

Personalizing Counterinsurgency: Assessing the effectiveness of drone strikes on the counterinsurgency in Pakistan

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Abstract: This paper studies the perceived legitimacy of drone strikes in Pakistan, in an effort to gauge their effectiveness on the counterinsurgency effort in the region. By looking at issues with legality, strategy, transparency, and perception, this paper argues that drone strikes threaten the long term success of the counterinsurgency. Shrouded in secrecy, they increase anti American resentment and portray a colonialist impression of American efforts in the region. This takes away from modern counterinsurgency's main focus of supporting the local population and establishing sustainable governance structures to oppose further insurgency. Doubts about the legality and accuracy of drone attacks add to the growing dissent from respectable intellectuals, who attack the hypocritical stance that the US takes on extrajudicial killings. This paper concludes that the drone campaign must be accompanied with a sustained information campaign, and efforts to build civilian capacity in Pakistan in order for the counterinsurgency to achieve any sort of sustainable success.

Briefing Memo

The Obama administration has ramped up the drone strikes in Pakistan's tribal areas. In the past three years, over 200 strikes have killed more than 2500 people. The identity of the victims, as well as the legality of the program are hotly contested topics in academia and political debate. Predator drones provide an almost 'seductive' way to wage the War on Terror in Pakistan: it involves no troops on the ground, and so the program seems to represent lower human, capital and political costs for the US. But a critical look at the legal, strategic as well as broader philosophical questions being raised about the drone program sheds light on how the program's reputation affects its pervasiveness and success in countering insurgent extremism emanating from Western Pakistan.

For the purposes of this analysis, counterinsurgency is conceptualized as presented by Gen. David Petraeus and his former Senior Counterinsurgency advisor David Kilcullen. Through their arguments, counterinsurgency is understood to be a civil-military campaign that focuses on supporting and protecting the local populace. It accompanies a military struggle against insurgent groups with a unifying counterinsurgent narrative that focuses to take control away from insurgents and return it to a legitimate government.

But for any such operation to be successful, the counterinsurgency itself must be perceived as legitimate. Unless the counterinsurgency is seen by the host country to have some moral imperative, it will have little room to gain over insurgents in renewing an established political order. The effort must be seen as legitimate by domestic actors and international partners as well to receive critical assistance when necessary.

This paper looks at various factors that affect the perceived legitimacy of the drone program. These are broadly categorized into legal issues, data issues, strategic issues, public relations issues and philosophical issues.

The drone campaign's legality is dubious because the US is not at war with Pakistan, and there is no clear evidence to show that the 'militants' killed by drones are engaged in combat with the US. Neither Bush nor Obama have explicitly invoked self-defense. Arguments on legality can be made both ways, but international precedent has found targeted assassinations in Yemen and Israel to be cases of extrajudicial murder. The campaign's legal status is made more questionable by the lack of clear knowledge of the CIA's safeguards and the fact that targeted assassinations remain outside of the CIA's legal domain.

There is little reliable data to judge the effectiveness of drone strikes. Media access is limited, and reports from varying sources claim accuracy from 4% to 100%. Official claims have been shoddy, and data is often presented in a biased fashion. But what is clear is that drones do not always kill the people they intend to kill, and the secrecy around the program renders all victims faceless. For the highly illiterate Pakistani population, there is much leeway to swing public opinion.

The drone campaign also presents a number of strategic issues, especially when viewed as part of a larger counterinsurgency operation. The remote-control nature of drone killings threatens to 'personalize' the US struggle against extremism, making it just about eliminating high-value targets. As such, the drone strikes continue without any hold-and-build efforts in Pakistan. Coupled with the resentment and anti-Americanism each drone strike creates, the situation is ripe for insurgent groups to cash in on. The CIA's historical troubles with assassination and extraordinary rendition are also

increasing dependency on independent contractors, and the policy is beginning to be seen as a remnant of colonialist thinking.

As a result, legal efforts have begun against the CIA in Pakistan, causing the agency's Station Chief in Pakistan to flee. A seemingly callous attitude to the casualties, and recent events such as the murder investigation against CIA operative Raymond Davis and the killing of 28 Pakistani soldiers by NATO has created a public relations nightmare for the US. Pakistan's rising opposition is cashing onto this quickly.

The drone campaign has seen opposition from notable thinkers such as Michael Walzer and Kilcullen himself, prompting questions about the philosophical underpinnings of the program. The lack of public discourse around the strikes is worrying to many. The US itself was opposed to similar strikes by Israel before 9/11, and this is perceived as hypocritical by many observers. Worryingly, it seems that drone strikes are also becoming a show of power, fired in revenge to attacks against US agencies. Proponents argue that Pakistan is complicit in the attacks, but there is reason to believe that relationship involves much coercion. Regardless, Pakistani wishes have been ignored when need be.

With the secrecy around the program, it becomes hard to empirically portray its effectiveness. A simple lens looks at it in two ways, how effective is the program at killing high-value targets? And how does this affect the larger Af-Pak counterinsurgency. It is clear from the multiple strikes it has taken to kill many militants, that drones miss their targets. The expanding definition of who passes as a legitimate target also convolutes this analysis. The first step is to acknowledge that mistakes are made. From a broader counterinsurgency perspective however, despite claims that drone strikes have reduced enemy attacks in Afghanistan, Pakistan continues to see both drones and terrorist attacks in their aftermath.

To conclude, this paper recommends policy changes to address three major shortcomings of the drone program: the lack of transparency, rising anti-American sentiment, and the absence of hold-and-build efforts. It is suggested that the US open up details about the target selection process and casualties from drones. This should be accompanied by an informational campaign targeted at the Pakistani population, establishing a counterinsurgent narrative, and further supplemented by efforts to build civilian capacity in Pakistan.

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1. Introduction

In an oft-cited excerpt from his book *Finding the Target*, Frederick Kagan argues that Network Centric Warfare (NCW) adds nothing to the US military arsenal as a strategy. In a critical look at the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, he underscores why a war is more than just a ‘targeting drill’:

NCW defines the basic problem in war as identifying and destroying the correct targets in order to force the enemy to capitulate. It focuses, therefore, entirely on the use of the military to destroy things and kill people, and thereby misses the point of war entirely.

