"Costless" War:
American and Pakistani Reactions to the U.S.
Drone War

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Abstract
Since 2004, the CIA has conducted approximately 290 known strikes in Pakistan's remote Waziristan region, using robotic planes known as "drones" to carry out missions. Targeted against militant strongholds along the Afghani border, this covert effort has successfully eliminated key Taliban leaders, such as infamous terrorist Baitullah Mehsud in 2009. In addition to its success in targeting military enemies, drone technology eliminates all risk to American military personnel. As a result, the American political and popular response has been largely positive, and the program has continued to escalate. However, U.S. policymakers have failed to recognize the Pakistani reaction to drone warfare, which has been overwhelmingly hostile. This paper will analyze how the psychological nature of drone warfare—on both American attackers and Pakistani victims—has shaped the development and results of drone strikes in Pakistan. It will discuss the disparity between Americans' view of drones as riskless and humane and Pakistanis' belief that they are dishonorable and cruel. The paper suggests that drone warfare is radicalizing and destabilizing on Pakistani society.

Introduction
In March 2009, Baitullah Mehsud, the leader of Pakistani militant group Tehrek-i-Taliban, claimed responsibility for a deadly attack on a police academy in Lahore, Pakistan. Pakistani civilians and officials widely condemned the attack in the media, but Mehsud's rationale for the attack was clearly intended to garner support. The attack, he said, was "in retaliation for the continued drone strikes by the U.S. in collaboration with Pakistan on our people" ("Lahore was Pakistan," 2009). Less than five months later, two drone Hellfire missiles crashed through the roof of a building in northwest Pakistan. The bodies of Mehsud, four members of his family, and several bodyguards were found in the rubble. However, these were not the only casualties inflicted in the U.S. military's effort to

kill Tehrek-i-Taliban's leader. Over the course of a fourteen-month military operation, sixteen previous drone strikes had failed to kill Mehsud, resulting in between 207 and 321 deaths (Callam, 2010) and injuries to many others, including children ("Drone Attack," 2009)—statistics that Mehsud himself would no doubt have cited when justifying his own terrorist actions.

The tactics used in the United States' offensive against Mehsud are not limited to this particular case. Armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), commonly known as drones, have been developing rapidly over the past decade. Equipped with missiles and state-of-the-art surveillance technology while operated by pilots thousands of miles away, these weapons allow precision strikes against militants with absolutely no risk to soldiers' lives—a dramatic advance in warfare technology that CIA director Lion Panetta has described as "the only game in town" for disrupting al-Qaeda and other militant rings (Mayer, 2009).

Indeed, drones are fast becoming America's new weapon of choice for counterterrorism, and perhaps war itself. In 2002, the Department of Defense had only 167 drones in its inventory and a "handful" of unmanned systems in the air; by 2010 that number had increased to over 7,000 aerial units in operation worldwide. Since 2009, the military has trained more unmanned aircraft pilots than traditional fighter pilots each year, and not a single aerospace company is researching or developing new manned aircrafts (Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 2010). While the United States has used armed UAVs in multiple regions, in Pakistan alone there have been approximately 290 known drone strikes since 2004 (Mayer, 2009). Despite the widespread use of armed drones, Americans have not reacted strongly to this method of military action (Singer, 2012). With the elimination of several key militant leaders like Mehsud, the minimizing of American military casualties, and decreasing public concern about military action in Pakistan, armed UAVs may appear to offer the U.S. government a win-win tactical solution to the War on Terror.

However, a closer examination of Baitullah Mehsud's ideology and appeal raises troubling questions about the use of drones in Pakistan. While the death of Mehsud was generally celebrated in most Pakistani media, his references to drone warfare were not baseless. America's drone attacks, while having had little influence on the American cultural or political arenas, have had a significant impact on Pakistan's national psyche. Pakistan's civilian casualties from UAV strikes stand in stark contrast to the absolute safety of American drone operators, sparking animosity towards the United States in a culture where honorable warfare is imperative. The United States, the international community, and indeed many Pakistanis may consider the deaths of leaders like Mehsud valuable, but the methods used to kill them may make terrorist groups sympathetic in areas where eliminating support for these groups is paramount. Even if drones succeed in killing key enemy leaders, public outrage over drone

attacks and civilian casualties may actually encourage others to take their place and ultimately strengthen fundamentalist groups' foothold in the region.

