Pakistani government’s tactic of plausible deniability of drones and their complicity to the U.S. drone programme.[10] David Kilcullen has noted that the public outrage of drone strikes in the Pashtun-dominated FATA region is not limited to northwest Pakistan, but has spread to a broader population throughout the country. This risks spreading extremism to the more liberal parts of Pakistani society. This heightened sense of radicalisation and destabilisation in Pakistani society caused by drones has to be addressed in order to understand its counter-productivity in combating terrorism operations in the long run. This will enable long-term strategic success rather than short-term tactical gains to be made in Pakistan. My study aims to address these problems.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on targeted killings and drones has been limited by the lack of information that has been released about the programme. What we know about drone strikes is largely based upon the use of questionable statistics, and how they have been used to provide research studies that both interrogate and defend the use of drones. The veil of secrecy that the U.S. drone programme has been under has slowly receded as a result of the White House acknowledging the use of Predator Drones in Pakistan.[11] Furthermore, additional questions have been asked by members of the United States Congress about the use of drones to kill American citizens, such as the strike that

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killed Anwar al-Awlaki in Yemen in September 2011.[12] This has given way to a growing body of legal and moral literature that investigates the ability for the United States to conduct targeted killings both at home and abroad

Scholars and experts on drone warfare have relied heavily on statistical research and studies conducted by public policy institutes such as the New America Foundation and non-profit news organisations such as The Bureau of Investigative Journalism.[13] Both organisations use the aggregation of news reports that are crosschecked through various sources and so, have claimed to be ‘credible’. These include news and media stations such as the Associated Press, Reuters and the New York Times.[14] As a result, the existing literature on targeted killings through drone strikes have become predicated on the use of these statistics to provide adequate explanations and conclusions on the perceived costs or benefits of the drone programme.

However, the existing literature tends to focus on the political, legal and moral challenges that the drone programme faces due to the topic being a contentious issue in the United States’ on-going ‘War on Terror’. The primary legal challenge to targeted killings focuses on whether the use of ‘Unmanned Aerial Vehicles’ (UAV’s) is an unlawful method of killing. As previously acknowledged, the conclusions made are predicated on the use of supposedly ‘credible’ information on the number of civilian casualties. This provides legal scholars and experts with problems as McNeal argues that critics of the U.S. policy of targeted killings generally lack credible information and sufficient empirical evidence to justify their criticisms.[15] He cites the conflicting figures that have been reported in Pakistani and Western media outlets such as the number of civilian casualties and the number of civilians killed per high-value target (HVT’s).[16]

Moral arguments made against the use of drones refer primarily to Michael Walzer’s ‘Just War’ Theory, which refers to the ‘combined set of moral principles and background set of legitimating norms’ that justify the killing of co-belligerents and shape judgments of military conduct.[17] Scholars such as Finkelstein view targeted individuals as belligerents, however that they should be subject to law enforcement and afforded the rights of prisoner’s of war.[18]

It is important to applaud these studies as important and relevant in critically analysing the legal and moral ramifications of targeted killings through drone strikes. However, they are inherently problematic as they are dominated by political, legal and moralistic overtones that come at the expense of analysing the secondary effects of drone warfare. This is in particular to its impact on civilians and militants and their subsequent radicalisation in Pakistani society.

Recently, authors such as Khan have made references to the psychological impact of drones.[19] However, the two most influential studies on the link between the psychological impact of drone warfare and radicalisation of affected populations are the joint New York University and Stanford University study entitled ‘Living Under Drones’ and Aliya Robin Deri’s study on American and Pakistani Reactions to the U.S. drone war. These two eminent studies are of great importance because they analyse the link between Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in times of war and drone strikes in Pakistan. Furthermore, they analyse how the psychological effects of trauma and anxiety that have been caused by drones are linked to historic and cultural norms in Pakistan, such as honourable conduct in war, and the social fabric that tie families and communities together.[20] This area of focus analyses the changes in patterns of behaviour among those communities that have been targeted by drone strikes and why some have resorted to violence.[21]

Unfortunately, advocates of drone warfare prefer to highlight the efficiencies of using UAV’s to kill ‘high-value targets’, and have often dismissed this body of literature. This study aims to build on this neglected area of research and provide an adequate explanation on the link between drone warfare and the subsequent destabilisation of Pakistani society. This has policy implications at both the domestic and international level, primarily in the conduct of counter-insurgency (COIN) and counter-terrorism (CT) operations.

CHAPTER ONE: TARGETED KILLINGS AND THE U.S. DRONE PROGRAMME

What is a ‘Targeted Killing?’

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‘Targeted Killing’ is a contested term between members of the policy and academic communities. The main point of contestation is that the term ‘Targeted Killing’ does not have a distinct definition under international law.[22] Thus, ‘Targeted Killings’ are a continuation of the legitimate struggle against terrorism, where newer forms of government acts have been re-characterised so as to justify addressing them within the framework of the law of armed conflict.[23]

Philip Alston, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, defines a ‘Targeted Killing’ as:

‘...The intentional, premeditated and deliberate use of lethal force, by States or their agents acting under colour of law, or by an organised armed group in armed conflict, against a specific individual who is not in the physical custody of the perpetrator’.[24]

In existing legal literature, the normative values held by many scholars that abhor the use of ‘targeted killings’ provide a strong influence in their conclusion and, as discussed previously, is inherently problematic.

Drone Strikes as a Method of ‘Targeted Killing’

Smith and Walsh define ‘drones’ as ‘remotely piloted unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV’s) equipped with surveillance technology and accurate missiles that are able to loiter over terrorist and insurgent strongholds for long periods to identify and strike targets’.[25] In Pakistan, the contemporary use of ‘targeted killings’ in the U.S. drone programme use various methods used to train local Pakistani agents to provide human intelligence by identifying suspected members of Al Qaeda and Taliban leadership in the remote tribal areas of northwest Pakistan.[26] Hellfire missiles launched by Predator Drones later execute these targets. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) jointly administer the current drone programme.[27] The targets of drone strikes are scrutinised and catalogued under a single, continually evolving database called a ‘Disposition Matrix’ that was created by the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC). [28]

The Problem of Drone Strikes in Pakistan

Despite the efficiencies that drone strikes have brought, they have become increasingly problematic in Pakistan. In August 2009, Baitullah Mehsud, the leader of *Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan* (TTP), was killed in a drone strike in South Waziristan. Two problems exist and surfaced after the event.

Firstly, despite a \$5million reward for the ‘location, arrest, and/or conviction’ of Mehsud, prosecution was never a serious option for CIA and U.S. Special Activities Division that track HVT’s such as Mehsud.[29] Secondly, the death of Mehsud would not have been possible without the use of local Pakistani spies and informants cooperating with American officials to precisely locate and target the Pakistani Taliban leader. The latter issue is critically important because the precision, accuracy and legality of a drone strike depend on the quality of the human intelligence that is provided by the local informants upon which the targeting decision is based.[30]

These two problems also have secondary implications that come as a direct result of Pakistani and American attempts to curtail terrorist activity in northwest Pakistan. The use of secret Pakistani intelligence has had far-reaching effects on the de-legitimisation of the Pakistani government. In 2002, a Pew poll showed that 72% of the general Pakistani population believed their national government was a ‘positive’ influence on the country. This dropped to 59% in 2007, and by 2011, it had dropped to 20%.[31] It is important to note that the causal link between drone strikes and government popularity is not clear. However, there has been an increasing number of Pakistani demonstrations against drone attacks for providing human intelligence, as well as the alleged use of Pakistani military bases such as Shamsi Airfield to station American drones.[32] Baitullah Mehsud acknowledged the attack on a police academy in Lahore in March 2009 was a ‘retaliation for the continued drone strikes by the US in collaboration with Pakistan on our people’, whilst also claiming responsibility for two other deadly attacks. He also concluded that the attacks would continue ‘until the Pakistan government stops supporting the Americans’.[33]

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In May 2010, Faisal Shahzad, a Pakistani-American citizen of Pashtun ethnicity, attempted to bomb Times Square in New York City in a revenge for the death of Baitullah Mehsud[34]. His justification for blowing up innocent women and children was a simple response:

‘How would you feel if people attacked the United States? You are attacking a sovereign Pakistan. American drone strikes don’t see children, they don’t see anybody. They kill women, children, they kill everybody’.[35]

Similar to Mehsud, he warned that his goal was to ‘punish the U.S. for conducting Predator airstrikes in Pakistan’s tribal areas’.[36]

In both confessions by Mehsud and Shahzad, there are three striking implications. Firstly, the deadly terrorist attacks were revenge for drone strikes. Secondly, the attacks were in retaliation for Pakistani intelligence sharing and coordination with American Special Forces. Finally, the attacks would continue until the U.S. stopped its use of drone strikes in northwest Pakistan. The default procedure that has met these declarations, has been to dismiss them out of hand as baseless, and that terrorism, in any way, shape or form should be abhorred, despite any political and moral justifications that may be made to validate them.