War is not about killing people and blowing things up. It is purposeful violence to achieve a political goal. The death and destruction, though the most deplorable aspects of war, are of secondary importance. The pursuit of the political objective is all, in fact, that separates killing in war from murder.¹

According to Kagan, the ‘remarkable’ ability of new technology to find and eliminate targets ‘blinds’ both military personnel and politicians to the political goals of the war, and the effect this has had on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is ‘disastrous’.²

It seems that it is addressing this ‘blindness’, that forms one of the major reasons for the formulation of Modern Counterinsurgency (COIN). In Pakistan, however, which has seen the bulk of the United States’ drone warfare, public perception seems to still see the American strategy as blind - to the aims of the War on Terror, and not least of all to the lives of Pakistanis.

Predator drones, with their seeming pinpoint accuracy, ease of use from Langley, with no threat to US forces, are seen to provide an almost ‘worryingly seductive’ tool in the War on Terror, because they create the perception that war can be ‘costless’.³

Despite their success with ‘neutralizing’ insurgent targets, it is becoming clear that the drone program has its costs. With well over 200 drone strikes in Pakistan in the last three years, it is now clear that the human cost is not negligible. What is almost forgotten however, are the strategic costs of the program. A lingering perception that the drone program is more extrajudicial murder than it is just

¹ Frederick Kagan, *Finding the Target* (ReadHowYouWant, 2010): 499.

² Ibid, 500.

³ Jane Mayer, “The Predator War”, *The New Yorker*, October 26, 2009.

military strike, is threatening to derail the ability of the US counterinsurgency to win hearts and minds, at least in Pakistan. Resentment is constantly increasing against the program that is run by operatives from air conditioned offices in Virginia, apparently steeping in the luxuries that many Pakistanis are slowly losing: air conditioning, and a say in who lives or dies in North-West Pakistan.

Critically, what this paper addresses is not simply the legality of the CIA's use of Predator Drones in Pakistan (although that is important), but also the perceived legitimacy of this program, and the answers to why Pakistani perceptions must factor as important considerations into how the US takes the program further. A critical look at the legal, strategic as well as broader philosophical questions being raised about the drone program sheds light on how the program's reputation affects its pervasiveness and success in countering insurgent extremism emanating from Western Pakistan.

2. Framing Counterinsurgency

For the purposes of the analysis presented in this paper, Counterinsurgency is considered as presented by Gen. David Petraeus in *The U.S. Army Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, and by David Kilcullen in *Counterinsurgency*. Kilcullen was of course Gen. Petraeus's Senior Counterinsurgency Adviser during the drafting of the manual and played a key role in formulating the US Army's modern counterinsurgency strategy.

A brief look at the key aspects of modern counterinsurgency better frames the analysis that follows, and for this purpose a simple synthesis of some counterinsurgency principles is presented here.

Modern Counterinsurgency takes a 'residential approach' against a transnational insurgent entity,⁴ which in this case is the "globalized Islamist insurgency".⁵ The goal is to isolate the insurgents from the population, through a combination of civil and military strategies that attack not just the military capability of the insurgent groups, but the hold of their ideology on the local population. It is therefore

⁴ David Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, Oxford University Press, 2010: 35.

⁵ Ibid, 165.

important from a counterinsurgent perspective, to have a unifying alternative narrative to present to the population for long-term success.⁶

As Petraeus writes, “all efforts focus on supporting the local populace and HN government”.⁷ Kilcullen conceptualizes this approach as a three pronged Political, Economic and Military strategy, focused on wrenching control away from insurgent groups and maintaining legitimacy through a broad based informational campaign to unify the counterinsurgent message.⁸

It is important to note however, and this will become clearer as we go deeper into this analysis, that the perception of counterinsurgency in the ‘host nation’ is perhaps equally important as conceptualizing counterinsurgency itself. (And this is why the existence of the counterinsurgent narrative is so crucial.) This is primarily because of the deep cooperation that counterinsurgency involves with the host population. Examining external perceptions of counterinsurgency also provides us a valuable sanity check through which to look at the US Military’s counterinsurgency strategy itself.

3. Why is Legitimacy Important?

Counterinsurgency, as Petraeus and Kilcullen make clear, is focused on protecting the local population and creating an environment in which the local government can begin to operate without fear of being dislodged by insurgent activity. Any successful government must first be granted legitimacy by the people it seeks to govern. In normal scenarios, the process by which a government takes control is the defining characteristic of its right to be in that position.⁹ Similarly, for any sustainable structure of governance to emerge out of a counterinsurgency, the counterinsurgency itself, which is instrumental in helping set up the government, must be considered legitimate.

⁶ Gen. David Petraeus, *The U.S. Army Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, The Chicago University Press, 2007, 298.

⁷ *Ibid*, 54.

⁸ David Kilcullen, “Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency”, Remarks delivered at the U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Conference, Washington D.C., 28 September 2006.

⁹ Of course it can also be argued that a failing government has no legitimate claim to keep governing, but that is at a later stage.

In simple terms, the local population must accept and welcome the changes that the counterinsurgents bring for the new scenario to be more desirable than the one under the insurgents. If this is not so, both insurgent and counterinsurgent have the same claims to being the legitimate government. Perhaps what is quite telling is the use of the words ‘host nation’, in the writings of Petraeus and Kilcullen, as if suggesting that the counterinsurgent force is a guest.¹⁰ What this signals is the inbuilt check in the counterinsurgent strategy to defer to the wishes of the local populace, and to establish the need to engage and understand their concerns.

What we mean by legitimacy here is not an objective judgment of the moral imperative that the counterinsurgency holds, but rather the perception that the counterinsurgency is acting with a moral imperative. This is a subtle but important distinction. We may spend all our time convincing ourselves that the counterinsurgency we are engaged in has a strict moral imperative, but if the local population disagrees this argument becomes irrelevant to the success of the strategy.

Even in the larger context of international (and even domestic) political acceptance, a perception that the counterinsurgency is legitimate holds critical importance. Shane Harris argues that White House should care about outlining the legitimacy of the drone program because it may face similar fate as the US policy on Guantanamo Bay. Rising pressure against the absence of due process at Guantanamo (first from academic circles, then human rights lawyers and finally the public) forced the Supreme Court to rule that the “detainees at Guantanamo Bay have the right to petition for habeas corpus”, turning the US policy on its head.¹¹ Keeping the drone policy shrouded in secrecy makes it vulnerable to similar campaigning and the US military leadership might be better off taking the lead in establishing legitimacy at home.

A similar argument can be made for the acceptance of the program in international circles. When the legitimacy of the drone strikes is not outrightly defined, the US may face a scenario where a partner

¹⁰ Nasser Hussain, “Counterinsurgency’s Comeback- Can a colonialist strategy be reinvented?”, Boston Review, January/February 2010: 26.