This paper will discuss how assumptions about drone warfare's psychological impacts in both America and Pakistan have shaped the development and results of the United States' UAV policy in Pakistan. Americans' increasing reluctance to risk lives in war and drones' appeal as a "riskless" weapon has encouraged the reliance of U.S. military actions on UAV technology. Yet, despite the widespread American perception of drones as a humanitarian technology that saves soldiers' lives, Pakistanis view drones as inhuman killing machines that murder civilians and violate cultural codes of honorable warfare. The U.S. drone policy in Pakistan is based on a nationalistic belief that maximizing successful strikes and minimizing American casualties equates with success; it fails to account for drones' ability to alienate and radicalize the Pakistani population. Ultimately, U.S. assumptions about drones and Pakistani culture are causing repercussions that may eventually compromise U.S. interests in the region.

Background: UAV Technology

The development of a military technology that distances the attacker from his target is hardly a new phenomenon. Historically, human groups have attempted to engineer better ways to not only kill their enemies, but also prevent their enemies from killing them. Even the idea of an unmanned aircraft is not especially new. Under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the military conducted research on whether bats carrying small kerosene explosives could enter and firebomb enemy buildings (Scheve, 2008). Lack of control over these "bomb-wielding bats" doomed the initiative, but the idea of unmanned aerial campaigns never disappeared. Advances in flight and radio technology allowed for more successful development of drones, most notably in Israel, where glider-type UAVs were developed in the 1970s and 1980s. These models were used only for surveillance, but like all standard UAVs today, were operated remotely through a joystick manual control.

The first armed UAV was the MQ-1B Predator, which was introduced in 1996 conducting its first attack in November 2002 (Mayer, 2009). Its small arsenal of two Hellfire missiles made it appropriate for small-scale ambushes, but, like previous models, it was built primarily for surveillance. However, the 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the resulting war in Afghanistan increased U.S. interest in conducting unmanned, targeted strikes in remote and mountainous areas like Pakistan's Waziristan, a region along the Afghanistan border that often provided havens to Taliban militants. Due to UAVs' ability to hover and their excellent surveillance equipment, Predators' offensive capacity became increasingly important in military actions. For instance, the MQ-1B Predator, killed Behsud in 2004.

The Predator is far from the last incarnation of the American UAV. The United States military quickly followed the Predator with a fully operational and equally grimly named MQ-9 Reaper in 2007, capable of flying nine times farther and twice as high as the Predator. It uses numerous visual sensors for targeting, including an infrared sensor, a color/monochrome daylight TV camera, an image-intensified TV camera, and carries four Hellfire missiles (United States Air Force, n.d.). Intended as an independent "hunter/killer weapon system" rather than for surveillance, the Reaper appears set to replace the Predator as the main instrument of drone attacks.

Why are drones becoming so prevalent? The continuing development and use of the Reaper, Predator, or any other armed UAV are governed by the practical considerations of price, risk to soldiers' lives, and military usefulness. All three issues weigh heavily in favor of UAV development. Studies show the Reaper proves to be extremely cost-effective as a weapon, costing only $3.5 million per unit (and a total of about $54 million per system), as compared to the hefty $1.2 billion needed to build a manned B-2 bomber (United States Air Force, n.d.). Additionally, drones are remotely operated, thus completely eliminating any risk for their operators.

Drones also perform important military functions. Peter Singer of the Brookings Institution in Washington sums up the advantages of UAV technology as the "three D's: dull, dirty, or dangerous:" dull, because they can inexpensively patrol empty stretches of barren land for 24 hours a day; dirty, because they can endure clouds of smoke or radiation; and dangerous, because there is no risk that a pilot will be captured or killed by enemy forces (Murphy, 2009; Rall, 2011). These qualities are especially important in counterterrorism operations in remote areas like Pakistan's Waziristan, where terrorist cells are often seamlessly embedded with civilian communities. There, drones can combine large amounts of surveillance with extremely lethal offensive strikes. As a result, UAVs are a definitively practical weapons system for conducting counterterrorism in Pakistan: cheaper than the alternatives, safer for its operators, more versatile than a manned system, and more dangerous to its targets.