Arguments that praise the use of drones as ‘surgically precise’ are dangerous, in that they overlook the mental health and ‘psychological warfare’ aspects of targeted killing. Existing analysis on the efficiency of drones needs to include the psychological impact of drone warfare rather than relying on the number of ‘high-value targets’ killed.

This study argues that ignoring these claims are a misstep on behalf of the U.S. counter-terrorism community and raises two important themes that need to be addressed.

- Do these statements that justify terrorist attacks and suicide bombings as revenge to drone strikes warrant any validity?
- Has the psychological damage as a result of drone strikes caused certain populations in Pakistan to turn to violence in response to Pakistani and American attacks?

Throughout this study, it will be shown that both themes are significantly important and have policy ramifications on how the U.S. should continue its counter-terrorism operation in Pakistan. The next two chapters will discuss these two themes in greater depth.

The FATA and ‘Militant’ Groups as Targets for Drone Strikes

The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) is a semi-autonomous tribal region in northwest Pakistan. They consist of seven tribal ‘agencies’: Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, North Waziristan and South Waziristan. They border Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, formerly known as the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). There are six frontier regions: Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, and Dera Ismail Khan.

Although the seven tribal agencies and six frontier regions represent a distinct section of northwest Pakistan, they are far more diverse than commonly understood. According to the New America Foundation:

‘Although there are important ideological and historical commonalities among the fighters, militant groups have very different backgrounds, tribal affiliations and strategic concepts’.[37]

The diversity among militant groups provides an important theme to this study. The primary distinction are those groups that are ‘anti-Pakistan’ and those that use the strategy of conciliation with the Pakistani state while conducting military operations inside Afghanistan.[38] The latter are primarily the Quetta Shura and the Haqqani Network. Both of these networks have alleged ties with Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency and the military.[39] However, all of these militant groups are united in their fight against American and NATO forces in Afghanistan.

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The Frequency and Lethality of ‘Targeted Killings’ in Pakistan

One of the limitations of conducting research on drone strikes is with presentation of data and statistics. Although the number of drone strikes in Pakistan is well documented in news reports, the number of civilian and militant deaths due to drone strikes suffer from unreliability and/or inaccuracy. The overall impact of drone strikes in the difference between HVT’s, low-to-medium level militants, and civilians has been difficult to calculate. This has been due to the opacity of the drone programme, limited access to the militant FATA region and conflicting claims about the accuracy and collateral damage levels of hellfire missiles.[40]

The imprecise nature of death toll statistics has been used for propaganda purposes, as militant Islamist groups have tended to inflate the number of people killed in drone strikes. Simultaneously, the U.S. has often underestimated the number of civilian casualties from drone strikes.[41] The main criticism that has been drawn against drone strikes is the high number of civilian casualties. According to The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, there have been 371 C.I.A. drone strikes in Pakistan from 2004 to 2013, which have reportedly killed 2564-3,567 people, of which 411-890 has been reported to be civilians, and among them, 168-197 were children.[42] Although the data represents a deplorably high number of civilian casualties, this is not the primary argument that I seek to emphasise.

The key problem that exists with the high number of civilian casualties are the secondary order of effects from drone strikes. These second-order effects include psychological trauma, and anxiety; increased anti-American sentiment; anti-Pakistan government movements, and how they are all linked to motivations for revenge and reprisal attacks. All of these second-order effects present legitimate concerns about the efficiency and proficiency of targeting killing as a long-term strategic solution for success in Pakistan.

The Psychological Impacts of Drone Strikes as a ‘Second-Order Effect’ of Targeted Killings

This study defines a ‘second-order effect’ as one that is unintended and is indirect to the primary effect of the strike. Whilst the primary effect of a drone strike is death or dismemberment of civilians, a ‘second-order effect’ refers to the secondary effects such as psychological damage, anti-American and Pakistani government sentiment and the motivation for revenge. ‘Second-order effects’ of drone strikes are primarily negative. They have a damaging outcome on the relationship between Pakistani civilians and their government. Furthermore, they also negatively affect the relationship between Pakistani civilians and militants and the United States.

The ‘second-order effects’ of drone strikes have to be considered as an additional dimension of the evaluation process to determine the overall effectiveness of targeted killing through the use of drones. In doing so, this method of analysis shifts the conversation away from simply focusing on the negative moral and/or legal costs of civilian casualties, as well as away from the positive impacts of eliminating HVT’s from the remote tribal areas of Pakistan.[43]

The ‘second-order’ effect of drone strikes has policy implications for the Pakistani government’s COIN campaign against militant groups in the FATA. Additionally, it also has foreign policy implications for American C.T. operations in Pakistan. If the psychological impact of drone strikes are not considered, the U.S. risks damaging the ‘population-centric’ COIN strategy of winning the ‘hearts and minds’ of the Pakistani people. Existing authors such as David Kilcullen refers to the ‘Accidental Guerrilla’ phenomenon as a local Pashtun rejection of external forces.[44] Hudson, Owens and Flannes build on the ‘Accidental Guerrilla’ phenomenon and argue that the ‘erosion of trust’ between militant and government has led to an increase in both high-profile (Camp Chapman, December 2009) and low-profile attacks.[45] This study argues that without considering the psychological impact of drone strikes as a ‘second-order effect’, the U.S. is certainly creating more ‘accidental guerrillas’ in Pakistan.

This chapter has provided a brief introduction of the background of ‘Targeted Killing’, and the frequency and lethality of drone strikes in Pakistan, and why they have become problematic. Additionally, it has also presented a brief synopsis of the militant FATA and NWFP region. Finally, it has provided a short summary of the psychological damage that has been caused by drone strikes, and how they are a ‘second-order effect’ of targeted killing. The next two chapters will assess these second-order effects in detail and explain how they are damaging the U.S. and

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Pakistan’s COIN and CT operation against militants in the FATA region. This study hopes to encourage debate on an area of research that has been neglected in existing literature. It will provide policy decision-makers with a tool to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of drone strikes in Pakistan. Finally, it will provide a brief selection of options that can be seen as alternatives to the frequent nature of drone strikes.