¹¹ Shane Harris, “Are Drone Strikes Murder?”, National Journal, January 8, 2010.

has critical intelligence but is not able to share it because they are unwilling to be a party to the campaign.¹²

The issue henceforth becomes finding a way to gauge the perceived legitimacy of the drone program. This paper looks at a variety of issues that contribute to opinions about the program and its mandate in the North Western regions of Pakistan. These encompass issues of legality, transparency, strategy as well as general attitudes taken by the operatives and officials towards Pakistani citizens and the program itself. A holistic analysis then looks to isolate specific issues with the current framework that can be better addressed to help the effectiveness of the US counterinsurgency in Pakistan.

4. Legal Issues

The legal standing of the CIA's drone campaign is hotly contested, to say the least. The fact that this remains by and large a covert operation means that the US has yet to give an open legal defense of the program. The prime assumption is that the US continues to operate the drone program in self defense, against the threat posed by Al Qaeda, the Taliban and other related groups in Pakistan's tribal areas. But there are a number of critical questions that complicate the legality of drone strikes.

A simple reading of the laws of war could provide the conclusion that it is illegal to engage in "deliberate, disproportionate, or indiscriminate" killing of civilians.¹³ The US must abide by these laws for the drone program to be strictly legal. But the problem is that the US is not at war with Pakistan. In a simple extension to this argument, the CIA operatives that run the program are civilians "engaged in hostilities", arguably making them "unlawful combatants".¹⁴

Despite the fact that the US is not at war with the Pakistani state, the US is at declared war with Al Qaeda and its allies, which now find safe havens in Pakistani soil. The question then becomes when it is legal for the US to breach Pakistani sovereignty. The UN Charter bans using force against the territorial

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Muhammad Idrees Ahmad, "Fighting back against the CIA drone war", *Al Jazeera*, July 30 2011.

¹⁴ Ibid.

integrity of a state unless “the targeted nation consents, or the United States properly acts in self-defense”.¹⁵

The Pakistani government’s consent to the drone program is assumed and widely believed to exist, although it has never been explicitly acknowledged. On the other hand, it is considered implicit that the US is acting in self defense, though as Shane Harris points out, “neither Bush nor Obama has invoked self-defense to justify the use of drones”.¹⁶ Either way, there are disputes as to whether the UN Charter allows the US to invoke self-defense, with some arguing that such violence is only permitted in response to an armed attack. “That means significant force may only be used on the territory of a state that is responsible for an armed attack”, says Mary Ellen O’Connell, a professor at Notre Dame Law School, “there simply is no right to use military force against a terrorist suspect far from any battlefield.”¹⁷ Are Al Qaeda operatives in FATA far from the battlefield? Is Pakistan responsible for failing to prevent terrorist sanctuaries from emerging in the area? What about many associates of Al Qaeda and the Taliban that are armed but have not engaged in armed conflict with the United States?¹⁸

Answers to these questions have gone both ways, but the implication is that the legal status of drone strikes is by no means clear or obvious. The informal presence of the “unwilling or unable” standard, especially in American foreign policy has complicated things further. It was certainly the fact that the US considered Pakistan “unwilling and unable” to capture Osama bin Laden that was used to justify the raid inside Pakistan in May 2011.¹⁹

There is precedent to help understand the interpretation of this complicated legal code. In November 2002, the CIA fired a Hellfire missile at a moving vehicle in a densely populated part of Yemen that killed Abu Ali, the suspected head of Al Qaeda in Yemen. The strike had proceeded only after Yemen had granted the US permission to fly in its airspace, the CIA waited for other vehicles to

¹⁵ Jack Goldsmith, “Fire When Ready”, *Foreign Policy*, March 19, 2012.

¹⁶ Harris, “Are Drone Strikes Murder?”.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Goldsmith, “Fire When Ready”.

clear from the target zone before striking, and Abu Ali was widely believed to be behind an attack that killed 17 American soldiers. Nevertheless, a report for the UN Commission on Human Rights found the strike “a clear case of extrajudicial killing”. In essence, Yemen’s assessment that Abu Ali and his comrades were beyond the law was not legal justification to allow the US to kill them via drone strike. According the UN the US had a legal obligation to capture the targets.²⁰

Before 9/11, the Israeli government “pioneered” the targeted assassination of terrorists. This, by and large, was widely criticized by the United States at the time for being extrajudicial in nature. In one specific case of the killing of a Moroccan immigrant in Norway on the basis of faulty intelligence, the incumbent Mossad agents were arrested and imprisoned.²¹ The Israeli program is widely considered to be much more extensively documented than the American program, and this has raised interesting questions about the US’s changed stance on targeted assassinations post 9/11.

Shrouded in secrecy, there is no clear knowledge of the safeguards that the CIA implements, if any, to prevent civilian casualties. This is different from the policy in Afghanistan, where military air strikes follow policy that is publicly acknowledged and debated. Perhaps as a result of this dichotomy, UN officials have also asked the US to move the drone program under the auspices of the military and international law.²² At present, the CIA’s safeguards seem to be a convoluted mixture of “computer algorithms”²³ and “verifiable human sources”.²⁴ Despite the seeming existence of these safeguards, a former CIA officer admitted to Jane Mayer of the *New Yorker* that “no tall man with a beard is safe anywhere in Southwest Asia.”²⁵

Interestingly, around the same time as Beitullah Mehsud’s killing, it was revealed that under the Bush Administration, the “C.I.A. had considered setting up hit squads to capture or kill Al Qaeda operatives around the world”, and had considered enlisting the help of Blackwater to do so. This caused

²⁰ Harris, “Are Drone Strikes Murder?”.

²¹ James Kitfield, “Wanted: Dead”, *National Journal*, January 8, 2010.

²² Christine Fair, “Drone Wars”, *Foreign Policy*, May 28, 2010.

²³ Mayer, “The Predator War”.

²⁴ Kitfield, “Wanted: Dead”.

²⁵ Mayer, “The Predator War”.

caused a fury and legal experts concluded that had the program gone through, “it would have violated a 1976 executive order, signed by President Gerald R. Ford, banning American intelligence forces from engaging in assassination.”²⁶ Perhaps the only difference between this plan and drone attacks is public opinion, which should have no bearing on the legality of drone strikes, either domestically or internationally. Assassination remains outside the CIA’s core competency, and after a number of high profile gaffes with both assassination and extraordinary rendition in the not so recent past, most noticeably sending suspects to a third country for interrogation based merely on “hunches”,²⁷ there is reason to cast further doubt on the CIA’s ability and mandate to conduct covert killings of suspected militants.