The American Reaction to Drones

However, the use of armed UAVs has been influenced by more than mere technological practicality. Since the United States is a democratic nation, decisions about military action—at least on some level—involve the opinion of the American public. The constitutional requirement that Congress, not the president, declare war was not coincidental; it ensured that any war would have "broad support...and a willingness to share the costs, both human and economic, of enduring them" (Singer, 2012).

That support has been increasingly difficult for the U.S. government to attain. In World War II, Americans endured rationing, war taxes, and the draft with relatively little protest. In the Vietnam War, in

which the American death toll was seven times less than in World War II, less than half of Americans agreed with the war just two years after it began ("USA Today/ CNN Gallup Poll," 2005). In the 21st century, it took only a year before more than half of Americans thought the Iraq War was a mistake. In both of these conflicts, negative public opinion tended to focus on the war imposing a human and monetary cost upon the nation.

Historically, such negative public reaction has manifested itself in additional measures to limit the costs of war. Neither the Vietnam War nor the Iraq War was actually a "war" declared by Congress, but rather an "authorization for the use of military force" that the President had requested and Congress passed. In response to this perceived lowering of the political barriers to war, Congress passed the War Powers Resolution of 1973. Although its constitutionality has been contested by almost every president, the War Powers Resolution was intended to "ensure that the collective judgment of both the Congress and the President will apply to the introduction of the United States Armed Forces into hostilities" by instituting limits to the number of engaged troops and duration of hostilities before Congress needed to approve the executive branch's military action (Law Library of Congress, 2012). Additionally, in the same year that the War Powers Resolution was passed, the draft was formally ended, thus removing the general public burden of compulsory military service. After the unpopular Vietnam War, the American public and their representatives clearly reacted to the costly conflict not only with rhetoric, but also with legislation intended to limit the instances and costs of war.

Today, however, the advent of drones has significantly changed how Americans perceive the costs of war, and, by extension, how they react to war itself. Drones are not only cheaper than manned systems, but they also eliminate a great deal of the psychological burden that accompanies a nation going to war. Government officials and commentators frequently refer to drone attacks as "costless" (Singer, 2012), demonstrating the expectation that Americans primarily care about limiting the American death toll. Additionally, UAVs' spatial removal of the killer from the killed may also help the American public dissociate from civilian deaths. Vicki Divoll, a former C.I.A. lawyer and current professor at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, notes, "people are a lot more comfortable with a Predator strike that kills many people than with a throat-slitting that kills one" (Mayer, 2009). Perhaps counter-intuitively, drones are comforting to Americans not only because they protect American lives, but also because they seem to make the deaths of their victims less morally fraught.

The resulting impact of drone warfare on the American political conversation is palpable. Drone strikes in Pakistan, conducted secretly by the C.I.A. outside of a war zone, are laden with questions about international law, constitutional balance of powers, and ethical warfare. Yet, the issue has never been debated on the floor of Congress or put to a vote (Singer, 2012). Instead, drones seem to have become the political

answer to quelling public condemnation of a conflict. When columnist George F. Will (2009) argued against investing in the war in Afghanistan, he proposed that the United States instead "do only what can be done from offshore," including using drones for airstrikes along the Pakistani border. Several years and hundreds of strikes later, the United States government seems to be following his plan to the letter. President George W. Bush authorized 35 drone strikes in Pakistan in 2008; President Barack Obama responded to advancing drone technology and decreasing support for the War on Terror by escalating the program to 53 attacks in 2009 and 117 in 2010 (Lakshmanan, 2012). Thanks to UAV technology, America's reaction to costly wars appears to consist of engaging in "costless" drone warfare, rather than attempting to find an exit strategy.