CHAPTER 2: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF DRONE STRIKES AND THEIR DOMESTIC IMPLICATIONS

The Role of the Government of Pakistan

Despite long-held doubts about Pakistan’s commitment to core U.S. security interests, the leaders of the U.S. have praised the government of Pakistan for its ongoing cooperation with the United States’ CT and COIN campaign.[46] Between September 11th, 2001 and June 2010, the Pakistani security apparatus has allegedly arrested and eliminated some 17,000 terrorists.[47] However, since 2008, the increase in United States and Pakistani cooperation has seen a marked increase in the number of domestic terrorist bombings and other militant attacks. Furthermore, militant Islamist extremism has been spreading from the northwest tribal areas of the FATA to the more densely populated Pakistani cities.[48]

The COIN and CT campaign in Pakistan consists of a wide array of operations, such as the capture of Abu Zubaydah, Ramzi bin al-Shibh, and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, and numerous air and ground operations. However, the government of Pakistan has also taken part in U.S. drone strikes in northwest Pakistan. According to the International Crisis Group, ‘there is ample evidence of the Pakistani government and security authorities’ tacit consent and even active cooperation with U.S. officials since the start of the drone program in 2004’.[49] There has also been increasing acknowledgement of Pakistan demanding greater involvement on C.I.A drone strikes including signing off on certain targets.[50]

The Reaction of the Pakistani Civilian and Militant Population

The psychological damage caused by drone strikes lies in the historic role played by external forces operating in Pakistan over the last 110 years. Kilcullen claims that drone strikes simply represent a new form of destruction on the livelihoods of people living in the FATA and NWFP regions of Pakistan.[51] The ungoverned space of the FATA region has felt the impact of the British and Russian Empires, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Afghan Civil War, and the rise and entrenchment of the Taliban.[52] The effect of centuries of war in this region due to both colonial and post-colonial atrocities has left many in the region disenfranchised and frustrated due to the long and continuous wars that have been fought in their territory. Thus, drone strikes may work to reduce the number of HVT’s operating in Pakistan, however, they serve only to destabilise the local population because they serve as a reminder of some of the most enduring characteristics of life in the FATA and NWFP.

The psychological impact of drone strikes and the enduring characteristic of warfare in northwest Pakistan have physically manifested themselves through various behaviours. It has included diminished public support for the Pakistani government, public demonstrations and anti-drone songs. However, it has also provided recruitment of civilians into extremist organisations that are sympathetic to these rural populations.[53] This last critical point is important, as both Hoffman and Flynn believe that targeted killings have multiplied the number of insurgents fighting, whilst also undermining the government of Pakistan.[54] Kilcullen and Exum offer an additional claim that drone strikes have allowed the Taliban to not only ‘capitalize on the ensuing mayhem and gain new recruits’, but that they have also ‘re-energized old ones’.[55] This needs to be understood more clearly, because not only are drone strikes being used as a propaganda tool to recruit new extremists, but these Taliban militants who fled Afghanistan in 2001 are inspiring these new recruits. Some of these fleeing militants have also been the target of drone strikes, but have escaped from Afghanistan into Pakistan.[56] Having been the target of drone strikes in Afghanistan, they have become re-energised as they have once again become targets in Pakistan.

What are the Psychological Explanations of the Impact of Drone Strikes?

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Despite there being a deficiency in the availability of epidemiological data to explain the link between drone strikes and their psychological effects, there is considerable evidence that focuses on the psychological effects of war on civilians. Existing research on the negative mental health aspects of war suggests an explanation for the relationship between drone strikes and their effect on civilians.

The most common link that can be found between the psychological effects of war and drone strikes is that of communal ‘suffering’.[57] In Pakistan, there is a greater focus on the customary role of the community rather than the individual.[58] While numerous studies have argued that experiences of war has focused on the psychological effects of the violation of individual integrity and identity, Summerfield claims that:

‘...Non-western peoples have different notions of the self in relation to others and the maintenance of harmonious relations within a family and community is generally given more significance than an individual’s own thoughts, emotions and aspirations’.[59]

Thus, using this psychological analysis of war, it can be used to explain how drone strikes cause psychological harm to individuals and communities in Pakistan.

The emotional reactions of communities in the FATA and NWFP regions show that the destruction and civilian casualties caused by targeted killings have a greater impact on local society rather than the individual. This can be exemplified by the spreading of animosity and protests throughout Pakistan, rather than just those that are found in the tribal regions. An example of this community reaction is a protest that was conducted in October 2011, as 2,000 Pakistanis demonstrated outside the Parliament House Building in Islamabad.[60] During the protest, activists of the party set fire to model drones and shouted, ‘No more drone attacks’. Activists were also interviewed and claimed:

‘We come here to support the Waziri people: 90-95% of the drone victims are innocent civilians. Our government is just a puppet directed by America; they just polish American shoes’.[61]

There are four important points to emphasise from this protest. Firstly, the inaccessibility of the FATA tribal region does not allow those who have been the victim of drone strikes to voice their sense of ‘helplessness’. Secondly, this inaccessibility has led the greater Pakistani population to unite under a common cause and voice their support for the Waziri people. This echoes Summerfield’s analysis on the significance of the community over the individual. Thirdly, the protest was staged outside the Parliament House Building and not outside the U.S. embassy in Islamabad. This suggests greater disdain for the government of Pakistan rather than the United States, as shown by the activists of the Tehreek-e-Insaf party who referred to them as ‘puppets directed by America’. Finally, it shows that the psychological trauma caused by drone strikes have also manifested themselves through peaceful protests rather than just through violence.

This last point exposes the weakness of those, such as Hudson, Owens and Flannes, who argue that there is an inherent link between civilian casualties from drone strikes and reactionary violence.[62] Peaceful protests highlight a significant drawback to those who dismiss reprisal attacks as revulsion to drone strikes as ‘baseless’, because it shows that the reactions to drones are both peaceful and violent, rather than just the latter. This argues that the governments of both Pakistan and the United States need to re-evaluate the use of drone strikes and how they create new pockets of resentment throughout Pakistan, and not just in the tribal northwest regions.

Basoglu offers evidence that the psychological impact of drone strikes can also be explained through ‘Learning Theory Analysis’.[63] This branch of trauma studies assesses how the behaviour of individuals can be applied to different situational contexts and how exposure to ‘stressor events cause certain associative, motivational and emotional deficits’.[64] A learning theory formulation of war trauma postulates that experiences of war violence, and life-threatening events ‘exert their traumatic impact on people through their helplessness effects’.[65] The feeling of helplessness, unpredictability and uncontrollability cause certain ‘fear-induced traumatic stress reactions’ in those communities that are affected.[66] In the FATA region, this is made problematic by the fact that the residents of the area are not able to easily leave the region.[67] The uncontrollability and unpredictability of drone strikes becomes a core element of the ‘anticipatory anxiety’ felt by residents of the region, as they are unable to minimise their

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exposure.[68]

There are similarities can be found in both Basoglu’s analysis on the link between drone strikes and torture and Summerfield’s study on the impact of war on mental health. This is primarily in the way it affects larger communities, and so, the impact or result, will be a communal reaction, rather than just an individual reaction to drone strikes. This substantiates that it is not enough to simply use the number of civilian casualties or the HVT’s killed as the sole basis for evaluation. There is a link between the death of civilian casualties and the reactions that they have, either through peaceful means or violence. This helps to fill a gap in the understanding on why drone strikes are linked to acts of terror and why they have been used to justify them rather than just claiming there is an inherent link between the two activities. The key problem with focusing only on the numbers of civilian casualties and/or HVT’s killed is that these two explanations overlook the impact of drone strikes on the mental health of the communities they have devastated. The analyses provided by Basoglu and Summerfield contributes to the importance of the community over the individual in non-western countries. These two studies corroborate existing contemporary research by Kilcullen and Exum who argue that:

‘Every one of these dead noncombatants represents an alienated family, a new desire for revenge, and more recruits for a militant movement that has grown exponentially even as drone strikes have increased’.[69]

The impact of dead civilians and low-level militants killed by drone strikes represent a problem because many of them are deeply connected to local tribe and clan structures who will seek revenge against those who killed them.[70] Drone strikes have alienated thousands of clans, sub-clans and extended families.[71] The importance placed on the family as the emotional centre of the community makes the psychological effect of drone strikes more problematic because the Pashtun majority of the FATA and NWFP hold onto personal and collective vendettas for generations, and reprisal attacks can be provoked ‘irrespective of time’.[72] Khan – who has called drone strikes ‘counter-intuitive’ because the Pashtun communities are considered as ‘revenge-prone’ – supports this view.[73] According to Khan, the Pashtun community has a ‘culture of revenge’ and drone strikes have merely multiplied the number of insurgents.[74] This has made cooperation between groups such as the Haqqani and Quetta Shura networks with the Pakistani military difficult, as they are unable to earn and maintain their support due to the government’s continued policy of cooperation with the United States.[75]