5. Data Issues

There is little reliable data to go by on which to judge the CIA’s drone operations. Depending on where you look, the victims of drone attacks have been classified anywhere between “mostly civilians” and “not a single civilian”²⁸. The covert nature of the CIA program has meant that there is no official account for every person killed. The harsh terrain, rising political instability and now the area’s transformation into an active combat zone has paralyzed journalist access to the sites of drone attacks .

As a result there is no clear picture to who is killed, and how effective this program has hence been on actually reducing terrorism. The return of some terrorists, apparently from the dead, has been particularly embarrassing for the program. Ilyas Kashmiri for example, was claimed dead over a year before he was actually successfully killed by a US drone strike. Just a month after the CIA had originally claimed Kashmiri’s elimination, he resurrected to give an interview to the late journalist Saleem Shahzad.²⁹ This has also given reason to doubt not only official claims about the victims of the strikes, but also the accuracy of the Predator drones themselves.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Kitfield, “Wanted: Dead”.

²⁸ Ahmad, “Fighting back”.

²⁹ Muhammad Idrees Ahmad, “The magical realism of body counts”, *Al Jazeera*, June 13, 2011.

It is when looking at the actual numbers of civilian deaths in drone attacks that the data begins to get incredibly messy. Pakistan's largest English-language daily, *Dawn*, calculated that in 2009, only 5 of the 708 killed by drones were known militants. Similarly, *The News* - another respected English newspaper - calculated that "between January 14, 2006, and April 8, 2009, 60 drone attacks killed 701 people - of whom only 14 were known militants".

Other statistics on the American side have been much more forgiving to the drones. The Long War Journal (LWJ), widely quoted in the Western media, reported as low as 7% civilian deaths. As Idrees Ahmad notes, this was at a time when the LWJ could not identify "a single individual killed". The New America Foundation (NAF), also responsible for a widely respected survey in Pakistan's tribal areas, portrays a similar picture of the accuracy of drone strikes, although the margin of error it cites is larger. But as Ahmad argues, the NAF too has made claims that seemed clearly false. At one point in 2011, NAF data showed that of the 287 killed by drones in Pakistan that year, 251 were militants. But if the single incident of the March 17 killing of 38 pro-government elders in Datta Khel is accounted for, these calculations fail to stand.

On occasion, claims about those killed are prematurely made. Pakistani and American officials claimed soon after the January 13, 2006 strike in Damadola that 4 Al Qaeda terrorists were among the dead. The attack had actually killed 18 villagers, "mainly women and children", and the claim was later retracted. But 5 years later, all 18 killed were still listed as "militants" in the NAF database.³⁰

These are all not simply surface issues with data reporting, but represent larger structural problems with assessing the effects of the CIA's drone program. Most data, gathered by both Pakistani and American media outlets, has little direct access to the sites of drone strikes. Instead, both must rely on other sources that inevitable seem to get their data either from 'stingers' in the region,³¹ official government or military numbers, and perhaps even the Taliban themselves.³² Arguably, there are no

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ahmad, "Fighting back".

³² Fair, "Drone Wars".

confirmed statistics either way. If there is no way to independently verify the identities of those killed then there is little that we can definitively rely on.

What is clear from the multiple strikes it took to kill Kashmiri, Beitullah Mehsud and Mullah Sangeen however,³³ is that drones do not always kill the people they are supposed to. What remains to judge then, is how we classify these accidental targets of Predator drones. The CIA has classified the thousands killed as a handful of “high value targets” and the rest as “suspected militants”. Even non-governmental think tanks such as the NAF only categorize into “militant” and “other”, leaving no clear category for civilians.

On the other end, the average Pakistani knows little about what is happening in the battlefield. Marred not just by the secrecy of many operations and the difficulty of independent verification, but also by more than 60% illiteracy, the Pakistani audience will routinely get much of its information, as well as its opinions, from the country’s thriving but also firebrand television news media.³⁴

The holes in data gathering and reporting leave much leeway for public opinion, as well as official government statements, to sway either way, presenting a favorable propaganda opportunity for all parties. But whichever way one tends to lean, it would be naive to assume that drones do not kill unintended targets, and that no civilians are lost.

It is not simply numbers that are the problem. All the victims have been “faceless”, and the damage from the bombings has “remained unseen”.³⁵ As North West Pakistan has become forbidden territory for media organizations, there is no picture of the destruction caused by a drone strike. There is no video of a drone attack happening,³⁶ only a series of pictures by Noor Behram, a Pakistani

³³ Ahmad, “Body counts”.

³⁴ Zubair Torwali, “The battle for public opinion”, *The Friday Times*, Vol XXIII, No. 44.

³⁵ Mayer, “The Predator War”.

³⁶ Ibid.

photographer that has managed to document the sites of around 60 drones.³⁷ For “every 15 people killed”, Behram told the Guardian, “maybe they get one militant”.³⁸

6. Strategic Issues

One of the primary reasons that the drone program received critical support, was the “public disenchantment” with the US troop deployment in Afghanistan. Tired, frustrated and drained by the extended presence in Afghanistan, pundits suggested that the US retract from the extended counter-insurgency against the Taliban that required more troops on the ground. Instead, they suggested, the US should do as much as it could “from offshore”, focusing purely on counterterrorism and to “surgically eliminate Al Qaeda leaders and their allies”. The US was encouraged to shift focus to Pakistan, “a nation that actually matters”³⁹, in the words of conservative pundit George Will.

In its very essence then, drone warfare on its own is the very opposite of counter insurgency. It involves little human capital, and minimal engagement with local actors. As such there is an unsurprising appeal to this “push button” approach to fighting Al Qaeda. The shift in strategy has been worrisome to Jane Mayer because of the “remarkably little public discussion” that it has occurred with,⁴⁰ but the renewed focus on surgical counter-terrorism presents a regression to a form of strategic thinking that we have seen to fail multiple times, not least of all in Israel.

Ambassador Daniel Kurtzer has argued that Israel’s counter terrorism strategy in the second *intifada* focused purely on strengthening a defensive attritional barrier against Palestinian insurgents. As the success of Israel’s tactics to eliminate the “middle managers of violence” increased, a larger political objective became more and more invisible. Despite the fact that this strategy can arrest terrorist attacks in the short term by dramatically increasing the costs of violence, it does nothing to address continuing political resentment and a conviction to resort to violence if and when necessary.⁴¹

³⁷ Associated Press, “Photo exhibit shows alleged US drone strike deaths”, *Dawn*, July 20, 2011.

³⁸ Ahmad, “Fighting back”.