American Assumptions about Civilian Casualties

Although they primarily focus on the American public's reaction to drones, U.S. politicians and commentators have discussed the moral questions of collateral damage. Terrorist strongholds, like those found along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, are almost always difficult to differentiate from civilian communities; as a result, most agree that any bomb-like weapon—manned or unmanned—will inevitably cause civilian casualties. However, the extent of collateral damage due to drone attacks is extremely ambiguous. Many American government officials and commentators have used this ambiguity to underestimate the effect that civilian deaths would have on Pakistan.

A robust analysis of the civilian fatality rate caused by UAV strikes requires statistics concerning the number of people killed by drone attacks and the victim's civilian or military status. However, these numbers are almost impossible to pinpoint, for a number of reasons. The opacity of the C.I.A. program in Pakistan means that most strikes are classified, and the press reports on these strikes are often based on the hearsay of tribal villagers from remote areas (Bergen & Tiedemann, 2010; Carlstrom, 2010). Eyewitnesses may be unable to give exact accounts of casualties, or may even have a vested interest in exaggerating them (Cortright, 2012). Even more importantly, it is often impossible to differentiate militant casualties from civilian casualties—especially after the people in question are already dead. As one commentator dryly summarized, those killed in drone strikes rarely carry "their Taliban, Haqqani or al-Qaida bomb-proof identity cards" (Farooq, 2012). Unsurprisingly, the resulting estimates of casualties vary considerably, often depending upon the political and social loyalties of the estimator. A 2009 Pakistani study put the civilian fatality rate at over 98%—at the other end of the spectrum, a University of Massachusetts professor estimated that only 3.5% of total fatalities were civilians (Bergen & Tiedemann, 2010).

The truth almost certainly lies somewhere between these two extremes, and attempts have been made to pinpoint the exact civilian death

toll in Pakistan. According to Woods (2012) of the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, somewhere between 2,412 and 3,063 people have been reported killed by drone strikes in Pakistan since 2004. According to these statistics, between 467 and 815 of these casualties were civilians and approximately 175 to 178 of those were children. An additional 1,158 to 1,263 people were injured (Cortright, 2012; Farooq, 2012). These statistics yield a civilian fatality rate that ranges from 15 percent to more than twice that, at 33 percent. Meanwhile, the New America Foundation has estimated the civilian fatality rate in 2010 at 32 percent (Bergen & Tiedemann, 2010). This is the most frequently cited statistic for the civilian fatality rate caused by drone attacks.

Despite the relative reliability of this estimate, it is still unclear whether drones cause more, fewer, or a comparable number of civilian fatalities than manned systems would. Drones' effect on civilian casualties is often approximated by guesses on how the situation of drone operators affects their judgment. On one hand, drone pilots could be deemed "less situationally aware and also less restrained because of emotional detachment," resulting in higher casualties; on the other hand, they could also benefit from "sensor improvements, lack of fear-induced haste, reduced anger levels and force protection anxieties, and crystal clarity about strike damage," resulting in better precision and fewer unintentional deaths (Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 2010). It is virtually impossible to meaningfully analyze these subjective traits, leaving the military with little knowledge about the actual implications for the rate of civilian casualties.

Additionally, it is difficult to ascertain the accuracy of the information that drone operators use to conduct strikes. Not only are many tribal informants unreliable or untrustworthy, but there have also been disagreements about the quality of drone video surveillance. Not long before September 11, 2011, U.S. counterterrorism officials believed a drone had captured footage of Osama bin Laden in tribal Afghanistan. "The optics were not great, but it was him," one reported later. But others have disagreed, with another former C.I.A. officer saying that, "[the man] could have been Joe Schmoe. Believe me, no tall man with a beard is safe anywhere in Southwest Asia" (Mayer, 2009). Technological disagreements like these, when combined with the established uncertainty about the number of strikes, deaths, and civilians affected, make it nonviable for anyone to comment reliably on drones' impact on civilian populations in Pakistan.