This has additional ramifications that serve to destabilise Pakistani society because of the attacks that have been staged in protest to the Pakistani government’s policy on drones. Firstly, It has placed additional political pressure on the Pakistani government to oppose American drone strikes on HVT’s, despite their status as an important militant target being indisputable.[76] Secondly, similar to the prolonged exposure to drone strikes in the FATA region and their ‘unpredictable’ and ‘uncontrollable’ nature, innocent Pakistani civilians in larger cities such as Peshawar also have to suffer from the unpredictability and uncontrollability of terrorist attacks in their cities.[77]

The government of Pakistan should reassess its cooperation with the United States on drone strikes that are targeting low-level militants to reduce the number of revenge attacks lowering the psychological anxiety and fear that has been induced on Pakistani civilians. This is increasingly important considering the Pashtun community comprises roughly 15.5% of the total Pakistani population as well as 42% of neighbouring Afghanistan.[78] The Pakistani and the United States government need to understand how the vehement reaction to drone strikes could lead to a ‘generation of martyrs’ that are borne out of the psychological impact of targeted killing.[79]

How does the Psychological Impact of Drones Serve to Help Extremist Recruitment?

The impact of drone strikes in Pakistan on the civilian and militant population has manifested itself in both peaceful and violent means. The common characteristic that is prevalent in both means is that they have provided terrorist organisations with powerful grievances against the government of Pakistan and the United States.[80] These terrorist networks are able to create a narrative with civilian populations that define the method of killing as cruel and dishonourable. In many cases they are able to win support of the local population and provide a recruitment windfall into these networks. Although, as has been seen, not all of the reactions to drone strikes have been violent, there is significant primary evidence that have shown the Taliban have been ‘capitalising on the mayhem’ caused by

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drones.[81] The method of capitalising on the grievances that have been caused by drone strikes has seen drones be referred to by the New York Times, Stanford/NYU as the ‘New Guantanamo’.[82] According to the New York Times, drones have replaced Guantanamo Bay as the ‘recruiting tool of choice for militants’.[83]

The study by Stanford and New York University shows numerous examples of civilians who have joined the Taliban as a result of drone attacks.[84] Mirza Shahzad Akbar, a Pakistani human rights lawyer explained that a few of his clients had rejected the opportunity to join the Taliban. However, many others had joined numerous militia groups when it was clear that ‘no legal route was available’.[85] This claim that an absence of legal action against drone strikes is supported by the Stanford/NYU study who claim that many Waziris are unable to find an explanation for why U.S. strikes continuously target their communities. Thus, without an explanation, they believe that the U.S. ‘...actively seeks to kill them simply for being Muslims, viewing the drone campaign as part of a religious crusade against Islam’.[86]

The Stanford/NYU study reveals three important points. Firstly, it reveals that many people in Waziristan are unaware or are uneducated on the existing ‘War on Terror’ that is targeting militants in their communities. Secondly, they are unable to use the legal system as a platform for gaining justice for those who have been killed by drones. Finally, their feelings of ‘suffering’ and ‘helplessness’ that was discussed earlier by Basoglu is serving as a reaction by some to choose revenge through violence. This has led the line that separates ‘civilians’ from ‘militants’ to become blurred as drone strikes are acting as a uniting force.[87]

In order to understand how the two groups have become united in their efforts, it is important to understand the predominant cultural and societal norms in Pakistan. In the ungoverned spaces of northwest Pakistan, the members of the community identify themselves through their familial ties and commitments. Lindholm describes how the people of the FATA live under a segmented system of ‘Pashtunwali’, which is characterized as having an internal organization, however, that power and influence remain widely distributed.[88] Groh supports this view, however, he claims that despite their being some differences between the various Pashtun tribes, any existing grievances they have between them are set aside when they are faced with an external threat.[89] He claims:

‘All grievances existing within the tribe are effectively put on hold, and a form of military-like order is established under the skilled and experienced leader to allow the group to focus on fighting the common enemy’.[90]

This claim is also supported by Meyer, who has noticed the Taliban have stepped up their attempts to stir-up anti-American sentiment in the region since the death of TTP leader, Baitullah Mehsud.[91] As drones are physically threatening the lives of ordinary Pashtuns, they are uniting together in order to preserve it. According to Meyer, a number of attacks on Pakistani government strongholds have come from ‘formerly unaligned militant groups who have joined together against the Zardari Administration’.[92] According to Zaizi, drones are uniting smaller groups into larger, and more ideologically radical groups.[93]

One of the pillars of the ‘Pashtunwali’ is ‘Badal’, which demands that a Pashtun seek revenge for any insult or injury that is placed on them.[94] According to Groh, the insult or injury ‘determines the nature of the response’, which includes murder.[95] This becomes problematic in Pakistani society, because while the government would consider murder as an act of revenge, and punishable by law, Pashtuns would see it ‘as an appropriate means of settling the issue’.[96] This further separates the Pashtun people from the government.

Having understood the cultural and societal norms that ordinary Pashtun people abide to, it is possible to find identifiable links to the psychological impact of drone strikes, and how this has turned ordinary Pashtun civilians into militants. Firstly, the drone strikes in the FATA region are physically threatening the Pashtun people as their personal space is being invaded and the normal life of ordinary citizens is physically and chronically restricted.[97] Under the system of ‘Pashtunwali’, they are banding together through shared grievances to preserve their way of life. Secondly, the feeling of ‘helplessness’ and ‘suffering’ that has caused serious psychological harm to certain individuals and communities has left people without an adequate explanation to why they are being targeted. This links the studies of both Summerfield and Basoglu that have discussed earlier. Finally, the cultural and societal norms of ‘Pashtunwali’ – described by Groh and Lindholm – provides a mechanism from which the Pashtun people are able to project their

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anger and resentment to drone strikes, when legal solutions are difficult or unavailable to obtain. These multiple factors contribute to an understanding of the ‘second order’ effect of drone strikes.

How have Drone Strikes Served to Destabilise Pakistani Society?

Militancy and extremism in Pakistan has seen a marked increase since 2008. Statistics have shown the number of terrorist and suicide bombings in Pakistan compared to the number of drone strikes that have been carried out in Pakistan. Although there was also a noticeable increase in attacks against the government of Pakistan in 2007, there were 489 attacks that were recorded in 2008, rising to 573 in 2009. There were two significant events that took place in 2007 and 2008, which can be used to explain this increase in violence that also must be addressed.

Firstly, in October 2007, General Pervez Musharraf was re-elected as President of Pakistan.[98] Musharraf wanted to ensure a smooth transition into the Presidency and duly dismissed the Chief Justice and other judges within the Supreme Court and declared a state of emergency in Pakistan.[99] Secondly, in 2008, amid concerns about the ongoing struggle between the government of Pakistan and militants in northwest Pakistan, the U.S. stepped up its COIN campaign pledging that it was ‘ready, willing, and able to provide military support and conduct joint operations with the Pakistanis’.[100] This included a secret accord that was signed by new President Zardari, which involved greater coordination of intelligence and an approved list of HVT’s.[101] Support from the United States undoubtedly had an impact on increased violence in Pakistan, as the majority of Pakistanis are sensitive to foreign military presence.[102]

The psychological impact of drone strikes as a ‘second-order’ effect of targeted killing provides an additional dimension to the existing literature on the current militant situation in Pakistan. This analysis aims to scrutinise the drone programme’s apparent effectiveness, and avoids studies such as those conducted by RAND scholars, Johnston and Sarbahi who claim that drone strikes are associated with decreases in the number and lethality of militant attacks.[103] Although they acknowledge that there have been spillover effects of drone strikes on anti-American sentiment and US-Pakistan relations, a serious weakness in the argument is that it dismisses the spillover or ‘second-order’ effects of drone strikes in order to protect its perceived successes.