³⁹ Mayer, “The Predator War”.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Daniel Kurtzer, “Intifada III - Coming Soon to a TV Screen Near You”, *American Interest*, January/February 2007.

The US drone program has an eerie resemblance to the Israeli strategy. David Kilcullen and Andrew McDonald Exum write that the drone campaign is in fact part of a “larger strategic error - our insistence on personalizing the conflict with Al Qaeda and the Taliban”.⁴² Instead of ‘distracting’ Al Qaeda from planning further terrorist activities,⁴³ the drone program distracts the counter insurgency from larger problems in the areas where these terrorist groups are based. Killing terrorists is not a bad thing, they say, “but it’s not the only thing that matters. Killing Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi only brought 18 days of quiet in Iraq before Al Qaeda resumed operations under new leadership. Putting “thousands of hours of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance” to targets,⁴⁴ that consist largely of foot soldiers,⁴⁵ may not be worth it. Like Zarqawi, there is no reason to suggest these fighters can’t be replaced, and in all likelihood they will be replaced more easily.

The drone program fails to address the fact that extremists must be isolated from the communities they live in. The local population must be convinced that violence is not a force they can justifiably resort to and that Pakistan can be stabilized in other ways. Instead, every drone strike creates another “alienated family”, and a “new desire for revenge”, turning Beitullah Mehsud into “Robin Hood”.⁴⁶ In Pakistan’s dense towns, each drone damages not only the house it targets, but the many around it, inevitably killing “impartial people” that only add to this resentment.⁴⁷

As Kilcullen and Exum argue, the use of drones “displays every characteristic of a tactic ... substituting for a strategy”. They are accompanied by no information effort targeted at the Pakistani public (they are instead covered in a cloud of secrecy), and by no effort to “understand the tribal dynamics of the local population”.⁴⁸ This is evidenced simply by the program’s seeming ignorance of the historical context in which it operates. The program is similar to the “air control” methods used by the

⁴² David Kilcullen and Andrew McDonald Exum, “Death From Above, Outrage Down Below”, *The New York Times*, May 17, 2009.

⁴³ Kitfield, “Wanted: Dead”.

⁴⁴ Kilcullen, “Death from Above”.

⁴⁵ Ahmad, “Fighting Back” & Mayer, “The Predator’s War”.

⁴⁶ Kilcullen, “Death from Above”.

⁴⁷ Associated Press, “Photo exhibit”.

⁴⁸ Kilcullen, “Death from Above”.

British in the same area, and is hence unsurprisingly seen as a “continuation of colonial-era policies”.

Add to this the similarities to the French aerial bombardment in Algeria, the American strikes against the Union of Islamic Courts in Somalia and the Israeli attacks against Palestinian insurgents, and a score of issues that can rile up anti-colonialist sentiment in Pakistan are presented on a platter. This is not a secret to insurgent groups, who make the site of each drone attack a recruiting ground when the entire community comes together to assess the damage.⁴⁹

Drones have escalated an already colonialist perception of the United States. Take for example, recent amendments to the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR), promulgated by the British against the tribes of FATA, and kept intact by subsequent Pakistani governments because the regulations gave them the ability to implicate entire tribes for refusing to hand over a fugitive.⁵⁰ The regulations exhibit an utter lack of understanding or respect for Pashtun culture, which is strictly bound by honor to give shelter to anyone that needs it.⁵¹ The United States had pushed for the amendments to the FCR to help limit its use for oppression, but the US role in this process remained largely invisible.⁵² This either shows a complete obliviousness on the part of the Americans to improve their perceptions in Pakistan, or the extent of the damage that the drone campaign has caused. So strongly has the drone campaign enticed Anti Americanism that no Pakistani party wishes to be associated with American policy to preserve its own legitimacy in Pakistani public opinion.

The expansion of the drone program into Balochistan presents an even greater strategic folly. Balochistan is slowly becoming the headquarters for extremist groups, which are under constant siege in their old sanctuaries of Waziristan. Persistent human rights issues and the fundamentally challenged position of Balochistan in the Pakistani federation provides an easy rallying point for insurgent groups. The problem in Balochistan, like it used to be in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, is not historical extremist sanctuaries, but persistent human rights issues that have caused decades of resentment against the

⁴⁹ As depicted in *Pakistan: Children of the Taliban*, Directed by Daniel Edge, Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy Films, 2009.

⁵⁰ Ashfaq Yusufzai, “Democracy Follows Drones”, IPS, Aug 24, 2011.

⁵¹ The Taliban and Al Qaeda to exploited the Pashtun Code, as reported in Yusufzai, “Democracy Follows Drones”.

⁵² Ibid.

Pakistani state. So strong is the separatist sentiment in Balochistan, that Imran Khan chose to postpone a rally to be held in Quetta on the 23rd of March, Pakistan's defense day, so as not to trigger Balochi dissent.⁵³ And while the Pakistani opposition's populist approach presents one way to deal with Balochistan, the US chooses to take off drones from Balochi land to kill the Baloch.

As a result, Pakistanis see the drone campaign as an aggressive killing operation, not as part of a larger counterinsurgency strategy meant to win control, as well as hearts and minds. The strategy with drones has been about limiting "enemy activity" in Pakistan to create a strong border defense for US forces in Afghanistan.⁵⁴ This makes sense when viewed through a larger Af-Pak lens, but this is one of those times when the Af-Pak label hides the true reality of the scenario. Afghanistan and Pakistan are two different countries, and this difference is made starker by the Pakistani state's traditional superiority complex when compared to Afghanistan. Now given the brunt of the physical damage to deal with, Pakistan sees accountability and no apology, and the only part of the struggle that addresses the civil of the 'civil-military' counterinsurgency,⁵⁵ is rising anti Americanism.

A White House report presented to the US Congress on April 4, 2011 was therefore critical of the lack of 'hold' and 'build' efforts to go along with the drone strikes and military operations in FATA.⁵⁶ The Kerry-Lugar bill was one effort to support long-term civil cooperation and development, but generated "bitter controversy" in Pakistan on "conditionalities regarding 'security related assistance'".⁵⁷ This generated a vocal protest from the Pakistan army as well as the public, accusing the US of 'micromanaging' Pakistan's affairs.⁵⁸ Similar furor followed after the US Congress passed a resolution regarding the Pakistani government's policies in Balochistan.⁵⁹

⁵³ Mumtaz Alvi, "PTI delays Quetta meeting fearing backlash from nationalists", *The News*, February 5, 2012.

⁵⁴ Karen Parrish, "Petraeus: Counterinsurgency Strategy Has 'Borne Fruit'", *American Forces Press Service*, July 12, 2011.