This ambiguity has led some American politicians and commentators to minimize, or even justify, the civilian death toll. In fact, some believe that drones are a humanitarian technology that is actually *better* able to minimize collateral damage. For example, Kenneth Anderson (2009), a prominent anti-landmine activist, argues that UAVs represent a shift from "more destructive weapons systems…to more discriminating ones" while Benjamin Wittes of the Brookings Institute

believes that the alternative to drone warfare would consist of much more destructive and indiscriminate attacks (Singh & Wittes, 2012). Both Wittes and Anderson cite rapidly developing UAV technology as one of the reasons that UAVs are more discriminating, but their descriptions of drones as the "most discriminatingly humanitarian" technology available (Anderson, 2009) largely ignore reports of indiscriminate killings that have emerged from Pakistan.

U.S. government officials have been even more conservative in their estimates of civilian deaths, sometimes unbelievably so. In June 2011, senior White House counterterrorism adviser John Brennan drew criticism when he contended that drone strikes in Pakistan had not caused "a single collateral death" (Cortright, 2012; Mehsud, Schmitt, & Walsh, 2012). Somewhat more credibly, President Obama described drone attacks as controlled and precise in his first statement directly addressing the covert C.I.A program in Pakistan. Civilian casualties had been exaggerated, he said briefly, and armed UAV strikes had been kept "on a very tight leash" (Landler, 2012). However, the drone program's opacity, the unclear statistics on drone civilian deaths, and the lack of concrete evidence cited by Anderson, Wittes, Brennan, and President Obama make many claims about minimal collateral damage questionable.

Commentators have also argued that collateral damage is an inevitable part of modern conflict. In an influential paper on the evolution of war, military analyst William Lind (1989) has written that global warfare is moving into a "fourth generation," in which political infrastructure and civilian society replace armies as targets. From the perspective of a terrorist organization, the battlefield becomes "highly dispersed and includes the whole of the enemy's society." Although Lind is describing terrorist tactics, the threat to the United States' civilian population—made real by the September 11, 2001 attacks on American soil—may have made attacking other societies' civilian populations seem more legitimate to the American government and people. Indeed, State Department counterterrorism advisers Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon report that, a week before the 9-11 attacks, former C.I.A. director George Tenet said that using the Predator's offensive capabilities would be a "terrible mistake." Yet, days after the attacks, the C.I.A. had petitioned the White House for new authorities, and the first successful Predator strike followed a year later (Mayer, 2009). After suffering attacks on their own soil, many Americans changed their definition of ethical and legal warfare. Anderson (2009) seems to agree with this new definition, arguing that drones are humanitarian because they do not "unduly" target civilians. In his opinion, the government should focus on *limiting* the collateral damage caused by strikes on civilian areas, rather than curtailing the strikes themselves.

Another pro-drone outlook avoids questions about collateral damage, focusing instead on changing the public's perception of drone attacks. Democratic international relations and intelligence experts

Graham Allison and John Deutch have claimed that, if there is widespread Pakistani condemnation of President Obama's drone campaign, it is because "the U.S. government no longer seems capable of conducting covert operations without having them reported in the press" (Anderson, 2009). Since the C.I.A. drone program in Pakistan is, in their opinion, necessary, Allison and Deutch argue that the United States government should attempt to curtail *reports* of civilian deaths, rather than the civilian deaths themselves.

However, even disregarding the thorny questions about freedom of press and government transparency that such an attempt would raise, Allison and Deutch's suggestion would almost undoubtedly be unsuccessful. Although the C.I.A. program is already classified, reports of large explosions, even if they occur in remote areas in Waziristan, have been impossible to completely suppress. It would also be difficult to control the media in Pakistan completely. In fact, the classified nature of the program may make the Obama administration's unverifiable claims about tightly controlled strikes even more suspect, especially in Pakistan (Carlstrom, 2010). The effect of this opacity manifests itself most visibly in the previously discussed differences between American and Pakistani estimates of collateral damage: U.S. scholars have put the percent of civilian fatalities as low as three percent, while Pakistani estimates have reached as high as 98 percent. Rather than curbing discussion of drone attacks, the drone program's secrecy seems to instead be giving both sides license to produce the numbers that they would like to believe.