Firstly, the psychological damage caused by drones has widened the trust deficit between individuals and groups. This is primarily because of the recognition that the ISI has been supporting informants that are providing intelligence on the location and identity of militants. The trust deficit has caused some groups such as Khorasan Mujahedin to pursue retaliatory attacks against local civilians that are suspected of being informants.[104] The majority of people who have been suspected of attacks have never acted as informants, but have tended to confess to prevent further beating.[105] A more interesting point to note is how the psychological feeling of ‘helplessness’ to prevent future drone strikes has caused some groups to alternatively target those who may be selling information in order to revenge prior attacks. The popular discontent between the civilian and military on the sharing of intelligence has widened the existing trust deficit between individuals and groups in Pakistani society. Additionally, the asymmetrical vulnerability of the Pakistanis on the ground and the unavailability of a legal platform with which to petition their grievances serve to increase their abhorrence to drone strikes. It has also reduced local toleration for a government that does not provide any oversight of the drone programme.[106]

Secondly, militants have used the Pakistan government’s complicity in the drone programme as a pretext to strike government and army targets across Pakistan. Militants have taken advantage of the psychological impact of drones by using the subject as part of their jihadi propaganda.[107] Ayman al-Zawahiri, the current leader of al-Qaeda, has called for the people of Pakistan to rise up against the government, calling their activities an act of ‘treachery and betrayal’, which focuses specifically against those who have been innocent targets of drone strikes and feeds on their grievances.[108]

Kimmage produced a study on al Qaeda’s media strategy and the rise in the use of the internet for propaganda purposes. In his study, Kimmage found that roughly 46% of the al Qaida’s propaganda videos in 2009 focused on events in the AfPak region.[109] Brian Fishman, in a study by the New America Foundation, shows that 32 of 70 propaganda videos that were released by al-Qaida were related specifically to events in the AfPak region.[110]

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These videos are produced with the intention to take advantage of the psychological damage inflicted on the civilian and militant population to foster further recruitment into militant ranks.

By tapping into the existing grievances of local victims of drone strikes, this has embedded them into the narrative of the Pakistani Taliban's 'Defensive Jihad' to defend the Muslim community against attack.[111]. SISA specifically refers to the attempts by Nawai Afghan Jihad, an Urdu Jihadi magazine, to blame the Pakistani establishment for 'assisting and endorsing an outsider like the C.I.A to conduct drone strikes with impunity'.[112] It also goes as far to speculate whether the government of Pakistan, in tandem with the United States, will 'invade' North Waziristan, and target pro-government groups such as the Haqqani network.[113] Both of these statements are aimed at unsettling the local population of Pakistan, using the psychological trauma caused by drones, as the inspiration to induce them into militancy.

Finally, drone strikes in the tribal areas of Pakistan has seen a form of 'militant migration', as many inhabitants of the FATA have moved to big cities such as Karachi.[114] This has increased sectarian activity in an already unstable Pakistani city as numerous groups from the FATA that have regrouped in Karachi are pro-Sunni and so, have conducted numerous anti-Shi'a attacks. The bombings and mass-killings are not isolated in Karachi, as they have also spread across Pakistan in tandem with the expanded influence of the TTP.[115] Siddique comments on the 'intertwining of Punjabi extremist elements with the Pashtun-borne Taliban movement', that has created sectarian splinter groups such as 'Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan' and 'Lashkar-e-Jhangvi'.[116]

By accounting for the numerous consequences of Pakistan's complicity in drone attacks it is important not to dismiss the danger that is caused by an amalgamation of the various factors that have been discussed in this section. This chapter has focused on the domestic issues that face the Pakistan government for its continued complicity in the U.S. drone programme. It has drawn on various historic sources on Pakistani culture and linked it to contemporary studies on the psychological damage caused by war on civilians. It is important to assess and understand the root of tribal frustration and how the psychological impact of drones is causing 'second-order' consequences that threaten to further radicalise and destabilise Pakistani society. The Pakistani government needs to re-evaluate its support for the drone programme. It should also focus on efforts to rebuild trust among the government and the citizens of Pakistan.

CHAPTER 3: IMPLICATIONS OF DRONE STRIKES FOR THE UNITED STATES

A Dishonourable Method of Warfare

There is a wide disparity between the American and Pakistani perception of the use of drone warfare in Pakistan. According to a 2013 Pew poll, 61% of Americans 'approve' of the use of drone strikes to target extremists.[117] On the other hand, only 5% of Pakistanis 'approve' of using drones to target extremists.[118] What is more important and has secondary implications is that 68% of the Pakistani population 'disapprove' of American use of drones.[119] In addition to the negative support that Pakistanis have for drone strikes, a 2012 Pew Survey noted that 94% of Pakistanis believe the strikes kill too many innocent people.[120]

According to Deri, the U.S. drone programme has continued to evolve and develop unchallenged largely because of the popular response to its perceived efficiency in locating and killing HVT's. However, she also claims that U.S. policy-makers have failed to comprehend the Pakistani abhorrence to drone warfare. She argues that if drones do succeed in killing HVT's, the national condemnation over the method and the number of civilian casualties has served to increase the number of civilians and militants willing to take their place. Cronin refers to the popular support of a common cause as the 'invisible element' of terrorism, and thus can making killing HVT's irrelevant if they can be easily replaced.[121]

The variance in perception has created a large schism in the American standpoint of drones as 'riskless' and 'humane', and the Pakistani standpoint as 'dishonourable' and 'cruel'.[122] This view is supported by Exum, who acknowledges that for people living in the FATA, drones do not characterise a 'honourable way of warfare', neither does it characterise as a 'classical sense of what it means to be a warrior'.[123] Additionally, an increase in the indiscriminate use of 'signature strikes' - where the targeting criterion is not the combatant status of an individual but

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rather their pattern of behaviour – increases the psychological harm placed on civilians as it increases the disproportionality in military capability between the United States and Pakistan.[124] Thus, the use of drones as a honourable method of warfare must be addressed if it is to continue.

Deri refers to the concept of ‘Izzat’ and how it is linked to the Pakistani definition of honourable warfare.[125] According to Deri, ‘Izzat’ refers simply to ‘prestige’ or ‘honour’.[126] However, Dusenbery believes this definition is too conventional, and believes that ‘Izzat’ also refers to ‘respect, reputation, shame, prestige, and status’.[127] Dusenbery builds on this definition of ‘Izzat’ and claims that it is also the reference point to which one can ‘seek retribution for wrongs and injustices suffered at the hands of others...serving as both impetus and rationale for social action’.[128] Although, there is ambiguity between Deri and Dusenbery’s definition of ‘Izzat’, the two authors agree that the term is often ‘described negatively’ and is not a widely discussed concept in Western culture.

By drawing from the Urdu concept of ‘Izzat’, it is possible to understand why drone strikes in Pakistan have been met by popular dismay. As discussed earlier, drone attacks in Pakistan are becoming increasingly indiscriminate and although the primary ‘militant’ target has tended to be of the male gender, the collateral damage is often women and children. The definition of ‘Izzat’ by Deri and Dusenbery that refers to ‘protecting one’s family’ can be linked to Kilcullen’s claim that ‘each innocent victim of a drone strike represents an alienated family...a new desire for revenge’.[129] As discussed earlier in the study by Summerfield, non-western communities tend to place significant importance on the family, and the concept of ‘Izzat’ plays an important role in protecting the women and children in a family. The use of violence to defend the honour of one’s family is thus, a part of tribal Pakistani culture, especially when it is against acts of external aggression such as drone strikes that challenge Pakistani definitions of honour.