⁵⁵ As described for the Afghanistan campaign in Ibid.

⁵⁶ Yusufzai, "Democracy Follows Drones".

⁵⁷ Ishtiaq Ahmed, "The US Af-Pak Strategy: Challenges and Opportunities for Pakistan", *Asian Affairs: An American Review* (37): 191-209.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Tariq Butt, "Balochistan resolution in US Congress raises hell in Pakistan", *The News*, February 19, 2012.

It is important to note however, that the Af-Pak counterinsurgency seeks not just to monopolize control away from the insurgents, but to gain control in areas where many federal governments have failed to do so in the past. In many cases, the control of groups from which the ‘insurgency’ is now considered to be rising has predated the Pakistani government itself, which makes it simple for counterinsurgency operations to be interpreted as “colonial small wars”, intended to impose new authority rather than give control back to an established government.⁶⁰ The problem with an isolated drone strategy in Pakistan is that it delegitimizes any efforts that the Pakistani or American governments make for the people of FATA, by virtue of their presence being perceived as colonialist and oppressive by its very nature. As a result, no move to establish any political order is happening at all.

From a simple counter-terrorist lens as well, the drone campaign provides new challenges to dismantling terrorist networks. The victims of drone strikes cannot be captured, but only killed. In contrast to the “no shots fired” policy in Afghanistan, which is designed to minimize civilian casualties and provides invaluable access to individuals who can then be interrogated, the drone campaign in Pakistan has no such safeguards for civilians and no access to insurgents that can be interrogated.⁶¹

Add to this the fact that the CIA’s troubles with assassination and extraordinary rendition in the past, and the news that the CIA is getting back into the killing game has caused worry to many. As a result the US must increase dependency on independent contractors such as Blackwater (now Xe Services), which itself has been the subject of many protests in Pakistan. Robert Baer, “a noted former CIA field officer in the Middle East”, warns further that “with contractors, you lose all that control”.⁶² Consequently, the US is left with no independent verification of the campaign, leaving it to be run by uncontrolled contractors and intelligence officials in no capacity to kill.

⁶⁰ Hussain, N., “Counterinsurgency’s Comeback”

⁶¹ Parrish, “Petraeus”.

⁶² Kitfield, “Wanted”.

7. Public Relations Issues

Accompanying the drone strikes have been a host of incidents that further the opinion that Americans have no regard for the Pakistani lives lost as a result of drone attacks, and because of the War on Terror in general.

In a high profile case last year, Karim Khan, a journalist from Waziristan, filed a formal complaint against CIA officials stationed in Pakistan for sanctioning the killing of his brother and 18-year old son. His suit named CIA director Leon Panetta, US defence secretary Robert Gates as well as the CIA station chief Jonathan Banks, whose identity as the CIA station chief was a closely guarded secret. Once his cover was blown, Banks quickly fled the country.⁶³ Meanwhile, the CIA's former acting General Council, John A Rizzo, who was also named in similar complaints admitted he was responsible for signing off on the "hit list" for "lethal operations". Persons on this hit list were "blown to bits" in "businesslike" operations said Rizzo, who also claimed to be "up to my eyeballs" in the drone program.⁶⁴

Lawyers have had differing opinions on whether the case can succeed. Some saying it has little chance of success, others arguing that the extradition will be the problem. Regardless, the issue here is that Pakistanis continue to feel the brunt of physical strikes, while they see Americans running free. This has striking similarities to the recent case of Raymond Davis, another intelligence operative caught in Pakistan for murdering two motorcyclists but then released and deported in a deal that Pakistanis resented and protested in large numbers.

In early 2011, President Obama's chief counter-terrorism adviser John Brennan insisted that "nearly for the past year there hasn't been a single collateral death" in the drone war.⁶⁵ Not only do

⁶³ Declan Walsh, "CIA chief in Pakistan leaves after drone trial blows his cover", *The Guardian*, December 17, 2010.

⁶⁴ Ahmad, "Fighting Back".

⁶⁵ Ibid.

statements such as this rile up the Pakistani media and public, but also show a complete obliviousness at the highest levels of the US strategic hierarchy to the human cost of the drone campaign.⁶⁶

In stark contrast to the apologies that the White House released after the Quran burning incident and the shooting rampage of Sgt. Robert Bales in Afghanistan in early 2012, American authorities refuse to acknowledge civilian deaths in drone strikes in Pakistan. After the recent killing of up to 28 Pakistani soldiers by a NATO airstrike, the White House made it perfectly clear that it was issuing no apology. All in all this presents a comprehensive argument to Pakistanis that Americans have no respect or regard for Pakistani life, even when compared to their Afghan brethren with whom the United States is actually at war.

In what is perhaps a reflection of the attitude of the CIA towards those it targets, drone operators have begun to refer to human beings they kill on their monitors as ‘bugsplat’,⁶⁷ and the many that flee the site as ‘squirters.’⁶⁸

Pakistanis’ helplessness at dealing with the drone campaign, coupled with the perceived failure of their own ‘democratic’ government to protect their rights creates an environment where the disillusionment extends not just to the drone program but to the War on Terror in general. As Murtaza Hussain argues, “The killing of individuals whose names are unknown, against whom no evidence has been provided, and who are able neither to surrender nor identify themselves as friendly to unmanned aerial robots is surely a hideous manifestation of the increasing depravity of the ever-expanding ‘Global War on Terror’.” What makes this more worrying is that the disenfranchisement with the War on Terror here comes through no direct sympathy for extremist groups, but through a failure of the counterinsurgent groups (both Pakistani and American) to extend arms to the local population. Hussain goes as far as to say “It is often said that terrorists have a disregard for the sanctity of human life. By this

⁶⁶ This human cost goes farther than those directly killed in drone strikes. Doctors have reported marked increases in usage of tranquilizers and sleeping pills due to the pervasive sense of fear, as seen in Murtaza Hussain, “Pakistan’s legal fight to end the drone war”, Al Jazeera, December 15, 2011.

⁶⁷ Hussain, “Pakistan’s legal fight”.

⁶⁸ Mayer, “The Predator War”.

standard, the actions of the CIA and its Pakistani government enablers certainly fit the description of terrorism.”⁶⁹

Unsurprisingly, Pakistan’s rising opposition, which has included the meteorically rising populist manifesto of Imran Khan, has used drone strikes as a central rallying call, staging sit-ins in major cities and protesting to block NATO supply routes through the country.