The Obama administration and American commentators have not completely failed to address the issue of civilian deaths inflicted by the Pakistan drone program; however, their rhetoric has tended to focus on minimizing the reported amount of collateral damage or justifying it as an inevitable side-effect of counterterrorism operations. Ultimately, considerations of civilian deaths have never really entered into the development of the United States' drone policy in Pakistan.

Impact of Drones in Pakistan

The American dialogue about drones has been nominal, mostly focusing on the benefits of "riskless" strikes against terrorist leaders or rationalizing the deaths of civilians as either minimal or unavoidable. In contrast, the Pakistani reaction to drones, influenced by a cultural emphasis on honorable warfare, have been passionately and overwhelmingly hostile. As discussed previously, Pakistani newspapers have reacted to the C.I.A.'s opaque program by reporting incredibly high rates of collateral damage. As a result, a 2011 Pew poll of the Pakistani public shows that 89 percent of Pakistanis believe that UAV strikes kill too many innocent people, while 61 percent say that they are also unnecessary (Pew Research Center, 2011). Within the targeted areas in Waziristan, these numbers are undoubtedly even higher. One American reporter, held by a terrorist group in Waziristan for seven months, described drones as a "terrifying

presence" to his captors (Bergen & Tiedemann, 2010). Aside from terrorist targets, there have also been numerous reports of drone strikes on funerals, on wedding parties, and even on rescuers who attempt to help those injured by a previous strike (Farooq, 2012; Woods, 2012). Those who survive often suffer from the anxiety of living in fear of drone strikes, and many are hospitalized with post-traumatic stress disorder or extreme stress ("US Drones," 2011). In addition, the secrecy that surrounds the C.I.A.'s targeting methods increases fear and mistrust among rural Pakistanis, likely increasing the widespread condemnation of drone strikes instead of decreasing it, as Alison and Deutch would suggest.

Obviously, the casualties inflicted by drone attacks would outrage any attacked nation. However, certain aspects of Pakistani culture, especially in tribal regions, make Pakistanis especially hostile towards drone warfare. *Izzat*, an Urdu word which translates to "prestige" or "honor," plays an important role in Pakistani and North Indian culture, permeating activities that range from entertaining one's guests to protecting one's family. In the West, the concept of *izzat* is frequently described negatively as a motivation for infamous honor killings in which a man feels obligated to kill a kinswoman for dishonoring his family. However, *izzat* generally plays a more positive role in encouraging honorable behavior, including the protection of women and children from harm, similar to the concept of chivalry in Western culture (Shah, 2012). Surprisingly, former Tehrek-i-Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud actually exemplifies the role *izzat* plays in Pakistani society. Although blamed by the C.I.A. and the Pakistani government for the assassination of former Prime Minister Bhutto, Mehsud strongly denied the accusation and stated through a spokesmen that, "Tribal people have their own customs…[and] don't strike women" ("Al Qaeda Militant," 2007). Despite being hostile to Bhutto's politics and certainly not averse to killing or taking credit for brutal terrorist attacks and assassinations, Mehsud felt that accepting blame for a woman's death would damage his reputation.

Drone attacks, which may seem to indiscriminately target innocents, women, and children without even risking soldiers' lives, clearly challenge the role of the honorable warrior, a concept that spans across all cultures. Andrew Exum, a former Army Ranger, notes that a pilotless airstrike "doesn't strike [him] as an honorable way of warfare" (Mayer, 2009). UAV strikes are particularly heinous when viewed from within Pakistan's cultural codes of honor. Religiously based traditions of *jihad*, or struggle, against an oppressive force and *shahadat*, or martyrdom, can combine with the concept of *izzat* to encourage tribal Pakistanis to defend their violated honor violently. For example, one witness to a 2009 drone attack described young survivors declaring that they would "continue jihad against America until [they] finish the USA or embrace martyrdom" (Woods, 2012).