The Psychological Impact of ‘Signature Strikes’ and ‘Double-Tapping’

According to Klaidman, ‘signature strikes’ are:

‘...The targeting of groups of men who bear certain signatures, or defining characteristics associated with terrorist activity, but whose identities aren’t necessarily known’.[130]

The use of ‘signature strikes’ represents an evolution in the use of drone strikes as a method of targeted killing. Prior to 2007, ‘personality’ or ‘high-value individual’ strikes, that targeted high-value leaders were the chosen method of targeted killing by drones.[131] This method of targeted killing has been met with significant controversy because it has simultaneously seen an expansion in the definition of ‘militant’ in American military terms. According to Glenn Greenwald, President Obama has expanded the definition of a ‘militant’ to ensure that the number of ‘civilian’ casualties remains low when drone strikes are reported in the media.[132] This involves counting all military age males in a strike zone as ‘combatants’.[133]

Although there are the obvious legal and ethical ramifications of extrajudicial assassinations without proper due process, the psychological effects of ‘signature strikes’ are equally as important when evaluating drone strikes. Firstly, the distinction between ‘civilian’ and ‘militant’ in drone strikes has not been made public. Additionally, Bergen and Tiedemann acknowledge that ‘militants’ are known to live and operate amongst the ‘civilian’ population in the FATA region.[134] Secondly, the ‘unpredictable’ and ‘uncontrollable’ nature of drone strikes – as discussed by Basoglu – serves to increase the psychological impact of drones.[135] As ‘signature strikes’ target all ‘military-aged males’, this further restricts the level of mobility of the population within the FATA and places a constant fear of imminent death in the minds of innocent civilians. Owens refers to this behaviour as ‘anticipatory anxiety’ because drones have caused people to constantly worry about their immediate future, and is a psychological characteristic found in many conflict zones.[136] Furthermore, ‘signature strikes’ do not take into consideration the cultural norm in Pakistan of carrying small arms/light weapons on a daily basis.[137] Therefore, the major implication of ‘signature strikes’ is that by using a flawed ‘pattern of life’ analysis of the FATA population, it impedes the regular, daily pattern of life of innocent civilians that are targeted in drone strikes. This is reinforced by their uncontrollability and unpredictability that serves to increase the psychological feeling of helplessness.

The Stanford/NYU study also revealed evidence of ‘double-tap’ drone attacks. According to their study, an initial

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strike would take place on a target, and soon after, another strike would be launched to ensure the target has been eliminated.[138] According to the Kabul press, this technique is used to compensate for the deficiencies in the Hellfire missiles used by drones to limit surrounding collateral damage.[139] However, during the period of the two air strikes, first responders such as family members, neighbours or medical teams will have arrived to rescue the victims, and they too will be injured or killed in the second air strike.[140] A ‘double-tap’ strike occurred in Datta Khel, North Waziristan, killing a top commander of Pakistani Taliban leader, Hafiz Gul Bahadur.[141] According to Zia Khan, over 40 people were killed, only 12 of whom were defined as ‘militants’.[142] Both strikes represent the newest form of a ‘Kill first, ask questions later’ counter-terrorism policy, that leaves no consideration for the mental health issues they have left behind.[143]

‘Double-tap’ strikes are another type of psychological attack on the FATA population as a result of the prolonged exposure to unpredictable drone strikes. They are another example of how the effects of drone strikes go beyond the number of fatalities. There are implications that need to be addressed on the use of ‘double tap’ strikes as they are seen to dismiss the relationship between ‘civilians’ and ‘militants’ in tribal communities. According to Pir Zubair Shah, it is a common practice for Taliban militants to immerse themselves in the daily life of civilians.[144] This can range from buying goods from stores to sharing living compounds with family members or friends that are not actively engaged in combat. ‘Double-tap’ strikes cut through the social structure of tribal communities because they believe that by ‘civilians’ engaging with ‘militants’, they have become legitimate targets for drone strikes.

According to Basoglu’s analysis of drone strikes, ‘double-tap’ strikes serve to maximise the feeling of helplessness in people.[145] It is also worse in tribal Pakistan because of the closeness of communities, despite the immersion of civilians and militants. This increases the number of civilians affected by drones, as it includes witnesses and rescue workers of the large communities. Civilians living in close communities are denied the coping strategy of being able to rescue and bury those who have been killed.[146] This is because secondary strikes have actively discouraged them from attending to the blast area.[147] Thus, the cumulative psychological effects of drones are likely to be greater, and the resulting negative sentiments that they create will also be larger.

How has Drones Facilitated Extremist Recruitment?

Despite the benefits of using Predator drones to target HVT’s and limiting U.S. casualties, the psychological ‘second order’ effects raise multiple concerns. This is primarily because of drone strikes increasing anti-Americanism in Pakistan, radicalising more civilians into militants. Landay claims that the deaths of hundreds of women and children have substantiated the claims by Pakistani extremists such as Baitullah Mehsud that reprisal bombings and terrorist attacks are justified.[148] The justification of suicide attacks and terrorist bombings as a response to drone strikes will serve to facilitate extremist recruitment as the psychological feeling of helplessness and frustration leads to a motivation for revenge through violence. This is also further exacerbated when the local population are unable to obtain proper legal justice to compensate for the loss of family members. Studies on the psychological impact of drones to terrorist recruitment also counter studies by the International Crisis Group who claim, ‘...Militant recruitment is achieved more on economic than ideological grounds’.[149]

There are countering claims to how militants have taken advantage of the youth population’s reaction to drones. Authors such as Khan claim that in the FATA, militants have exploited the widespread illiteracy of the general youth population to foster extremist recruitment. On the other hand, Foust claims that militants often recruit from ‘affluent and well-educated areas of Pakistan as they do from the tribal areas’.[150] Zia Ur Rehman exemplifies this latter dynamic by reporting that Karachi has become a hub for recruiting university-educated youth into al-Qaida and Taliban groups due to its number of academic institutions.[151] Although it is difficult to select which of these studies to be accurate, the common assumption that is made by the different authors is that militants are targeting the youth population as a part of their recruitment process.

The concerns raised by youth recruitment are important because the child/adolescent demographic is especially ‘at-risk’ from psychological illnesses such as PTSD. A study by Yule et al showed that about 10% of children and adolescents still suffered from PTSD 5-8 years after a traumatic experience.[152] This study adds weight to the argument that children and young adolescent are at a greater risk of being recruited by militants. An interview that

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was conducted by the Stanford/NYU study on the psychological impact of drone strikes in Pakistan specifically mentions the impact of drones on children. According to an interview with a Pakistani mental health professional, a long-term ramification of psychological trauma on children from drone strikes includes damaged ‘personality development’ that permanently reduces trust, while ‘stirring up feelings of anger and revenge’.[153] Additionally, the lack of adequate health infrastructure in parts of North Waziristan have proven incapable of dealing with mental health illnesses related to drones or other activities.[154]

A second reason that drone strikes are increasing extremist recruitment is that the U.S. has expanded its target list to also include low-level militants. Plaw and Fricker claim that this has proven controversial because the militant affiliation and involvement in violence of many who have been killed is unclear.[155] These are often referred to as ‘unknowns’ by the United States; however, the local population sees them as civilians. Figure 6 below shows the number of ‘unknowns’ killed by drones in Pakistan.

The data provided by Plaw and Fricker’s study on assessing the efficacy of the drone programme in Pakistan shows that the number of ‘unknowns’ killed in Pakistan from 2008-2011 represents an average of 19.32% of the total number killed. This is a marked increase from 4.5% during the first 3 years of the drone campaign.[156] The expansion of the programme to focus on low-level Taliban and al Qaida militants has seen an increase in opposition to drones. According to the International Republican Institute (IRI), as the number of ‘unknowns’ killed in Pakistan rose gradually from 2004 onwards, there has been a decrease in the willingness of Pakistanis to cooperate with the United States.[157] Additionally, the IRI poll also reports the number of the local population who disagreed with U.S. military incursions into the tribal areas lies between 73-77% from July to October 2009.[158]

Resentment towards the United States is increasing because the U.S. is not distinguishing between low-level militants and Pakistani civilians. The resentment has provided groups such as the TTP with a tool for recruitment because the U.S. has failed to isolate militant groups from the civilian population.[159] Instead of isolating Pakistani civilians, they have pushed them closer to the Taliban because civilian perceptions towards drones show that they feel they are being targeted rather than the militants.[160] Expanded drone strikes directed against low-level militants have shown to be counter-productive because rather than isolating civilians from militants, they have brought the two groups together and united them against the United States. The feeling of ‘anticipatory anxiety’ also further exacerbates this problem. Civilians, in constant fear of immediate death, are seeking more efficient methods of justice, rather than waiting for a legal system that has prevented them from doing so.