8. Philosophical Issues

The opposition to the drone campaign from many notable intellectuals, some of which were critical in shaping modern counterinsurgency itself, raises important concerns about the philosophical grounding of the drone campaign. Most notably, David Kilcullen, leading counterinsurgency theorist and Senior Counterinsurgency Adviser to Gen. Petraeus during the drafting of *The U.S. Army Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, as well as Michael Walzer, on whose work in Just War Theory much of the US pre-emptive self-defense argument is based, are opposed to continuing drone strikes in Pakistan, at least in their current form.

Much of Kilcullen’s opposition to the drone campaign has been referenced above as strategic issues. Walzer, like Jane Mayer, is opposed to an intelligence agency “wielding such lethal power in secret”. He argues for the need for a legal code under which the drone program must operate, as well as “public justification” to kill those targeted by drone strikes.⁷⁰ Interestingly, during the 2008 campaign, the only thing that differentiated then Senator Obama and Senator McCain was whether they would talk about drone policy publicly. Senator McCain said he wouldn’t.⁷¹

All evidence seems to point to the fact that before 9/11, the CIA and the American intellectual leadership in general was against the idea of extrajudicial assassination. Former CIA Director George Tenet has been quoted as saying that it would be a “terrible mistake” for the CIA to wield Predator

⁶⁹ Hussain, “Pakistan’s legal fight”.

⁷⁰ Mayer, “The Predator War”.

⁷¹ Harris, “Are Drone Strikes Murder?”.

Drones.⁷² In July 2001, the American Ambassador to Israel, Martin Indyk commented about Israel's methods to target Palestinian Terrorists: "The United States government is very clearly on record as against targeted assassinations... They are extrajudicial killings, and we do not support that."⁷³ Yet after 9/11, Bush's lawyers modeled the defense of covert CIA target killings on the Israeli position against terrorism.⁷⁴

And the apparent success of the US to continue with drone strikes for much of the last seven years has shown how irrelevant international law can become in the face of political power. Jeffrey Smith, former CIA general counsel told the *Washington Post* that the new found status of assassination as international norm "exposes American leaders and Americans overseas". The inconsistency in the US's positions before and after 9/11 is clear, just as is the inconsistency between the number of civilian deaths in drone strikes. Perhaps in the end what number lives on is a "function of political power".⁷⁵

Worryingly so, the drone attacks are also becoming a show of military power. After a December 2009 raid on the CIA base in Khost, near the Afghan border, 12 missiles were fired in the single month of January 2010. The sudden increase in strikes was seen by both the Pakistani and the American media as a "show of strength" and an attack motivated by the desire for "revenge"⁷⁶. Did intelligence data increase significantly that month? The resurrection of Hakimullah Mehsud, who was actively targeted and subsequently claimed dead by one of these missiles, shows that this is unlikely to be the case. If this is so, the argument that civilian casualties are unintended, and that the meticulous safeguards of the CIA combined with the sheer accuracy of the Predator drones justifies their use falls flat.

There is a lingering belief that the Pakistani Government's complicit support of the program justifies its existence. It is questionable whether a majority of Pakistani civilians would support drone strikes in FATA. The NAF's highly publicized survey of Pakistan's tribal areas indicates in fact, that 76%

⁷² Mayer, "The Predator War".

⁷³ Quoted in Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ahmad, "Body Counts".

⁷⁶ Sanjeev Miglani, "America seeking revenge in Pakistan for CIA raid?", *Afghan Journal*, February 2, 2010.

are opposed to drone strikes in the region.⁷⁷ The question then is, how sincere is the government support for drone strikes? It is reasonable to assume that just as Musharraf had little choice between being ‘with the Americans’ or ‘against them’ after 9/11, him and the following PPP government have considered themselves helpless in front of the American resolve to continue with the drone program, and decided to make the best of it by sharing intelligence and eliminating targets that were a threat to the Pakistani state as well. But even when Musharraf had apparently agreed to comply with the drone program, the US continued to bomb Pakistan without Musharraf’s permission. Take for example the killing of Abu Laith Al Libi, which killed 12 or 13 people and was described by US officials as ‘fortuitous’, considering multiple failed attempts to kill Al Libi, one of which included a strike that killed 7 children.⁷⁸ To Pakistanis on the ground this political power play is just one more way in which the Americans continue with their colonial ways, and there is little to suggest that there is no coercion whatsoever in this alliance.

Others have argued that part of the reason why the silence around the drone campaign must be maintained is for the good of the target country, which “either in the interests of good relations or because it cannot effectively prevent it, may ignore the covert action”.⁷⁹ This argument presents a rather puzzling way to justify the covertness of drone strikes. It seems to argue that silence from the US about drone strikes allows the Pakistani government to gather public support in ways it sees fit. The flaw in this argument is that it creates a virtue out of allowing governments to go against the mandate of their own people, just as it allows the Pakistani government to allow drone strikes without facing direct accusation from its citizens, and this goes against the very fundamentals of claimed counterinsurgency strategy.

Many proponents of drone strikes seem to argue that Washington is left with no better way to deal with militants in Pakistan. The COIN *Field Manual* states that “the host nation doing something tolerably is normally better than us doing it well”. Whether drone strikes accomplish the goals of COIN well is

⁷⁷ New America Foundation, “Pakistan Survey”, pakistansurvey.org, accessed April 4, 2012.

⁷⁸ Micah Zenko, *Between Threats and War: US Discrete Military Operations in the Post-Cold War World*, Stanford University Press, 2010: 148-9.

⁷⁹ Goldsmith, “Fire When Ready”.

open to question (this analysis argues that it does far from well), but this suggests an almost critically low level of trust in the ability of the Pakistani military to target militants in FATA. But when this mistrust is accompanied by the demands to increase operations to North Waziristan, the inconsistencies abound further. And now that Pakistan has clearly stated that it must have a say in the future of Afghanistan, how will the US choose to deal with this mistrust?

What makes drones the “least bad tool” in the American arsenal,⁸⁰ is the lack of threat posed to soldiers during the attack. And again, it is made clear to Pakistanis that collateral damage is considered a lower cost than the loss of American soldiers.

Overall, the drone program is based on a philosophical framework that appears opportunist at best. The resultant relationship between the American establishment and the Pakistani population becomes an asymmetric arrangement where Pakistani viewpoints are being waited on to adapt to American needs. General Petraeus’s vision of counterinsurgency involves providing protection to the local population and the local government in an effort for the locals to gain some respite from insurgent groups and create sustainable political structures. In the setting that drone attacks present to Pakistanis, they are faced only with ultimatums, and it is in the freedom from being coerced into accepting American resolve that they see the respite they need to create their own political environment.