The visceral reaction to drone attacks is evident throughout urban Pakistani society as well, ranging from demonstrations in which protesters

demolish miniature drones ("US Drones," 2011) to America's abysmal popularity of eleven percent in Pakistan in 2011, down from a marginally better seventeen percent in 2010. In fact, Pakistan's confidence in the United States in 2011 was a mere eight percent, lower than eight other Muslim countries, including the Palestinian territories (Pew Research Center, 2011). Yet, no response is as culturally relevant as a recent, darkly humorous anti-drone song written by the popular Pakistani rock singer Shahzad Roy titled "Qismat Apney Haath Mein" (Pkvidzable, 2009). In the song's music video, Roy depicts himself as a rebellious prisoner in a Guantanamo Bay-style prison who conspires to escape, passionately singing in Urdu that "A few people / Have taken our nation under their control/…Destiny is in their hands" (Shah, 2012). When his guards' attempt to electrocute him results in a power failure, Roy's character escapes from the prison—only to be instantly hit by a drone missile. Roy's song addresses issues of unjust imprisonment and torture as well as drone strikes, and the theme of an inhuman, robotic antagonist is omnipresent in his video. Western prison guards wear gas masks and can barely hear Roy's singing over their Darth Vader-like breathing; the music video's final drone strike is conducted by a sunglasses-wearing, English-speaking C.I.A. operator who gloats from afar that "it looks like everything is going to plan." Despite escaping from the prison, the prisoner discovers that his captors still control his destiny, reflecting popular Pakistani perception that drone strikes extend American rule over the entire country (Pkvidzable, 2009).

Pakistanis' hostility to drone attacks permeates the nation's society, whether it manifests itself in the extreme psychological distress and rage of rural villagers or in protest rock songs like Shahzad Roy's. Collateral damage from drone strikes has sparked widespread anger, especially since the deaths of women and children in these attacks offend strongly held beliefs about honor in warfare—an aspect of Pakistani culture that has been almost completely ignored in American discussion about drone policy in Pakistan.

The Ramifications of Drone Strikes

It is unsurprising that Pakistanis, given their culture of honorable warfare, have reacted so fiercely and bitterly to America's drone strikes along the Afghani border. But this reaction is more than an inconsequential side effect of the U.S. attempt to eliminate terrorist havens in northwest Pakistan. Pakistanis' overwhelmingly negative view of America has serious repercussions, and drone attacks may in fact be ultimately counterproductive to American interests in the region.

It is a common belief that the central tenet of counterinsurgency doctrine is "do no harm" (Committee on Government Oversight and Reform, 2010) since harming civilians can make insurgents—in this case, militant groups like Tehrek-i-Taliban or al-Qaeda—more sympathetic to the indigenous population. The United States' operation in Pakistan is

usually classified as counterterrorism instead of a counterinsurgency; however, the same effect of martyring the enemy and "coalesc[ing] the population around extremists" (Bergen & Tiedemann, 2010) is also possible in Pakistan. Drone strikes, combined with the previously discussed cultural concepts of *izzat*, *jihad*, and *shahadat*, are often believed to become a valuable recruiting tool for extremist groups, as every civilian casualty means "an alienated family, a new revenge feud, and more recruits" for terrorist organizations (Mayer, 2009). Indeed, feelings of vengefulness are common among survivors of drone strikes. The previously described example of young men vowing jihad on America after a drone attack is a particularly glaring example of how the Pakistani drone campaign can actually turn civilians into terrorists; in another example, one Pakistani civilian, the sole survivor of a drone strike that killed three of his friends, said he wished to "grab a drone by its tail and smash it to the ground" (Mehsud, Schmitt, & Walsh, 2012). Appeals to Pakistani outrage over drone strikes, like the reason that militant leader Baitullah Mehsud gave for the Lahore police academy attack, are likely effective on these survivors.

The recruiting boost that drone strikes provide militant groups is not merely hypothetical. In 2010, a Pakistani immigrant to the United States named Faisal Shahzad unsuccessfully attempted to bomb Times Square. During his trial, he testified that American drone strikes had inspired his plot and that people like him would continue to attack the United States until such military action had discontinued. In the case of Shahzad, UAV attacks were outraging enough to justify a "lone wolf" strike against the United States (Cortright, 2012). Shahzad is not alone. In recent years, the perpetrators of terrorist attacks in Pakistan—like Baitullah Mehsud—have increasingly blamed the drone campaign for their actions. Despite the perceived effectiveness of drones at eliminating recognized militants, some analysts argue that extremism has actually increased "exponentially" in reaction to the strikes (Mayer, 2009).