This chapter has analysed the expansion of the U.S. drone programme to target low-level militants. It has also called into question the psychological impact of ‘signature strikes’ and ‘double taps’, which have threatened to destabilise and further radicalise Pakistani society as it has led to the U.S. reputation amongst Pakistanis to diminish as more civilians have been killed. ‘Second order’ effects of targeted killing will continue so long as the programme continues to kill innocent civilians through the expansion of the definition of ‘militants’. This will continue to provide extremist groups with a windfall of recruitment unless U.S. policy-makers understand the ramifications of expanding the drone programme.

CHAPTER 4: RECOMMENDATIONS

Drones and the Future of Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Insurgency Operations

Despite the psychological impact of drones on the civilian population in the FATA region, it is difficult to claim that the only effects of drones are negative. There have been extensive dividends to drones in eliminating HVT’s in the AfPak border. According to Obama administration officials, the U.S. has eliminated two-thirds of al Qaida’s top leaders in the AfPak border between January 2009 and December 2012.[161] Furthermore, according to the New America Foundation, 55 al Qaida, al Qaida-affiliated and Taliban group leaders have been killed by drones in Pakistan.[162] The deaths include a number of senior militant leaders within the TTP, Haqqani, Harkat-ul Jihad al-Islami and Taliban leaders in South Waziristan.[163] The deaths of senior militant leaders have disrupted the capacity of local, regional and transnational militants in the FATA, who have been responsible for multiple attacks against Pakistani government and NATO targets.

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However, the expansion of different types of strikes, specifically by the targeting of low-level militants has caused a marked divide in domestic opinion about its efficiency.[164] This has threatened the use of drones as a tool for CT operations in Pakistan.

This study understands that the use of drones will probably continue for the foreseeable future. Thus, this study aims to provide policymakers with a platform, that agrees with the targeting of HVT's, however, which also is able to separate friends from enemies by reducing the number of strikes towards low-level militants and eliminating the use of 'signature strikes'. This chapter offers recommendations at both the domestic and international level. It will aim to provide a clear policy platform for both the Pakistani government and the United States to continue its CT and COIN operations. The recommendations provided call for the consideration of mental health and psychological 'second order' effects when assessing various counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency objectives.

Recommendations for the Government of Pakistan

There are inherent contradictions in Pakistan's CT strategy between its relationships with the United States and certain militant groups such as the Haqqani network. Along with other Pakistani foreign policy issues such as its contentious relationship with India, its CT policy towards domestic and forces requires greater clarity.[165] This requires Pakistan to present itself as either serious about confronting domestic terrorism single-handedly or to publicly acknowledge its coordination with the U.S to reduce the opacity and ambiguity of its position. Both policy options will provide the Pakistani public with a clear perception of its position towards militant extremists. It will also reduce the feeling of uncertainty that the local population has gained as a result of the government's constant shifting position towards the United States.

Tackle extremism alone

The option of tackling extremism in northwest Pakistan will cause psychological trauma with or without the use of drones. Despite the feeling of depression and anxiety from drones that has taken place in the tribal belt, existing literature from authors such as Basoglu and Yule et al show that the exposure to the atrocities of war can cause serious mental health illnesses to civilians.

However, the government of Pakistan may benefit by tackling extremism without the help of the U.S. as it reduces the presence of a foreign state operating in Pakistan. As discussed by Kilcullen, the presence of external forces risks the population-centric counter-insurgency strategy in Pakistan as local forces reject their presence. This can cause an 'Accidental Guerilla' phenomenon, as external forces have been present in Pakistan for over 110 years. The presence of external forces has also united unaligned militant groups under Pashtun norms of 'Pashtunwali' and 'Badal'. This has resulted in the government of Pakistan not being able to take advantage of existing differences between different militant groups. It is these differences that need to be capitalised on by the government if they want to reduce the sense of grievance and hostility that has developed as a result of the widening trust deficit between the country's leadership and the people.[166]

A military strategy should involve strengthening the existing relationship with the Haqqani network and organisations that are against attacking Pakistani state infrastructure. This would inevitably lead to pressure being exerted on the government from the United States; however, the government should aim to focus on shifting the battle in the War on Terror back to Afghanistan. Despite the Haqqani networks attacks against U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, the War in Afghanistan is a publicly declared war zone between members of the international coalition and insurgent groups. This will allow the government of Pakistan to focus its energy on negotiating peace deals with organisations such as the TTP. This is important because while the TTP engages in terrorist attacks against both Pakistani civilians and the state, the Haqqani network has mostly refrained from attacking Pakistani military and civilian targets, and has only rarely attacked western civilians in Afghanistan.[167] The Haqqani network's role as 'mediator' and 'conduit' between the Pakistani government and the TTP has seen them use their influence to make peace between anti-Pakistan and pro-Pakistan militants in North Waziristan.[168] The U.S. should allow the government of the Pakistan to use the Haqqani network to forge a peace deal with the TTP and restrict its use of drones – such as the March 2011 attack in Datta Khel – that have sabotaged previous potential peace agreements.[169] There needs

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to be a clear separation in the CT and COIN objectives in Pakistan and Afghanistan between the U.S. and Pakistan. The Pakistani military should not have to cater to U.S. concerns about groups such as the Haqqani network. The U.S. needs to appreciate Pakistan's position as a major stakeholder in the continuing conflict and recognise its individual security interests.[170]

There also needs to be a relief and rehabilitation plan for Internally Displaced Person's (IDP's) in the FATA that go alongside successful peace agreements. Since 2001, the threat posed by militancy has increased as the ongoing conflict, poverty, and lack of development have made it easier for the Taliban to recruit soldiers from the lowest socio-economic class in Pakistan.[171] As long as the FATA remains the poorest and least developed part of Pakistan, the psychological impact of war and drones and civilian recruitment into militant organisations will be self-perpetuating. The government of Pakistan need to prioritise relief and rehabilitation to FATA's IDP's. A 2009 ICG report suggests that the government of Pakistan should 'engage in broad consultation with local and provincial leaders on a plan for relief, future reconstruction and resettlement with the goal of sustainable provision of public services and economic infrastructure'.[172] Displacement disrupts long-term stability and can increase displaced people's vulnerability to militant recruitment.[173] The Pakistani military need to lift the domestic and international humanitarian blockade to FATA's conflict zones to provide adequate relief to IDP's in the region.

Public acknowledgement of cooperation with the United States Drone Programme

An alternative option is to continue cooperation with the U.S. so long as it agrees to publically acknowledge its full collaboration to the Pakistani population. The creation of a transparent counter-terrorism programme will help to reduce the public outrage of Pakistan's continued covert relationship with the U.S. in the War on Terror. The 2013 Pew poll shows that Pakistanis continue to strongly oppose extremist organisations operating in Pakistan. This is exemplified by polls that show that of the six main extremist groups that operate in the AfPak region, only an average of 14.1% of the Pakistani population favourably view these organisations.[174] Additionally, in provinces such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 49% of the total population view the Taliban as a 'very serious threat'.[175] It is clear that the broader population of both the U.S. and Pakistan are threatened by acts of terrorism, and both populations support some type of CT platform to combat these threats. Thus, both governments need to agree on a basis in which to show the Pakistani population – including civilians in the tribal areas – that cooperation against extremists operating in the northwest region is a price worth paying to keep innocent civilians safe from the hands of militants.