9. Judging the Effectiveness of Drones

It is not easy to judge the effectiveness of a program whose working and strategic position is so covert. But as the analysis above has shown, there are critical factors in a successful counterinsurgency that drone strikes clearly fail to address. Perhaps a simple way to look at the effectiveness of drones is to see their effectiveness at eliminating high-level insurgent targets, and their effects on the larger counterinsurgency.

It is clear to us that drones don’t always kill who they are supposed to kill. Take for example the fact that it took 15 strikes to get rid of Beitullah Mehsud. This means that insurgents often escape and

⁸⁰ Fair, “Drone Wars”.

that innocents are killed. But we can also not take away from the fact that a number of high level targets, of interest to both the US and Pakistan have been ‘neutralized’. What is unclear is who exactly is targeted and how much collateral damage the campaign causes. While initial judgments seem to suggest only people closest to Al Qaeda were on the hit list, it has slowly become clear that the American definition of this is more expansive than one may assume at first glance. Drug traffickers in the region are now also being targeted, which has prompted the apt question of whether Hamid Karzai’s brother, who is also allegedly involved in drug trafficking, might also be targeted by a drone.⁸¹

But the first step in moving forward, is to acknowledge that there is a discrepancy between who drones target and who they manage to kill. This will suggest one of two things. Either the selection of targets is misguided (which is something bureaucratically correctable) or that the technology itself is not as accurate as we may think (which arguably presents a more difficult problem to address, at least politically).

The other question is how drones affect the counterinsurgency efforts as a whole in the Af-Pak region. This is perhaps more difficult to empirically gauge. While it is hard to pinpoint the exact causation between increased drone strikes and increased stability in Afghanistan, the US army claims that the number of enemy attacks have decreased in the past months.⁸² But much of the reaction to drone strikes is also directed at Pakistani urban centers, government officials and the military, which makes it much harder to consider the drone program empirically effective in reducing instability. Does the ‘distraction’ of drone strikes prevent another attack on the CIA such as the one in Khost? It is perhaps impossible to predict.

But any gauge of public opinion in Pakistan will tell you that drone strikes are not popular. This remains no secret to insurgents and they have been evidenced to use drone strikes as a propaganda tool. Add to this the United States’ refusal to acknowledge, let alone apologize, for civilian deaths, their perceived hypocrisy on extrajudicial killings, and impressions of colonialist attitude towards the affairs of

⁸¹ Mayer, “The Predator War”.

⁸² Parrish, “Petraeus”.

the Pakistani government, and the counterinsurgency is faced with rapidly rising anti American sentiment and tighter public mandate in which to maneuver the counterinsurgency in Pakistan.

10. Policy Recommendations

Kilcullen and others have argued for the complete stoppage of the drone campaign. It is highly unlikely however, that CIA or the Obama administration will be willing to take this route. The drone campaign has been central to their counterinsurgency efforts in Pakistan, and any realistic efforts at addressing the problems Washington faces in Afghanistan will involve modifications to the current drone policy.

The following changes to the drone policy are hence intended to address three critical shortcomings of the counterinsurgency efforts in Pakistan: lack of transparency, rising anti-American sentiment, and the absence of hold-and-build efforts.

Many proponents of the drone program have argued for increased transparency around the entire effort. Both Fair and Goldsmith, vocal defendants of the campaign, argue that the US must own the policy and make publicly available details of the process by which targets are chosen, and data about the casualties in the attacks. In the absence of judicial precedence in determining the legality of military process, Congress can be called on to endorse the target selection process,⁸³ and efforts can be made to increase media access to the sites of drone attacks. This of course will create an open floor to debate and will invite opposition, but that is the only way that the US can justify the continuation of drone strikes. It is only after the failures of the program are accepted that it can be reasoned how any other strategy would result in much greater losses. Increased transparency will also allow innocent civilians in Pakistan's tribal areas to not only stay safe but also engage with US forces in a less threatening manner.

The US must also work to wholeheartedly present an alternative counterinsurgent narrative to the Pakistani population. In the absence of a public justification to drone strikes, the US leaves itself vulnerable to the hijacking of its principles by insurgent groups in a propaganda war that they currently

⁸³ Goldsmith, "Fire When Ready".

seem to be winning. The presentation of this narrative must also accompany a prominent effort to portray US safeguards against the loss of civilian life and respect for Pakistani citizens. Here the US responses to collateral damage in Afghanistan can almost be duplicated outright.

By creating alternative channels of communication with the Pakistani public, such as those initiated during last year's visit by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to Pakistani colleges to receive questions from students, the US can begin to address anti American sentiment in more direct terms, countering the local anti American television media. It would be naive to think that there will be no anger voiced when new channels of communication are opened, but the mere effort will go a long way in addressing the impression that the US is engaged in a unilateral counterinsurgency. Opening up about drone strikes will also pressure the Pakistani government to accept its complicity in the campaign and ease pressure on the American intellectual leadership.

The third recommended policy change is to focus on active efforts to build civilian capacity in Pakistan. Having seen the Pakistani response to the Kerry-Lugar Bill and to the recent Congress resolution on Balochistan, this will be tricky. Any approach to address civilian capacity in Pakistan must be hands-off: independent but supported generously by the US. Torwali argues that the US should learn from the successful counterinsurgency operation by the Pakistan Army in Swat. The Army was deployed in Swat for many months, both only engaged in active combat after the release of some videos showing Taliban brutality turned public sentiment against them.⁸⁴ Similar approaches must be taken by the US in both civil and military spheres. The turn of public sentiment is not likely to be quick, but the US must be ready to embrace any opportunity it gets.

Others such as Ishtiaq Ahmed have argued for the need to create a common security bond between Pakistan, Afghanistan and India to create sustainable peace in South Asia. The United States can supplement an increased informational campaign with public support for efforts such as the Trans-

⁸⁴ Torwali, "The battle for public opinion".

Afghanistan Pipeline (TAPI), a proposed natural gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan in to Pakistan and India.

The US counterinsurgency needs a significant breakthrough in Pakistan. Unfortunately, this is unlikely to happen in quick time, but Washington must address the communication gap it currently has with the Pakistani population for any counterinsurgency in the region to achieve sustainable success. These policy recommendations perhaps accompany a shift in how we conceptualize the success of drone warfare. The current policy framework seems to see short term debilitating of terrorist groups as a success, but to be fair to Pakistanis (who they see the brunt of both terrorism and counterterrorism), and to achieve sustainable success against extremist networks, our parameters to judge the success of drone warfare must focus on the long term goals of a broader counterinsurgency.

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