Despite the frightening specter of an increase in extremism, drones may have an even more far-reaching and disturbing effect on the destabilization and de-legitimatization of the Pakistani government. At Pakistani demonstrations against drone attacks, protesters carry signs criticizing what they view as a violation of their country's sovereignty ("US Drones," 2011). Yet, although the Pakistani government has repeatedly raised concerns about the lack of transparency and accountability, the C.I.A. has successfully maintained that the strikes' success depends on their secrecy. Meanwhile, the Pakistani government has continued to comply with almost all of the C.I.A.'s requests for help, including allowing drones to fly out of Pakistani bases (Lakshmanan, 2012). Many Pakistanis feel betrayed by a government that not only has proven ineffective against terrorist bombings, but also permits C.I.A. drone strikes. In 2002, 72 percent of Pakistanis believed that their national government had a good influence on the country; in 2007, 59 percent

agreed. Not long after the drone program escalated, this number dropped to a minority at 40 percent. In 2011, a mere 20 percent believed that the government was a good influence. Similarly, current Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari has suffered increasingly negative poll results, with only 14 percent of Pakistanis deeming him a good influence (Pew Research Center, 2011). Recently proposed changes in U.S. drone policy have been met with cynicism from Pakistanis, who find change under the current system to be unlikely (Mehsud, Schmitt, & Walsh, 2012). Even in Shahzad Roy's anti-drone song, the C.I.A. protagonist is seen collaborating with a Pakistani crony before he kills the protagonist with a drone missile. Pakistanis have clearly responded not only to America's perceived invasion, but also to their own government's apparent complicity.

Pakistanis' lack of faith in their government has serious implications. The debate over drones has become a central issue in Pakistani politics; sooner or later, Pakistanis' negative opinion of the U.S. will reflect itself in its national government. Since the U.S. relies on the Pakistani government for support with many of its counterterrorism operations, an anti-American and increasingly fundamentalist administration could seriously hamper the United States' efforts to quell global terrorism. Even more alarming is Pakistan's possession of dozens of nuclear weapons (Bergen & Tiedemann, 2010) and shaky political relationship with neighboring India. Dramatic changes in Pakistan's government could create dramatic changes in global nuclear politics as well.

Conclusion

Armed drones have a profound psychological impact on both the nation that employs them and the nation that suffers from their attacks. In America, remote-controlled UAV technology is not only inexpensive and effective for counterterrorism operations, it does away with the greatest emotional burden of being at war: the condolence letter. The U.S. drone policy in Pakistan has been shaped predominantly by the American reaction to drones, taking advantage of post-September 11th comfort with UAVs to conduct a covert drone campaign in Pakistan's northwest regions.

Yet in Pakistan, where America has conducted hundreds of strikes, drones impose a psychological burden. Civilian casualties from drone strikes have sparked fear, suspicion, and most of all hatred of America in a culture where honorable warfare is paramount. As a result, the very groups that America is trying to eliminate are attracting more recruits, challenging the belief that drone warfare is "costless." Like beheading a hydra, a drone strike that successfully kills a militant leader only galvanizes dozens more to take his place.

On December 30, 2009, a suicide bomber killed himself and seven contractors on a base in Afghanistan. A few weeks later, the bomber

appeared in a released, pre-recorded video, where he said the attack was revenge for the drone strike that had killed Baitullah Mehsud months earlier (Bergen & Tiedemann, 2010). It is impossible to know whether Mehsud's death has ultimately solved some of America's security problems, or if it has merely created more of them. Yet, it is clear that the U.S. has gravely underestimated Pakistanis' hostility towards drone attacks. In reviewing counterterrorism tactics along the Afghani border, the U.S. must reconsider drone warfare from the perspective of the people it attacks and recognize the impact that drone strikes can have on terrorist groups' appeal, the Pakistani government's stability, and ultimately, America's own security.

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