Regarding the use of drones, the government of Pakistan needs to continue to push the U.S. government to cease its use of 'signature' and 'double-tap' strikes. These are two strikes that cause significant psychological damage to surviving victims of drone attacks. The government should push for greater control of drones that only pursue 'high-value targets'. The call for a scaled-back and more transparent drone programme should involve clarification of targeted individuals and the reasons for their targeting, and when they are killed, their deaths can be agreed and defended in the public sphere.[176] This will ensure that only militants are being targeted, and that innocent civilians should not have to continue fearing that they too will be killed. Drone strikes that kill low-level militants do not ascertain any strategic value for Pakistani security interests and only serve to increase civilian casualties if existing intelligence on their 'militant' status is incorrect. The psychological trauma from drone strikes that increasingly kill only low-level Taliban risks alienating too many innocent civilians.[177]

It is critical that the future of drones in Pakistan should only involve the targeting of HVT's that are clearly identified, and that their deaths can be defended. The targeting of HVT's rather than low-level militants demonstrates to the population a clear boundary between 'civilians' and 'militants', and separates friends from enemies. This is important to the future of a population-centric CT and COIN strategy in Pakistan.

Recommendations for the United States

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, this study acknowledges that the use of drones is likely to continue as part of America's continued counter-terrorism operation in Pakistan. Therefore, this study recommends limiting the use of drones only to those that are deemed HVT's. This involves gradually ending the practise of 'signature' and 'double-tap' strikes. Regarding 'signature strikes', it is unclear what, if any, process is in place for these targeting decisions,

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and so is problematic as they are open to abuse and mistakes.[178] Secondly, ‘double-tap’ strikes serve to maximise helplessness in people and enhances the traumatic impact of drones on civilians.[179] The CIA and JSOC should end both of these practises and only target HVT’s. Targeted killings against HVT’s should be defined as the leadership of al-Qaida and affiliated forces who are identified as having a ‘direct operational role in past or ongoing terrorist plots against the United States and its allies’.[180]

The theme of this study has been to address the psychological damage caused by U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan and how they are linked to the militarisation of civilians. Despite the numerous claims of militant leaders such as Baitullah Mehsud and Faisal Shahzad about the clear anti-Americanism that is caused by drones in Pakistan, this has been an area of study that has been under-researched. As a result, the Obama administration has been swift to dismiss claims of justification without fully understanding the ‘second order’ effects of drones in militarising civilians. The most significant recommendation that can be made is for the Obama administration to reverse this custom and strongly reconsider the negative ramifications of the use of drones in Pakistan. There needs to be a greater appreciation of how the historic and cultural hostility towards external forces is linked to the new phenomenon of drones. These hostilities transcend the efficacy of eliminating senior extremist leadership while also reducing American military casualties. This tendency to glorify the benefits of drones has completely overlooked the fact that drone strikes are infuriating the more moderate and liberal segments of Pakistani society. These moderate and liberal segments of society have typically been more sympathetic to the United States.[181] It is critical to maintain their support to limit the chances of their recruitment into militant ranks.

The United States should seek to scale back its use of drones only in areas where there is a clear distinction between militants and civilians. The U.S. needs to clearly illustrate to Pakistani civilians that the Taliban and Islamic extremism are the real enemy, not the United States. According to Kilcullen and Petraeus, building trusted networks is the ‘true meaning of the phrase hearts and minds’ in any counter-insurgency.[182] This involves firstly persuading people their best interests are served by your success, and secondly, convincing them that you can protect them.[183] The United States should not lose sight of its goal in combating extremism in Pakistan. The continued use of drones in Pakistan should only be based on calculated decisions that target senior militant leadership in order to demonstrate to the local population that they are there to protect them.

CONCLUSION

Key Findings

This study has attempted to address an understudied area of focus on the impact of drone strikes as a method of ‘Targeted Killing’. Although existing literature has tended to concentrate their analysis on the political, legal and moral implications of drones, few studies exist on the psychological consequences of drones on civilians in Pakistan. Furthermore, few studies accurately and convincingly address how civilians have become more militant as drone strikes continue in the tribal regions of Pakistan. Much of the attention towards the counter-productive effect of drones impacting militant recruitment has been made from respected newspapers such as the New York Times and the Washington Post. However, they have been limited in their attempts to provide evidence on the process of militarisation from ‘civilian’ to ‘militant’, and how the psychological damage to civilians is a key factor in that process. Unfortunately, making generalisations or off-hand remarks are not enough to convince policy-makers of the negative consequences of their actions, especially one as highly supported as the drone programme.

It has been shown that attempts to specifically analyse the psychological impact of drones has been problematic due to the inaccessibility of the FATA region to investigate these claims. However, existing literature on the general psychological impact of war on civilians, as well as studies that identify the key cultural and societal norms that exist in Pashtun society provide authors with a helpful platform to investigate these claims. Groh and Lindholm discuss the importance of ‘Pashtunwali’ and ‘Badal’ and how the impact of drones has united certain militant organisations against the Pakistani state and external enemies. Deri discusses how the use of drones as a ‘dishonourable’ method of warfare has served to militarise certain factions of society. The study on ‘Living Under Drones’ by Stanford University and New York University has provided policy-makers with an unprecedented first-hand view on the psychological impact of civilians in the FATA region. Finally, studies by Kilcullen, Reuters, and the New America

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Foundation have discussed the impact of drones on COIN and CT operations in Pakistan. This has shown that policy-makers need to look past the efficiency of drones and address their ‘second order’ effects in militarising civilians and uniting militants. This is crucial to attaining long-term strategic success rather than focusing on short-term tactical gains in Pakistan. It is not hypothetical that drones have replaced Guantanamo Bay as the primary recruiting tool for militants in enrolling and radicalising civilians. Arguments that discuss the political, legal, and moral implications of drones do not address the problem of civilian recruitment into militant ranks. This can only be addressed by acknowledging the role that psychological harm has done to civilians.

Finally, this study has acknowledged that the use of drones will continue for the unforeseeable future. No one can deny the extraordinary value that drones have provided the U.S. as an effective tool for eliminating terrorist safe-havens in the furthest regions of the world. However, that should not give it the freedom to continue without properly addressing the very damaging effect it has had on civilians. Addressing the psychological impact of drones provide policy-makers with an invaluable and pragmatic tool in analysing their effectiveness.

Limitations

In conducting research for this study, the primary limitation has been the problem of separating ‘fact’ from ‘fiction’. Due to the dearth of literature on the psychological impact of drones, this study heavily relied on accepting certain claims as ‘facts’ due to the limited number of counter-arguments that are available. Thus, the study relied on inductive reasoning to analyse various sources of literature and provide an educated guess that the use of drones has provided militants with a platform to recruit civilians. Although the literature that exists on the effects of the exposure to war, and, more specifically, to drones provides readers and policy-makers with substantial and conclusive arguments, equally powerful counter-arguments are important in providing the topic with the right balance to which accurate conclusions can be made.

Secondly, this study has been affected by the lack of quality epidemiological data to support its claims. Although, this study has used various Pew polls to discuss the unpopularity of drones in Pakistan, existing data on the high number of senior militants killed provide supporters of drones with a more commanding basis to support their arguments about the efficiency of drones. It is this data that has enabled the use of drones to continue without effective pressure because of the lack of powerful data to support counter-arguments. There is a growing branch of authors that acknowledge the negative consequences of drones and so, it is increasingly important that they find new and effective methods of collecting qualitative data to support their arguments.

Concluding Remarks

Drones have continued to be used as a means to justify terrorism. They have been used by Baitullah Mehsud and Faisal Shahzad to justify attacks on Pakistani and American infrastructure. These justifications have been dismissed out-of-hand by policy-makers. This study believes this tactic to be a mistake. Drones have served to militarise civilians, re-energise older militants, and unite various militant organisations that – prior to drones – had differences about the future direction of their groups. These ‘second order’ effects of drones cannot continue to be overlooked. There are a growing number of studies that have shown the psychological trauma that has been caused by drones and how they are linked to militant recruitment. They have raised legitimate concerns about the negative impact of drones. They should be used as an evaluative tool to analyse the effectiveness of drones in comprehensively eliminating terrorism. The killing of senior militants and reducing American casualties cannot continue to be the sole basis for evaluation. A more comprehensive platform that discusses the all-conclusive and widespread impact of drones must be the future method of determining their overall effectiveness.

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